

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 26

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MAY 6, 2021

Landslide Vote for Colbert; Shively Holds One-Year Seat



PAT DUFFY PHOTO

Dr. Melissa Colbert, pictured giving her candidate's statement during Saturday's Leverett annual town meeting, won the selectboard race with nearly 90% support.

By GEORGE BRACE

LEVERETT – Leverett's annual town meeting had an unusually large turnout on May 1, with an estimated 270 residents showing up to a meeting held outside the elementary school on a sunny Saturday morning. Intermittent wind made the meeting chilly at times, but it ran smoothly, and residents seemed to be in good cheer.

Using a process rare and possibly unique in Massachusetts, on-the-spot elections for town officials were held during the four-hour meeting, with candidates being nominated from the floor, introducing themselves, and voted on that same day.

A contested race for two selectboard positions was won by Melissa Colbert, who was elected to serve

for the first time in a three-year term; and current chair Julie Shively, elected to fill the second seat, a one-year vacancy created by the resignation of board member Peter d'Errico last fall.

Many of the remaining 25 articles that made up the agenda were financial "housekeeping" matters requiring voter approval, but several involved substantive issues spawning an exchange of views and information before votes were taken.

Participation & Access

Town moderator Larry Farber emphasized to residents that it was their meeting, and encouraged people to participate if they had something to say. He went on to outline the rules of procedure, stating that

see **LEVERETT** page A4

History in the Making as Crew Starts on Gen. Pierce

By JOE R. PARZYCH

MONTAGUE CITY – Northern Construction Services, LLC out of Weymouth and Palmer has contracted with the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to preserve, renovate, and restore a steel-truss road bridge known as the General Pierce that goes over the Connecticut River between Greenfield and Montague.

A crew on top of the deck uses a heavy equipment crane to lower construction materials down to other workers on scaffolding under the bridge at the same time, repairing the bottom of the deck.

The 753 foot long, 25.9 foot wide bridge with a steel truss design was built in 1947, according to Joe Burek, part of the bridge crew team for MassDOT.

Before the General Pierce there were two previous bridges there, the Montague City Bridge and a trolley bridge. The Montague City Bridge had a wooden, double-decked design that carried rail traffic on top and was 860 feet long, and the trolley bridge was engineered with a metal through-truss. These two bridges got destroyed in the Flood of 1936. There is also the New York, New Haven & Hartford rail

see **BRIDGE** page A5



PARZYCH PHOTO

Northern Construction workers inspect the underside of the General Pierce Bridge's deck on Tuesday. The crew is preparing for a long job.

Police Review Committees Share Reports

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE – The two civilian committees appointed last summer by the Montague selectboard to examine the police department have published their final reports.

"[B]ased on the information we gathered over the last several months it's clear that the community has a very positive opinion of the Montague Police Department," the committee tasked with examining community engagement concluded, after suggesting four possible areas for improvement.

The second committee, which focused on the issues of equitable

see **POLICE** page A8

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Town Has a Mosquito Plan, Will Consider Joining District

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard at its May 3 meeting voted to endorse a mosquito control plan prepared by public health director Daniel Wasiuk, part of an application to opt out of state spraying authorized by a new mosquito control law. The local opt-out option is one of a number of amendments inserted into the law, which seemed to encourage state aerial spraying of mosquitoes. Spraying of insecticides, critics say, harms animals, particularly pollinators, and potentially humans.

"I really had to construct it more in a qualitative way, rather than a quantitative way," Wasiuk said of his alternative local plan for mosqui-

to control. "We really need to know what the capacity of the municipality is." He said the health department would combine "education and outreach" with "source reduction." The latter might include "evaluating properties that have unmaintained pools, discarded tires, *et cetera*." The board will also "keep the public abreast" of mosquitoes or humans that have tested positive for a virus.

Wasiuk said he had talked to Tom Bergeron, the head of the town department of public works (DPW), about his plans for "water management and ditch maintenance." He said the DPW will need to work with the cons com and planning department to address wetlands.

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

SCENE REPORT

A Storied Farmhouse Comes Apart

By ROB SKELTON

MONTAGUE – A call went out from Dennis Lombardi, the esteemed North Leverett mason. The demolition of the Montague Farmhouse was imminent, and there were items to salvage: the hardware and fixtures from five masonry stoves he built in the '70s and '80's for the communards, and the cherry cabinetry and trim boards crafted by Peter Natti during his twenty-year tenure at the Ripley Road social experiment, before it dissipated and he returned to his hometown of Gloucester.

Local contractors Neil Bannon and Ricky Smith showed up. Hammers and wonder bars were used to dislodge the cast-iron doors from the "Russian Stoves." A diamond blade circular saw was used to scribe around marble decorative features, and sledge hammers employed to whack out neighboring bricks. Pry bars and drill drivers were used to gently remove the cupboards.

Janice Frye, Anna Gyorgy, and Sam Lovejoy – notable former residents of the commune, which started in 1969 – were on hand to salvage mostly memories, such as that the farmhouse was said to have been towed to its site from Shutesbury by a team of sixteen oxen.

The new owner of the place is Jason Cohen, a wonderful man who spent 21 years running a moving company in Jamaica Plain, and who founded the Unifier

see **FARMHOUSE** page A6



ANNA GYORGY PHOTO

Leverett mason Dennis Lombardi, with one of the four brick stoves he built at the onetime Montague Farm.

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Popular Free Store to Reopen With New Shed, Volunteer Staff

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Discussion of only one topic, the free store at the Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station (WRATS), filled half the of the town selectboard's April 28 meeting, with several citizens Zooming in to participate. A discrimination complaint filed by a former town police officer was not on the agenda.

Wendell did not create the first free store, but the Wendell free store has been central to the town's waste management process for decades, and has saved citizens the cost of buying many items new.

The shed that housed the free store as well as a can and bottle recycle bin closed with everything else in March 2020, and it has not re-opened for citizens since then. Bottle and can recycling was moved outside, and later returned to the

shed with one attendant given the job of accepting recycling from patrons, separating out pieces of trash from deposit bottles and cans.

At the April 28 meeting, former selectboard member Christine Heard said that because stores now only take small quantities of deposit containers, the number of deposit bottles and cans coming to the WRATS has increased, and they now fill a large part of the shed.

Highway commission chair Phil Delorey said that the WRATS workers already have nine functions, and that maintaining the free store is a job they do not need. Staffing the WRATS is a constant issue, and the present staff is a good one, Delorey said. He added that he was aware of signs and a petition supporting keeping the free store open.

Before any citizen spoke to support re-opening the store, Delorey

see **WENDELL** page A5

Con Com Continues Pondering Pond Plan

By SARAH ROBERTSON

LEVERETT – At Monday night's conservation commission meeting, a 23-page document with questions and answers about the Friends of Leverett Pond's weed management plan was shared with the public for the first time, and discussed by commission members. To give the public enough time to read and comment on the information, the hearing was continued until June 7.

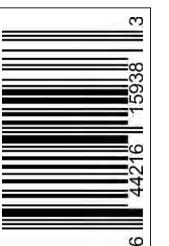
"Since 1994, that's coming up on 26 years, almost every year there's been herbicide treatment in the pond," said commission member Jono Neiger. "How long do we use herbicides until we realize it's not solving the problem?"

see **POND** page A6

The Official Newspaper Of This Simulation

State Explains Bridge Decision.....	A2
Letter: Expert Assessment.....	A3
Local Briefs; More Letters.....	A3
George & the Dragon.....	A4
10 Years Ago This Week.....	A6
Faces & Places: Good News.....	A8
Montague City Rambler.....	B1
A Frosty Photo Essay.....	B1

West Along the River.....	B1
Montague Police Log.....	B3
Fly Fishing, Tree Climbing.....	B3
Out Of The Park.....	B4
Multiple Compost Items.....	B5
NatureCulture: Of Mice And Cars.....	B6
Comics, Puzzle, Chart.....	B7
Wandering Monk Update.....	B8



The Montague Reporter

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Bridge Rationale

MONTAGUE CITY – Judith Reardon Riley, a spokesperson for the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT), answered reporter Jeff Singleton's questions last week about the scope of work at the General Pierce Bridge.

The bridge will be shut down for repairs from now until 2023, after a process that left many locals scratching their heads. The current work has been described as a 20-year fix. The contractor that won the bid for the project, Northern Construction LLC, announced over this winter that it had proposed an alternative plan to the state that would include repainting the bridge's upper trusses, and put the project on a faster timeline by closing the bridge to pedestrians during the work.

We think Ms. Reardon Riley's answers to Jeff's questions are interesting enough to reprint in full:

MR: *I do not quite understand why the painting was rejected by DOT, since I have not seen any documentation for that decision, including what it means to be "beyond the scope of the project," which might seem to some to be circular logic – i.e., "we decided painting could not be done because it was beyond the scope of the project, which did not include painting."*

JRR: Please note that due to the continued deterioration of the General Pierce Bridge, the waivers that had been granted to towns to allow fire trucks to use the bridge needed to be rescinded. At that time, MassDOT determined that the best approach to restoring the structural capacity of the bridge as soon as possible was to do a focused limited repair to keep the existing bridge in service until a full replacement could be programmed.

At the time of these considerations, the earliest possible programming of the full bridge replacement was estimated to be in the mid-2030s, and is preliminarily estimated at a cost approaching \$60 million.

The initial repair proposal did include cleaning and painting the entire structure, but in order to control costs for the repair, which is intended only to keep the bridge in service prior to full replacement, the upper more visible parts of the trusses were removed from painting. The actual extents of painting per the contract are all steel below the bridge deck up to the top of the lower chord gusset plates, and any areas above that which require localized repairs. Painting the whole

truss would more than triple the painting cost of the project.

MR: *Northern Construction appears to have presented some new information in their proposal, including the historical significance of the bridge, and a similar project in Holyoke which did paint the upper portion.*

JRR: A complete rehabilitation was the long-term improvement for the Willimansett Bridge over the Connecticut River located between Holyoke and Chicopee. It was not a shorter-term repair prior to an anticipated future full replacement, and the trusses there were fully cleaned and painted.

MR: *The final accepted bid [came in] well under the original projected project cost...*

JRR: The new paint proposal from the contractor to paint the whole bridge would add nearly \$6.7 million to the project cost, or 48% over the original bid amount for the whole project. MassDOT believes the additional value achieved by painting the upper portions primarily for appearance, does not justify the expenditure of such a large additional cost.

Project costs need to be considered in the context of MassDOT's statewide program, as any perceived "surplus" from a single project being contracted below its programmed cost, can be offset by other projects that are over, and the net total is constrained by the available capital each year.

MR: *Massive stakeholder comments at a public hearing appear to have been ignored, except for perhaps the lighting issue. What exactly is the point of these stakeholder hearings?*

JRR: MassDOT encourages and considers all stakeholder and public comments for our projects in order to make informed decisions. We acknowledge, understand, and respect the desires expressed to have the whole bridge painted and more aesthetically pleasing given the condition of the existing paint and duration until a full replacement is constructed.

However, our judgment is that for the relatively short anticipated life of this project given the future full replacement, and other bridge and transportation needs that can be addressed with the additional funding required, it is better to forego the large expense of painting the whole bridge at this time.



NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION / BASED ON A.K. CAMARA PHOTO

Suzanne LoManto, director of RiverCulture, does some landscaping at Unity Park as part of a "Shared Streets" grant awarded to Montague's planning and conservation department.

Letter to the Editors

Wendell Assessors to Outsource

The Wendell Board of Assessors, with the support of the Select Board and Finance Committee, has decided to enter into a three-year contract with Regional Resource Group (RRG) for comprehensive assessing services. A multi-year contract with RRG is a good way to control Wendell's assessing costs while providing excellent assessing services to the town. This will also save money by eliminating the need for hiring and training an Administrative Assessor and for costly consultants.

RRG will act as the chief assessor – managing the office, conducting in-house reassessments, handling both local and appellate tax appeals, tending to administrative tasks, and daily interacting with taxpayers on valuation and tax matters. RRG brings a team of highly qualified assessment professionals including a credentialed lead assessor, mass appraisers, property listers, and specialists in areas ranging from personal property valuation to chapter land administration, GIS support, and solar PILOT negotiations.

Working with RRG offers considerable budget savings, while raising office efficiency and professionalism, and providing an increased level of services.

In recent years we have been hearing from property owners concerned about increasing tax bills. It is true that tax bills have increased significantly over the last ten years. A large part of this increase is due to the increase in the Town's budget, which has been greatly affected by the increase in our school-age population.

The Town pays a percentage of the schools' budgets based on Wendell's portion of the total student population, averaged over a couple of years. This has contributed to the increase in the tax rate, which has gone from \$16.77 in 2010 to the current rate of \$24.54.

In addition to these budget increases, tax assessments on many properties have gone up. We have found the majority of properties we visited in the last few years were undervalued and properties are consistently selling for more than their assessed value. State law requires we value properties at fair market value, and two years ago the Assessors set a goal to assess every property within three years (as opposed to the state-required nine years).

Although we have been working very hard, visiting a record number of properties last year, we have not been able to get to as many as we had hoped and many properties are still undervalued. This is in part because of COVID but also because of the time and care that we put into assessing each property, going over the changes, and making sure that each property is in line with the

community as a whole.

Due to the challenge of finding qualified and experienced staff, the elected Assessors have been doing all of the actual assessing, including site visits. Hiring RRG will not only relieve the stress this has placed on our Board, but it will also speed up the process of evaluating all properties.

As we have been doing this work, a few properties have increased significantly in value due to a number of compounding issues. However, the majority of increases are simply because the properties were undervalued in comparison to fair market value, and to properties that have been assessed more recently.

As these increases have been happening over the last few years, it has shifted the burden of taxation. While we understand this is painful on the individual level, it is necessary in order to spread the tax burden equitably across the town. The properties in town that have been accurately assessed have been carrying an unfair burden of taxation for many years because so many properties were undervalued. By increasing the value of the undervalued properties, we are redistributing this burden equitably.

The valuation of the town is a very important part of the town's financial situation. Over the past ten years the gap between our budget and our levy ceiling has been steadily shrinking. When there is no longer a gap, the Town will be left with few options other than to drastically cut services. An increase in the total valuation of the Town helps to maintain this gap.

Our hope is that the work we have been doing – work that RRG will continue at a much faster pace – will result in a lower tax rate (assuming no large increase to the town budget), and a little more room between what the town needs to raise and appropriate and the levy ceiling.

We look forward to working with the folks at RRG and welcome their extensive assessing experience to the Town of Wendell. All property owners should look for a letter from our office which will detail changes in procedures for the Assessors office and provide contact information for RRG staff. As a Board we remain committed to fairly and equitably assessing all property in town and maintaining a high level of services and attention to detail.

Anna Seeger, Chair
Chris Wings

Wendell Board Of Assessors

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

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By NINA ROSSI

Montague parks and recreation director Jon Dobosz announces that **free Wifi is now available at Unity Park**. Just look for the "Unity Park Public Wifi" network on your device and log on – no password necessary.

The Greenfield Public Library has **reopened for browsing** as of May 4. Patrons may explore the shelves on Tuesdays from 2 to 6 p.m. and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Appropriately worn face coverings are required inside the building at all times, and there is a 20-person limit.

Information Services staff and limited computer usage will be available, but the bathroom, water fountains, elevator, and basement will not be. Pickups will continue, and if you are picking up materials that were placed on hold, the library asks that you go to the side door. For more information, email librarian@greenfieldpubliclibrary.org or call (413) 772-1544.

The Montague main library and branches continue to be open by appointment only. For details, see www.montaguepubliclibraries.org.

If you have been hungry for a real live cultural event, come up to Brattleboro this Friday evening, May 7, between 5 and 8:30 p.m. for **Gallery Walk May – The Art Party!** There will be live music at several locations along Main and Elliot streets, an artisan collective will be selling their wares at the Harmony parking lot, and you can make your own art at popup art stations at three locations. Visit www.brattleboro.com/downtown/artwalk for more details.

Sawmill River Arts Gallery at the Book Mill complex in Montague Center is hosting a **popup art event** this Saturday, May 8 from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m. The artists have selections that are geared towards gifts for Mother's Day on Sunday.

