

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 37

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

AUGUST 19, 2021

## ERVING SELECTBOARD

### Erving Flood Repairs Could Cost ‘Millions’

By KATIE NOLAN

The Erving selectboard declared a state of emergency on July 18 after heavy rain flooded roads, a sewer line, and a bridge foundation. The board met Monday night with the finance committee and capital planning committee to review the damage, prioritize repairs, and begin planning how to pay for them.

At the time of the emergency declaration, North Street was closed to through traffic, the Swamp Road Bridge and Kavanaugh Lane were closed, and Poplar Mountain Road and Wheelock Street were limited to local traffic. The Flagg Hill Road sewer line, which had already backed up three times this year, was clogged and overflowing due to the rain.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith told the board and committees on Monday that a Keyup Brook embankment at North Street and an adjacent guardrail had been damaged, and that the upper sections of Poplar Mountain Road had been completely washed out, with trenches in the asphalt.

Town administrator Bryan Smith said there was less severe flood damage at Moore Street, Lester Street, and Riverfront Park. He said residents had been calling town hall about damage to residences, and he had been referring them to their homeowner’s insurance companies.

Highway superintendent Glenn see **ERVING** page A6

### Barbès Fest Returns To Montague Center



CHRISTINA TRINCHERO PHOTO

*The global music festival encountered rain in 2019 (above), and went online for its second year. This weekend, organizers say, is about building new connections.*

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – “The first year no one knew what would happen,” said Kathy Lynch, the Center Street resident whose property plays host to Barbès in the Woods. “Now that all those fears are laid to rest, there’s a general excitement, that’s heightened by the fact that we were all locked in by COVID last year.”

After going virtual in 2020, the music festival will return this Saturday, August 21 to Montague, bringing what organizers call a “post-genre” assortment of global musicians to the site of a former farm and commune.

“We don’t like the phrase ‘world music,’ which means anything that isn’t local or familiar,” said Cassandra Holden, creative director of

Laudable Productions, a lead organizer of the festival. “Artists move; they tour. They borrow styles from everywhere.”

Multiple days of art, music and performance will accompany this year’s Barbès. Pre-party festivities begin in Turners Falls on Friday with a free opera, fashion show, and dance party, and events continue throughout the weekend. The main event runs from 3 to 11 p.m. at Lynch’s Center Street property, where musicians from as near as the Berkshires and as far as Pakistan, Mexico, and Israel will play on two stages.

The genesis of Barbès in the Woods is from the Barbès music venue in Park Slope, Brooklyn. “Montague found Barbès,” said Holden. “We’ve been doing these

see **BARBÈS** page A4

### Town Dems Add Fourth Selectboard Candidate

By JEFF SINGLETON

**MONTAGUE** – Four names will be on the ballot of the September 21 special town election to fill the selectboard seat being vacated by Michael Nelson. Montague Center resident Matt Lord, who missed the early August signature deadline set by the town clerk’s office, was nominated as the candidate of the Montague Democratic Town Committee at a caucus meeting Monday night, receiving 42% of the approximately fifty votes cast at the meeting.

The other three candidates, all of whom had already qualified for the ballot and also attended the Zoom meeting, are current school committee member Joanna Mae Boody (24% of the caucus vote), former selectboard member Mark Fairbrother (18%), and former building

inspector David Jensen (16%).

“This is not a primary,” caucus chair and meeting moderator Mark Wisniewski declared on numerous occasions. He explained that all candidates who had qualified by collecting signatures would appear on the ballot, but only one would receive the Democratic endorsement.

It took approximately 40 minutes for the meeting to officially begin, as Wisniewski, assisted by Francis Wisniewski and town clerk Deb Bourbeau, checked attendees’ names against voter lists for eligibility. In response to some grumbling by caucus members, Wisniewski declared the delay “standard procedure.”

The process was also delayed by confusion over whether voters who considered themselves “independent” would be allowed to vote. As see **CANDIDATES** page A7

## GILL SELECTBOARD

### FirstLight Offers Negotiations Over Recreation Investments

By JERRI HIGGINS

On Monday night, Gill’s selectboard discussed an invitation from FirstLight Power to join other “stakeholders” in working out an agreement about what recreation improvements the company should offer to make under its next licenses with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

FirstLight has applied for a new 30- to 50-year license to operate the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage station and Turners Falls dam and canal. Town administrator Ray Purington told the selectboard that FERC “is still gathering the data they need to make their decision” on the terms of the license.

Leonard Greene, FirstLight’s director of government affairs and communications, invited the se-

lectboard and other “key interested stakeholders” to a “virtual settlement meeting” on September 10 to try to settle recreation proposal requests. Follow-up dates of September 30, October 15, and October 29 were also offered.

The proposed agenda items include “river access and camping,” “ADA compliance,” “whitewater,” and “downtown Turners Falls development and fishway viewing.” Local towns, environmental groups, and recreation advocates have criticized the company’s December 2020 relicensing application as being too limited in its offers of recreation investment.

The new invitation would restart private “settlement” negotiations among stakeholders, which started in 2017 but reportedly stalled in see **GILL** page A5



PHOTO COURTESY OF GRACE HARRIS

*Enmanuel Quezada Abarua participated in the Mural Project this summer at Sheffield Elementary School, which our reporter helped with as a youth leader.*

### Partners, Youth Leaders Enliven Summer School

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

**TURNERS FALLS** – In the beginning of summer, Sheffield Elementary School began its annual summer school program. But this summer, they did it with a twist: the Rising Star Youth Leader Program, a summer professional opportunity for older students to help out. There were also collaborations with Musica Franklin, the Brick House, and the Mass Migrant Education Program, which led a class that painted a mural in the school building.

I helped out in this program as a Rising Star Youth Leader, and it was so fabulous! I absolutely loved all the kids, and all the activities and subjects we learned about were so fun and interesting.

At the beginning of summer, a bunch of students filled out applications, answering questions about our interests, past career experiences, and references. Before the program started, there was an orientation for all the Youth Leaders, in which we learned about the program and the

see **SUMMER PROGRAM** page A8

### Census Dump Shows Modest Local Growth

By JEFF SINGLETON

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – The first batch of detailed data 2020 US Census was officially released last week, although it appears in a difficult-to-use format until a more user-friendly version is issued next month. The Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts has published readable tables and “inter-

active maps” showing the key data for cities and towns in the region.

Towns in the *Montague Reporter* readership showed population totals remaining more or less stable over the past decade, with some small increases and declines. For example, the population of Montague, which was projected to decline according to a Census Bureau estimate last year, increased from 8,437 in 2010

to 8,580 in 2020 (1.7%). Similarly, Greenfield saw population growth of 1.8% to 17,768 in 2020, although the city was counted with well over 18,000 people back in 1990.

Wendell’s population increase of 9% was the largest in the *Reporter* coverage area, representing a gain of 76 people during the decade, though it should be noted that the

see **CENSUS** page A6

#### Tiny Newspaper Blissfully Ignores Empire In Collapse

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### EMERGENCY/RESPONSE



*Fire trucks, onlookers, and smoke from a house fire filled Park Street in Turners Falls on Sunday, August 8. Everyone was evacuated safely, and crews from 15 towns worked with grim focus until the building was saved. According to the Turners Falls Fire Department, the fire was started by children playing with a lighter.*

## G-M REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

### Bus Talk Opens Can of Worms

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – The regional school committee met remotely on August 10. Staff start the school year next Monday, August 23, and students start next Thursday.

Superintendent Brian Beck introduced the committee to Jeanne Powers, the new director of teach-

ing and learning, and Christopher Barnes, the new high school principal. He then moved into a discussion of COVID protocols.

“We did go through a couple weeks where we had zero cases in both Montague and Greenfield, which was very encouraging,” he reported, “but the numbers are see **GMRSD** page A5











Compiled by NINA ROSSI

**COVID cases are on the rise** in Franklin County, unfortunately. Free testing is available seven days a week at Greenfield Community College. Hours are Mondays and Tuesday 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Wednesdays and Thursdays 1 to 6 p.m.; Fridays, 8 a.m. to noon; and Saturdays and Sundays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

You can make an appointment, or just walk in. The tests are reliable and you'll get results by email, usually within 24 hours. Avoid crowded spaces, wear a mask, clean your hands, stay home when you don't feel well, and please, get vaccinated.

The public is invited to enjoy **opera at Peskeompskut Park** in Turners Falls this Friday evening, August 20 at 6:30 p.m. The Brattleboro-based opera company TUNDI Productions will present excerpts from Wagner's *Ring Cycle* – scenes of love, lust, and thievery set at the bottom of a river.

"This epic canvas explores the range of human emotion as mankind approaches the point of reckoning – pertinent for our own times of social, tribal, and environmental strife," states a press release.

The event is free! Bring your own picnic, and chairs or blankets to sit on.

Friday evening entertainment continues in Turners Falls with the **Trash Rich Fashion Show** at the Pioneer Valley Brewery at 151 Third Street at 8 p.m. Curated by Kathryn Swanson of Swanson's Fabrics, this free show features fashions created from yard goods sold at her fabric store on Avenue A. NYC designer Richie Richardson of FAB Fashion on Second Street will close the show with a presentation of his fall collection.

The event is a pre-party for the Barbès in the Woods festival in Montague Center (*see article, page A1*). After the fashion show, DJ Bosq will entertain with Afro-Latin music, disco, funk, reggae, house, and hip-hop from 9 to 1 p.m. Food will be available from Santo Taco.

Concerts at the **1794 Meetinghouse in New Salem** have resumed. The first one is this Friday, August 20 at 7:30 p.m. with singer-songwriter Diana Jones, and four more are scheduled in September.

The affordable concerts take place in an historic hall with wonderful acoustics right on the town common in New Salem. All performers, staff, and volunteers are fully vaccinated; the Meetinghouse asks all concert patrons to be fully vaccinated as well. Tickets are \$15 for adults – check the lineup at [1794meetinghouse.org](http://1794meetinghouse.org).

Sawmill River Arts Gallery is holding a **mini Pop-up Craft Fair** from 11 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, August 21 coinciding with the Barbès in the Woods festival. It will be set up in front of the gallery at 440 Greenfield Road near the Book Mill. The vendors participating include La Boa Brava Jewelry, M. Sward Ceramics, Lil D's Bakery, and a henna artist.

Join the **Pioneer Valley Symphony** for Music in the Orchard at 4 p.m. on Saturday, August 21. Take a musical walking tour with members of the orchestra through the beautiful grounds of Park Hill Orchard in Easthampton, which is filled with outdoor sculpture installations. Admission is free, but RSVP now to secure a spot. At least two stations will be accessible to individuals with limited mobility. The rain date is Sunday.

**Great Falls Books Through Bars** is holding another volunteer day at Just Roots Farm in Greenfield this Sunday, August 22. Two afternoon packing shifts are planned to make up shipments of books for incarcerated people – contact [gfb-booksthroughbars@riseup.net](mailto:gfb-booksthroughbars@riseup.net) to find out more about this opportunity.

The Wendell Free Library hosts a small **weaving exhibit** celebrating the life of Dvora Cohen (1953 to 2021). Cohen was a master weaver who studied at the Hill Institute, and widely participated in Valley craft fairs. Complementing her work, the exhibit also displays creations by Shawn Jarrett and Adele Smith-Penniman.

The Wendell Library sits across from the town common, 7 Depot

Road, and is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 2 to 6 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Masks are required in and around the building. The weavings can be viewed now through mid-October. For more information, email [asmithpen@gmail.com](mailto:asmithpen@gmail.com).

Red Fire North on Route 63 in Montague tells us they are opening an **ice cream stand** for Bart's ice cream on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, between 4 and 8 p.m. They will serve a variety of Bart's flavors in organic ice cream cones, with toppings that include chocolate shavings, coconut chips, maple nuts, and other goodies.

The **Cummington Fair**, held since 1883 but canceled last year due to the pandemic, is back this year, August 26 to 29.

Livestock, crops, and handicrafts are showcased in the town's historic buildings, and rides and games for kids are held on the fairgrounds, along with vendors of all sorts, a demolition derby, oxen and horse pulling, a tractor parade, live music, and tag sales. See [cummingtonfair.com](http://cummingtonfair.com) for details.

Coming up on Saturday, August 28 is the **Night Skate at Unity Park** from 6 to 9 p.m. with live music and skating. Then amble over to the riverside to see a fireworks show over the river, put on by the Franklin County Boat Club. (The annual event is usually on the last weekend in July, but not this year.) It starts at 9 p.m.

The LAVA Center is hosting a free **virtual poetry reading** and book launch on Monday, August 30 for *A 21st Century Plague: Poetry from a Pandemic*. The 7 p.m. reading and talk will feature 12 of the writers from this compilation of work from 53 writers around the world. Register online to receive the Zoom link at [localaccess.org](http://localaccess.org).