The artists are ceramicist Megan Reed, jeweler Hannah Staiger of La Boa Brava, and Josh Hannon with one-of-a-kind cutting boards, coasters, and other woodcrafts. Nina Dodge of SkyClad Quilts is the special guest artist. Her handmade quilts feature abstract scenes from nature in bold, dynamic colors.

The Gallery will also be open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. with the work of fifteen local artist members and twenty local consignors. All other businesses in the Book Mill complex are also now open!

Join a book discussion of Layla Saad's *New York Times* best-seller, *Me and White Supremacy*, at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 11. The Zoom presentation will be led by local racial justice activists Jade Barker and Cate Woolner.

The event is part of the New Salem Library's "Let's Talk About Race" program, helping people reflect on the long history of racism in this country. Call (978) 544-6334 or email n_salem@cwmar.org for the link to join.

Silverthorne Theater's **Theater Thursdays Play Reading Series** kicks off on Thursday, May 13, with *When We Get Good Again* by Northampton playwright James McLindon, directed by Mark Dean. The play is about "... integrity, excuses, and doing the right thing... as soon as you can figure out exactly what that is."

This free event will be available at 7:30 p.m. Find a link to the YouTube broadcast at www.silverthorne-theater.org, and join a live Zoom discussion with the playwright, director and cast members afterwards at 9:30 p.m.

A Day of Remembrance in Turners Falls will be held on Saturday, May 15 from 1 to 3:30 p.m. The Nolumbeka Project will host a gathering at Peskeomskut Park to commemorate the 345th anniversary of the Great Falls Massacre on May 19, 1676. This event is considered the major turning point of King Philip's war when 300 non-combatant women, children, and elders perished at the falls during a surprise pre-dawn attack by Captain William Turner and colonial militia.

Guest presenters are Elnu Abenaki Chief Roger Longtoe Sheehan, Nipmuck Tribal Council member Liz Coldwind Santana Kiser, Nulhegan Abenaki singer-songwriter Bryan Blanchette, Atowi Project director Rich Holschuh, and Nolumbeka president David Brule. Bring chairs or blankets to sit on. For more information, visit www.nolumbekaproject.org.

Here is another opportunity for artists from MASS MoCa's Assets for Artists program.

A series of three online events called **Navigating Housing and Studio Spaces for Artists: Know Your Rights and Resources**, with Ngoc-Tran Vu and guest speakers, starts on May 19 with the topic Renting and Evictions.

On June 23, part two focuses on Alternative Living for Artists and then on July 21, First Time Home Buying for Creatives. All of the hour-long presentations start at 6 p.m. If this interests you, register at www.assetsforartists.org.

If you are an elder living in Wendell, Leverett, Shutesbury, or New Salem and have put off needed dental, medical or therapy visits, or need a ride to a vaccination clinic,

Village Neighbors' fully vaccinated **drivers are available**. Elders can request a ride at (413) 345-6894 or servicerequests@villageneighbors.org. Both driver and member should observe COVID masking, distancing, and ventilation protocols. Volunteer drivers are also sought.

The **Village Neighbors Small Repairs team** is providing volunteer labor and free materials for small repair projects in homes within their service area. Projects are for minor home repairs that do not require building permits, with priority to those dealing with safety concerns. Apply by June 1 through pr@villageneighbors.org.

The Turners Falls Water Department **semi-annual water bills** were mailed April 30. Payment is due by June 1 to avoid a \$20 late charge. Payment can be made by mail, online at www.turnersfalls-water.com, or placed in the drop box located to the left of the Water Department office front door at 226 Millers Falls Road.

The Deerfield Valley Artists Association in Northfield has a new **photography exhibit** up until June 12. The exhibit features New England artists, many of them local, and was judged by Paul Franz, photography editor at the *Greenfield Recorder*. Prizes were awarded in professional camera and iPhone camera categories.

The gallery is in the former Cameron's Winery space at 105 Main Street, and is open Fridays and Saturdays from noon to 5 p.m.

The Leverett Library announces a **Birding Workshop** with Laura Beltran from Mass Audubon on Friday, May 21 at 8 a.m. "The early bird gets the... birds!" Learn how to use the app eBird to track your bird sighting, and learn about local birds. Register by emailing leverett@cwmar.org.

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More Letters to the Editors

Too Close For Comfort

I've read Chip Ainsworth's *At Large* column since the *Montague Reporter* started publishing it at the end of last year. The tone of the column is unique. Reading the *Reporter* usually soothes me into a deep contentment about my community. In contrast, Ainsworth demonizes his subjects: the tone is mocking, the angle is unbelieving. It generally *feels* very unfair and I hope he never roasts me.

What do his subjects have in common? They are wealthy and powerful. They are landowners who want to make a change to the status quo. (So far all have been men.) He paints his subjects as outsiders, though as readers we probably have incomplete knowledge of their true status.

As a principle, I think it's a great thing to challenge the wealthy and the powerful. We readers should welcome this aggressive stance as the old-fashioned muckraking it is. I certainly would rather read a paper that exposes the powerful to scrutiny than fawns over and celebrates their every decision.

Do I like *At Large*? No. Would I like it if it weren't so close to home? I probably would.

In general I disagree with every stance Mr. Ainsworth has taken in his column. Perhaps this is because I have had such a strong and automatic response to his tone. Or maybe it's because I see a future for Franklin County different from what is in Mr. Ainsworth's imagination.

I would like to see more housing built in Northfield, regardless of the architectural style. I want solar panels put up in Northfield, too. As for an old dam built in the 1940s and people drawing water from a stream? I don't really care, let the courts decide. Neighbor relations are nothing for me to mess with.

I hope that Chip Ainsworth does not take an interest in me at any point in the future, but we should not discount the value of having someone scrutinize the powerful trying to exert their will on the world.

Sarah Brown-Anson
Greenfield

Town Meeting How-To

Montague's Annual Town Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 22 this year, starting at 9 a.m. under a tent outside the Franklin County Technical School (82 Industrial Boulevard). Since Montague's Town Meeting is an elected body, only representatives from the six precincts will be voting, but everyone is welcome to attend.

There are 29 requests ("articles") on the warrant for this meeting. Town Meeting members receive information about the issues they are being asked to vote on ahead of time; by the time you read this letter, those packets will have been mailed and will also be posted on Montague's website: www.montague-ma.gov.

I hope that in the time before the meeting all of our Town Meeting members and many other interested people will review these materials, and I want

to encourage you to follow up ahead of time if you want more information or have questions. The rules that govern Town Meetings can limit discussion, so it's helpful when voters come to the meeting prepared.

The committees and boards that have been most involved in developing the warrant for this meeting – the Selectboard, Finance Committee, and Capital Improvements Committee – are made up of people who would be happy to talk with you before Town Meeting. The town's website or Town Hall staff can help you get in touch with us individually, and we are also holding a public information session online on May 12 at 6 p.m. The Zoom information is on the agenda, which was posted on May 5.

Jen Audley
Precinct 4 (Turners Falls)

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LEVERETT from page A1

discussion could not go beyond the 26 articles to be voted on, and describing how they would be introduced and discussed. Each article was introduced by a town official or resident involved with putting it forth, followed by a brief summary, and a call for people with comments to speak at a microphone.

Most articles were passed by voice vote, many unanimously, while some required paper ballots to be submitted.

According to the state website, "In the past Town Meetings and Town Elections took place on the same day as a single event, but that is not the case today." Except in Leverett, that is, and perhaps another unrecognized town or two, where the older system remains in place.

Many in Leverett favor the tradition, and point to the system of requiring voters to be present at town meeting to vote as a more participatory and direct form of democracy, while others give more weight to concerns that the limitations involved disproportionately disenfranchise some voters, such as women, people of color, and those with children, for whom in-person meeting attendance can present a hardship.

Changing times, demographics, and technology have given rise to increased interest in the political process this year in Leverett, a town long known for its high level of political concern and involvement. The latest activity was intensified by dissatisfaction among some residents with the selectboard's response to the defacement of Black Lives Matter graffiti in 2020, which resulted in the board creating an advisory social justice committee (SJC).

The SJC recently conducted a survey to provide data for use in recommending changes in town government and town meeting pro-

cedures, in order to "address historic and systemic oppression and inequity," but its completion in March did not leave time for a great deal of action on its conclusions. Increased attention was paid to childcare at Saturday's event as a result of the survey, but overall town meeting proceeded as it has in the past — aside from COVID-related safety measures, such as being outside, and greater attendance.

Town Elections

Town clerk Lisa Stratford estimated attendance at 270 residents, as compared to a norm of 100 to 150 in recent years. Voting was estimated to be close to double the usual count for selectboard seats, with Colbert receiving 238 votes, Shively 165, Jed Proujansky 59, and Shane Jernigan 30.

The unusual situation of two seats being up for election was due to the resignation of Peter d'Errico last fall, and the need to fill his seat for the remaining year of his term. Moderator Farber followed an established town procedure in determining that the highest vote-getter would receive the three-year term, and the second place candidate the one-year term, giving Colbert the longer term and board chair Julie Shively the shorter one.

Colbert, a practicing medical doctor who grew up in Leverett, has been described by supporters as a bridge between different groups or generations due to being a woman, a mother, and a person of color, as well as a long-time resident active in the community.

In other election results: two three-year terms and one single-year term on the school committee were filled by Jess Rocheleau, Aaron Buford, and Becky Tew; Andy Vlock and Nancy Grossman were elected to the finance committee;

Tim Shores and Richard Natthorst to five-year terms on the planning board; and Jim Staros to a three-year term on the board of assessors.

Articles & Resolutions

All 25 articles which came up for a vote were passed, most of them by voice vote with no debate, due to being "housekeeping" measures, or straightforward authorizations for expenditures recommended by town committees and the selectboard.

Residents rose to speak on a number of articles however, including "A Resolution in Opposition to State Subsidies & Incentives for Biomass," which was opposed by some but passed.

The resolution proclaims Leverett's opposition to state aid for "commercial wood-burning biomass plants" and calls for the state Department of Energy Resources (DOER) to revise a proposed change in regulations allowing such incentives "by returning their woody biomass provisions to their previous, science-based language." It also states that Leverett "stands in solidarity with the residents of Springfield" and their city council, which passed a similar measure in December.

Speaking in opposition to the article, one resident pointed to the use of forests to provide income to families and energy, and questioned some of the benefits it would provide if the state acted on it, suggesting instead that DOER be given more time to work through a discussion.

An article brought forth by Diane Crowe on behalf of the recreation committee requiring town meeting approval for any "permanent change in use or structure" to the town's recreation field received attention, with a bit of back and forth. Crowe listed a number of past proposals for the field which her

committee felt were not consistent with its purpose of open space and recreation, including most recently a proposal to install solar trackers to provide electricity to the library.

Concern and confusion over the current procedures for approving such projects led recreation committee members to seek clarity, and more clearly define how such decisions are made, along with re-emphasizing the field's history and importance as a recreation area. Newly elected planning board member Tim Shores cautioned against "inflexibility," but the measure passed.

An article seeking to acknowledge that Leverett is situated on Nonotuck and Pocumtuck territory, as well as the wrongs done to Native nations, was withdrawn by its authors. They explained they were asked to do so by members of the tribes involved so that further discussion could take place before anything is formally put forth.

Many townspeople took the opportunity of the meeting to make announcements and express appreciation.

Fire chief John Ingram announced his resignation, due to accepting the position of fire chief in Belchertown. Ingram thanked the town for his time as chief, and received a thank you back in the form of a round of applause.

Steve Weiss, president of the Leverett Education Foundation said thanks for attention to the school during the pandemic.

Gary Gruber of LC Builders announced that an Earth Day cleanup held in April had been a big success, with 80 people spread among 50 groups participating.

And school committee member Kip Fonsh led a round of applause for town employees, for their "grace, class, and commitment through the pandemic."

OP ED

A Beast, to Hold the Wind and Sun

By **GEORGE SHAPIRO**

LAKE PLEASANT — In the April 29 issue of the *Reporter* I learned that underneath Northfield Mountain there lives an unnatural "beast" that shreds millions of fish and renders our stretch of the Connecticut River a veritable wasteland.

Unfortunately, for he who might slay the dragon, the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Station will be crucial to building an electrical grid no longer dependent upon fossil fuels. While it was built to complement a nuclear power plant, the problem it solves comes from the basic physics of electricity: the supply of power in the electrical grid must exactly match the demand, or there will be a blackout. This means that having too much electricity is as big a problem as not having enough.

When a power plant is producing more power than can be consumed, that power can be sent to a facility like Northfield Mountain to pump water up a hill to a storage reservoir. Then, if demand is greater than supply, that water is let down the hill through turbine generators so that the power of gravity produces electrical power.

The basic fact of solar and wind power is that they change from day to night, and hour to hour. It is practically impossible to have an electrical grid based on wind and solar without the ability to store grid-scale levels of electrical power.

This is undoubtedly why the investors behind FirstLight have made a bet on Northfield Mountain. In fact, using Northfield Mountain to store wind energy was already on the table in 2018 for the proposed offshore "Revolution Wind" project to be built near Martha's Vineyard. While there is hope that there will be new energy storage technologies, as it stands right now, pumped-storage is one of the few

proven solutions at scale.

Unfortunately, storage and transmission are chicken-or-egg problems for building big offshore wind projects. It has been difficult for the free market to coordinate the interests of investors in wind power and electrical transmission lines, not to mention the property owners on the Vineyard who have taken up arms against the great evil threatening to rise above their waves.

And, as of yet, there is little in the way of incentives to build storage at grid scale. So the existence of a massive storage facility on Northfield Mountain makes its eventual use to store wind power a certainty, as global warming forces New England to bribe investors into building offshore.

The other fact at work is that Northfield Mountain is very much like a hydroelectric dam except, instead of producing electrical power, it turns electrical energy into gravitational energy and back again. The same ecological problems that condemn Northfield Mountain are largely true of every other dammed river with turbine generators. Residents of the Pacific Northwest will be familiar with the longstanding fight over the great dams on the Columbia River. In the end, the only thing "green" about hydroelectric power is that it doesn't produce carbon dioxide.

If the EPA were going to step in to stop the relicensing of Northfield Mountain, by the same measure, it should shut down every other hydroelectric project in the US.

However, what's dangerous about the moral grandstanding with respect to Northfield Mountain is not simply that as an organizing strategy it is bound to fail.

The transmutation of ecological crisis into moral crisis is part of the grand American tradition of seeing social problems as the product of individual acts of moral virtue or villainy. If

you live in a world defined by individuals acting according to their moral beliefs, it is natural for you to assume we could all just produce our own electricity too: at home with roof-top solar or backyard windmills, or even small-scale hydroelectricity, and do away with massive infernal machines hidden beneath our feet. Unfortunately, this would be in denial of reality.

Electricity is social infrastructure built on our collective interest and governed by physics, economics, and ecology. If Northfield Mountain is property deeded to investors acting in their own self-interest, it is also owned, for good or ill, by the people who depend upon it for light and warmth and power.

We don't get to reject the world we live in as a moral evil. Doing so leaves us, as individuals, buying solar panels and electric cars and green houses, trying to hoard the creature comforts of a world we have denied. Or else not being able to buy solar panels or electric cars or any housing at all, and disappearing into a world full of climate refugees.

The great lesson of global warming is that there is no line between ecological crisis and economic crisis. If you want to reject Northfield Mountain on ecological grounds, you cannot pay lip service to the essential role it plays in the material system all of our lives depend upon. Further, attacks on facilities like Northfield Mountain align neatly with interests bent on preserving the system of natural gas-based electrical power generation that New England currently depends upon.

That Northfield Mountain has an ecological cost is not deniable, but living in a bubble centered around our stretch of the Connecticut River is not a solution.

George Shapiro lives in Lake Pleasant.

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BRIDGE from page A1

bridge, now known as the Canalside Rail Trail Bridge. Now the construction crew is saving history, one piece at a time.

It seems just like yesterday that SPS New England, a concrete contractor out of Salisbury, was working on the Turners Falls-Gill bridge back in 2010 to 2014. Come to find out that 1,733-foot steel deck truss bridge was originally built in the years of 1937 and 1938. Before it was constructed, a ferry known as Bissel's operated a quarter of a mile upriver, and from this site a 550-foot long bridge known as Red Suspension Bridge was built in 1878. Its piers remain on the river bank.

A 563-foot long bridge called the Lower Suspension Bridge also got hit by a devastating flood in 1938, and was damaged beyond repair. Engineers used the materials from both for the war effort during World War II. At that time the Civilian Conservation Corps program (CCC) was around, working around the country on road projects, bridges, etc.

WENDELL from page A1

suggested housing a new free store in a separate location, and said the WRATS attendants already had a list of 16 to 18 potential volunteers.

Doug Tanner, Wendell's representative to the Franklin Solid Waste District, said that Wendell gets money because it has a free store. Selectboard member Laurie DiDonato suggested hiring a new worker, but speaking as fin com chair, Tanner said the town can in no way afford that.

Citizen Pru Smith said she thought volunteers would not work, and that she has seen another free store closed and unavailable because no volunteer showed up.

But citizen Sharon Gensler gave a short history of Wendell's current recycling effort. It was started by volunteer citizens and dump workers who made an effort to keep things out of the landfill, the disposal option at the time. (At that time a New Salem resident called their dump, "the New Salem Trading Post.") When Wendell changed its landfill to a transfer station, volunteers spent a day sorting materials, mostly metals, for recycling.

Citizen Sally Alley Muffin Stiffin said she found many materials for her house at the WRATS, and that since its closing, residents have been saving things for when it re-opens.

Delorey said the new free store would open next Saturday, May 8.

The conversation continued during a highway commission meeting on Tuesday, May 4. Nearly twenty people attended the in-person meeting outside the highway garage.

Delorey said he had spoken with WRATS supervisor Ray Stone, and the two had decided the best place for the new free store would be on the concrete slab next to the existing shed.

Three volunteers are signed up to attend the store this Saturday, though there will not yet be a building, or electrical service to test donated appliances. Delorey said he thought enough materials and money were available to build a shed, and that there are "thirty carpenters in town" who could help.

Questions remaining at the end of the two meetings included whether volunteers would be able to enforce wearing masks – or to tell people that what they are donating to the free store is actually trash.

At Tuesday's meeting, citizen Tom Mangan recommended writing a manual of policies for the store, detailing what can and can't be dropped off.

Unwanted Officer

At the selectboard's April 14

Special thanks to local historian Ed Gregory of Greenfield, who grew up in Turners Falls, for sharing local history photos and information, including photos taken of historical bridges, and for campaigning and educating others including the state about the real historical name of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, as it has been called since 1938.

Ed was a longtime good friend and colleague of my grandfather, a late *Montague Reporter* writer, and the "Gill Gourmet" columnist. He is looking down from heaven, seeing what the men and women engineers are cooking up these days of late, and the interesting new construction projects of the future they will design and come up with.

Please check out the Montague MA Historical Society website at montaguearchive.org. Thank you.

Joe R. Parzych grew up in Gill and lives in Greenfield. Check out "Joe r Parzych photography and ect." on Facebook for more.



meeting, town administrator Nancy Aldrich had reported a discrimination complaint from a former employee, but the board agreed not to discuss it until consulting town counsel.

Last week the *Greenfield Recorder* reported that former police officer Christopher Maselli claims he was dismissed from the department because he is white, and the selectboard supports the Black Lives Matter movement.

Selectboard chair Dan Keller told the *Reporter* that Maselli was not fired by the selectboard. Maselli had been the subject of three executive sessions, but came to none of them, Keller said; his actions pursuing one Wendell resident had resulted in that resident suing the town and winning a settlement, and the selectboard had received multiple other complaints of rude, abusive, and threatening treatment, some in writing.

According to Keller, Maselli also began signing his own payroll slips for detail work during fiber-optic construction after then-police chief Ed Chase, his father-in-law, felt it would be a conflict of interest to sign them; he refused to let fellow officer Anne Diemand sign them. Keller said that when he tried to talk with Maselli about the issue, Maselli became irate and interrupted him to the point where he could not finish a sentence.

Keller said that when he tried to talk with Maselli about the [payroll slip] issue, Maselli became irate and interrupted him to the point where he could not finish a sentence.

Each summer the board signs appointment slips for every non-contracted town employee in a public meeting, and on public record. Since COVID isolation and Zoom meetings, board members have gone to the selectboard office one at a time the day after their meetings to sign any necessary documents. Last July, no selectboard member chose to sign a slip for Maselli, so he was not reappointed.

In response to a request from the *Reporter* to review Maselli's complaint, Aldrich said that town counsel had advised against sharing the document.

Assessors

The April 28 meeting opened

with assessors Anna Seeger and Chris Wings asking for selectboard support in hiring professional assessing service Regional Resource Group (RRG) of Leominster for professional assessing, starting immediately but with a three-year contract starting July 1. Seeger said she had the impression that the town money managers supported hiring RRG, but there was a complication. RRG would start now and want payment for the work they do before July 1.

Assessors have enough money, but it is in the wrong account, and transferring money from one account to another requires town meeting approval. Aldrich said that after May 15 such transfers can be done without a town meeting vote.

The next warrant authorizing payment of town bills will be signed after the board's May 12 meeting, and then after their May 26 meeting. Wings said the assessors want RRG to start before May 15.

Assessors also need to hire a clerk. They have been offered three hours per week, but Seeger said they need five. Seeming off the subject at first, selectboard chair Dan Keller said Wendell, separate from New Salem, has gone ahead in its search for a town coordinator to replace Aldrich, a shared coordinator, when she retires. The new coordinator may take on clerking for the assessors, he said, and paying them as assessor clerk can be done most simply from the town coordinator's pay.

Speed Limits

Delorey said there are five well-traveled roads in Wendell with no posted speed limit, which were dirt roads in the 1970s when speed limits were first posted in town. The engineering studies required for legally enforceable speed limits is an expensive process that Delorey said he considered unnecessary. The town can install speed limit signs without the study, at the cost of the signs.

So far, the Leverett/Wendell police have been giving warnings, and that by itself has slowed the traffic for now. Delorey said he will come back to the selectboard with a map and plans, including cautionary signs for troublesome places.

Other Business

Keller reported that the application is in for a grant to pay for an overhaul of the police station, including insulation, installing plumbing, and updating the wiring, at an estimated cost of \$81,000.

The town hall kitchen recently passed a state inspection, and Aldrich got a request for using it. Board members thought it best to check with the board of health and

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NOTICE OF NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES, Montague, MA: Proposed Millers Falls Historic District.
Proposed district includes properties on Bridge Street, Church Street, Crescent Street, East Main Street, and West Main Street.

A public informational meeting at which the proposed nomination will be discussed will be held via Zoom courtesy of the Montague Historical Commission at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 27, 2021. Information on how to access the meeting will be posted to the Montague Historical Commission webpage on the Town of Montague website closer to the meeting date.

The National Register of Historic Places is the federal government's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation.

EFFECTS TO HISTORIC PROPERTIES:

- *consideration in the planning for federally assisted projects
- *eligibility for certain Federal tax benefits
- *consideration of historic values in the decision to issue a surface coal mining permit where coal is located
- *qualification for federal grants for historic preservation when funds are available

RIGHT TO OBJECT TO LISTING:

Owners of private properties nominated to the National Register of Historic Places must be given an opportunity to concur in or object to listing in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980 and federal regulations 36 CFR Part 60. An owner or partial owner of private property who chooses to object to listing is required to submit to the State Historic Preservation Office a notarized statement certifying that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property, as appropriate, and objects to the listing. For a single privately owned property with one owner, the property will not be listed if the owner objects. For a district with multiple ownership, or for a single property with multiple owners, the district or property will not be listed if a majority of the owners objects. Each owner or partial owner of private property has one vote regardless of how many properties or what part of the property that party owns. If the property cannot be listed because the owner or majority of owners objects prior to the submission of a nomination to the Keeper of the National Register by the State, the State Historic Preservation Officer may submit the nomination to the Keeper for a determination of the eligibility of the property for inclusion in the National Register. If the property is then determined eligible for listing although not formally listed, federal agencies will be required to allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment before the agency may fund, license, or assist a project that will affect the property.

Listing in the National Register, or the determination of a property's eligibility by the Keeper of the National Register, automatically brings with it inclusion in the State Register of Historic Places. The State Register provides for review of state funded, licensed, or permitted projects. If a property is listed in the National and State Registers, the owner may do anything with it that he/she wishes, unless state or federal funds, permits, or licensing are used, or unless some other regional and/or local ordinance or policy is in effect.

If an owner wishes to object to the listing of a property, a notarized objection must be submitted to Brona Simon, State Historic Preservation Officer, Massachusetts Historical Commission, 220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts, 02125, by June 9, 2021.

Inclusion in the National and State Registers of Historic Places does not guarantee that cultural resources will be preserved. Rather, it ensures that the historic value of listed properties will be considered during the planning stages of any federally or state sponsored project.

The nomination will be considered by the State Review Board of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) on Wednesday, June 9, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. Details on how to attend will be posted on the MHC's website closer to the meeting date (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc). Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the National Register nomination in advance of the meeting should contact MHC.

the kitchen committee before saying yes. DiDonato, a member of the kitchen committee, said they would meet May 3, and the selectboard said they will decide at their May 12 meeting.

Aldrich said that Good Neighbors gave Wendell a \$500 donation.

Tri-County Construction gave a bid of \$5,600 to replace the town hall windows with fixed lights on the top third, and regular double-hung windows below that. Tanner suggested awning windows at the bottom for ventilation instead, because they cost less and seal better.

DiDonato said Wendell's Green Communities grant money has

just about enough money left to pay for the windows, but that any such change should need the historic commission's approval. Selectboard member Gillian Budine recommended the town go forward with replacing the windows if the historic commission approves.

The Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse have asked for permission for free disposal of construction debris from the Meetinghouse renovation. Treasurer Carolyn Manley looked up the state law, and found such a favor would be illegal.

Mike Jackson contributed additional writing.



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FARMHOUSE from page A1

Festival. The asset he bought consists of the rundown farmhouse, sixty acres, and a former cow barn renovated by previous owner Bernie Glassman and the “Peacemakers,” whose claim to fame was getting prisoners work baking brownies for Ben & Jerry’s, and getting celebrities like Jeff Bridges to give him money.



Dennis Lombardi and Ricky Smith, another local contractor who helped with the salvage, work the balusters out of the staircase.

The million-dollar barn ended in bankruptcy, and it was scooped up by a hedge named Bill from Shelburne Falls, who ran it as a wedding business until he got Parkinson’s and sold it to Cohen.

Paul Voiland of Red Fire Farm Bakery was the GC. Described by David Detmold as a “master of the material realm,” Voiland stripped the farmhouse of its windows in about four hours. Metal fixtures were segregated and hauled to Kramer’s metal yard. Some propane heaters and a water tank were trucked to Camp Timber Trails in Tolland, a former Girl Scout camp now owned by 68 people including Cohen, who is also a Berklee-trained songwriter and keyboard player.

Richie Roberts of Leverett, son Ricky, and daughter Jenny arrived to dismantle. They estimated twenty dumpsters. Gravel was laid down to harden the ground, and drivers from Amherst Trucking tag-teamed the full dumpsters, removing them off-site.

Jason Cohen’s diplomacy was in full force as he greeted former residents and neighbors, commiserating with their sadness to see the old place torn down. Inadequate maintenance over time made it difficult to imagine rehabilitation, so it was sort of a Hobson’s Choice.

The caretaker John, who has spent ten years at the former Lucien Ripley farm, built a beautiful grow-room in the basement, soon to be buried. He’s gonna stay another half year and maybe head to Colorado.

With the demo of the former commune – founded by Marshall Bloom, who killed himself one year in – all that remains is the legend of the place which famously housed Sam Lovejoy, who knocked down a weather tower on the Montague Plains in an act of civil disobedience which helped kibosh a plan, voted for by the citizens of Montague, to allow a twin nuclear plant on said sandplains.

**POND** from page A1

To continue the use of herbicides and hydro-raking to manage invasive and nuisance vegetation, the Friends of Leverett Pond (FLP), a nonprofit dedicated to the pond’s stewardship, must submit a notice of intent describing its plan for the next three years. The plan must meet specifications of the Wetlands Protection Act and respond to concerns of fellow Leverett residents and pondside property owners.

The document, which consists of the FLP’s written answers to dozens of questions from the con com, can be found on the town website. Conservation agent Tessa Dowling said other documentation related to the weed management plan is available upon request.

The FLP is working with a wetlands scientist from SWCA Environmental Consultants, Mickey Marcus, to conduct a habitat assessment for the management plan. Marcus attended Monday night’s meeting and helped answer further questions about his methods, the notice of intent, and plans for two further studies before the notice of intent (NOI) is submitted.

“We haven’t done any field work yet – we’re letting the pond grow in so we can see what’s there,” Marcus said. “My role is really to pull together historical information, and new information this year, and come up with recommendations for pond management. I don’t know what those will be yet.” Marcus said a draft NOI submitted this winter contained “very specific recommendations, but I’m not sure if those are the ones I will ultimately recommend.”

The FLP’s primary concern is the spread of variable milfoil, an invasive fast-growing plant. Scientific reports show that milfoil can grow in up to 10 feet of water. FLP vice president Mitch Mulholland has stated that the weed only grows in water up to five feet deep, so the group is only targeting the perimeter of the pond for herbicide use.

The FLP has also targeted other nuisance plants, such as curly-leaved pondweed and bladderwort, with herbicide treatment and hydro-raking. The herbicide Diquat was applied in 2017 and 2018 to combat those surface-crowding plants, and ProcettaCOR was used for the first time in 2019 to reduce milfoil in combination with mechanical removal. Multiple other herbicides have been used in past years.

The con com has asked the FLP to refrain from calling the pond “unhealthy” unless an “independent aquatic scientist” makes that judgment.

During Monday’s meeting, Neiger said he had found digital records of herbicide use in 2015 and 2016 contradicting a recent spreadsheet provided by the FLP.

“It made me concerned because the only two years I had reports that I looked at weren’t reflected in the herbicide table,” Neiger said. “I want to know with that information. How can we get that more complete?”

Mulholland agreed to cross-check the recently submitted herbicide table with past records and report back. “It was decided as long as the herbicide is legal in the state then we’re covered under the license we

get, and that Solitude Lake Management gets,” Mulholland said, referring to a contractor the FLP hires to manage the pond’s weeds.

Two years ago, Solitude was ordered by the state Department of Environmental Protection to cease hydro-raking on the pond for lacking the proper dredging permits. Hydro-raking costs \$200 per hour, and is paid for by individual homeowners to clear the water weeds in front of their homes. In the future, the FLP hopes to replace herbicide use with annual winter drawdowns to expose and kill aquatic vegetation along the pond’s perimeter, a practice made possible by a newly installed dam.

Neiger said he fears the recreational interests of private landowners are being prioritized above the restoration of the pond’s ecology.

The con com has asked the FLP to refrain from calling the pond “unhealthy” unless an “independent aquatic scientist” makes that judgment, according to the document.

Neiger said he fears the recreational interests of private landowners are being prioritized above the restoration and protection of the pond’s ecology, and that it was important to understanding Marcus’s intentions as a consultant, given that he was hired by the FLP.

“I’m not going to get involved with the recreational uses of the pond,” Marcus said.

In coordination with the state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, the FLP is planning a fish “shock-boat study” in June or July to determine the health of the pond’s fish population. Fish would be temporarily stunned with pulses of electricity sent through the water and surveyed for their size, quantity, and relative health.

The FLP also plans to request the state Department of Conservation and Recreation conduct a fisheries study, according to the recent correspondence, to follow up on the last assessment in 1994.

The raw results of both studies would be provided to Marcus and the FLP for “interpretation, evaluation and reporting,” according to Mulholland.

“Presently Mitch Mulholland conducts pre- and post-treatment surveys and data entry. [Selectboard member and FLP president] Tom Hankinson is handling the analysis,” the document explains. “FLP is trying to find a non-FLP, qualified wetlands person (perhaps a grad student studying Wetland Science at one of the colleges) to do the surveys.”

At the hearing, commission members planned a tentative site visit on the pond in the form of a group paddle on July 24, which is open to the public. Hankinson offered his six personal boats to anyone who wanted to join, in addition to the public boats at the boat launch.

“We will raise an armada for you, get you as many boats as you need,” Hankinson said.