The **Leverett Crafts & Arts Center** has announced its reopening date of Saturday, September 4. They will be exhibiting two artists in residence's work, plus the Mudpie Pottery collective is holding a sale that Saturday from 10 to 4 p.m. New oil paintings by Lori Lynn Hoffer, "Tuscany Revisited: Golden Light," and "Paintings from Lockdown" by Susan Valentine will be on view in the gallery. Come to the reception on the 4th from 4 to 6 p.m., or attend a closing party on September 26 from 4 to 6 p.m. Find details at [leverettcrafts.org](http://leverettcrafts.org).

Saturday, September 11 is the date of the official reopening of the historic **Wendell Meetinghouse**, and festivities are planned. See [wendell-meetinghouse.org](http://wendell-meetinghouse.org) for more.

And – it's not too late to register for the **Montague Soap Box Derby!**

Organizer Mik Muller says that they have received 15 entries so far, but are aiming for twice that. Don't delay, sign up today! Check out the videos on how to make a racer, and see previous races, at [northeast-soapbox.org](http://northeast-soapbox.org). The two derby events will take place in Greenfield on September 12 and in Turners Falls on September 19.

Read the story behind the races, in Mik's own words, on page B4!

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

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## Another Letter to the Editors On the Campaign Trail

I'm reaching out here to connect more with Montague voters before the Special Election coming up on September 21.

As a Selectboard member, it will be my responsibility to fulfill the goals of the town of Montague while working collaboratively with the teams and individuals that are in place. There are a few areas of focus that I will specifically advocate for in my role that I would like to share with you.

I spend a great deal of my time in the parks, stopping by the Great Falls Farmers Market, and enjoying the bounty of the community gardens. The growth and activity, in the local parks, are so inviting for town members and for those in surrounding areas. There were many times, but this Summer specifically, that I have witnessed the community come together to enjoy our beautiful outdoor spaces.

It has been nice to see how we use our spaces to continue to connect and celebrate together during these hard times. I'll be supportive of motions that come before me that seek to enrich and uplift these areas of our community.

Beyond that, I enjoy the many diverse businesses throughout our community. I'd be willing to support endeavors that provide growth and opportunity here in Montague. We have such beautiful villages that offer wonderful experiences for our community as well as those visiting. This is a difficult time for local businesses. I feel well-suited to support conversations that focus on how we address these issues and continue to see growth and sustainability here in Montague for the long term.

I followed along with the findings of the two Police Advisory Committees that became public this Spring. I heard a great deal of discussion in both meetings with those groups, at Selectboard meetings, as well as the Spring Town Meeting. I've spoken with members of those committees directly, as well as with Chief Williams one-on-one. It was mentioned

more than once that there are Spanish-language responses to a committee survey that were not translated. If that is still the case, I would be happy to assist in this process. These answers need to be addressed.

Further, I'm happy to collaborate with those who served on those committees to continue this conversation moving forward. We cannot let this conversation end. These committees worked very hard and there were still many questions left unanswered. I look forward to the rich discussions surrounding these topics, and the translation of the survey responses.

I'll serve the community in this role by working collaboratively with all parties in place while also inviting other voices to the table for discussion. We are best suited as individuals when our needs are met, and that is the same for a family, a business, and even a municipality.

I'm so pleased with the way our town transitioned to remote meetings and then hybrid meetings based on the needs during the pandemic. I've seen a higher turnout to meetings and am thrilled that the current Selectboard has been supportive of this accessibility option for the community. The more people that attend and can be a part of the discussion, the better!

In closing, please consider following me on Facebook or Instagram (@voteboody) for information on where and when I will be out in the community. I'll also post information about the town and local happenings on these pages along with election details.

If online doesn't work for you, please feel free to email me at [jmboody@gmail.com](mailto:jmboody@gmail.com) or call me directly at (413) 281-9597. I look forward to hearing from you!

**Joanna Mae Boody**  
**Millers Falls**

*Editors' note: We encourage letters from all campaigns, and all readers. Our next edition comes out September 2. Please send them to [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org).*

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**BARBÈS** from page A1

different events the past few years featuring international artists. Many of those artists have a relationship with the Barbès club."

"The bar is a place, maybe 80 people fit in there," said Edo Mor, a talent buyer for Laudable Productions. "Accessing the culture of Barbès was a way to access a much bigger scene than New York, and much of the world."

The first Barbès in the Woods ended in 2019 with a thunderstorm crashing into town as Berkshire Batteria played Brazilian samba to the crowd left dancing in the rain. Last year's festival, keeping with pandemic protocols, was livestreamed from the Academy of Music in Northampton.

This year the festival is back in person. According to Mor, around 1,400 tickets have sold so far. In exchange for free admission, about 60 volunteers (full disclosure: this reporter included) will work the check-in tables, haul trash, and perform chores necessary to keep the event running.

Volunteers and staff are required to wear masks while working, and attendees will follow a two-tiered mask policy, with the lawn in front of each stage divided into designated masked and unmasked areas. Anyone not vaccinated, including children ages five to 12, needs to be masked at all times.

"That way people can self-select the environment that feels safest to them," Holden said. "It's a 12-acre property.... there's plenty of room for people to spread out."

This year's festival also draws connections from the main event with several other venues and businesses, and bridges Montague Center with Turners Falls.

Brattleboro-based TUNDI Opera



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LAUDABLE PRODUCTIONS

Saturday's lineup includes Pakistani-born singer-composer Arooj Aftab (left) and the afrobeat band Kaleta & Super Yamba (right).

begins the weekend on Friday afternoon, performing excerpts from Wagner's Ring Cycle at Peskeompskut Park.

Swanson's Fabrics, which is celebrating one year since opening its storefront on Avenue A, has partnered with the Barbès organizers and RiverCulture to host events all weekend. On Friday night Pioneer Valley Brewery will host a "Trash Rich Fashion Show," featuring clothes made of fabric from Swanson's, and then a dance party with DJs. Before the music festival begins across town on Saturday, the store will host a festive gathering with street performers, tarot readers, and giveaways.

The Lady Killigrew Cafe will host a free afterparty Saturday night, and on Sunday Swanson's will hold a "black-tie finger-food brunch," raffle, and fundraiser in partnership with the neighboring shop Buckingham Rabbits Vintage.

"I think that as people we need reasons to connect, and we need to feel connected to something larger than ourselves," said Lynch, who grew up in town and owns and manages the Montague Village Store. This summer the store hosted a series of music-and-food events called "Suds and Songs," with lo-

cal songwriters booked by Lynch's friend Kara Kharmah, a music marketer based in Amherst.

Booking for Barbès is handled by Laudable. In addition to the musical acts booked throughout the afternoon and evening, the event will feature pop-up interactive theatre pieces by Eggtooth Productions, a sound installation by Garth Stevenson, and sculptures.

"We think of it as a very curated, very specific series of performances," Mor said. "It's kind of an all-killer, no-filler lineup."

"I urge people to be there when the gates open," he added.

The Berkshire Batteria will return for this year's event alongside an artist making her US debut, the Farsi-speaking, Israel-born vocalist Liraz. Her recent electro-pop and soul project features audio tracks of Iranian women who recorded their voices in secret.

Coming off a recent tour with Kamasi Washington, the Japanese keyboardist Masayuki Hirano will return to western Massachusetts with the BigYuki Trio.

Arooj Aftab, a Pakistani-born singer and composer based in NYC, comes with a hauntingly minimalist sound influenced by jazz, Hindustani classical, folk,



and electronica. Interviewing Edo Mor on air this week, local radio host Monte Belmonte suggested Barack Obama could attend this year's festival, as Aftab appears on the former president's recently published summer playlist.

Mor told the *Reporter* he could neither confirm nor deny this rumor.

"We're in a moment where music is shifting out of genre," Mor said of the weekend's lineup. "For BigYuki and Arooj Aftab, you could find a way to describe their music – but in my experience of it, to call it 'qawwali music' or to call it 'jazz' is just doing a disservice," Mor said. "And if it's doing a disservice to put it in that box, then why do it?"

Mor is glad the festival draws people unfamiliar with the artists and curious about what to expect. "That's a special feeling right there.... That experience of discovery is a different kind of energy."

"I met more neighbors at the last Barbès than I have in the last 10 years of living here," said Lynch. "We all have enough reasons to be pissed and upset and angry and nervous, and this is a way to let that go for a day, and connect with the commonality of people through art and music."



## OP ED

# Failing to Make a Desert, and Calling it Science

By **GEORGE SHAPIRO**

**LAKE PLEASANT** – One learns in life that there is little point in talking to a salesman as if they have an honest opinion. This is why I would usually ignore the comments of someone like Christopher Egan which have been printed in the August 5 edition of the *Montague Reporter*.

Egan is executive director of the "Massachusetts Forest Alliance," which was created in 2012 when three groups – the Massachusetts Wood Producers Association, the Massachusetts Association of Professional Foresters, and the Massachusetts Forest Landowners Association – voted to merge and form an organization that doesn't sound so much like a lobby to keep the money flowing, in the best traditions of American government and business.

However, I am a resident of Lake Pleasant, and Mr. Egan mentioned the scientific forestry responsible for the management of the Montague Plains, and as an inhabitant of those "plains" and a general fan of science, I can't help but respond.

A quick trip to the Montague Plains Wildlife Conservation Area will confirm that, if you ignore the miles-long wooden boardwalk installed by whatever company owns the electrical transmission lines, scientific management of those plains by state foresters has created an environment that closely resembles a World War I battlefield.

The aims of this project were: generate revenue for the state by harvesting timber; reduce the incidence of forest fires; and restore the natural ecology of a rare inland sand-plain habitat. On the first point, unfortunately for the state, the forest of the "plains" was mostly low-quality timber which was wood-chipped and trucked away to make wood pellets for heating. Burning wood pellets for heat or electricity has approximately

the same pollution profile as burning coal and, needless to say, promoting "biomass" as a renewable energy source is one of the major projects of Egan's Mass. Forest Alliance.

Clear-cutting the plains would never do to restore the ecology, so scientists were brought in to calculate the maximum density of trees that would inhibit a "crown fire" from spreading in the plains. This ends up being pretty low, hence the WWI battlefield.

Ecological restoration, in this case, looked like dinosaur-sized machines with giant blades mowing down trees and trampling everything in between into pulp, but with single trees left standing for the purposes of science. To add insult to injury, they refused to create a buffer around the gravel road through the plains, leaving the town of Montague to deal with the now-exposed trees that fall across that road with every storm.

In all honesty, the aftermath of a major forest fire is not picturesque, and the ecology of sand plains is dependent upon the regular forest fires that are the natural consequence of the low moisture levels in the sandy soil. The constant fires reduce the amount of biomass, maintaining a "poor" soil with unique chemical characteristics that sustain unique organisms.

Undisturbed, the end result of these natural processes may look as much like a desert as a forest. The ecological restoration of the plains was supposed to be a demonstration of controlled burning in scientific forestry management. Unfortunately for the scientists, controlled burning proved too expensive and too dangerous. As a result, this WWI battlefield is largely well-mulched, relatively moist, and thus conducive to fast growth of new non-native plant life – which, incidentally, will burn nicely when it inevitably dries out. In response, the state has started to regularly mow the brush,

which increases the layer of mulch, and to apply herbicide over large areas, at which point they might as well declare the whole ecology experiment a failure.

My opinion is that "science" has been hung out to dry on the Montague Plains. The work of scientists was used as cover for the more important agendas of meeting state forestry revenue targets and, when "global warming" is in every news report, feeding the insane plans of the biomass fuel lobby, e.g. Mr. Egan, who want to increase the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> (and other pollutants) in the air right now by burning more wood!

The position of Mr. Egan and the state, with respect to forest management, is largely: *Who do you believe, me, or your lying eyes?* There is no one who will ultimately hold them accountable. However, the legislative fix might be simpler than what various parties have proposed.

Currently, logging of state forests is ultimately a revenue source. Rather than trying to legislate forestry practices, it would perhaps be better to remove the perverse "profit" incentives involved in the management of state forest lands, and make ecological restoration the paramount standard by which the performance of the relevant state agencies is judged, with funding appropriate to the goals and fully separated from logging and use-fees. The management of natural lands in the US has traditionally been framed as balancing the needs of industry and recreation. It's time to actually put science first.

The problem here is much larger than the failure of the state's forestry science in the Montague Plains. If we cannot put science first in the maintenance of state lands, how can we expect to ever put science first in the management of the climate as a whole?

*George Shapiro lives in Lake Pleasant.*

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**GMRSD** from page A1

again climbing – they’ve more than quadrupled in the state in the last 14 days.”