The FLP and con com discussed the timeline for the studies of the pond and submission of the NOI. They agreed to continue the public hearing on June 7, with a tentative goal of August for a review of the final plan.

**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD**

Erving Joins Aerial Spray Boycott; Cool Toward “Age-Friendly” Status

By KATIE NOLAN

On Monday night, the Erving selectboard decided to submit an alternative mosquito management plan, and opt out of pesticide spraying potentially conducted by the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board (SRMCB).

The SRMCB may conduct aerial spraying to control mosquito-borne diseases like eastern equine encephalitis and West Nile virus in towns that do not submit an alternative plan by May 15. Erving’s alternative plan emphasizes public education about reducing mosquito breeding areas and avoiding mosquito bites, as well as maintenance of culverts and catch basins.

“I am not in favor of random spraying,” Eastern Franklin County Health District inspector Claudia Sarti told the board.

The board members discussed joining the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District, another alternative to SRMCB spraying. Selectboard chair Jacob Smith said joining the district would “give us more capacity to manage this.”

Conservation commission chair David Brule said the district could “customize a [mosquito] control plan for the town.”

Town administrator Bryan Smith told the board that joining the Pioneer Valley district would require a town meeting vote and a \$5,000 annual fee. He noted that there would not be time to get a town meeting vote before May 15.

Senior Center Re-Opening

Senior center director Paula Betters presented her plan for re-opening the Erving senior center for 25 hours per week in June. She characterized the plan as “cautiously opening slowly.”

Under the plan, the center would be open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. five

days a week for card and board games (up to six people), twice a week for chair exercise classes (up to 18 people), for Friday quilting (up to 18 people), and for use of the exercise equipment (up to three people). Participants would wear masks indoors, and no meals will be served.

Jacob Smith said he thought the plan sounded “ambitious.”

The selectboard asked Betters to continue planning for re-opening, while getting more information from town counsel, the town’s insurance carrier, and other senior centers. In addition, Betters and Bryan Smith will research whether town employees can ask participants about their vaccination status.

Age-Friendly Community

LifePath’s age friendly program manager Nour Elkhattaby Strauch provided an overview of the agency’s age-friendly community program, and asked the board for its support.

Strauch noted that 22% of Franklin County’s population is over 65 years. He said the age-friendly program has four phases: enrollment, assessment, planning, and implementation. Program areas include transportation, social participation, buildings and outdoor spaces, community participation and employment, and respect and social inclusion.

Nour said the regional steering committee, composed of interested people from local towns, was applying for the AARP’s “age-friendly” designation, and would proceed to the needs assessment phase.

Jacob Smith commented, “It sounds like a long and involved process, years of work. I don’t know how it fits in with the all the other projects going on.”

Senior center director Paula Betters said a lot was already being done in town for seniors. “What

is the final outcome?” she asked. “What is the benefit of going through this?”

Strauch responded that the program provides technical assistance and a structure so that small towns don’t need to commit significant resources. He added that grants are available through AARP, Tufts Family Health Plan, and the state to implement plans.

Betters asked about a 15-page community questionnaire on the AARP website. “There’s a lot of flexibility for each community to do what works for them,” Strauch replied. He suggested towns could conduct interviews or use focus groups to collect information.

Selectboard member William Bembury said the program sounded good, but he was concerned that “it seems like a lot of work.” He added, “I don’t feel totally comfortable with more work for staff.”

Strauch noted that he works full time on the program, and would not “put any undue work on senior center staff.”

Jacob Smith asked for a description of the amount of potential involvement by town employees. Kurtz and Strauch agreed to provide that at a future meeting.

Other Business

Mitchell Waldron, currently a part-time officer with the Gill police department, was appointed as a full-time officer with the Erving department. He will start work on or before June 7.

Edward C. Muszynski provided a bid of \$11,500 to survey several public ways in Erving: Care Drive, Pleasant Street, Public Works Way, and Highland Avenue.

The board approved documents for an invitation for bids for landscaping services such as weeding, mulching, liming and mowing town properties.

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MONTAGUE from page A1

The state law, with its more aggressive mosquito spraying and local opt-out provisions, was partly a response to an outbreak of Eastern Equine Encephalitis said to be the worst since the 1950s.

Montague's opt-out application, which will officially be that of the selectboard, must be received by a state agency called the Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board by May 15. Advocates opposed to state spraying have complained that the criteria for opting out are vague.

In response to a question from selectboard member Michael Nelson, Wasiuk said he had no recommendation about joining the Pioneer Valley Control District (PVMCD), which is on the May 22 town meeting warrant. "There is a lot more to learn about joining any district," said chair Rich Kuklewicz, "but we need to leave our options open."

The PVMCD includes 15 cities and towns in the region and is governed by a five-member commission. The district claims to have collected 19,027 mosquitoes in 1,339 pools during the 2020 season, according to its annual report. It found one pool containing West Nile Virus, and none with EEE.

Wasiuk said the initial cost of joining would be \$5,000, and that the district currently provides limited services: surveillance, trapping and testing, and public education.

PVMCD superintendent Christopher Craig said the district is a new group and will probably expand its offerings, but no member community would be required to accept all services. "It is up to the towns," he told the *Reporter*. "Joining the district does not mean we're suddenly going to have trucks outside spraying."

"We have no desire, or anticipation, of spraying," Nelson said during Monday's meeting.

"I would want that to be in a written contract [with PVMCD]," said Jane Alessandra, who has been advocating against aerial spraying and in favor of the local opt-out. She said she was originally from eastern Massachusetts, and that members of control districts in that region were "suddenly mandated that [they] have to spray to stay in."

"Ultimately you don't get to choose," said Ariel Elan, another opponent of spraying. Elan questioned why the issue of joining the district is on the town meeting warrant.

"We need the flexibility," replied town administrator Steve Ellis. "We need a safety valve." The warrant article does not commit Montague to joining the district, but grants the selectboard the authority to vote to do so at an open

meeting. Ellis said that might be necessary should an EEE emergency arise between town meetings.

Ellis said that he had participated earlier in the day in a "listening session" of the state commission created to evaluate the state's mosquito control policy. "It didn't fulfill my expectations," he reported. "I did not feel it was a useful learning exercise."

Alessandra, who had also attended the session, agreed, and said that the only "public person" who favored the statewide spraying program was a "very sad person" whose five-year-old daughter had died from EEE. Alessandra said it was "understandable that she wanted to kill all the mosquitoes on the planet."

Global Pandemic

Wasiuk presented the latest data on COVID-19 cases in Montague and reviewed the local progress of vaccination. He said there had been 20 positive cases in town during the previous two-week period. He also reported that vaccinations at the John Zon Community Center in Greenfield would continue during May, but would be "transitioning" to a drive-through location at Greenfield Community College.

Emergency management director John Zellman noted that a large percentage of Franklin County residents – probably over half – had received their first doses of the vaccine, and appointments are becoming much easier to obtain.

However, he said, the rate of vaccination has appeared to slow down, raising questions about whether the population locally or nationally will achieve so-called "herd immunity," the condition where the combination of vaccination and prior infection essentially eliminates the spread of the virus.

Regarding the state's reopening policy, Wasiuk said that effective May 10, "larger venues" including water parks and amusement parks will be allowed to reopen at limited capacity, and "singing will finally be permitted indoors" at small venues. At the end of the month, gathering limits will increase. "The momentum is contingent on the numbers," he said.

Annual Town Meeting

The board voted to approve the final warrant for the May 22 annual town meeting. It has expanded from previous iterations to a total of 28 articles. The meeting will be held outdoors, probably at the Turners Falls High School parking lot.

Jen Audley, chair of the town finance committee, said she was concerned that town meeting members – and the general public – did not

have a venue for asking questions about the articles they will vote on that day. She announced that the next joint fin com and selectboard meeting, at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 12 would be devoted to a "public information session" on the warrant.

Another public information session – this one on the new maintenance facility the Franklin Regional Transit Authority plans to build on Sandy Lane – will take place from 5 to 6 p.m. on that same day.

Other Business

A highlight of Monday's meeting was the announcement by the facilitators of the two police department review committees, Chris Pinardi and Ariel Elan, that their work had been completed and reports had been posted on the town website. The board voted to accept the reports and discuss them at next week's meeting; a public comment session is scheduled for March 17. (See article, Page A1.)

The board voted to create a special account for donations to the Montague Center park improvement plan, being sponsored by the parks and recreation department. Parks and rec director Jon Dobosz said the plan was in the "design phase," and that Montague Center resident Pinardi is spearheading a campaign to encourage donations "for improvements in the ball field."

Water pollution control facility superintendent Chelsey Little was approved to hire part-time "summer help" at the facility.

The board approved a series of community band concerts at Peskempskut Park in July.

Ellis announced that he had received word that the state Department of Transportation had added a new "Sixth Street bridge" across the Turners Falls power canal to one of the state's bridge lists. The new bridge is scheduled for construction in fiscal year 2026. In response to an inquiry from the *Reporter*, Ellis expressed some uncertainty about which of the two bridges currently at that location would be replaced, but said he believed both could well be removed.

Ellis also announced that he would be meeting with the owners of the closed Farren Care Center, Trinity Health of New England Senior Communities, and several representatives of the town's legislative delegation to discuss Trinity's commitment to financing a redevelopment study for the hospital building. Ellis also said that the Farren had held an internal "celebration of legacy" the previous week, primarily for its staff.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for May 10.

**PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE**
MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, the Montague Conservation Commission will hold a remote public meeting to review the following Request for Determination of Applicability at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 13, 2021: RDA #2021-07 filed by the Town of Montague to determine whether a proposed a 100 foot long, 6 foot wide hardened walking path extension is subject to the Wetlands or Riverfront Protection Acts. The property is located off **Newton Street** in Millers Falls and is identified as Assessor's Map 31 Lot 03. Members of the public are encouraged to participate by using the following information:

Log in: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/84685764772> **Passcode:** 241906
Meeting ID: 846 8576 4772 **Call in (audio only):** +1 (646) 558 8656

Mark Fairbrother, Chair

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE
MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, the Montague Conservation Commission will hold a remote public meeting to review the following Request for Determination of Applicability at 6:35 p.m. on Thursday, May 13, 2021: RDA #2021-05 and 06 filed by the PanAm Railways and New England Central Railroad for verification of sensitive areas along railroad rights of way as per Mass Department of Agricultural Resources Pesticide Board Regulations 33 CMR 11.00 for the **use of herbicides for maintenance of the right of way**. The properties covered include all railroad rights-of way owned by these companies in the Town of Montague. Members of the public are encouraged to participate by using the following information:

Log in: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/84685764772> **Passcode:** 241906
Meeting ID: 846 8576 4772 **Call in (audio only):** +1 (646) 558 8656

Mark Fairbrother, Chair

LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on May 5, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Write-Ins Win Big in Wendell

It's not easy for a write-in candidate to beat the nominee on the ballot, but Wendell showed how it can be done on Monday, as Amy Simmons turned incumbent Martha Senn out of office, 148 to 102, for a three-year term on the board of health, and two-term incumbent Deirdre Cabral, running as a write-in for another five-year term on the planning board, upset the nominee on the ballot, Marianne Sundell, 180 to 59.

In the run-up to the election, as many as a dozen residents made phone calls to get out the vote, and eight or nine stood on the town common, held signs and handed out slips of paper with the names of some of the write-in candidates as people headed to vote.

Simmons campaigned with a promise to look favorably on the so-called "simple living" proposal put forward last year by Jonathan and Susan von Ranson, who had hoped to build a non-electric apartment, using a composting toilet, wood heat, and propane lanterns, on the second story of their barn on the town common.

Town clerk Anna Hartjens, who has been serving in that post since August 1973, was defeated by political newcomer Gretchen Smith. Both were on the ballot.

Positive Steps at Strathmore

Heading into a town meeting this Saturday where voters will consider a petitioned article to cut

off any future use of town funds for maintaining the town-owned Strathmore Mill, planner Walter Ramsey will announce a number of small but significant steps that may make it easier for the town to interest a developer in the complex.

"There are a number of studies coming that we've been working on," said Ramsey. Using funds left over from a \$100,000 state grant for priority permitting of the Strathmore, the town contracted with Tighe & Bond to produce a cost estimate for removing the asbestos-tainted debris pile left over from the 2007 arson fire that burned Building #10 to the ground. Although earlier estimates ranged from \$400,000 to \$600,000, the study showed the actual cost would be much lower – \$221,000.

Now, Ramsey said the town is busy lining up to get a sub-grant from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments' Brownfields program, from the EPA. "We're very close to getting funding to completely remove that debris pile," he said. "It's a positive step." The footbridge which once connected the Strathmore to parking areas on Canal Street is now the subject of negotiations between the town and its owner, FirstLight Power. The 100-year lease that enjoined the utility company to maintain the structure expired last month.

"We're still negotiating our rights to the footbridge," said Ramsey. "We're also investigating other canal access possibilities. Fuss & O'Neill did a traffic analysis for upper end of the island to see if a loop road could be designed," he said, using the Fifth Street bridge as an egress and the IP bridge by the Discovery Center as an entrance.

**Lack of Weekend Buses Our Own Fault**

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE – "This is probably the only option, but it exacerbates the problem," Jeff Singleton reported to the town selectboard Monday evening. Singleton had "taken off" his reporter "hat" to embody the role of Montague's alternate representative to the board that governs the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA).

The option, given the closure of the General Pierce Bridge, was rerouting the Route 32 Greenfield-to-Orange bus up High Street, past Stop & Shop, and across the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge into Turners before turning east.

The problem, as Singleton sees it, is that with the addition of these five buses a day, "we're going to have about 19 round trips going up and down High Street, which is massive overkill." FRTA has been struggling to break out of a vicious cycle of limited service, low ridership, and skimpy state funding. "It's going to reduce some of our metrics," Singleton fretted, "at the very time the

state is demanding we use metrics to evaluate routes."

The selectboard members absorbed this news.

Moving on, Singleton shared a response from the state Department of Transportation to a letter he'd had the board sign, complaining that FRTA is the only regional transit authority in Massachusetts without weekend service. "MassDOT is not opposed to weekend service for FRTA," the letter read. "RTAs ... develop and manage their own budgets and weekend service, or any service decision, is not contingent on MassDOT approval."

"This was a revelation," Singleton said. State transportation officials have asked to meet with FRTA reps and local politicians to discuss the matter.

"What we'll hear probably from the local management of FRTA is that, with the funding given, they can't afford to run a weekend service," said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz.

"Well then, it is a state decision," Singleton replied, and the two men laughed wearily.

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POLICE from page A1

policing and the use of force, named several “areas of strength” – including an approach that prioritized deescalation, and use-of-force policies that “meet or exceed” a recent Massachusetts police reform bill – before making 12 recommendations.

Both reports are available on the town website (they can be accessed at tinyurl.com/MPDengage and tinyurl.com/MPDequity), and will be the subject of public discussion in the coming weeks.

The selectboard created the advisory committees after a June 2020 town meeting decision to freeze the police budget at the previous year’s level, amid national protests against police violence and racism. “I don’t think there’s a lot of other communities taking this as seriously, and proactively, as Montague,” town administrator Steve Ellis said at the time.

“We came in with a lot of different opinions – different ideas about what we might find,” Chris Pinardi, who chaired the engagement committee, told the selectboard Monday night as they voted to accept the two reports. “I think, in the absence of finding anything, we came up with some great recommendations of ways to build on that positive relationship that we have, and make it better.”

Pinardi’s committee received 384 responses to a survey about interactions with Montague police, and included a 51-page appendix on the data. 86% identified as white – the US Census counts Montague as 90% white – and the responses were very positive, though some respondents described instances of harassment, violence, and discrimination.

The report also notes that 26 respondents requested an anonymous follow-up session but none ended up giving a statement.

The committee recommended regular “Town Hall-style” community events with police; coordinating with an on-call mental health professional; standardizing report-



BRIAN WOODCOCK PHOTO

FACES & PLACES

Brian Woodcock, a Montague resident and self-described railfan, contacted the Reporter to express his concerns about the state of the pavement at this Pan Am crossing at Lake Pleasant. “I’ve called the town, they say it’s a railroad problem,” Woodcock told us. “I’ve called the railroad, they say it’s a town problem. It’s a real headache. Someone’s going to get hurt there. It’s like the railroad doesn’t care.” We reached out to Montague town planner Walter Ramsey to ask if it was on town hall’s radar. “You know, there’s been some communication between the railroad and the town about it,” Walter said, directing us to contact highway superintendent Tom Bergeron.

“As it stands right now,” Tom said, “they are building the crossings, and next week, Wednesday-Thursday-Friday, we’ll be closing Lake Pleasant Road down for three days. The DPW will be working with Pan American to dig out the blacktop, they’ll fix the crossings, and then on Friday we will pave it. That’s if the weather all works out.” You heard it here first! Sometimes it’s just that easy. Thanks to Brian for the tip, and we’re very happy to hear that good news was coming down the track after all.

ing on demographic information; and increasing staffing levels.

Last month the Montague department announced it would be partnering with Greenfield and Deerfield for a pilot program in which a mental health clinician would be on call to accompany police in responding to certain calls.

“It was very interesting to me that even though the two advisory groups did work quite separately, a couple of our key recommendations actually are the same,” Ariel Elan, who chaired the committee on equity and use-of-force policies, said on Monday.

Her committee’s report was more

detailed, including demographic statistics on the department’s arrests, traffic stops, and use of force, as well as overall call volume. No glaring inequities were apparent in an initial review by the Reporter of the traffic stop or arrest data.

The seven most common categories of calls in 2019 were “medical emergency,” firearms licensing, “parking violation,” “assist citizen,” “animal complaint,” “well being check,” and “traffic enforcement” – together amounting to 37% of calls. The report specifically suggests using unarmed and non-uniformed staff to respond to non-violent calls.

Other suggestions included body

cameras; an alternative channel for complaints; a review of the department’s pepper spray policy; regular publication of traffic stop and arrest data; and a policy prohibiting officers from participating in white supremacist groups.

“We hope that the work done by this committee and that of the Police Community Engagement Advisory Group is the beginning of a larger process embraced by the town of Montague to address the systemic issues facing our community, such as barriers to prevention and treatment for mental health and substance use disorders, as well as issues facing people living in pov-

erty,” the report concluded.

Agendas and minutes from both committees are on the town website, and recordings are available via Montague Community Television (tinyurl.com/MPDmeetings).

Next Monday, May 10 at 6:30 p.m. the selectboard will discuss the findings, and a public forum will be held the following Monday, May 17.

“A key to it is to try to give everybody an opportunity to speak,” selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said on Monday. “We wanted to at least have an initial kickoff discussion before town meeting. Seemed appropriate to get it done within the year.”



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Above: The barrels are up at Barton Cove! Barry Scott captured this shot Sunday, complete with rainbow.

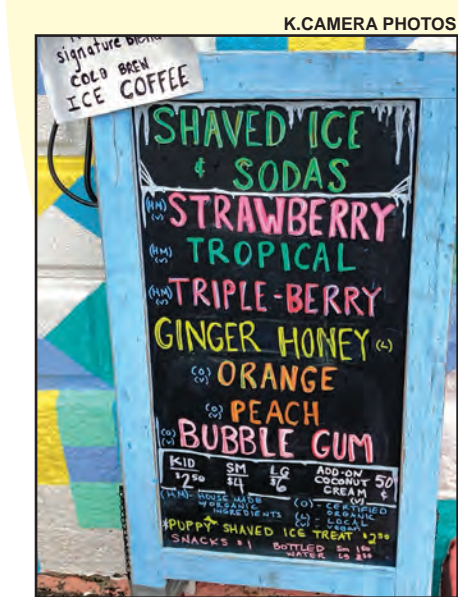
Nice. Ice on a Sunday!



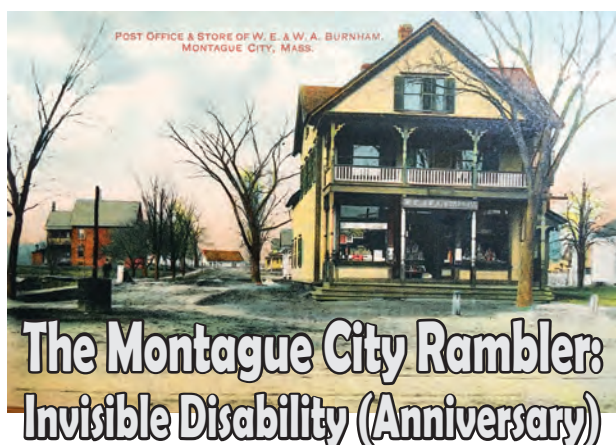
Nice. Snack Parlor proprietor Marcy Gregoire (right) provides shaved ice to customers Moxie Junke and Emily Brewster last Sunday afternoon. Nice. operates out of the Nova Motorcycles garage, a stone's throw from Unity Skate Park.

Moxie chose the bubble gum flavor, while Emily opted for ginger honey, though they soon returned again to try the strawberry and peach.

Below: Nash Atkins entertains the customers. The snack bar has hosted live music the last three weekends. Their website is still under construction, but updates are generally available on the "Nice. Snack Parlor" page on Facebook.



The snack café, which currently operates Fridays and Saturdays from 12 to 5 p.m. and Sundays from 12 to 4 p.m., offers a rotating menu of shaved ice flavors, in addition to coffee and other snacks.



The Montague City Rambler: Invisible Disability (Anniversary)

By LILITH WOLINSKY

MONTAGUE CITY – My flowering gardens, seven different kinds of berries, the green and warty squash I hope will ripen and overwinter in my cellar; my love, and work, and casual community relationships; my small group of friends, plus my mother, with whom I speak multiple times each day as she rises from, and sinks into, the hidden recesses of haywire brain circuitry and emotional lability.

My work as a medical social worker, and how I conceptualize others who need my assistance; the

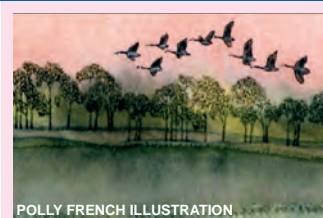
tools I rely on to do my job. Definitely my money, and my visions for the future – what I may be able to accomplish or obtain, what I might need to survive – and my house, with stairs and wood and angles.

All of my daily activities, as well as my sleep each night, and my little kitties, so full of vitality – Minnow, one part rat, one part weasel, and a whole lot of darting bunny, and Caleb, with the sleek grace of a beaver, the lumbering confidence of a bear, and the athleticism of a much larger cat on the prowl; both with nerves still recovering from early traumas.

All of these are affected by the chronic arthritis, mostly invisible, which took up residence in my body five years ago in May.

Each week through that month, into the summer, and then again as fall descended, a surprising array of previously little-known joints would become shiny and warm, full of fluid and difficult to move. I was alarmed as pain zigzagged through my body like a pinball – phalanges, malleolus, sacroiliac, patella, temporomandibular – the body as Latin puzzle with pieces askew.

Now, as the spring crescendo approaches, my see **RAMBLER** page B5



WEST ALONG THE RIVER SPRINGTIME COMES TO THE OLD PASTURE

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – I stride down the path through the woods on this trout-lily day of the First of May. I'm headed for the morning's task, long delayed, with my trusty Swedish bowsaw once more, heading to great grandfather's lower pasture.

As you may know by now if you're following these stories from The Flat, from time to time I take myself down along the river to gather up the occasional storm-felled windfall. This time it's a 30-foot-long wild cherry tree, almost as straight as a mast-pole on a sailing ship. For some reason known only to the restless wind and the tree itself, it blew down late last fall. I'm on the way to harvest it before the late spring heat works against me, or the ticks make the task unpleasant, even risky.

I angle out from my main path and head off to where the tree lay, past the grandfather wolf tree, past the black locust that tilted one night in the wind and got hung up in a neighboring maple. Locust wood is so hard and resistant, it's been stuck and leaning there for thirty years now, and will still be there long after I'm gone.

I slip under the leaning tree and thread my way through the wakening ferns, their green-hewn fiddleheads just rising up in a still tight-fisted curl. The shallow hollows along the way are filled with clusters of blooming trout lilies. Their demure yellow petals showing themselves in an ephemeral week's worth of modest grace before resuming their anonymous existence on the woodland floor for the next eleven months. Until another May comes again.

I reach my cherry tree that is stretched lengthwise across the path, and begin my morning's work. The quiet saw cuts through fragrant wood with each down-

stroke and backwards pull. Every four or so thrusts, I stop to look and listen. No chainsaw ringing in my ears, the extra effort demanded by a hand saw has its rewards. I can hear the rushing spring freshet of the river through the bare branches, catch the conversation of the chickadees working through the trees.

In less than an hour, between sawing and resting, I've got the trunk cut up into a dozen sections.

I stack the sections on a convenient rotting log in a slightly tilted position so that the rain runs off. This is where the logs will remain until next November when I'll collect them and haul them up to the house. I take a seat on my log pile, spending a good long time, as long as I please, to listen to the woods.

If I were Abe, my grandfather, this is when I'd take out my corncob pipe and have a smoke. As one of the last corncob pipe smokers in Millers Falls, that pipe was his trademark, along with his countryman's cap tilted at a jaunty and rakish angle. But that pipe was him, not me. Don't smoke. For sure though, he too would have cut the log up with his bow saw, the one long retired from two generations of use and hanging in my woodshed.

Just beyond my feet is a small grouping of trout lilies, slightly nodding in the May breeze. An idea crosses my mind to stretch out beside them and view the world through a forest of trout lily stems. I thought of a line I had just read this morning that H.D. Thoreau wrote down in his journal on April 26, 1854. He suggested doing that very thing:

Lay on the dead grass in a cup-like hollow sprinkled with half-dead low scrub oaks. As I lay flat, looking close in among the roots of the grass, I perceive that its endless ribbon has pushed up about

see **WEST ALONG** page B4



Yellow trout lilies (Erythronium americanum).

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

“TINSEL”

Meet Tinsel, a super cute girl with the most gorgeous blue eyes to ever brighten your newspaper page. Her previous person described her as “Loving, cuddle bug, snuggler and just a cat that loves Love.”

She would prefer to live without other cats, but with slow introductions she would do well with a calm dog. She would even do well with kids! Her previously family originally found her as stray, and for the past two years she has been indoors

only and has loved every minute of it. Tinsel is on a special food that she eats very well, and should stay on this food to help with her skin.

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 10 THROUGH 14

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 Better 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

PUBLIC SERVICE ART ANNOUNCEMENTS

ECHO Project Reverberates at LAVA

GREENFIELD – The LAVA Center has received a digital capacity grant from the Massachusetts Council for the Humanities to develop a local history project, and to create a new website featuring the research and stories of Greenfield residents.

“ECHO Greenfield – Exploring and Creating Histories Ourselves” will engage Greenfield residents of all ages in learning how to research local history, and how to creatively record their own stories. Initially the website, echogreenfield.org, will offer guiding questions and prompts about the history that surrounds us and the histories that have been lost or hidden, and provide links to resources and methods for finding out more about these stories.

Next Wednesday, May 12, at 5 p.m., the project team will present a panel discussion at the LAVA Center, 324 Main Street in Greenfield, for anyone interested in becoming involved with the project as a guide, coach, or potential contributor to the

research. Over the summer and early fall, trained guides and coaches will reach out to groups and individuals to encourage them to participate in the project by framing their own research questions and expressing their learning in critical and creative ways. The training sessions will be posted on the website and be available to anyone who is interested in viewing them.

Ultimately, the website will be the repository of the digitized record of the essays, stories, poems, artwork, photography, short videos and other ways participants will express what they have learned and want to share. It will stand in particular to celebrate the histories of those who are often overlooked and of those who do not typically realize their own important role in creating history by documenting their own and their families’ experiences.

The program will launch with a gallery display of historical postcards of Greenfield, accompanied by creative writing prompts, and

by the creation of a paper quilt. The gallery display will grow to encompass a timeline where participants can note when they or their families first lived in this area, contextualized by events in history, from the first humans to be in Greenfield to the most recent immigrants and new Americans.

Poet and photographer Lindy Whiton is the project director. She co-founded The Literacy Project of Western Mass, and has conducted a number of oral history projects in the area. She is assisted by Doug Selwyn and Jan Maher, retired educators and co-authors of *History in the Present Tense: Engaging Students through Inquiry and Action*. Vanessa Query completes the project team as the website designer and user experience architect.

For more information about how to become involved in ECHO Greenfield, contact

lindy@localaccess.org, doug@localaccess.org, or jan@localaccess.org.

Art Collective Offers “Honey” Experience During Coming Bee Fest

GREENFIELD – Exploded View welcomes visitors to a guided installation called “Hope is the Honey” at The Pushkin, on the corner of Federal and Main streets in Greenfield, on Saturday, May 22, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., during Greenfield’s annual Bee Festival.

Inspired by the amazing resiliency and creativity of bee communities, Exploded View returns to the Pushkin with “Hope is the Honey,” a contemplative experience. There will be audio and visual installations, an infinity trail, and a bee-inspired photo op. Participants are invited to write their hopes on golden hexagons and add them to the collective hive.

In the tradition of “Telling the Bees,” visitors may reflect on what they have lost, and what they might have gained. A temporary community memorial will honor our losses.

Masks are required. Docents will guide individuals and pods of five or fewer through the installation. Donations welcome, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Sponsored by Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center, in conjunction with Greenfield’s Annual Bee Fest. Contact explodedviewma@gmail.com for further information.

ARTIST PROFILE

Rodney Madison, Painter

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

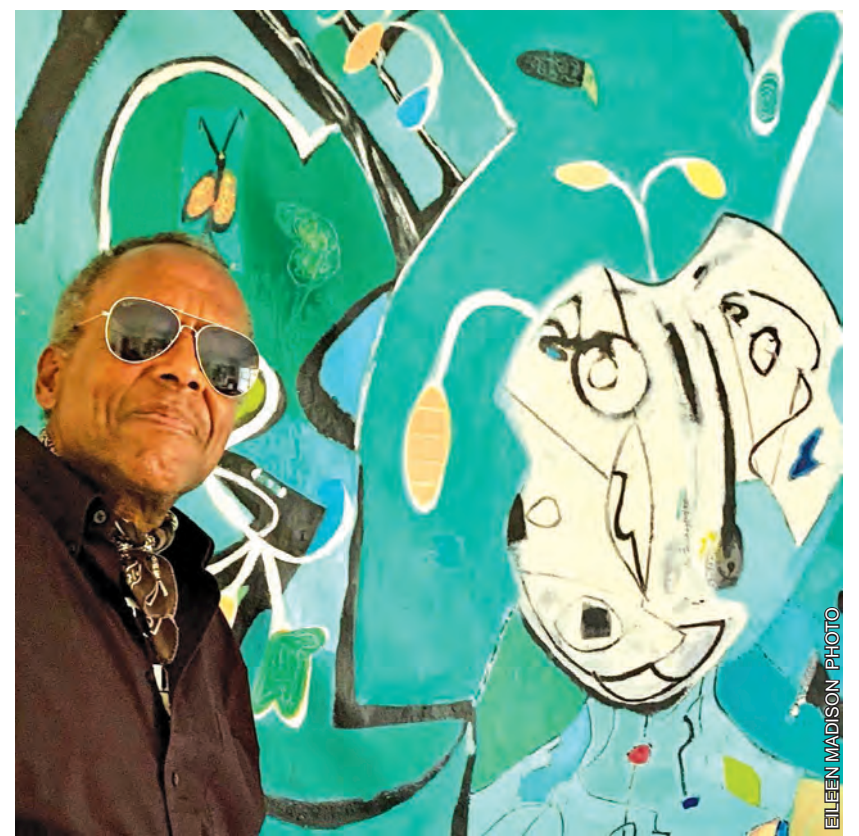
GREENFIELD – I literally stumbled on another artist to do a profile on. I saw Rodney Madison setting up his art, like I think he’s done before, inside the Pushkin Gallery in Greenfield. I talked to him for a bit and mentioned that I write articles on artists based on whether I like the looks of their art. I also mentioned I believe I saw an article on him in the *Greenfield Recorder*.

Rodney agreed to give me an interview for the article, and my editor enthusiastically said “Yes!” to me doing it. Here is what I learned about the man.

In connection with his art being at the Pushkin Gallery, he said, “I have known them since they opened.” He has been doing this for four years, he told me. He has been at several galleries, including the UMass gallery and one in Provincetown called Kmoe. At the moment, he said, “I am now in a gallery in Natick.”