Beck said he and district nurse leader Melissa Bednarski had reviewed state and federal guidance and recommended the school year start with the same safety guidelines it ended in the spring: masks on indoors and on buses, regardless of vaccination status; three feet of distancing, six during meals; and ongoing pool testing to detect the virus early.

**Adjustments**

Business manager Joanne Blier said the district’s federal ESSER 2 emergency grant allowed it to hire paraprofessionals at Hillcrest and Gill elementaries, a high school math teacher, and an adjustment counselor at Sheffield, which “will help with the increased rates of anxiety and depression” among students.

Beck discussed the district’s plans to address learning loss. “Some of the folks who run camps out there have kept us appraised of the observations they’ve, had in terms of child interactions with one another,” he said. “Students have an increasing amount of difficulty in terms of completing tasks, or completing stages of tasks.”

Rather than focusing on standardized testing, Beck said the focus will be on helping students plan and follow through on projects, or “portfolios,” and follow through on them. He said the staff will be using a “roadmap” for learning recovery, starting with making sure students feel they belong, assessing how they are doing, and “scaffolding” them up to where they should be.

Beck praised the teachers’ union for collaborating on the plan. “We’re deeply thankful that they looked at it

so quickly, and were supportive of making these changes,” he said.

The district also plans to work with Quabbin Mediation to train middle and high schoolers to be “active bystanders” in situations of conflict.

**The Small School**

For years, students who “intra-district choice” from Montague to Gill are eligible to ride a bus, though the reverse is not available for students who choice from Gill into Montague elementary schools. That service was suspended last year during the pandemic, and Blier recommended it not be restarted, because the bus becomes too crowded.

Blier argued that it would be better to start the year not allowing them to ride and “add them if it becomes reasonable to do so,” than start them with rides that are then dropped if cases worsen. “When you choose to attend a school other than your home school, you are responsible for transportation,” she added.

“If I had my way, we would eliminate school choice in general, from the entire world,” said Montague member Cassie Damkoehler. “I’m not a fan of intra-district school choice – I think it reeks of privilege, and it’s unfair, and it takes away from the neighborhood schools.”

Recently appointed member Jennifer Waryas had a question: “Are there particular reasons folks would prefer to go to Gill over Hillcrest?”

Damkoehler explained that Sheffield is a larger school than Gill, with a more diverse student body, and reiterated that she did not like school choice in general.

Joanna Mae Boody, also recently appointed, asked if there are metrics indicating that families are going to Gill because of specific needs which aren’t being met at Sheffield.

“The district is the same, so any services that a child would need would be provided at any of the schools in the district,” chair Jane Oakes told her.

Blier said that some services available at Hillcrest and Sheffield aren’t provided at Gill, including Title 1 reading supports. Damkoehler pointed out that the Title 1 program is funded by a grant based on having a certain percentage of the student body under the poverty line.

“It is based on the poverty level, yes, and yes, Gill doesn’t qualify for that program,” Blier replied.

Beck said the previous superintendent, Michael Sullivan, may have left behind a flash drive containing information about why families choice in and out of the district.

Bill Tomb, a Gill representative, shared some history. “The Gill population shrank quite a bit, which opened up a tremendous amount of space – about half the school,” he said. “Thereby, intra-district choice made a difference to the viability of the Gill elementary school staying open.”

Tomb suggested eliminating the “home school” concept entirely, which would allow any Montague students attending Gill to be bused, though it would create a “nightmare” of bus routes.

“Maybe busing students, or managing busing students, makes sense,” Waryas offered, “based on the alternative of maybe the school closing.”

Blier said she thought the practice of busing students from Montague to Gill may have dated to the closure of the Montague Center elementary school, in an effort to drive students to a similarly small school so they did not choice out of the district.

The committee decided not to take a vote, effectively continuing the decision enacted during


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**GILL** from page A1

2019, and are seen as an alternative path to a license agreement.

“If we were to go down this route, which I think is probably a good idea,” began selectboard chair Greg Snedeker, “who would be the point people? Do we want to engage the conservation commission on this for ideas?”

“I think having con com present could not hurt,” said Purington, “just so they are aware of broader impacts.”

“John [Ward] was our representative, right?” asked selectboard member Randy Crochier. Ward did not seek reelection earlier this year.

“I wonder if he would still be involved in this,” mused Snedeker, “because he was in those talks, and he knows a lot of what is going on – but I am not sure how much he pays attention to the recreational side.”

Purington said his recollection was that the first round of settlement discussions “did not produce any kind of result that made it into the license application. I think it was a much broader scope – it was fish passage, habitat, fish elevators, and riverbanks – and this is just going to be the recreational piece.”

Crochier expressed concern that proposed water releases for whitewater recreation below the dam might affect boating above the dam, adding that he was not against it, but that he hoped that the schedule would be made clear.

Purington said he would attend the first meeting, and bring up a proposed river access site off of River Road, a recommendation of Gill’s open space and recreation plan. “That is directly across the river where the picnic area is, and FirstLight is proposing to put in a new car-top boat carry access,” he said. “If they are already planning to do access on their own properties right across the river, this does not do anything.”

The town’s open space plan also suggested a request to FirstLight to host an annual outdoor education program at one of its Gill

properties, which Purington thought was still a good idea. “I do not think it rises to the FERC license application,” he said. “They could start doing that tomorrow without any real additional cost.”

After Snedeker said he had not noticed much kayak or canoe rental business at Barton Cove, Purington said that FirstLight maintaining its rental location, as well as the adjacent campground, benefits Gill through “bringing tourists and tax dollars to our businesses.”

FirstLight also announced two new grant programs for climate action and environmental justice projects, totaling \$30,000 per year. Applications will be accepted through October 8, with awards to be announced in November.

Crochier suggested looking into applying for generators at the Gill Elementary School as a climate action. “That could be a pretty good spot to think about because it could create a warming center in this town,” he said, “where we do not really have one for a prolonged power outage.”

**Cruiser, Pumper Requested**

Eleven members of the fire and police departments attended the meeting in support of a proposal for new vehicles for their departments. Fire chief Gene Beaubien, deputy fire chief William Kimball, police chief Christopher Redmond, sergeant Jason Bassett, and seven members of the fire department made up the meeting’s largest contingent.

“You have the majority of the public safety in the town of Gill present right now,” Kimball told the selectboard.

“So, if something major goes off, we lose everybody?” Crochier quipped.

“You’re gonna lose everybody,” Kimball joked back.

Kimball, who serves in both departments, told the board that the emergency personnel were assembled there to show “...that both departments feel this is a really important issue for our departments’ and our town’s

safety,” he said.

Kimball pitched buying a new hybrid cruiser to replace the 2013 Ford Interceptor police cruiser, and a new “mini-pumper” to replace the fire department’s main engine, a 1987 open-cab pumper. He told the selectboard that the police department had presented “essentially the same vehicle” to the capital improvements committee earlier this year, and noted that it would be Gill’s first hybrid police vehicle.

He also said that the initial \$57,750 price given to capital improvements for the cruiser could see an increase of up to 5% if the desired vehicle was not on the lot when the department was ready to purchase it. He also argued that purchasing the new cruiser would reduce use of the next-newest cruiser, extending that vehicle’s life by five or six years.

The fire department has not heard back about its application for a state grant to buy a full-sized fire engine. Kimball told the board that about 30 towns have been awarded the grant so far, and Gill is not optimistic about receiving it this year. The department is now “leaning toward” a mini-pumper engine, which would “better suit the town of Gill.”

Kimball said the mini-pumper would have the same capabilities as the current apparatus, but would be able to enter areas the larger engine cannot access. While the department’s brush truck is similar in size, it “is not designed to put thousands of gallons of water on a larger fire,” he said. The department had hoped to request using Gill’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to purchase the truck before it learned the town planned to use those funds for flooring replacement at the elementary school.

“It is a good time to be talking about this though,” said Snedeker, “because of the proposed bills in the infrastructure, and what is going through the federal government right now. It is good you are being proactive.”

Kimball also suggested that because town meeting had approved \$300,000 in borrowing for the flooring project, if that project is

eligible for ARPA funds, a new debt exclusion vote could be held to borrow the same amount for the safety vehicles.

“If we do not use the \$300,000 for the school floors, we cannot spend that \$300,000 on anything else,” Crochier told him. “But it may make the town meeting more agreeable to voting towards the fire apparatus in the same dollar amount or less. I just want to be clear that we are not talking about shifting funds.”

**Other Business**

Heath Cummings, facilities director at the Gill-Montague regional school district, said that all the epoxy flooring at the elementary school would be finished by August 18, completing the current phase of the flooring project.

Animal control officer (ACO) Kyle Dragon requested the town issue him an “ACO warrant” empowering him to carry out his duties, as apparently required annually by state law. Purington said he had reached out to other town administrators across the state “to get an example of what this warrant looked like, and basically, everyone looked at me like I had two heads. So, we are breaking new ground here.”

A motion allowing the chair to sign a warrant for Dragon was unanimously approved. Purington told the board that he took the wording “straight from Chapter 140, Section 151A of Mass General Law, and tailored it to Gill.”

“If my dog gets picked up and goes to doggy jail, and I pay bail, where does that fine go?” Crochier asked. “Does it go to the shelter, or does it go to the town?” Purington said that per the regional dog kennel agreement, the sheriff’s office gets those fees or fines.

Purington reported that Gill’s board of health voted to mandate wearing masks indoors, starting this Wednesday or Thursday, in all Gill public places.

*Mike Jackson contributed additional reporting.*



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ERVING from page B1

McCrory said that the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) had repaired Kavanaugh Lane while working on Route 2 repairs, and that the highway department has been working on other town roads, filling in washed-out sections, but there is more work to do. The Swamp Road Bridge, he said, had been removed and disposed by Sam Browning, Jr. Trucking of Northfield. North Street is open after emergency repairs, but is reduced to a single lane of traffic

near Swamp Road, with stop signs and alternating traffic.

Jacob Smith said that Browning had rebuilt the embankment on North Street, but the guardrail was still damaged. He added that the the Wheelock Road fire pond was filled with sediment.

McCrory said MassDOT and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) had conducted a “walk-through” Monday to assess damage. “We have more damage than we thought we did,” he

said. While about 60 feet of North Street had been repaired, the MassDOT engineer found another 100 feet that needs attention, as well as 715 feet of upper Poplar Mountain Road, and another 140 feet at the bottom of that road where a culvert headwall was undermined.

The state Department of Revenue (DOR) approved the town spending up to \$200,000 over its approved FY’22 budget for emergency work. As of Monday, the town had spent \$67,050 removing the Swamp Road Bridge and \$22,500 on the North Road embankment repair.

Jacob Smith said the estimated cost of replacing the Swamp Road Bridge was \$1 million or more, and that the Poplar Mountain Road repair could cost “millions.” He said he hoped the town could get Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or MEMA grants to help pay for the work.

McCrory said he did not expect payments from MEMA “any time this year.”

“Do we have an order of priority [for road repairs]?” asked finance committee member Debra Smith.

McCrory said that the town needs “to get the roads in plowable condition” before snow falls, and that fixing Poplar Mountain Road was a first priority. He said the town could “put the [North Street] guardrail on hold.”

Bryan Smith said he would work with McCrory and other department heads to develop a list of necessary work, and present it when the three boards reconvene on August 23.

Asked about seeking DOR ap-

proval for additional unbudgeted emergency spending, Bryan Smith said he would contact the agency. Erving is slated for \$523,087 in American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding that can be used for infrastructure like roads and wastewater; \$91,585 of it has been received. He said the town had already committed \$220,000 of the ARPA funds for a sewer project at the former International Paper Mill.

Sewer Costs Overflow

In June, after three sewage back-ups and overflows, the board had decided to replace the Flagg Hill Road sewer line. Root infiltration had exacerbated clogging from disposed towels and wipes. The July flooding created further problems.

At their June 24 meeting, the selectboard had estimated the cost of hiring a contractor to replace the line at approximately \$100,000, and decided to have the highway department replace it at a cost of \$10,000 to \$15,000 in materials. The board and McCrory hoped the work could be completed this fall or next spring.

However, on Monday, McCrory told the board that it would be difficult for his department to replace the line, given the emergency road work and other planned projects. Asked for a preliminary cost estimate, the engineering firm Tighe & Bond projected that replacing the line would actually cost \$335,600, with construction beginning in April 2022.

“That’s double or triple what we were hoping,” Jacob Smith com-

mented. He wondered if Tighe & Bond could complete the engineering and bidding documentation earlier, allowing construction to begin this fall.

Bryan Smith said the firm’s preliminary estimate anticipated there was ledge beneath the sewer line, and that geotechnical borings would be necessary to determine how difficult the excavation might be.

“They’re not the only firm that can do the work,” said selectboard member Scott Bastarache, adding that the replacement should be done “before the snow flies.”