The man is from the South Side of Chicago. That is the man’s hometown. “I just started to paint in my mid-50s, but I have been surrounded by art my whole life,” as he told me about his artistic background. “My father is the best painter I have known. His work is truly magical. His name is Reginald Madison.”

Speaking next of why he paints what he paints, his words were, “I let the magic take over. I paint the things



Rodney Madison, with a detail of a painting. His art can be viewed on Instagram (@rodneymadisonstudio) and Facebook (@MadisonGallery1111).

and people that I have known.”

As for the people’s opinions on his art, and whether they like it? “When I present my art to the universe, I get a positive response,” he said.

This article isn’t like the first one he has done an interview for. Two others have been for the *Berkshire Eagle* and the *Hudson Valley Post*. Also, like him, this isn’t the first artist profile I have done. But he did

have something to say about my interviewing of him. He said he found that I asked great questions when doing the interview. That certainly makes me say that he’s a very nice guy, to say that!

I also asked whether he thinks his art will be remembered. He spoke of his work being strong and speaking for itself. I would say that it leaves an impression on people.

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Montague Community Television News

Events Real & Virtual

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Are you hosting a live or virtual event? Do you have an idea for a movie or a show? MCTV is available to assist in filming or editing your project! Don't be shy, check it out! The station is always looking for new community-made content.

One trusty source of content is the Montague Selectboard! They meet weekly, and the recordings of all their Zoom meetings are available on the MCTV Vimeo page, and will air on Channel 17. Also up this week is the Montague Finance Committee. Keep up to date on all of the town meetings and more on montaguetv.org.

All our videos are available on the MCTV Vimeo page, which can be found linked to the MCTV website under the tab "Videos." All commu-

nity 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 infomontaguetv@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 infomontaguetv@gmail.com.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Dumping; Baby Fox; Unknown Cat; Internal Affairs; Scooter Gang; God And Religion; Brick And Crowbar

Monday, 4/26

7:13 a.m. Dumptruck with trailer parked in a bad spot on side of Sunderland Road in the S-curves. Officer located driver down road and advised; driver is moving it.

6:31 p.m. Caller states that a manhole cover is missing at Marshall and High streets with no barriers around it. Ongoing issue; has been reported before, and DPW was notified. Officer put cones around hole and advised that DPW will respond tomorrow.

Tuesday, 4/27

10:38 a.m. 911 caller requesting extra traffic enforcement at Avenue A and Seventh Street; she has noticed recently that vehicles

have not been stopping for the walk signal. Most recently, she observed a truck turn at the intersection this morning when a woman was stepping out to cross the street. Advised caller this would be logged so officers could monitor the area.

4 p.m. Caller requesting officer to meet him at Springdale Cemetery to check out an illegal dumping situation. Officer confirmed mattress and tires dumped in tree line of cemetery. Officer not sure which church maintains that cemetery; possibly Our Lady of Częstochowa. Message left.

5:01 p.m. Report from Randall Road of kids riding dirt bikes in street. Officer out speaking with male party she observed riding without a helmet. Officer spoke with male and his parents; advised he can't be riding in the streets and needs a helmet.

5:13 p.m. Report of baby fox running back and forth across the street on Route 63. Unable to locate.

6:24 p.m. Caller from Bridge Street requesting to speak with officer re: the tent outside of his window. Officer attempted to call back; message left.

6:53 p.m. Caller from Avenue C states that an unknown cat has been on his property all day and that it just scratched his daughter. Declined medical/police response. Spoke with animal control officer, who will respond tomorrow.

7:19 p.m. Report of ongoing issue with loud music on Randall Road. Officer reports music was not that loud on arrival; residents agreed to turn it down.

8:29 p.m. Caller requesting officer because he thinks his landlord disconnected the power to one of the outlets he uses. Officer advised caller that this is not a criminal matter; advised of options. Also advised to contact the housing court over the ongoing issue. Caller called back stating he is going to sue MPD and call internal affairs.

8:48 p.m. Caller from Old Stage Road requesting officer attempt to make contact with residents to advise them that their dog tried to attack her while on a walk. Caller states she was not injured. Officer advised resident of complaint.

Wednesday, 4/28

7:20 a.m. Report of subject parking vehicle at the Montague Retreat while hunting in the area. Officer called registered owner of vehicle, who advised he turned around in the driveway last week and

drove by this morning but will not return there.

3:10 p.m. Shelburne Control toned out MCFD for smoke investigation near Chestnut Hill Loop. Brush fire located.

3:20 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street reporting ongoing issue with a dog defecating at his residence. Provided number for ACO.

4:04 p.m. Report of approximately seven teenagers yelling/swearing at children at Unity Park and throwing coffee cups and wood chips at them.

Most/all were on bikes or scooters going between Unity Park and the skate park. Second caller reporting that a parent just threatened to throw his bike in the river because he was swearing. Parties are separated at this time. Upon arrival, bystanders advised that parties left safely. Officers located and spoke with parties; no further issues.

5:48 p.m. Caller states that a sewer cover near High and Marshall streets has come loose again and is tipped upwards. Advised DPW foreman of complaint; he stated that it is scheduled to be replaced next week.

Thursday, 4/29

5:59 a.m. Report of truck parked in area of Green Pond Road for over 24 hours; no one around. Possibly a hunter in the area. Will have evening shift check on the vehicle later on.

6:17 a.m. First of two recorded messages regarding God and religion.

8:20 a.m. Caller from East Chestnut Hill Road requesting options re: having a vehicle removed. Caller advises she rents at this location and gave a friend permission to leave a vehicle there seven months ago. Party has still not repaired or removed the vehicle. Officer advised caller of options.

9:47 p.m. Caller states that someone threw a brick through his back car window while he was driving on L Street. Area checked; unable to determine where item was thrown from.

9:58 p.m. Caller from Bridge Street states that a neighbor took his air conditioner cover off of his A/C unit and now has it over at his trailer. Advised caller to call in morning and ask for an escort over to the property to retrieve his item in the daylight.

Friday, 4/30

12:27 a.m. Caller states that there is a car at Rubin's Auto Repair whose lights have been flashing and alarm sounding for

over an hour. Attempting to contact keyholder. Message left on 24-hour business line.

8:12 a.m. 911 caller from L Street states that a man got out of a red Volvo with a smashed back window and began threatening people with a crowbar. Vehicle and operator involved in previous vandalism call. Area checked; unable to locate.

5:15 p.m. Report of male party outside Family Dollar asking people for money. Officer advised.

8:03 p.m. Caller states that she found a loose dog near the Montague Bookmill and has it in her car outside of the station. Attempted to locate owner without success. Officer will meet female party at kennel. Dog in care of kennel.

Saturday, 5/1

9:57 a.m. Walk-in party advising that there is a large amount of trash, paint cans, and other hazardous material dumped in Springdale Cemetery. Ongoing issue.

11:49 a.m. Motorist reporting truck bed liner on a bank on the side of Federal Street. MassDOT notified.

1:54 p.m. Walk-in reporting an incident of threats toward her family from someone at Unity Park earlier today. Advised party of options, including court.

2:53 p.m. Caller states that a gray Nissan Altima hit another passing car on Turners Falls Road and was swerving quite a bit. Units out with male party performing field sobriety tests. A 36-year-old Colrain man was arrested and charged with operating under the influence of liquor or .08%.

Sunday, 5/2

6:39 a.m. Two calls received; recording playing with male in background talking about not going to college.

12:35 p.m. Report of syringe in the parking area across from Unity Park on First Street. Syringe retrieved by officer.

2:57 p.m. FAA called requesting a welfare check at the airport; advised a pilot called in that they had lost all electrical components on board and are circling over the airport at an unknown altitude. Stated they believe their engine is OK, then lost radio communication. FAA unable to reach airport manager. Shelburne Control and MPD officer advised. FAA called back advising they received confirmation that the pilot landed the plane safely at Turners Falls Airport and made contact with the airport manager.

Learning to Fly Fish: Part IV

Ariel Jones, who recently passed away, penned a series of 14 articles in the Montague Reporter in 2005 about her experiences learning to fly fish. This is the fourth in the series.

Jones was a pioneer of the local art scene when she moved to Turners Falls from NYC and opened a photography studio on Avenue A in 2000.

BY ARIEL JONES

MONTAGUE – During July and August, I found myself wanting to go out to a river more and more. A big day came when Tom took me to the Deerfield River, up around Rowe. A completely different river environment again. It was very beautiful and much broader than the Ware and the Swift. And here I first encountered large slippery rocks. So far I had been in soft muddy bottom, spooky weedy bottom, and the wildly over-walked lanes of the heavily fished Swift.

I had only fished a few times when we went to the Deerfield. Whatever confidence I had built up began to crumble as I entered the much swifter current and tried to negotiate large and slippery rocks. I quickly learned to keep one foot firmly planted while gingerly trying to place the next one forward. Tom had sent me off in a different direction, towards a large boulder he knew trout held behind.

Dismay and a little panic began to rise within me as it got deeper and I went further away from Tom. Obviously, he felt more confidence in me than I did. Once again I was in the situation of having to overcome my fear (this time, of falling into the cold water and being drowned by my waders) and once again, pride pulled me through. Pride can be a useful thing in the right situation.

I was trying to stay in a shallower section, but I couldn't cast far enough to take advantage of the generously offered



Tom fishing in the Swift River, early Autumn, 2004.

good spot. At the time, I didn't realize that trout lay behind the boulder. I was flinging my line out all around it. Two other fly fishers were edging nearby, clearly wanting a shot at my boulder. This made me feel very self-conscious, for I assumed that anyone else fishing out there was very good at this and I must look like an idiot. While the second assumption was quite true, the first was not, necessarily. I also felt I was wasting a great spot.

I Climb a Tree

Focusing so much on myself, of course things went from bad to worse. On one unfortunate cast my fly got caught in the only close tree along the river's bank behind me. For a few moments I just went blank. Then I decided to make my way to the damn tree and try to retrieve my fly. At least I could be in shallower water for a while.

Glancing behind me, I noticed the two new kids on the block edging closer to my boulder. I would have to hurry, but not fall down. When I arrived at the offending tree, I took hold of a low branch and climbed on a boulder. I saw my fly, but couldn't reach it. I had to sort of pull myself up the little bending tree.

For this gymnastic feat I needed both hands, so I put my rod between my teeth and prayed no one was watching. I did manage to retrieve my fly, and in fact retrieved someone else's as well. That somehow made me feel better. I really did not want Tom to feel he had to come over and free my line for me.

The two guys had moved in ever closer to my rock. With a renewed air of goofy confidence I went back to my spot as quickly as I could manage and reclaimed my space.

Satisfaction

Driving back, Tom commented on the two guys crowding me. When I told him that I had felt bad about "wasting" the spot with my poor efforts, he said that I had every right to fish there. And anyway, he didn't think they knew all that much about what they were doing either. (Big smile from me.) Then he casually asked me why I was in the tree.

I caught nothing that day, but went home content. I was beginning to sort out the difference between the kind of pride that helps me to get out there and try, and the kind that is constantly distracting and has nothing whatsoever to do with learning to fly fish. Or anything else.

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WEST ALONG from page B1

one inch and is green to that extent – such is the length to which the spring has gone here

That is exactly what I'm not going to do.

Good for H.D. to lay his head down among the stems and grasses, but I don't want to tempt the populations of wood ticks and deer ticks that Thoreau didn't have to deal with. Don't want them climbing up into my ears and hair.

So I sit on my log, smoking my imaginary corn cob, having a conversation with the ancestors in between puffs on my pipe that isn't there.

It's no small coincidence that in 1896, just about a hundred feet away from me, so the family story goes, Abe's mother Lizzie was working in this pasture now gone to woodlands when she felt the first birth pains. Abe was destined to be born on May 1, exactly today.

She took herself back to the house, gave birth to the last of her six children, my grandfather. We could say she was used to birthing children, and as the family story goes, was back up and on her feet taking care of business within an hour. Abe always told us he was born in a May basket!

I look up from my musing and imaginary conversations with the spirits lingering among the trees, just in time to see the startlingly blue of the bluebird's back. What is he doing in our woods? The bluebird is actually a thrush of the lawns and meadows. But now he's busy visiting the warming tree trunks and collecting insects for his lunch. The shock of blue in these dark yet brightening woods likely

is carrying some sort of springtime May Day message. It's up to me to figure it out.

But it doesn't take too much imagination on my part to place this bluebird thrush as the opposite springtime May bookend to the hermit thrush of December. Not far away from here in the lower pasture, I wrote of the *Darkling Thrush* who visited me as I was once again cutting wood just before Christmas at the darkest time of the year. That hermit thrush was lingering in the winterberry bush long enough for me to see him and to be reminded of the poem by Thomas Hardy.

And now at the brightest point of the year, the part filled with the most hope and promise, this sky-blue visitor pauses in the woods, carrying what kind of message this time?

I can take awhile to ponder that and figure it out, no rush in these warming woods with the chore done.

Still, I'm wondering if I'm the only one in this corner of the world who passes time in the early spring quoting Thoreau, smoking a non-existent pipe, sitting on a log and conversing with his long-gone grandfather? This is the way I welcome in the spring in the old pasture, getting in touch with my realities.

While up in the yard near the house, the dogwood and crabapple are in flower, the cherry tree with its promise of fruit draws in the oriole, the lilacs in the dooryard are at last ready again to bloom.

From a branch in the apple tree a small yellow bird

"Quickens his song into the blue reaches of heaven –

Hey sweetie sweetie hey hey."



OUT OF THE PARK

MAY 2021

By JON DOBOSZ

UNITY PARK – Hello everyone! Hope you are all having a wonderful spring. We are getting off to a great start with our spring programs. We're thrilled to finally see smiling faces – through masks – at our parks, programs, and events, and we're confident that we'll be fully operational sooner rather than later.

Speaking of events, we held our first Peter Cottontail Drive-Thru EGGstravaganza earlier last month, and it proved to be a big hit. A few dozen cars came through the Unity Park parking lot to pick up gift bags of toy-and-candy-filled eggs for the little ones.

Despite his busy schedule, Peter Cottontail was kind enough to attend the event and wave to the kids on their way out. While this proved to be a nice occasion, we look forward to returning to our traditional egg hunt at Unity Park next spring.

Even though our spring programs just started, we are in the process of piecing together a busy summer. On Monday, May 3 we started to take registrations for **Summer Camp**. Camp will be held from Monday, June 28 to Friday, August 13, and will operate from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with pre- and post-care available. Right now registration is only open for Montague residents, but non-residents may register starting Monday, May 17.

We will be operating a little differently than in the past, and are partnering with the Gill-Montague school district to add a small, fun, and educational – "Fun-ducational"? – element to the program. Children may register for the entire summer or selected weeks.

The camp is \$8 per week per Montague camper, and \$100 per week per non-resident camper. The school district is offering scholarships to those who attend Gill-Montague schools. Feel free to view our camp brochure on our website for more information.

We also want to remind everyone that we'll be bringing back the **Soap Box Races** on Sunday, September 19 at Unity Park! MPRD, in partnership with Nova Motorcycles and Montague WebWorks, is looking forward to this great community event returning. We're still tinkering with the details, but if you're planning to enter your own cart for the race, please log onto montaguesoapboxraces.com. There are three age divisions: Youth ages 8 to 12, Teens ages 13 to 19, and Adults ages 20 plus. If you're interested, get ready to build!

Aside from Summer Camp and the Soap Box Races, we're in the process of gradually building back our typically extensive array of summertime offerings. Valuable partners, like RiverCulture, are working with us on **Movies in The Park** and **Night Skates**, so be sure to keep an eye and ear out for periodic announcements.

That's about it from here. If you wish to receive additional information on these and other programs simply contact us at (413) 863-3216, check out our website montague-parksrec.com, or view our Facebook and Instagram pages. Enjoy the lovely weather, and we'll talk to you again in June!

Jon Dobosz is the director of parks and recreation for the Town of Montague.