Bryan Smith said he would contact Tighe & Bond and other engineering firms.

Board of Health AWOL

Bruce “Cyd” Scott has resigned from the board of health, effective October 1.

Jacob Smith thanked Scott “for his time and efforts,” and went on to say that Scott had been challenged by lacking a quorum for board of health meetings: of the other two members, he said, one never attended meetings, and the other rarely attended.

The Erving town website lists Scott, Michael Gralenski and Leo Parent, Jr. as the current board of health members.

“We need a full board of health,” he said. He asked Bryan Smith to contact town counsel to find out if the selectboard had any authority to take action on the matter, and to ask the remaining members to “re-sign if they can’t attend meetings.”



NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Secret Session; Masks; No Old Home Day

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard, now meeting in their own office room, returned to wearing masks for their August 4 meeting. The conference room, at the opposite end of the office building hall, allows more distance between participants, though the selectboard office has records that may be needed as well as the town coordinator’s computer.

Executive sessions are not common, and the board usually schedules them at the end of an open meeting, allowing the clerk and others to leave for the evening. This time they held an executive session at 7:30 p.m., returning to open session at 8:00.

The justification for executive session, under state law, was “To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government’s bargaining or litigating position. Also, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel; to actually conduct collective bargaining and contract negotiations with non-union personnel.”

Pandemic Continues

Board of health chair Barbara Craddock was included in the executive session, and when the open session renewed, she stayed to give a COVID-19 update. Wendell had recently seen four new cases, bringing the total to 15 reported cases in town since March 2020.

Three of the new cluster, Craddock said, followed a visit to Florida, and those people had just finished their quarantine. The fourth person was uncooperative on the telephone and hung up on the caller, leaving little avenue for contact tracing.

Craddock said the CDC is recommending masks inside, and emphasized that businesses have the right to insist that customers wear masks. 70% of eligible Wendell residents have been vaccinated, and most of the unvaccinated residents are young. The town office building is open, but people entering should be masked.

Wendell has or will receive COVID-19 emergency funds under the federal CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), with different uses allowed for each. Selectboard chair Dan Keller suggested giving some of the money to the Friends of Wendell, or Wendell Cares. Member Gillian Budine said she thought some IT work might make upcoming possible remote meetings flow more smoothly.

Flood Aftermath

Highway commission chair Phil Delorey reported on the work done on the Farley Road washout. So far, the road crew had brought in 700 yards of fill to replace what was washed away, and lined the drainage with large stones sloped to reduce the speed of rushing water, at a cost of \$43,000. Another \$80,000 would be needed to repave the road.

If spent, that money will decimate the overall highway budget, but Delorey said the paving should happen soon to preserve the work already done.

Finance committee chair Doug Tanner, joining the conversation by speaker phone, suggested spending the money and replacing it from stabilization at a special town meeting. The town can be reimbursed with MEMA or FEMA money, but that process took years after the 2006 tornado, and the reimbursement will not cover 100% of the expense.

Treasurer Carolyn Manley said the town may borrow emergency money to avoid taking money from stabilization.

Delorey also mentioned a culvert that needs replacement and shoring up in a hollow near the Diemand Farm. Several years ago, an engineer gave a rough estimate for that work at \$312,000.

Other Business

The board discussed the request for proposals (RFP) for the town-owned building and land at 97 Wendell Depot Road, and the process of getting the property into private hands. A walk-through will be held Saturday, September 4 at 10 a.m., and responses to the RFP will be opened at the September 15 selectboard meeting. The RFP will be published in the central register on August 18 and August 31, and for two days in the *Athol Daily News*.

Tom Chaisson’s estimate for insulating the entire town hall floor, \$15,600, was high enough that the town must ask for more bids. Town coordinator Alisha Brouillet said one other person had expressed interest.

The selectboard plans to meet this Monday, August 23 at 7 p.m. with the police succession committee to discuss the town’s long-term police regionalization agreement with Leverett, and arrangements over the two-town department’s substation in Wendell.

The long-term organizer of Wendell’s Old Home Day sent the selectboard a message saying that, given an increase in COVID infections, she would not hold the event this year. Without her efforts, Old Home Day will not happen.

CENSUS from page A1

town lost 14% of its population a decade earlier. Erving, which had gained 22.7% in that previous decade, lost 135 residents according to the new count, a 7.5% contraction. Shutesbury, which saw very large increases in the 1970s and ‘80s, lost a small number of residents in 2020 count. Leverett gained 0.8% and Gill gained 3.4%, with an additional 51 residents moving into the latter town.

The towns showed small increases in racial and ethnic “diversity,” although the data is not easy to interpret based on the categories used by the Census. Those filling out the forms were confronted with categories such as “White alone (non-Hispanic),” “Black alone (non-Hispanic),” “Asian alone (non-Hispanic),” “Hispanic or Latino (of any race),” and “two or more races alone (non-Hispanic),” among others.

According to Donahue Institute analyst Susan Strate, some residents may have marked more than one category.

To take a few examples, the percentage of residents marking “White alone” on the Census forms declined in Montague from 90.3 to 86.1%, while the “Black alone” population increased by 0.3% and the “Hispanic or Latino of any race” group grew by 1%. The largest percentage increase occurred among those who marked “two or more races alone (non-Hispanic),” which doubled from 2.3% to 4.6%.

Greenfield, meanwhile, saw its White population decline from 89.8% to 82.5% while its Black population rose from 1.5% to 2.2% and its Hispanic population increase from 4.9% to 8.3%. Population data for other towns can be found by clicking on one of the “Massachusetts Interactive Maps” at *donahue.*

*umass.edu/census2020.*

The Donahue Institute website uses “Decennial Census Redistricting Data,” a reference to the process of redrawing congressional and state legislative districts. The Census numbers are used for a wide range of purposes, including allocation of aid and evaluating equity in policing and other public policies, but the Census Bureau’s recent decision to release this portion of its data before the original late-September deadline was a direct result of pressure from the states, which must begin their redistricting processes before the fall.

In April the Bureau released preliminary data used to draw Congressional districts for each state. Massachusetts saw a population increase of 7.2%, thus retaining all nine of its seats in the House of Representatives. But district boundaries must still be realigned, because some lost population and others gained.

The April data seemed to show, for example, that the 1st District in western Massachusetts currently represented by Richard Neal would lose population and would probably require adding towns from the next district to the east, Jim McGovern’s 2nd District, which includes most of Franklin County. It could mean that number two will add towns from its north and east.

While hearings on Congressional redistricting were held during late spring and early summer, the process to reorganize state-level legislative districts has been delayed by both a lack of complete data and a controversy on Beacon Hill over whether to build the new districts using local precincts or Census tracts.

Most smaller towns consist of a single precinct and census tract, but Montague is divided into six

precincts and two Census tracts. Greenfield contains nine precincts and five tracts. The towns must also adjust their precinct boundaries after each Census.

In Massachusetts this local re-precincting traditionally comes before – and is the basis of – state legislative redistricting, but this year strong support developed in the legislature to start at the state level using Census tracts as building blocks, a method used by a number of other states. Secretary of State William Galvin, who plays a major role in the legislative process, attacked this as an example of “gerrymandering” and received some support from city and town officials.

As of this writing, it is not entirely clear whether the controversy has been resolved. No new information appears on the website of the legislature’s redistricting committee, and according to the election website *Ballotpedia*, “redistricting authorities in Massachusetts have not established a timeline for the 2020 redistricting cycle.”

However, William Brownsberger, the Senate chair of the redistricting committee, told the *Reporter* that the state will probably attempt to implement redistricting and re-precincting “at the same time.” “It will be a little bit challenging, but it doesn’t need to create a problem,” Brownsberger said. “We just have to talk to each other.”

Pam Wilnot, vice president of the voter advocacy group Common Cause, said her organization has long advocated using Census data to build state districts. “We do have to do it differently this time around,” she said, referring to the delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. “We have the opportunity to build a better mousetrap.”



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**CANDIDATES** from page A1

Wisniewski attempted to point out, independent is not a category on state-approved voter lists; voters who do not designate a party identification are considered “unenrolled,” and may vote in the caucus.

Wisniewski allowed each candidate to make five-minute statements indicating their qualifications and why they chose to run for the board.

Lord, who currently serves on the planning board, said he thought

the town was “well positioned” to adapt to the changes taking place in the region and the country. He emphasized his legal experience, calling himself an “advocate and an organizer” on issues like climate change and land use.

Boody, who has recently moved to Millers Falls and currently serves on the Gill-Montague regional school committee, noted her experience with collective bargaining and her administrative role monitoring

human subject research at the University of Massachusetts. She also said she had “regained her strength” after the recent death of her father, and would be “honored” to work with selectboard members Rich Kuklewicz and Chris Boutwell.

Fairbrother, who currently serves as chair of the conservation commission, stressed his experience on town committees, including the selectboard and the airport commission. He noted that he grew up in Mon-

tague and graduated from Turners Falls High School in the year “it’s none of your business.” Fairbrother, who lives in Montague Center, said he felt the town was in better shape than when he was previously on the selectboard, now having “only one empty paper mill instead of two.”

Former building inspector David Jensen told the meeting he has been a town meeting member since the 1980s, when he owned a business in downtown Turners Falls.

He currently owns property on Avenue A. As a building inspector, he said, he has probably visited “half the buildings in Montague.” Jensen, a Millers Falls resident, said he has always been engaged in “how things run” in town, calling himself an “insider outsider.”

The meeting ended after just over an hour. Wisniewski said attendance was significantly larger than in recent years.



## NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

# Pocket Park, Pole Closure Close

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard heard good news Monday on two complex issues the town has been wrestling with over the past year. One involved the reconstruction of Spinner Park, a small “pocket park” on Avenue A, and the other a utility pole designed to serve a solar array on the former burn dump at the end of Sandy Lane.

The Spinner Park project originally seemed like a rather simple restoration, with a design approved by the town nearly 18 months ago. It encountered sudden strong opposition to moving the spinner statue, a replica of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century *art nouveau* depiction of a female textile worker, to the rear of the park.

The original plan was eventually approved, but as digging began, it was found that electric conduit serving nearby apartments would be below the statue’s base. The electric company Eversource objected, which led to several months of negotiations. The problem was eventually resolved, but the resulting new design required labor-intensive reconstruction, including cutting decorative brickwork individually, at a time when contractors and subcontractors were experiencing labor shortage.

“We’re hoping that in the next three weeks it is done,” Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA) told the board last Monday. The FCRHRA oversees federal Community Development Block Grants, which fund the project.

“There’s always things that come up in these projects,” a weary but hopeful McHugh told the *Reporter*, estimating that the Spinner Park reconstruction might actually be completed \$80,000 below budget.

The Spinner Park discussion followed an informational hearing on the 2021 Community Development Block Grant. The grant, as in the past few years, will fund four social service programs, housing rehabilitation, and eligible infrastructure projects, particularly in Turners Falls.

In other news, the board approved an easement allowing Eversource to place a new pole on Sandy Lane, which will serve as a transmission point for a new solar array being constructed on the old burn dump at the end of the street. The vote on the pole – and the required public hearing – were delayed for several weeks due to the need for consultation with the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA), which is undertaking improvements on Sandy Lane in conjunction with the construction of a new bus maintenance facility at the location.

To add to the complexity of the decision, according to town administrator Steve Ellis, “Sandy Lane has never previously been accepted as a town way.” Ellis said once the pole is constructed and the road improved by the FRTA, “we’ll bring that to town meeting.”

The board held a hearing on the pole and approved its location on the west side of Sandy Lane, then approved a “revised deed” with FRTA for the purchase of the bus facility property. Ellis explained that the deed contains a new easement allowing Kearsarge Montague LLC, the company constructing the array, “to maintain and ultimately decommission” its assets located on the property.

The board also approved a separate “three-party agreement” between the town, solar company, and transit authority. Ellis called the whole process “maddeningly complex.”

### Health & Sanitation

Town health director Daniel Wasiuk presented the board with an update on the number of new COVID-19 cases in town. He said the number of “new cases” over the previous two weeks (July 25 though August 7) was seven, and that four of those individuals were unvaccinated and three “fully vaccinated.” Wasiuk told the board that the percentage of Franklin County residents that have been fully vaccinated stood at 61%.

Wasiuk also reported to the board on the progress of Montague’s mosquito control plan, which has been approved by the state, allowing the town to “opt out” of state-imposed aerial spraying. The health director

said his department has been distributing a flyer describing measures local residents should take to control mosquito breeding grounds, including eliminating standing water on their property.

Wasiuk also said the department was increasing inspections on potential breeding sites and was working with the public works department to clean culverts.

The board approved an application to the state Department of Environmental Protection for a grant for the water pollution control facility (WPCF). WPCF superintendent Chelsea Little told the board the funding would allow the town to investigate the perennial problem of excess water flowing into the system, called inflow and infiltration, particularly in Millers Falls. She said another part of the project review options for “hydraulic monitoring” of the combined sewer overflow system, which regulates overflow primarily from Turners Falls.

Ellis told the board the town has “avoided” the need to negotiate a new sludge cake removal contract for the WPCF, which might have resulted in a large cost increase for the facility.

### Private Sector

Joseph Price of the GreenHouse Cannabis Group Incorporated, which plans to open a pot delivery service in Millers Falls, told the board his company received its “provisional license” from the state Cannabis Control Commission. The town is waiting for the state to survey the site, delivery vehicles, and related equipment before it approves a final license.

Price said his firm would apply to the state for an additional “operator license” to own a storage facility, potentially in Montague. This would require a second “host community agreement” with the town, which he suggested could be negotiated in the early fall.

The board approved a “master agreement” with FirstLight Hydro LLC allowing the construction of the new Fifth Street Pedestrian Bridge in exchange for giving the power company the right to remove the old footbridge to the Strathmore factory complex. Among numerous other provisions, the town is given the right to construct a new footbridge at the same location “if we so choose,” in Ellis’s words.

Ellis also reported that FirstLight has agreed to provide the town with \$250,000 for “canal district utility improvements.” “There’s tremendous need in that area, should it ever be redeveloped,” he said.

### Other Business

The state Department of Transportation has responded favorably to the town’s lobbying to fix the North Leverett Bridge, which has been reduced to one lane. The bridge, Ellis said, has now received a “project number” and an “initial target” cost of \$5.9 million. There is no projected timeline for the project.

The board considered a “small contribution” to a preliminary study by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to produce a larger federal grant application to enhance the “digital regional economy” on the “Route 2 corridor.” The board said it was “intrigued and open to the possibility” of allocating \$3,000 from the town’s “community development discretionary unallocated fund” for the project.

The board approved the warrant for the September 21 special election to replace member Michael Nelson. The election will be held from noon to 7 p.m. at the usual polling places. Four candidates will be listed (*see article, Page A1*).

Executive assistant Wendy Bogusz told the board the CodeRED emergency notification system is now available in Spanish, Polish and Russian.

The board appointed Connor P. Johnson as a new grounds maintenance worker at the public works department, and approved a change order of \$5,251.07 for the Gill-Montague senior center roof replacement.

The next selectboard meeting will be held Monday, August 23 at 6 p.m.

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## LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

*Here’s the way it was on August 25, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.*

### WMeco Promises Slower Trucks in North Leverett

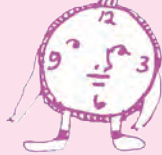
Permitting on the work Northeast Utilities needs to do to replace partially submerged utility pylons in a 20-acre beaver lake at the top of Richardson Road has been proceeding slowly. Now, neighbors who live along North Leverett Road have banded together to make certain the semi-trailer trucks that will start traveling up to the work site this Friday proceed slowly too.

Eight 80-ton semis carrying massive wooden mats to construct a staging road and work platforms in the beaver lake will run three trips a day up the narrow country road, for the next four weeks. “You will never have a truck run down North Leverett Road without a pace car leading it, up or down,” promised Matt Lagoy, project manager for Western Mass Electric Company, at a special meeting with the selectboard, attended by more than a dozen North Leverett residents on Wednesday, August 17.

That meeting was called after neighbors got up a petition, with several dozen signatures, calling on the board to make sure traffic laws were obeyed during the multi-million dollar construction project.

### MCTV Manager Fired

Battle lines have been drawn regarding the recent dismissal of Robin Mide from her position as station manager at Montague Community Television on Second Street in Turners Falls. 62-year-old Mide was terminated by Montague Community Cable’s (MCCI) six-member board of directors following an investigation of what board member Michael “Mik” Muller said was “an event that called her viability into question.” The vote on August 11 to pink slip the veteran manager from her multiple duties at MCTV was 5-0, with one abstention.



Mide, of Guilford, Vermont, has appealed the decision, essentially asking the board to reconsider. “I want my job back,” she said. “I was fired for trumped-up reasons. It was a bad decision that wasn’t in the best interest of Montague. [It] was harsh, it was sudden, and it came from out of the blue.”

Asked when Mide’s appeal would be heard, MCCI board chairperson Anne Harding said, “I don’t know yet, I’m waiting to hear from Robin to set a date.... I hope it would be within the next week, and I hope we can come to some sort of amicable conclusion to this.”

Pending her appeal, the decision is final and can’t be overturned by any other entity, including the eight-member Montague Cable Advisory Commission or the Montague selectboard. Her absence has created concern over a return to the period of instability in 2002 when financial mismanagement and inadequate staffing caused the station to be taken over by Greenfield Community Television.

### Another Excellent Block Party

The fifth annual Turners Falls Block Party rocked the bricks on Avenue A, Saturday, August 13.

The lawn-chair brigade was out in full force, but the zombies seemed to be dying off in this year’s kick-off parade. Vendors of all sorts lined the streets, along with community agencies and plenty of great food stands. This year, the Gill-Montague Community School Partnership grabbed the reins from RiverCulture to organize the event, so the focus shifted slightly to more child-friendly activities, and to enhancing our already connected neighborhood.

Recycled materials were turned into fashionable outfits, as models strutted their stuff down the Avenue in the third annual Fabrication fashion show. Musical acts of all sizes played at Spinner Park, Between the Uprights, the Shea Theater, and the 2nd Street Baking Company.

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SUMMER PROGRAM  
from page A1

rules, got to know each other, and tie-dyed the t-shirts that would be our uniforms for the summer!

Ms. Dianne Ellis, the pupil services director, volunteered the idea of having the older students help out the teachers and paraprofessionals for this year's summer program. Our day was set up so that from 9 a.m. to lunch, each grade was in a different classroom for academics, where they learned math, reading, writing, etc. After academics, there was lunch and recess, at which we did fun activities.

For example, the fourth grade class I worked in for the whole summer did a project about mixed-up animals. The students each had to design an animal that was a hybrid with a different animal, and write a description of it, and then their classmates tried to draw their animal from just the description. It was super fun! I made a mermaid-vampire-fairy hybrid.

At one recess, a couple other Youth Leaders and I organized a mini-performance. We read a whole book or a section of a book to the students, and then assigned them roles and helped them act it out as a play. For example, we read *Click, Clack, Moo* by Doreen Cronin to the younger kids, and then reread the story but had all the kids play the parts of the ducks, chickens, and cows. It was adorable, and they absolutely loved it.



Mural Project students learned about culture, ethnicity, and heritage, and researched symbols from different parts of the world to include in the new mural's design.

After lunch and recess, there were a bunch of different elective classes to choose from, like Creative Minds, Loom Beading, P.E. and Spanish. I worked mostly in the Creative Minds class, which was basically an art class in which we did stamps, painting, color wheels, and more. During the last couple weeks of the program, I worked in the Mural class.

The Mural class was led by Grace Harris from the Mass Migrant Education Program, and taught by Amalia Mayorga and Naomi Romm. We first learned about culture, ethnicity, and heritage, and where everyone in the class was from. After the students got to know each other a little bit more, we began talking about how we were going to be painting a mural – a world map, which was rep-

resentative of where everyone in our class comes from!

It was so amazing to see where everyone was from. A bunch of students were from Guatemala, one was from London, and one had family from Italy. After multiple practice drawings of monuments, symbols, and ideas of what we were going to put on our map, Ms. Naomi began sketching the whole world on a blank wall in the school. Once she was finished, the class helped paint in all the different countries and continents in different shades of blue. We then researched significant symbols around the world, in preparation for Ms. Naomi to draw them around the map.

This class was for sure one of my favorite parts of the Rising Star Youth Leader Program. It was fun,

I loved helping paint the wall, and I could tell the kids were beyond excited when the whole piece came together.

One of my fellow Youth Leaders, Erin Banister Potter, said her favorite part of this whole program was meeting new people. Erin is going into eighth grade this year at Great Falls Middle School. "This program has prepared me for different careers where I may work with other people," she said.

I asked Erin what a typical day looked like for her, because I definitely did not get to help with everything going on in the program. "I work with the preschoolers in the morning until twelve," she said. "Me and the preschoolers learn about different types of animals. We have learned about octopus, turtles, lizards, etc. We mostly learn about how they survive in the ocean."

In the afternoons, Erin helped with enrichment activities. "I usually go to Loom Beading," she told me. "We teach the kids how to make necklaces and bracelets! We also learn about Native Americans, who were the first to use loom beading to make necklaces and bracelets."

Erin also added, "This program is really good for teenagers who may not be busy in the summer, to have an opportunity for their first job, and to prepare them for future careers."

I absolutely loved this program, and I hope we can do something like it next summer, too!



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ALEX MCGUIGAN PHOTO

FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER AUGUST 19, 2021

Above: Local band Huevos II played a late evening set last Saturday night at Peskeomskut Park.

# Art & Soul Seeks A New Home in Montague

By LILLIAN MOSS

**TURNERS FALLS** – Art & Soul, an “incubator” of spiritual development through creative workshops and events, has had a presence all up and down the Pioneer Valley since 2014. Now it’s looking for a place to call home here in the five villages or in nearby Greenfield.

The brainchild of Susannah Crolius, an artist and minister, Art & Soul is an invitation to personal spiritual development. Workshops and events encourage participants to explore spiritual issues and themes through art. “We use art as a form of expression,” says Crolius in a recent conversation. “But we’re not primarily an art studio. The objects we create just help us give voice to what’s otherwise inexpressible.”

She continues by explaining the “soul” part of Art & Soul. “My work is not associated with any particular religion,” she says. “I have no spiritual agenda. My goal is to create a safe and sacred space for people to encounter the spirit within themselves.” Susannah calls herself a facilitator, rather than a teacher. “I create the space. Then I ask questions, offer prompts and materials, and let people run with it. And, wow, magic happens!”

“Magical,” is how Lorraine Algozer describes her first experience with Art & Soul. Algozer has been working with Crolius since 2019, and tells me that she stumbled on the workshops when they were held in Northampton. “Her space was filled to the brim with everything you can imagine for creative expression,” she says. “Trunks of fabric, shelves of objects from nature, art supplies of all kinds. Just being there gave me a good feeling.”

After a tough and disorienting year in her personal life, Lorraine found healing and connection at Art & Soul events. As she explains it, she was able to “reimagine herself” by expressing her inner life through art.

Susannah Crolius grew up in a creative family where self-expression was part of everyday life. Gardening,

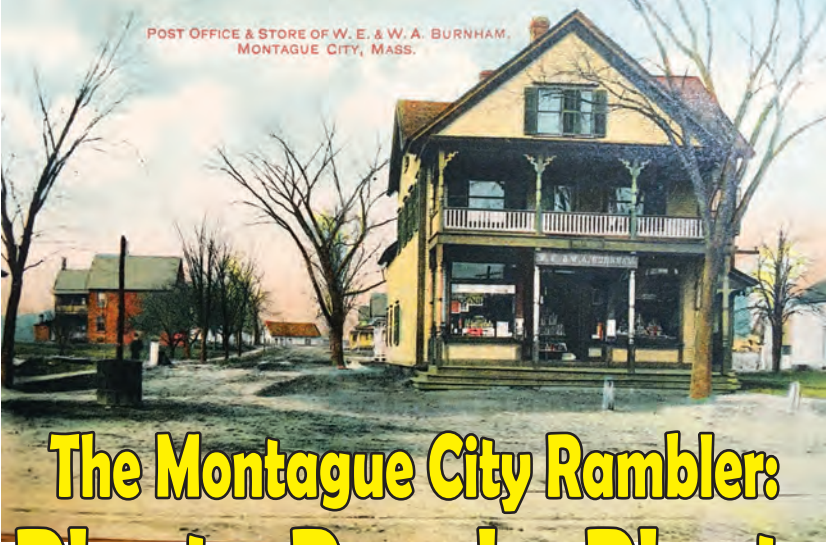


MOSS PHOTO

Susannah Crolius is an artist and minister interested in helping people to find their spiritual core through creative expression of all kinds.

writing, art, and theater set the stage for her childhood, so art became a natural expression of her personal spirituality as she matured. She entered seminary in her twenties and became an ordained minister, first with the Unitarian Church and then with the United Church of Christ. As a pastor, though, administrative duties distracted from her desire to be a facilitator of spiritual growth. She wanted, she says, “to make the essential

see **ART&SOUL** page B2



## The Montague City Rambler: Plants, People, Plants

By LILITH WOLINSKY

**MONTAGUE CITY** – It’s a few degrees past mid-summer, and time to wrangle my life into sense via words. My trusty first reader is heading to a camp in northern Vermont, and if I wish to have her perspective on this column – and I do – I need to pick up my contemplative pace a notch. This does not come naturally. I am frequently entertaining near-simultaneous thought, on a number of perhaps intertwining

topics, so that when I sit down to bring coherence and structure via the written word, I feel as though I’m confronting a plate of spaghetti, all sauced up with puttanesca, or perhaps a creamy carbonara. The unraveling takes time.