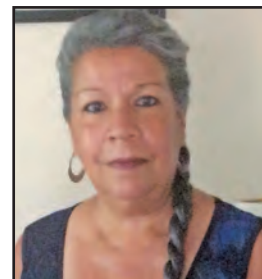
May 15: Day of Remembrance Event

THE GREAT FALLS – The Nolumbeka Project will host a gathering at Peskeompskut Park in Turners Falls on Saturday, May 15, from 1 to 3:30 p.m. to commemorate the 345th anniversary of the Great Falls Massacre on May 19, 1676. This event is considered the major turning point of King Philip's War when 300 non-combatant women, children and elders perished at the falls during a surprise pre-dawn attack by Captain William Turner and colonial militia.

Guest presenters will be **Roger Longtoe Sheehan**, the Sagamo (chief) of the Elnu Abenaki Tribe and a talented traditional artist, musician and educator; **Liz "Cold Wind" Santana Kiser**, an Elder of the Chaubunagungamaug Band of Nipmuck Indians, a member of the Nipmuck Tribal Council, and the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer; **Rich Holschuh**, director of the Atowi Project in Wantastegok/Brattleboro, and a member of and cultural relations liaison for the Elnu Abenaki band; **Bryan Blanchette**, a Nulhegan Abenaki singer/songwriter and Berklee College of Music graduate who has been performing on the northeast powwow circuit for over 20 years, including multiple appearances with the Black Hawk Singers at the Pocumtuck Homelands Festival; and **David Brule**, president of the Nolumbeka Project, an author, teacher and linguist of Nehantic descent.

This program is supported in part by grants from the Gill and Montague Cultural Councils, local agencies which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

A video of the 2004 Reconciliation Ceremony between the town of Montague and the Narragansett People is posted on www.nolumbekaproject.org. This is the wording of the agreement signed that day:



Guest presenters include Liz "Cold Wind" Santana Kiser (top) and Rich Holschuh (bottom).

"In the spirit of peace, healing, and understanding we come together on this date, May 19, 2004, to acknowledge the tragic events that took place on the shores of this river on May, 19, 1676 and thereby begin to put the traumatic echoes of the past to rest.

"It is chronicled that in 1676, Narragansett Chief Sachem Canonchet, in the midst of war, organized the refugee villages for the women, children, and elderly at the Falls. In his absence they were attacked and hundreds were killed. In 1996, in the spirit of Canonchet, the Narragansett returned to the ancient land of their relatives, the Pocumtuck, to assist the protection of the ancient and war burials at Wissatinnewag. In recent weeks, the village of Turners Falls has requested of the Medicine Man of the Narragansett a ceremony of spirit healing and reconciliation. That request is honored here today.

"For thousands of years, the area of and around the Great Falls was a place where all were welcome. This area served as a focal point for diplomacy and exchange, particularly during the harvest of the shad and salmon migrations.

"As we exchange gifts, ideas, and good will today, we commit to a future that will continue the exchange of actions to promote understanding about and between the cultures, increase mutual vigilance for historic preservation, and deepen our appreciation for the rich heritage of the indigenous peoples of our region, and all who have found respite, sanctuary and welcome here."

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RAMBLER from page B1

unbidden companion walks with me through my small homestead, present, albeit better behaved. There are big holes for trees (my exercise for the weekend), bulbs to be planted, and a carpet of yellow dandelions dangerously close to my baby hedgerow.

The Bear Path compost, rich and brown, is ready for distribution, as are the pile of boxes I have accumulated for soil regeneration. A new trellis awaits assembly, and the lilacs have just the slightest heady bloom. The tulips, colored like candy, are a day or so past their prime, and I think I see a cluster of tiny white with deep red buds on the apple tree, barely in the ground.

Inside, jars of saved seeds line the counter. Tithonia and fringe-like Aztec Zinnias wait for their planting date; the petunias, yet to be purchased, will spread below. I go to sleep each night to peepers, and wake to the sound of migrating songbirds, cheered by their vigor.

I see illness as a path. Not one I would choose, but where I find myself: a strange dream landscape complete with big boulders, streams needing bridges, and wild animals in unexpected places. It is not the whole of me, but it demands accommodation, a reworking of internal and external planes. If there's a purpose to affliction, so common, perhaps it is a nudge to the frontier lands of evolution.



Montague Composts!

By KATE O'KANE

TURNERS FALLS – Montague's new free residential composting program at the recycling and transfer station has gotten off to a great start. Since the program started in mid-March, many town residents have started composting – quite a number for the first time. Many have been using the countertop compost pails that have been available for free at the Transfer Station. These are available as of this writing on a first-come, first-served basis at the Transfer Station, but supplies are limited. Other folks have been using pots, large containers, paper bags, and buckets of various types to collect their compost in.

Dave Withers, the transfer station attendant, said the program has been so popular that there have been lines of cars on Saturday mornings waiting to get up to the compost bin to deposit items. And the four-yard dumpster, which is much bigger than what we requested initially, has been getting filled up about halfway during each of the last few weeks, which is more than we expected.

People have been delighted to have a place to be able to get rid of pizza boxes with stuck-on food, containers and cups that are marked compostable, egg cartons, paper towels, as well as all food waste, including meat and dairy, knowing that all those items will be turned into compost, a valuable substance, rather than winding up in a landfill.

Members of Drawdown Montague, a group of residents who take on practical, community-based projects that can help to address the climate crisis, have been spending time at the recycling and transfer station in order to help people learn about composting. We've had some lovely conversations with people about why they're composting and



Bruce Collins gets ready to transfer his compost into the special dumpster at the station.

how they feel about doing it.

John from Turners Falls said he and his wife compost most of their food waste at home, because they use the compost themselves in their yard or garden. But he likes that he can bring animal products to the transfer station rather than put them in the trash, which makes the trash lighter and keeps it out of the landfill. That the town now has composting "is one of the best things that has happened," he said.

Mariana Luz, who lives near the transfer station, said, "I love composting!" She said that she had wanted to compost in her yard but couldn't, because there are bears in the woods behind her house.

Taylor Jones and Duncan Bullen arrived on bicycle from downtown Turners Falls with a large pot of compost in a basket on the back of one of their bikes. They said that they were "very excited to get started," as they hadn't been composting themselves. They said that it's nice to not have the food waste in the trash because it's expensive to dispose of and it smells.

Debbie Benoit, who lives on

Route 63, said, "I think this is great. I already notice I have less trash, and I'm just one person."

Bruce Collins, who lives right near the transfer station, said, "I like doing it; I'm glad they went to doing this." He said he was aware that composting would save the town money on landfill costs.

We encourage those of you who haven't started composting yet to join your neighbors by giving it a try. You can feel good that you're helping both the town, by reducing landfill costs, and the environment, by reducing harmful greenhouse gasses that are released by food waste in landfills. Plus, you will be saving money yourself on trash disposal costs.

There's a helpful sign right next to the compost bin at the transfer station that lists what you can and cannot compost. Here are those guidelines...

What to compost: All solid food wastes, including meat, bones, poultry, fish, cheese, dairy (no liquids), eggs, eggshells, shellfish, fruits, peels, vegetables, bread, grains, tea bags, coffee grounds and coffee filters. Paper is also accepted, such as napkins and paper towels, paper egg cartons, paper to-go containers, any containers clearly marked as compostable, and pizza boxes with stuck-on food. Pizza boxes that are free of food should go in paper recycling.

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

Kate O'Kane is a member of Drawdown Montague.



Taylor Jones and Duncan Bullen arrived on bicycle from downtown Turners Falls to bring their compostables to the transfer and recycling station.

Jennie Williams Bardwell Life in Gill 1860 - 1950

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COMPOST AWARENESS (INTERNATIONAL)

International Compost Awareness Week Events

FRANKLIN COUNTY – International Compost Awareness week is May 2 through 8, 2021. The Food Waste Reduction and Composting Working Group of the Greater Quabbin Food Alliance is offering three free composting webinars in May. The first one already took place by the time this newspaper was published.

The topics of the next two webinars will be Indoor Worm Composting and Business Composting. Each webinar will last about an hour, with plenty of time after the presentations for questions, answers, and discussion.

Worm Composting Webinar: Monday, May 10 at 7 p.m. Learn how to compost indoors year-round with Red Wiggler worms!

Amy Donovan of Franklin County Solid Waste District will show how to make a simple, low-cost vermicomposting bin, where to get the right type of worms, which food wastes are appropriate, and how to harvest and use the finished compost. Learn how to reduce trash from a household, classroom, or office.

Amy will share tried and true techniques to get the best results, with no odors. The finished worm castings are a nutrient-rich soil additive – some of the best compost on earth!

Register in advance for this webinar at tinyurl.com/wormswillfixit. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Food Waste Solutions for Businesses Webinar: Tuesday, May 18 at 2:30 p.m. Did you know? According to the NRDC, 40% of food produced in the US goes uneaten! Come learn what you can do at your business to make a difference.

Businesses, restaurants, and event planners all over the country are discovering that recycling and composting can be easier than they thought, and can cost the same as – or even less than – throwing it all in the trash! Learn how to potentially save operational costs and impress your customers by minimizing your food waste and lowering your carbon footprint.

This event is ideal for your business, restaurant, community agency, faith-based organization, food processing facility, or residential facility.

Local solid waste experts will share free resources, local success stories, achievable ideas, and tips and tricks for getting started or taking the next steps in your composting and recycling efforts. They will cover topics relevant to reducing food waste from your regular business operations or events – for everything from food service businesses and retail operations to restaurants, office lunchrooms, catered meetings, and event venues.

Register in advance for this exciting webinar at tinyurl.com/compostmybusiness. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

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NatureCulture: The Science Page

WARREN ONDRAS PHOTO

Contributions to NatureCulture are welcome. What are you interested in? Would you like to write about birds, weather, science of any kind? We need your input. Send articles for consideration to: science@montaguereporter.org. Thank you!
— Lisa McLoughlin, editor

Trees: Keep Them in the Ground!

By BEVERLY LAW
and WILLIAM MOOMAW

Protecting forests is an essential strategy in the fight against climate change that has not received the attention it deserves. Trees capture and store massive amounts of carbon. And unlike some strategies for cooling the climate, they don't require costly and complicated technology.

Yet although tree-planting initiatives are popular, protecting and restoring existing forests rarely attracts the same level of support. As an example, forest protection was notably missing from the \$447 million Energy Act of 2020, which the US Congress passed in December 2020 to jump-start technological carbon capture and storage.

In our work as forest carbon cycle and climate change scientists, we track carbon emissions from forests to wood products and all the way to landfills – and from forest fires. Our research shows that protecting carbon in forests is essential for meeting global climate goals.

Ironically, we see the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve as a model. This program, which was created after the 1973 oil crisis to guard against future supply disruptions, stores nearly 800 million gallons of oil in huge underground salt caverns along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. We propose creating strategic forest carbon reserves to store carbon as a way of stabilizing the climate, much as the Strategic Petroleum Reserve helps to stabilize oil markets.

The US has more than 800 million acres of natural and planted forests and woodlands, of which nearly 60% are privately owned. Forests pull about one-third of all human-caused carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere each year. Researchers have calculated that ending deforestation and allowing mature forests to keep growing could enable forests to take up twice as much carbon.

Half of a tree's stems, branches, and roots are composed of carbon. Live and dead trees, along with forest soil, hold the equivalent of 80% of all the carbon currently in Earth's atmosphere.

Trees accumulate carbon over extremely long periods of time. For example, redwoods, Douglas firs, and western red cedars in the coastal forests of the Pacific Northwest can live for 800 years or more. When they die and decompose, much of that carbon ends up in soil, where it is stored for centuries or millennia.

Mature trees that have reached full root, bark, and canopy development deal with climate variability better than young trees. Older trees also store more carbon. Old-growth trees, which usually are hundreds of years old, store enormous quantities of carbon in their wood, and accumulate more carbon annually.

There are many fallacies about forest carbon storage, such as the concern that wildfires in the American West are releasing huge quanti-



CATE WOOLNER PHOTO

Above: Examples of trees.

ties of carbon into the atmosphere. In fact, fires are a relatively small carbon source. For example, the massive Biscuit Fire, which burned 772 square miles in southwest Oregon in 2002, emitted less than 10% of Oregon's total emissions that year.

Another false claim is that it's OK from a climate perspective to cut trees and turn them into furniture, plywood, and other items because wood products can store substantial amounts of carbon. These assertions fail to count cradle-to-grave emissions from logging and manufacturing, which can be substantial.

The wood products industry releases carbon in many ways, from manufacturing products and burning mill waste to the breakdown of short-lived items like paper towels. It takes decades to centuries for newly planted forests to accumulate the carbon storage levels of mature and old forests, and many planted forests are repeatedly harvested.

In a review that we conducted with colleagues in 2019, we found that overall, US state and federal reporting underestimated wood product-related carbon dioxide emissions by 25% to 55%. We analyzed Oregon carbon emissions from wood that had been harvested over the past century and discovered that 65% of the original carbon returned to the atmosphere as CO₂. Landfills retained 16%, while just 19% remained in wood products.

In contrast, protecting high carbon-density western US forests that have low vulnerability to mortality from drought or fire would sequester the equivalent of about six years of fossil fuel emissions from the entire western US, from the Rocky Mountain states to the Pacific coast.

Focus on Big Trees

In a recently published analysis of

carbon storage in six national forests in Oregon, we showed why a strategic forest carbon reserve program should focus on mature and old forests. Big trees, with trunks more than 21 inches in diameter, make up just 3% of these forests but store 42% of the above-ground carbon.

Globally, a 2018 study found that the largest-diameter 1% of trees hold half of all the carbon stored in the world's forests.

Findings like these are spurring interest in the idea of proforestation – keeping existing forests intact and letting them grow to their full potential. Advocates see proforestation as an effective, immediate, and low-cost strategy to store carbon. Older forests are more resilient to climate change than young tree plantations, which are more susceptible to drought and severe wildfires. Like the 2,000-year-old redwoods in California that have survived recent wildfires, many tree species in old forests have lived through past climate extremes.

Creating forest carbon reserves would also conserve critical habitat for many types of wildlife that are threatened by human activities. Connecting these reserves to other parks and refuges could help species that need to migrate in response to climate change.

Less than 3% of land conserved in the Northeast US is forever-wild. The Northeast Wilderness Trust (NEWT) is working with landowners, volunteers, and other conservation organizations to rewild the Northeastern landscape. [Disclosure: NatureCulture editor Lisa McLoughlin is partnering with NEWT in her "Writing the Land" project: writingtheland.org.]

Forests and Climate Goals

More than half of US forested

Hey, Rodents Ate My Car

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

NORTHFIELD – It was very upsetting to me that my three-year-old car has been condemned by the insurance company as a total loss because of mice. Mice. One day I had a nice car with a malfunctioning radio, and the next I had nothing but a pile of crap.

The insurance company says this has been happening a lot, since people aren't driving as much now during the pandemic.

So, I launched an investigation into how to deter mice. Mothballs are one way but they are not good for humans or animals to breathe. They contain one of two toxic chemicals, either naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene. Both are pesticides.

Exposure to naphthalene can damage red blood cells, kidneys, and other organs, with the possibility of seizures, coma, or death. Paradichlorobenzene is somewhat less toxic, but still not healthy. Breathing even faint fumes over time is considered poisonous and not recommended for either chemical. If you have to get rid of mothballs they're categorized

as hazardous waste.

So, I looked into more natural remedies. It appears, based on two research articles – one in the *Thai Journal of Veterinary Medicine*, and another in *Scientific World Journal* – that certain plant-based sprays and scented sachets do deter rodents. Chili, wintergreen oil, bergamot oil, peppermint oil, and geranium oil were all found to be effective to different degrees.

I had previously tried mixing chili powder into sheetrock mud, trying to patch a rodent hole, and that was not effective. I don't like eucalyptus, so I was more curious about the mint options. YouTube has some great videos where Shawn Woods – among others – tests different products on mice living in his barn, tractor, and RV. I enjoyed the animal cam footage showing the little rodents shunning peppermint oil and grandpa Gus' mouse deterrent.

I don't know how often general internet and scientific research agree, but I was pleasantly surprised this time, and will be buying some essential oils to protect my next vehicle.

Moon Calendar

May 2021

Last Quarter
Monday,
May 3

First Quarter
Wednesday,
May 19

Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower
Tuesday, May 4

New Moon
Tuesday, May 11

Full Moon and Total Lunar Eclipse
Wednesday, May 26

NASA's Mars InSight's mole taps the bottom of the lander's scoop.