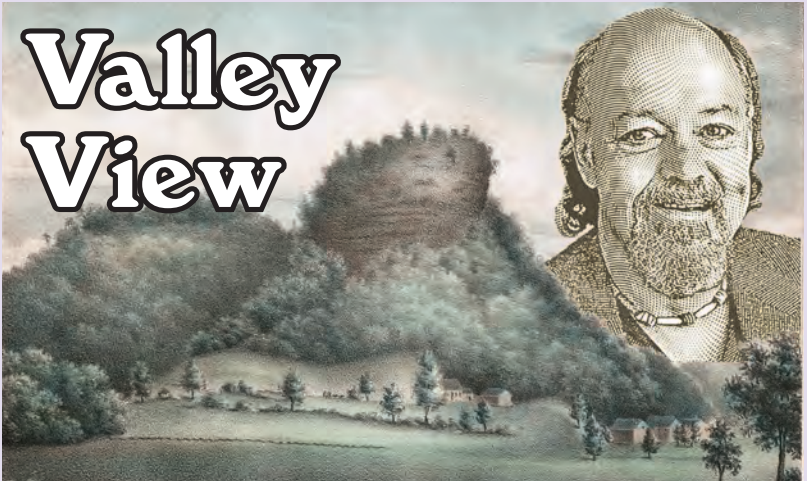
It’s easy, as a woman, to be aware of the voices of others, and harder to find and adhere to my own. The pressures are many, the judgments strong, and the multiple expectations anchored deeply, so that when I sit down, I must some-

times consciously acknowledge who is here with me, in my head, and shake them free, like coconuts to the ground. Sometimes, too, I have to give myself permission – to know what I know, to feel what I feel, and to choose the words that give wing and rhythm to that which I recognize as my own.

Even still, after having accumulated years and decades on the planet, I am confronted too often – by both men and women – who push harshly against my commitment to my own vision. I identify this as internalized misogyny in women, an unexamined fear wedged firmly against some vital internal organ, and in men, it is the misogyny as old as history, a comfortable bone, polished smooth. But in both instances, to those who cannot allow themselves even small liberties, any I afford myself are an affront, a tiny speck of sand lodged in the eye, and needing extraction.

Outside, my garden is flush with color. The almost-ceaseless July rain, a surprise after last year’s drought, has greened and dampened (in both ways) the perimeter of plants in my yard. My

see **RAMBLER** page B5



ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

By GARY SANDERSON

**GREENFIELD** – Does anyone else track the vintage cast-iron cookware market? It’s pretty wild. Didn’t so much as dip on eBay during the Americana crash.

Take, for example, a recent old-fashioned, on-site South Reading, Vermont auction. There the contents of a tidy, bucolic 100-acre gentleman’s farm were being sold in the morning shadow of picturesque Mount Ascutney. W.A. Smith Auctions was selling the worldly possessions of a late, well-heeled southern Connecticut couple who lived at the retirement home nestled into the western edge of a five-acre meadow bordered by a neat stone wall and mixed-hardwood forest. Classic central Vermont, in the heart of ski country.

It was a steamy Friday morning, high sun filtered through thin pinkish smoke from western wildfires. Flexible white plastic stacking chairs were set up for buyers in tight rows facing the auctioneer under a blue-striped tent, connected by a second tent to the home’s modern sunroom and deck. Talk about the comforts of home, they had it – the sturdy deck and sunroom, likely the retirees’ addition to their antique, center-chimney Cape, looking out at a private meadow friendly to deer, turkeys and bears, maybe a wayward moose.

The rear tent contained the merchandise to be sold, including antique case furniture, tables and chairs, and other household furnishings, such as beds and sofas, artwork, silver and jewelry, and anything else capable of tickling a buyer’s fancy. Among the wares resting on folding rect-

angular tables was a rare 1930s Griswold No. 7 Oval Roaster – a large, showy cast-iron baking pot that had obviously prepared many tasty pot and oven roasts, smoked shoulders and harvest stews, and will cook yet many more.

That festive covered cooking vessel with bold lettering on its lid had “wood-burning cookstove” written all over it. Looking at it, you could almost smell the soothing hickory-and-maple-smoke scent wafting through wainscoted parlors on a winter day.

Having collected vintage cast-iron cookware for decades, I had more than a passing interest in this large, handsome roaster. I had seen a few on eBay in recent years demanding an opening bid of 300 bucks or more. Maybe this one, sold at a weekday on-site auction advertised as accepting no phone or online bidding would come in cheaper, I told my wife, who rode co-pilot. Just the possibility was enough for me to justify a 90-minute journey to a place I love to visit anyway. Plus, being Lot 31, the hammer would likely fall on it less than an hour into the estimated six-hour sale.

“Worst case scenario is, in my opinion, \$350,” I predicted to my wife.

“I’m hoping for less than 200,” she answered. Isn’t that what wives are for?

Collecting cast-iron cookware was nothing new to us. I started pounding the pavement for it some 35 years ago, perusing backroad tag and estate sales, indoor and outdoor flea markets, and occasionally even auctions in search of early cookware marked *Erie*,

see **VALLEY VIEW** page B4



JOANNE SANDERSON PHOTO

A Griswold No. 7 Oval Roaster – but at what price?







PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

## Mug Race Blasts Off Saturday

**MONTAGUE** – The 40<sup>th</sup> edition of the Mug Race is set to “blast off” on Saturday, August 21 at 8:30 a.m. from the Montague Center common. This 5.5-mile road race covers Taylor Hills, runs along the Connecticut River, and traverses back to end at the ball field on Station Street. Pewter mugs are awarded to the top male and female finishers, and ceramic mugs to the top three finishers in each division. All runners are entered to a lottery drawing for prizes at the end.

This year the Mug Race committee will honor two longtime race supporters, Dr. Al Ross and Dave Kaynor.

Dr. Ross passed away on October 13, 2020. He helped form Connecticut River Internists and became “Doc” to hundreds of families in the area. Ross was also a huge believer in exercise as a way to bring a community together, and he “needled” the Old Home Days Committee to add a race to its line up. His daily running route is now the course the Mug Race follows.

One other passion (but certainly not his only) was the preservation of land. Ross served on the board

of directors of the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, of which his daughter Emma is currently the director. And it’s Ross who started the annual Sawmill River Run road race on January 1 – part of the proceeds always went to the Mount Grace Land Trust.

At the race starting area, Mount Grace Land Trust folks will have an information booth and will announce the date of the dedication of a Connecticut River canoe launch area on Meadow Road. This is a parcel of land owned by Ross and entrusted to this endeavor.

This area also lost a well-known musician and lover of the Mug Race, Dave Kaynor, who passed away on June 1 after a long battle with ALS. Kaynor shared his love and talent of fiddling all over this valley. Kaynor would run the race whenever his summer schedule allowed, and he finished many times in the top 10%.

Following the race at 10 a.m., some of Kaynor’s Montague Monday night fiddlers will honor him with a concert for everyone to enjoy. The performance will be held rain or shine at the Congregation Church on the common.



## MOVIE REVIEW

### Old (dir. M. Night Shyamalan, 2021)

By SEAMUS TURNER-GLENNON

**CHARLEMONT** – Two years ago in 2019, Indian-born American filmmaker Manoj Nellyyattu – better known as “M. Night” – Shyamalan released *Glass*, his best work to date. A sequel to both his 2000 superhero exercise *Unbreakable* and his 2016 psycho-thriller *Split*, Shyamalan used *Glass* as his personal forum to deconstruct superhero cinema on a fundamental, ideological level, and to create an epic of sorts which existed more in the realms of emotion and atmosphere than in those of logic and didactics. And in his newest effort, *Old*, Shyamalan continues in his almost total rejection of the logical in favor of raw, visceral emotion.

On its face, *Old* might appear to be one thing, something comparatively regular. It’s a thriller, maybe, or a horror. Or one of the twisty little Shyamalan joints those myopic critics who can’t get over *The Sixth Sense* walk into every Shyamalan film expecting to see, and are sorely disappointed that at the age of 50-something they might be expected to watch a work of art different from the sum total of the three types they’ve experienced previously.

But whatever you might think about – or expect – out of *Old*, Shyamalan feels almost determined to prove you wrong. Equal parts family psychological drama, Twilight Zone episode, low fantasy, mystery, science fiction fairy tale, and horror, *Old* is a film which exists not with inherent contradictions, but *within* them.

The plot of *Old* is relatively basic. A few different families are brought to a beach near a resort which they soon discover is inescapable, and

also makes them age rapidly. As the plot progresses, characters die off one by one, almost slasher-style: some of old age; some of complications relating to the aging process; some of even darker causes.

But the straightforward and simplistic nature of the plot isn’t really the point of what Shyamalan’s doing here. As these events play out, Shyamalan seems almost totally uninterested in the usual thriller trappings one might expect from something like *Old*, but in the character drama and existential horror imagery to be derived from the plotline.

This is Shyamalan’s most truly scary work since his tense, taught foray into the Blumhouse horror in 2015 with *The Visit*. There’s something almost nightmarish in tone about *Old* at points, something that borders on a tribute to the visceral bad-dream cinema of many greats of the horror genre. Yet, in spite of the terror he invokes through his imagery or thematic dread, Shyamalan still feels capable of retaining a fundamental love for human beings.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

### Two More Catalytic Converters Stolen; Structure Fire; Bikes, Scooters, Mopeds, Motorized Bikes, Golf Cart...

#### Monday, 7/26

10:37 a.m. Caller from Second Street reports porch furniture stolen overnight.

10:06 p.m. Screaming for help outside on West Street. Mother of the female calmed down the party.

#### Tuesday, 7/27

1:57 p.m. Report of men using the bathroom and consuming alcohol at Peskeomskut Park. When asked for a description, the caller stated she did not observe the men doing these things but had assumed at some point they were going to. Officer advised.

2:01 p.m. Theft of a catalytic converter reported on Walnut Street.

5:27 p.m. Caller stated he had been held against his will at an apartment on Fourth Street, and repeatedly assaulted, because his captors thought he stole something. Interviewed at the station. Victim complaining of loss of hearing and injuries, EMS to station.

5:58 p.m. Tree down on Greenfield Road, power out. DPW responding.

#### Wednesday, 7/28

9:50 a.m. Shots heard on Letourneau Way and Dell Street. Officer unable to find source.

1:47 p.m. Single-car accident on South Street. Vehicle struck an abutment.

6:13 p.m. Report of vandalism to a vehicle on Warner Street, hole in radiator. Officer advised.

6:30 p.m. Raccoons in a dumpster on K Street. Officer placed a log in the dumpster so they could climb out.

#### Friday, 7/30

3:37 p.m. Suspicious person on a bike reported on Keith Street. Officer investigated.

6:45 p.m. Report of three motorized bicycles on the bike path.

8:53 p.m. Report of a couple fighting at FL Roberts on Third Street. Officer found a couple joking around, no distress.

#### Saturday, 7/31

1:33 a.m. Caller states her daughter was bitten by a bat. They are at the hospital and have the bat in a container, and would like the ACO to contact them about what to do with it.

8:35 a.m. Loose beagle reported running toward Farren Care Center. Unable to locate.

10:59 a.m. Beagle brought in to TFFD. They will post on Facebook to try to locate the owner.

4:27 p.m. Disabled motor vehicle on canal bridge. Moved, courtesy transport provided.

8:24 p.m. Report of drinking and urinating at Peskeomskut Park. Parties cleaning up and moving

along.

#### Monday, 8/2

10:52 a.m. Report of a beer bottle being thrown out the window of a vehicle on Route 47 heading into Montague. Unable to locate.

4:44 p.m. Large bear reported walking from Goddard Avenue to Maple Street. Located. Officer was able to guide the bear back into the woods.

#### Tuesday, 8/3

11:49 a.m. Report of porch damage and bicycle stolen on I Street.

3:29 p.m. 911 misdial due to horseback riding.

3:43 p.m. Caller reports that some black men are riding mopeds on the streets and sidewalks in that area. Officers located a younger kid on a small battery-operated motorcycle and advised him of the complaint.

#### Wednesday, 8/4

12:18 a.m. Animal complaint on Millers Falls Road. Unable to reach owner.

3:49 a.m. Barking dog on N Street. Peace restored.

11:40 a.m. Accident in Food City parking lot. Report taken.

10:16 p.m. Report of people playing basketball at Unity Park. Verbal warning.

#### Thursday, 8/5

10:10 a.m. Male party called in believing police were looking for him in connection with a road rage incident in Gill yesterday. Gill police were given a phone number where he can be reached.

12:31 p.m. Larceny of motorized scooter reported on Second Street.

2:41 p.m. Party found motorized scooter in an alley, with someone trying to paint it and sell it to another party at the gas station.

4:01 p.m. Girl’s bike was stolen on Fourth Street, one black tire and one white tire. Report taken.

10:31 p.m. Request for assistance with getting a bat out of a house on Burnett Street. Bat removed.

#### Friday, 8/6

3:31 a.m. Report of possible stolen golf cart on Fairway Avenue. Caller advised she heard a loud bang, then saw a golf cart being driven towards Walnut Street with its lights on. Officer found an employee had used a golf cart to get to the greens to water them.

11:23 a.m. Request for assistance with a skunk on Turners Falls Road. ACO advised.

1:03 p.m. Caller from Third Street looking to report possible drug activity. Referred to the detective.

5 p.m. Report of two colie dogs being allowed to rush at people on H Street.

Referred to ACO.

9 p.m. Report of a dog locked in a car on Bridge Street in Millers. No service necessary: officer found a window cracked; not hot, and dark outside. Owner having a drink in a nearby bar, but no need to contact.

9:13 p.m. Motorized bike stopped on the bike path near Eleventh Street. Advised party’s father about legal operation, will be pushing the bike home.

9:30 p.m. Smell of trash burning on Montague Street.

10:10 p.m. GFPD requested assistance with a large fight/gathering at Miles and Main streets in that town.

11:10 p.m. Large bear sighted at Highland Avenue in Millers Falls.

#### Saturday, 8/7

12:25 a.m. Caller from Avenue B thinks there is a bat in her house; she can hear fluttering, but is blind. Officer caught and removed the bat.

11:04 a.m. Officer issued seven parking tickets on Old Greenfield Road by the gate to the railroad tracks.

2:58 p.m. Large amount of glass reported on the sidewalk by Kostanski Funeral Home.

8:48 p.m. Family dispute resolved on Fourth Street: verbal only; one male left for the night.

#### Sunday, 8/8

11:15 a.m. Caller on Turners Falls Road states someone put screws in his driveway. Officer requested.

2:41 p.m. Structure fire on Park Street, assistance needed with traffic in the area.

10:34 p.m. Report of loud children in upstairs apartment on Montague City Road. Officer could not hear loud noises, only the normal level of people talking.

#### Monday, 8/9

12:19 a.m. Caller reports upstairs neighbors yelling and fighting. Quiet upon arrival; residents advised of the complaint.

8:39 a.m. Two reports of a fawn in downtown Turners Falls. Referred to environmental police.

2:13 p.m. 911 misdials from T Street with a child laughing in the back-ground. Mother advised that the child is playing with the phone.

7:59 p.m. Smoke observed from a wooded area near I Street. Call transferred to TFFD. PD responded, observed small fire with children running from it.

8:59 p.m. Report of late night basketball games going on at Unity park. Parties moved along.

#### Tuesday, 8/10

8:14 a.m. Caller states that a man she gave a ride to yesterday took money

from her purse and car.

4:21 p.m. Report of a fawn at Seventh and Avenue B streets. Officer stating there is a family of deer living in the sand pits in that area. Unable to locate.

#### Wednesday, 8/11

8 a.m. ACO helped with freeing a skunk from a trap at Ste. Anne’s Cemetery.

1:51 p.m. Larceny of a catalytic converter reported on L Street.

8:35 p.m. Report of male hitting three parked cars with his vehicle on Greenfield Cross Road, an arrest was made for speeding and OUI.

#### Thursday, 8/12

6:23 a.m. Caller states she was told a female she has been having trouble with told her she has her debit card, and wants the officer to help her get it back. Investigated.

1:44 p.m. Request for help disposing of white powdery substance found in a bag near the dam gate-house. Bag retrieved, all clear.

8:39 p.m. Report of people camping outside of Food City and using electricity. Office found them using the power to charge their phones before going home.

#### Friday, 8/13

8:45 a.m. Caller reports a dog panting and barking in a vehicle parked across from Carroll’s Market in Millers Falls. Officer advised the dog not to be in distress: sun roof open, dog sitting next to the window and not panting or barking. Owner has the dog now and was advised.

1:29 p.m. Report of people drinking alcohol at Peskeomskut Park. Checked; no one found to be consuming alcohol.

11:11 Complaint of loud music on Grove Street. Music was off when the officer arrived, and the resident advised of the complaint.

#### Saturday, 8/14

4:15 p.m. Large amount of glass was reported in the road at Chestnut and Unity streets. DPW to clean up.

6:24 p.m. Loud music complaint on Fifth Street.

10:18 p.m. Complaint of a dog barking for two hours on N Street. Unable to locate.

#### Sunday, 8/15

2:56 p.m. Caller reports her purse was stolen from a picnic table while at the Country Creemee. Creemee then called saying someone turned it in and they have it.

8:39 p.m. Revving engines reported on Millers Falls Road. Officers advised of wood falling from the roof of a car.

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**VALLEY VIEW** from page B1  
*Victor and Griswold, or Sidney, Sidney Holloware and Wagner Ware Sidney O.* My target was cookware made before I was born in 1953, the best stuff dating back to between the 1890s and 1930s.

We’re talking about: skillets, hinged skillets, double skillets, double-hinged skillets, and high-sided chicken pans; handled griddles, bailed griddles and skillet griddles; muffin and gem pans; Dutch ovens, Scotch bowls and kettles. You name it, I’ve found it over the years. But big oval roasters like the one on the block in Vermont don’t appear often. There’s good reason. Folks don’t part with them. Why should they? Functional and durable, they last forever with minimal care.

And, oh my, do they ever produce superb meals from stovetop and oven.

Something average Joes who grew up with cast iron in their childhood homes seem to know little or nothing about is fitted skillet covers with self-basting rings on the inside. These cost as much as or more than the No. 8 frying pans they fit, and much more for larger and smaller pans. Cooking with skillet covers has become a lost art. But do they ever come in handy for a wide variety of stovetop and oven cooking. I think everyone should own at least one for their most-used black frying pan.

When I was in the bed and breakfast business for more than 15 years, decorative cast-iron cookware came in handy as presentation pieces for the breakfast and party table. Placing an oven-baked daisy ham from the smokehouse on the breakfast table in the cast-iron skillet it was baked on was always a nice touch. So was putting out cornbread in a hot No. 6 skillet, fresh from the oven. How can you beat cob-shaped corn muffins served in Griswold pans? Plus, nothing makes better blueberry and raspberry muffins than heavy cast-iron popover pans.

All of it evoked old-fashioned ambiance for travelers passing through the area. Call it Connecticut Valley hospitality.

Although we’ve been out of the hospitality grind for many years, cast-iron cookware still dominates our pantry. There’s an art to caring for and keeping it seasoned, which is by now second nature in our daily routine. We prefer wooden to metal spatulas except for the most stubborn problems, and use little or no soap on cast iron. Only when absolutely necessary do we soak a pan for extended periods to aid in difficult cleanup brought by losing focus to untimely cooking distractions. Even then you can eventually scrape off any tough, burned-on mess stuck to the pan, though it sometimes necessitates elbow grease and a stiff metal spatula.

Over time, a cared-for, seasoned, vintage skillet or griddle pan becomes glassy and slick, requiring little cooking oil to pan fry meat,

and a dab more for pancakes or French toast.

Those who know the construction markers on collectible skillets can recognize them even when the trademarks are totally hidden under decades’ worth of black, crusty grease. The best way to clean such a skillet is to place it in a hot open fire to burn off the crud. Then you scrub it down in hot, soapy water with a wire brush, scouring pad or fine steel wool, dry it, and season it with the oil of your choice before placing it in a slow oven or atop the woodstove for a few hours.

I prefer bacon fat or clarified butter (ghee) for seasoning, but that’s just me. Olive oil, corn oil, canola oil, coconut oil or even spray-on Pam all do the trick. It’s a good idea during the process to take the pan out of the oven from time to time and remove excess grease before it forms a tacky residue on the surface.

It never hurts to tune up even seasoned pans from time to time, just to keep them smooth and shiny, and it’s crucial to thoroughly clean pans after cooking. I clean a dirty pan by scraping it with a wooden spatula or scouring pad under hot, flowing water. Then the proper drying process is essential to keep a pan in tip-top shape. Use paper towels to rub it down, starting inside the cooking basin and working your way around the outer pan. That way you’re wiping the greasiest part first and using the greasy paper towel to spread the residue over the rest of the pan, including the handle for aesthetics.

A heated woodstove on which to dry the pan is a plus for those who heat with wood. Cast-iron cookware made before 1950 is cast thinner and smoother than the modern stuff, making it easier to manipulate and clean. The more prominently marked pans, such as the large-logo Griswolds from the 1920 and 1930s, command the highest prices. The newer stuff is clunky and its surface is rough, making it less functional.

Which brings us back to that oval roaster I chased 90 minutes north to central Vermont.

My price estimate to start the trip was dead wrong. Despite the absence of phone and internet bidding, there was a little wrinkle capable of driving up the price – that is, absentee bids. In other words, those who wanted to place a maximum bid without attending the auction could phone it in during the days leading up to sale day. There were many left bids on the oval roaster. The underbidder was one of them.

The hammer fell at \$425, which jumped to \$501.50 with the auctioneer’s juice. And there you have it. No oval-roaster bargain was to be had that day in South Reading, Vermont – proving once again that if it’s quality you’re chasing, be prepared to pony up fair market value.

Something else: by the time that classic piece of cast-iron cookware again hits the market, it’ll likely cost more.



# LOOKING FOR SOAPBOX RACERS

By MIK MULLER

**GREENFIELD & TURNERS FALLS** – Eleven years ago this week, after nine months of planning a brand new soapbox race event in Turners Falls, the first one since 1949 I’d been told, I finally got around to arm-twisting my daughter Ivy into entering the race herself with a cart she and I would build. This is the week that we began assembling the bicycle parts and the lumber, and with some help from Joe Landry, fashioned the “Poison Ivy” – a green, three-wheeled soapbox cart. It was just scraps of lumber I found in my garage and used kids’ bikes that I cut apart and bolted to the cobbled wooden frame. I don’t think it cost me more than \$10 altogether. But when it was done it was awesome.

I’ve been a fan of soapbox cart building and racing after seeing it in an episode of The Little Rascals on TV as a young kid in NYC in the ‘60s. Living in the city, I didn’t have much opportunity to participate in a derby until I was 12, when my day camp held a soapbox race down a long sloping boardwalk. My brother and a friend of mine and I entered a bare-bones, single sheet of plywood with three bike wheels contraption that ultimately beat every other cart by five times their distance. That experience stayed with me for a long while.

So, later in life as an adult with a family and after moving to and living in Montague for a decade, in 2010 I tried my hand in organizing a derby in Turners Falls, on the First Street hill at Unity Park. The people involved were wonderful, especially Deb Bourbeau, who worked it like a boss, garnering a high percentage of town hall staff to volunteer that day, and managing both the racer check-in and the time-tallying spreadsheet to establish racer place order as the day went on.

So many other people, too, but of course the board and staff of MCTV, the fiscal owner of the event those four years, who brought all hands on deck to videotape the whole thing and show it on Channel 17.

And how did my daughter do that first year? Though she did protest, albeit weakly, about going down the hill in the cart we built, I knew she would enjoy it. My effort was rewarded by the giant grin on her face as she came down the Unity Park hill, and then won first place. Standing on the hay bale trying to hold up the giant trophy must have been the thrill of her 10-year-old lifetime.



REPORTER FILE PHOTO

Those were four wonderful years, 2010 through 2013, where I also met derby racers from all over the northeast, including Connecticut, New Jersey, and Vermont, each of whom came to town to join us in a festival of good old American backyard armchair mechanic engineering genius, as well as those who knew what they were doing.

This is what these kinds of derbies mean to me. Parents and their kids, or work buddies and other types of organized enterprises like hockey leagues or fire departments or body shops or knitting clubs... building something from scrap over several weekends and rolling it down the hill with a bunch of other people who did the same thing, all enjoying the fruits of their labor while people cheer on.

Oh, the creativity! From giant boxes of Tide detergent, to medieval logs on wheels, to tiny hamsters, to piggy banks, to aerodynamic bullets, to bare-bones plywood and two-by-four creations, to a Dada Seuss poobah (no capes!). All cool, rolling creations. Good stuff.