NASA PHOTO

lands are privately owned, so strategic forest carbon reserves should be established on both public and private lands. The challenge is paying for them, which will require a major shift in government and societal priorities. We believe that transferring public investment in oil and gas subsidies to pay private landowners to keep their forests growing could act as a powerful incentive for private landowners.

Many researchers and conservation advocates have called for comprehensive actions to slow climate change and reduce species losses. One prominent example is the 30x30 initiative, which seeks to conserve 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030. In an executive order on January 27, President Biden directed his administration to develop plans for conserving at least 30% of federally controlled lands and waters by 2030.

Recent projections show that to prevent the worst impacts of climate change, governments will

have to increase their pledges to reduce carbon emissions by as much as 80%. We see the next 10 to 20 years as a critical window for climate action, and believe that permanent protection for mature and old forests is the greatest opportunity for near-term climate benefits.

Beverly Law is a Professor Emeritus of Global Change Biology and Terrestrial Systems Science at Oregon State University. William Moomaw is a Professor Emeritus of International Environmental Policy at Tufts University.

Two bills, H.1002 and H.912, have been submitted to expand the protected reserve areas on state land and wildlife management areas. If you wish, you can ask your legislators to support them. See www.savemassforests.com for more information.

This article was originally published at The Conversation (theconversation.com) on February 22. It was reprinted with permission.

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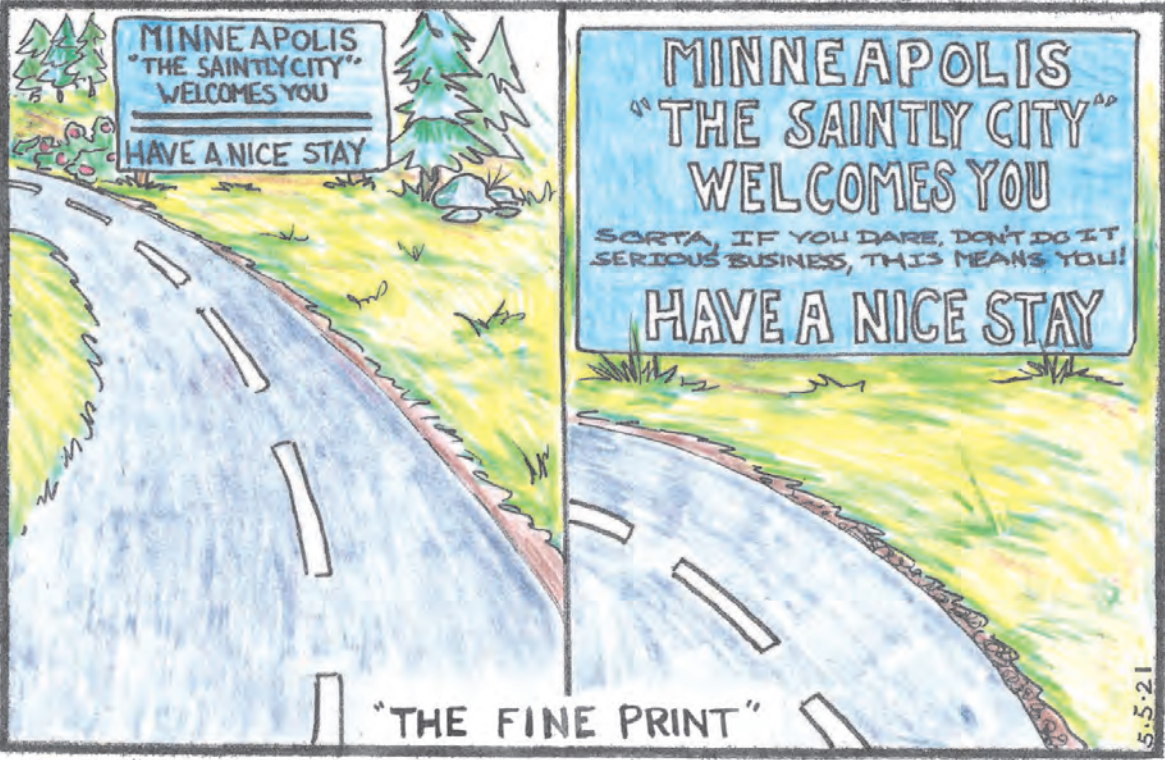
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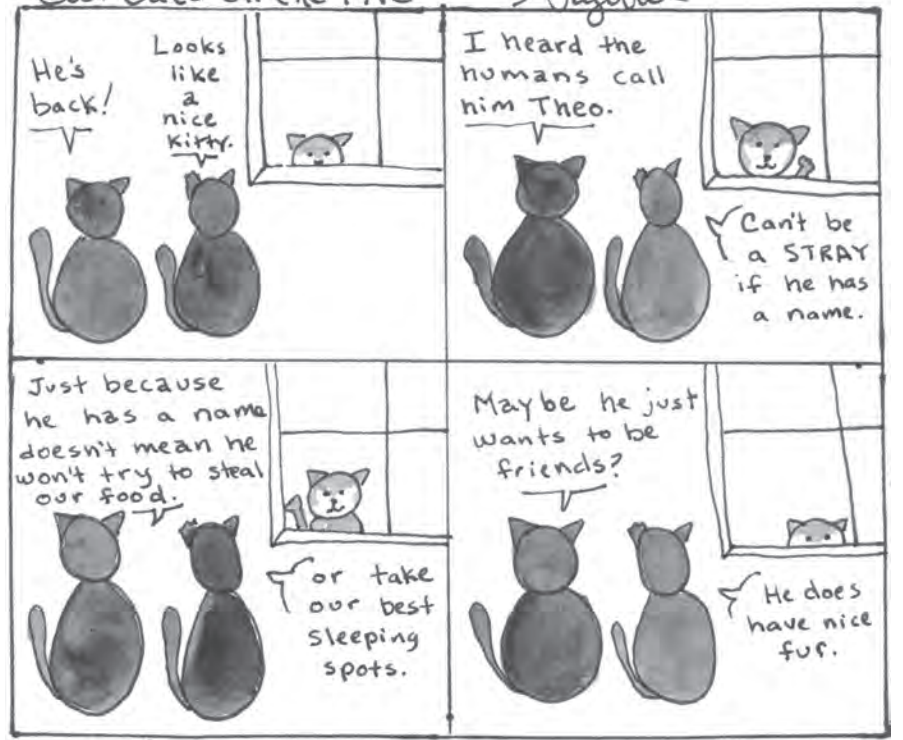
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by denis bordeaux



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Together



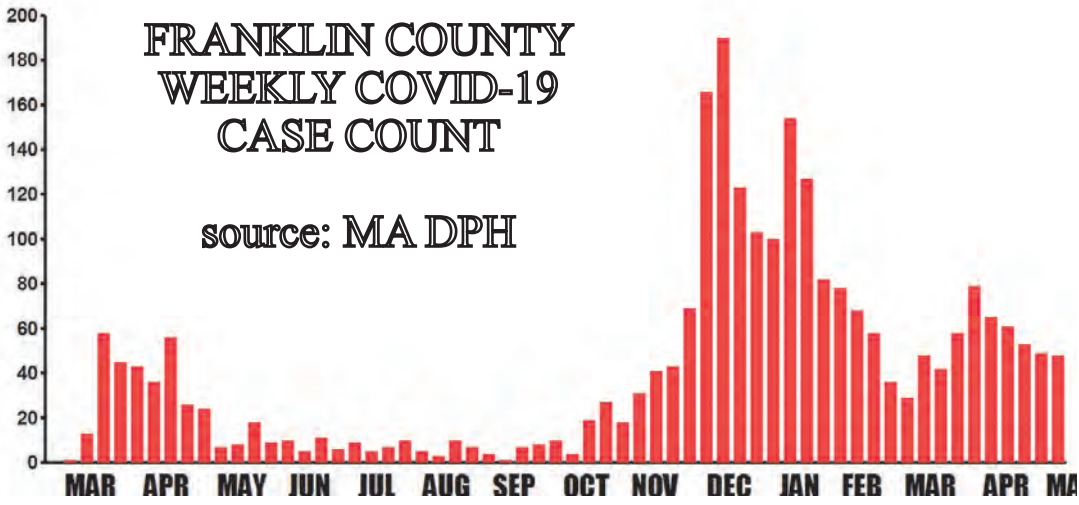
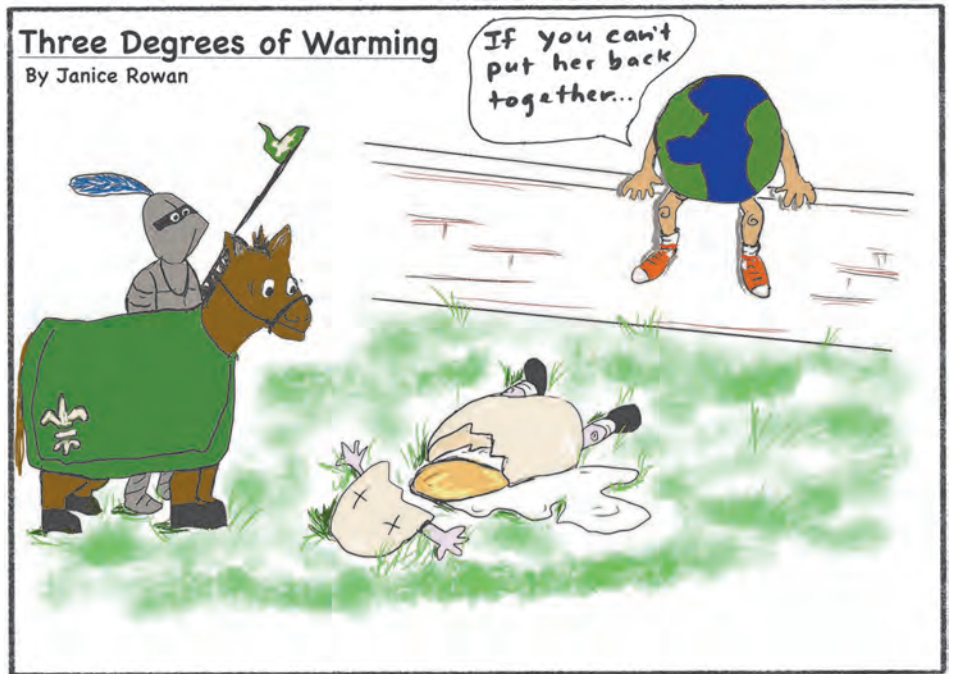
OVER THE HILL

Carolyn Clark



Three Degrees of Warming

By Janice Rowan



MONTAGUE CRYPTOJAM!
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 - GRAVES VRCNOCCR

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Wandering Monk Update

By JONATHAN VON RANSON

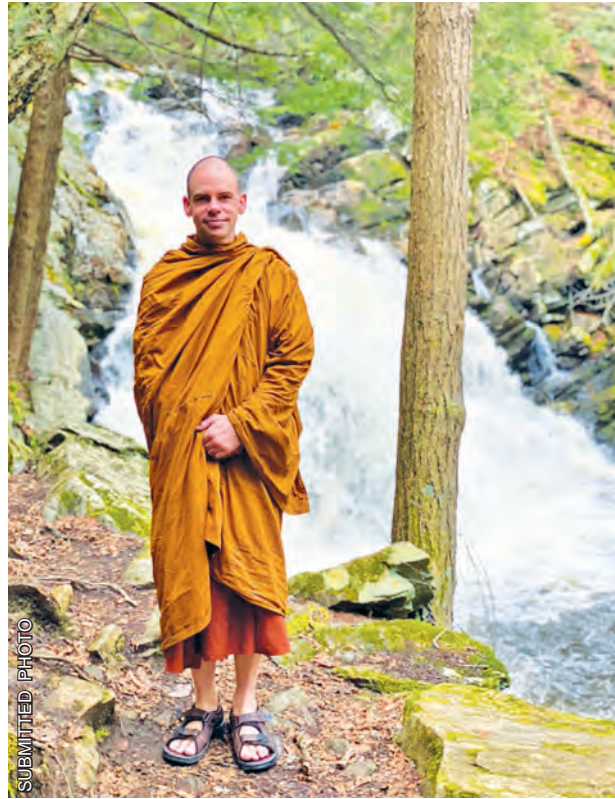
WENDELL – In 2015 Tahn Pamutto walked to our area from Temple Monastery in Temple, New Hampshire with the idea of becoming a wandering “forest” monk. At the Quabbin Harvest Food Co-Op in Orange somebody suggested he visit Wendell. A forest monk? In New England? In his early 30s and recently ordained, this monastic was attempting something of service, no doubt, but – think climate, as well as the unfamiliarity of the whole concept hereabouts!

I certainly wondered, at first, what this seeming for-eigner was doing walking slowly along the streets of town. It turned out he was from New Jersey, and he later explained that he walked so slowly hoping to be noticed, and perhaps get some food dropped into his bowl! But that first day he’d made it all the way through town before Wendell’s Scott Garland of Old Stage Road spotted his brown-robed figure holding an umbrella in the rain at the Leverett Village Co-Op.

“I recognized him as a Theravadan Buddhist monk on walkabout,” Scott said. He struck up a conversation and ended up befriending Tahn, giving him a place to stay when the monk wasn’t sleeping in the woods, which he did initially using just a tarp – no tent.

This deeply studied, hip and engaging monk ended up becoming familiar to the people of Wendell, spending the better part of three years there and in the rest of Franklin County and western Worcester County, carrying his begging bowl for his daily sustenance. Reliable and easygoing, he made scores of friends and got to know well many of the area’s forests, roads, and trails. Wherever he went, quite naturally, Buddhist teachings emerged, both in formal sessions and in passing.

Early on, Tahn contracted Lyme Disease. Continued flare-ups eventually forced him to re-evaluate his wandering vision, and the forest aspect in particular. And even his monkhood. He underwent disrobing in the monastic sense and became a layperson for a time again,



Tahn Pamutto took a break to deal with Lyme.

working as a personal care attendant and leading meditation events.

Over the last year Tahn, health largely restored, has re-ordained in the New York City area. He has also started Upavana, a non-profit organization intended to bring a Buddhist practice center of the forest tradition to the Valley. Those who love and appreciate not just Tahn, but the teachings of Buddhism, may feel called to offer this courageous monk a local place to live and/or hold group sessions. There’s also the opportunity to make support or find out more at www.upavana.org.

Jonathan von Ranson lives in Wendell.

COFFEE HOUR CONTINUATION NOTICE

Hydropower Coffee Hours Continue

GREENFIELD – In March and April the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) hosted two virtual Hydropower Coffee Hour events to discuss and answer questions about the five Connecticut River hydropower facilities that applied for renewed operating licenses in December. CRC is continuing this series for the next several months, until the public comment period opens in late summer.

The five facilities include the Turners Falls Dam and Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage in Massachusetts, and the Wilder, Bellows Falls, and Vernon dams in Vermont and New Hampshire. Once they are issued, the licenses for these facilities would be in place for the next 30 to 50 years and impact more than 175 miles of the Connecticut River.

It is critical that we all be prepared to speak up in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to influence these operating licenses. Join CRC at these upcoming Hydropower Coffee Hours to learn more:

May 12, 9:30 a.m.

River Recreation

June 8, 9:30 a.m.

Migratory Fish

July 14, 9:30 a.m.

Economics & the Markets

Additional details and links to register can be found at www.criver.org/events.

CRC staff and additional experts will be on hand to answer questions and share how the public can get involved in the hydro relicensing process to speak up for rivers. These events are devoted to question & answer. Each event has a unique topic to guide the conversation, but any questions related to the relicensing are welcome.

These Hydropower Coffee Hour events are a follow-up to two informational presentations held by CRC in January that can be viewed online at www.criver.org/livestream or on CRC’s YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/connecticutriver. We encourage attendees to view these presentations for additional background about the relicensing and related concerns.

Since 1952, Connecticut River Conservancy has been the voice for the Connecticut River watershed, from source to sea. They collaborate with partners across four states to protect and advocate for your rivers and educate and engage communities. They bring people together to prevent pollution, improve habitat, and promote enjoyment of your river and its tributary streams. Healthy rivers support healthy economies. To learn more about CRC, or to contribute to help protect your rivers, visit www.criver.org.

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