After the last race I thought to myself, wouldn’t it be great to have races in other towns? Each with their

own characteristics, downtown, and scenery, and each race organized with the same set of rules so people who build a cart would know they could race in any town’s derby, while of course also eating lunch there, making new friends, and creating a mini, floating tourism, grounded in a makers’ community. Contractors, crafters, and weekend warriors can build these things, and they also like to eat out: vacation with their avocation. That would be cool. And wouldn’t it be even cooler if it was a fundraiser?

Unfortunately, the Montague race had to go into hibernation for a while, so that thought was put on hold while I focused on my business.

Fast forward six years. Steve Ellis called me in October 2019 asking me to join the effort to bring the derby back to Unity Park, this time run by and a fundraiser for the town’s Rec Department. He had a committee raring to go. I’m grateful to him, because that was the spark that reactivated that thought of mine about bringing back the sport of DIY soapbox racing to local towns. Thus, I started NortheastSoapbox.org.

And as it just so happens, because of Montague’s derby reincarnation, a new race has now emerged in Greenfield, being held the weekend before Montague’s resurgent day. It’s a two-fer! Build one cart, race it twice! Two Sundays in a row in September. My secret plan is working.

Both races are fundraisers for each town’s recreation department. The proceeds of Montague’s race will benefit their summer program scholarship fund, and Greenfield’s race will benefit their skate park fund. Special thanks to Greenfield Savings Bank for being the top-most, Presenter-level sponsor of both races, which gave us the needed early injection of funds to get the races rolling. They are big supporters of this sport!

Committee members Peter Chilton of Nova Motorcycles and Seth Rutherford of 253 Farmacy have been instrumental in making the Montague race happen, including helping reclaim and repair the weather-beaten starting ramps I built with Bill Bry back in 2011.

Turners resident and welder Jon Bander is creating the three race divisions’ 1st, 2nd and 3rd place trophies, and Suzanne LoManto of RiverCulture is organizing the custom “style” trophies with her network of artisans. Russ Brown will return as the race announcer, and this year will be joined by Turners Falls resident and WRSI radio personality Monte Belmonte and Rep. Natalie Blais, both of whom will be the Style Judges.

So, it’s coming together. I wish you would join us in the celebration of simple, kinetic craftsmanship. Gravity racing, perhaps also as rolling art.

Yes, we are looking for racers. And sponsors, of course, but mostly racers so they and their supporters will have a plentiful cohort, and attendees will get a great show.

Racers can be anywhere from 8 years old to 80. Carts have simple size and weight rules, and must have brakes. Shoot for speed, or shoot for style. Or both.

And next year there is a good chance Bernardston and even Fitchburg will have races, as well as a couple locations in southern Vermont. So any cart you build could be used several times a year, over several years, and passed off to family and friends when you’re either done or ready for an upgrade. To wit, my daughter’s cart Poison Ivy is being rehabbed by my son-in-law Dan with his buddy Jake to compete in both races this year, while Ivy’s boyfriend is building one for himself, too. She just wants to cheer on this year.

If you want to enter or support the Montague Soapbox race, and maybe the Greenfield race, too, please check out their official sites, linked below. There is still time to build something for Greenfield’s Sunday, September 12 race, which can be further modified in time for Montague’s race a week later on the 19th.

It will be a grand day out.

**Mik Muller, Northeast Soapbox Association**

*MontagueSoapboxRaces.com  
GreenfieldSoapboxRaces.com*

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

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**RAMBLER** from page B1

hydrangea tree is lush and struggling – heavy with fragrant, white panicles and abuzz with winged creatures – while more leaves turn yellow, and fall to the ground, day by day. The baby apples and the crab are rimmed with leaves, yet still with spots of rust and curling, and the occasional patch of fuzzy white (and as of yet unidentified) insect matter. Though these trees are small, the birds have noticed their arrival, and perch while singing. They have my adoration.

The newly-named “great bed,” an ever-changing palette to share with the world, is a mix of planned endeavor and volunteers whom I could not bring myself to extricate. One of these, a jagged cardoon, silvery-green leaves reaching for passersby, is my favorite. While the foliage has steadily grown from earliest spring, and is near shoulder-high, it only now has tiny, purple-tipped thistles emerging from the multiple Y’s along its thick main stem.

Elsewhere in the bed: still fra-

grant, but waning dill; once ethereal, now drooping borage; late poppies blooming small, red cups; and the sprawl of pink and purple petunias, planted for my mother, who loves their lingering night time fragrance. Aztec zinnias, fringed in orange, have avoided the affliction of mildew, and stand erect, while monarchs, swallowtails, and a plethora of small white moths, double-dotted in green, dip and rise on the soft currents of air above the stems and leaves.

Almost every fiber of my being has been focused on finding a new living situation for my mother. Having worked with the elderly, I am aware of the profound vulnerability that can accompany aging – particularly when memory is impaired – and the equal dearth of resources, as our culture-at-large still over-values those with firm skin, taut bums, and a wide-eyed gaze.

It is dark at 8:30, and I see the evidence of time everywhere.



# Artist Profile: Annaleah Gregoire

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – As one of my latest artist profiles, which I like doing sometimes based on the looks of their art, I have picked Annaleah Gregoire. Her art is rather unique looking. She has her own website, where she speaks about it: “In my life and my artwork, there is a powerful pull toward the strange.”

“I’ve been working on my art very diligently since I was 15,” Annaleah told me. Her background consists of being a sculptor and painter, currently working on a BFA at California College of the Arts. She apprenticed before that with her art mentor, Peter Ruhf, who taught her how to use oil paint. She called Ruhf her “biggest fan,” and said that he’s a huge supporter of her work, and that she may not be where she is now without him.

Some of Gregoire’s work is in design commissions which are seen on Spotify, Apple Music and more. This has been going on for three years. She also has a t-shirt business which she has been doing work on for about 4½ or 5 years. Her website, called Annaleah Moon Studios, does pretty well, and she puts her illustrations on it.

“I’m currently investing in materials to accommodate the shifting circumstances during the pandemic,” she told me. “Before this, my commissions were more widespread, and I was able to attend shows where I met clients. As of the latest, that has been on a personal basis.”

Speaking of art shows, Gregoire considers her most notable one to be a solo gallery show at Hawks & Reed in Greenfield. She was also recently featured at a place called Abrams Claghorn Gallery in Albany, California. She told me of



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Evolving, a digitalized ink illustration by Annaleah Gregoire.

## Montague Community Television News Summer Goings-On

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

**TURNERS FALLS** – The meetings of the Montague finance committee, the Gill-Montague regional school committee, and the Montague selectboard are all up to date and available for viewing on Vimeo and on Channel 17. MCTV’s coverage of the River’s Birthday bash is now up, and soon to follow is our video of the Nolumbeka Homelands Festival.

All MCTV videos are available on our Vimeo page, which can be found linked to the website, [montaguetv.org](http://montaguetv.org), under the tab “Videos.” Community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 17, as well as

featured on the Vimeo page.

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

MCTV is looking to hire a producer to make Spanish-language content. Please email [infomontaguetv@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:infomontaguetv@gmail.com).



## RIVERBOAT DISPATCH Trash-er Island

By GALEN HUCKINS

**TURNERS FALLS** – The riverboater is bound to encounter many obstacles that float, bob, and weave in the current, from the errant discarded Croc sandal up to casks, barrels, or detached dock flotation.

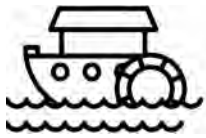
On our trip upriver to Northfield, we came across a whole tree, lodged just below the French King Bridge. After an expedition determined that the tree in question wasn’t going anywhere, we settled nearby for a lunch break and took our sandwiches on the trunk of the giant river blockage, listening to the rumble of cars and the wheeze of semi-truck air brakes overhead.

This kind of debris in the water isn’t surprising; after the extended rainfall and flooding up and down the valley, the Connecticut River is awash in flotsam. The US Coast Guard has issued several warnings to boaters on the Connecticut, and many of the river travelers we come across are taking extreme caution to avoid running into submerged logs. These can be hard to spot when, like icebergs, the majority of the hazard lies just underwater.

While the Channel Princess riverboat never gets going fast enough to get into too much trouble with floating debris, we’ve been posting a lookout on the bow just in case.

For weeks now the debris has been piling up and forming a massive trash-berg at the string of orange pearls above the Turners Falls Dam. When we stopped by for a look on Tuesday, the island created by all this debris extended the whole width of the river, and was so well-developed it appeared almost as if a speedy runner could get from one bank to the other without landing in the muddy waters.

It’s not a pretty sight, a good deal of construction material and other trash is caught up in this new land mass. While we’re curious to see how FirstLight intends to clear all this, for now it sits as a reminder of how much accumulation there is after a rainy season like this one – and how many travelers there are on the water besides us animals.



You can follow the riverboat and its travels at [www.riversignal.com](http://www.riversignal.com).

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the  
poetry  
page

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

– William Carlos Williams

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

# Our August Poetry Page

## Is it the shape

of a poem that can change this?  
Can a poem be shaped from a human heart  
Can capitalism reshape its values in time  
Isn't racism tired by now,  
is it God and nature themselves  
who created this vast beautiful  
diversity of human expression?

Is there time for you me to stop  
the projection of our brokenness on other  
raptures, embrace I'm a murder too but aren't  
we all?

I've seen their pictures from their breast  
pockets their mothers' love but do you have  
time for one full cleansing breath to feel the  
shape of the buddha thank you for the "Wokeness"  
condemnation  
as fear shame and hurt slithers among us

I am the farmers of the red river delta  
I was sent to kill it's impossible to be other  
In God's creation don't you think?

– Al Miller  
*Montague Center*

## The Story Speaks

Every story touches every other story.  
Stories are not us, they are only stories.  
All stories are true and not true.  
These small mysteries and deaths are our  
life in the dream.  
The breath, a vastness of wind.

All stories are trees.  
All stories are sea.  
All stories are river.  
All stories are You.

– John High  
*Brooklyn, NY*

## Ashes to Ashes

Understand  
you are not dead  
but always dying,  
perhaps  
a breath or two,  
heartbeat or ten  
distant from  
denouement,  
final scene nothing  
as you'd imagined it;  
peaceful,  
farewells in place,  
job well-done,  
life well-lived,  
affairs tidy  
and neat,  
precious one  
stroking  
hand or hair.

Instead,  
disarray and  
unrequited e-mail,  
unbalanced  
laundry in the washer,  
bed unmade,  
bills unpaid,  
taxes due,  
cellphone buzzing,  
pan on the stove  
soon to boil dry,  
subsequent fire  
a fitting inferno,  
legacy consumed,  
alone on the  
cold, hard  
bathroom floor,  
intestate,  
soul agape,  
temperature rising,  
dog scratching  
at the door,  
smoke in your eyes.

– Gary Greene  
*Greenfield*

## Cobwebs of the Mind

Strange how it all came to pass –  
Suddenly, there's mayhem.  
Everything moved much too fast,  
While the thinker gurgled in his playpen

The days of youthful, exuberant vigor  
Were replaced, as it were,  
By a silent, menacing figure,  
Making my future an amusement park blur.

I met someone once, a Nonesuch,  
An invisible sort,  
And extremely cold to the touch.  
To my recollection, he called himself Mort.

"Mort," I said, "though I can't see you,  
I'll agree that you exist,  
Adorned in transparent rue,  
Alone in your incoherent bliss."

"It is I," he replied, "Mortimer Glink,  
A placid, unassuming fellow.  
And rightly so, I think –  
It's highly enjoyable being mellow.

And that's why I'll utter not a word,  
While letting you choose bad values over good.  
You'll discover the final entity absurd,  
As you probably knew you would."

"Mort," I said of a sudden,  
"Could it be that we've previously met?  
You had the power of a bludgeon,  
And the sight of your ugly visibility made me sweat.

And now, in your garden of clearness,  
With omniscient massiveness  
Embracing eternal clearness,  
I feel the horsewhip of your passiveness."

Mortimer responded, "I believe the light  
Containing the answers for which you've been waiting  
Has shone down upon you, feeding an appetite  
In ravenous need of sating."

An electrical current having thus tickled my brain,  
I inquired, "Could this also mean  
That the decades I spent inert and insane  
Were merely directionless paths to where I'd already been?"

"That is correct," Mortimer agreed.  
"You are a fast learner.  
Next time, pay such heed  
Before placing your soul on the back burner.

For when your ego thinks it can see right through me,  
Your eyes in reality are hopelessly closed.  
And by now, you know the perils of being unable to see,  
Not discerning the sharpest thorns on the most elegant rose.

Contrariwise, neither can you extol the grace,  
And the gentleness within,  
Of the man whose mutilated face  
Appears as hideous as sin."

"Mortimer," I concluded, "today I find  
That I begin to understand the reasons why  
It is such a convoluted, sometimes hellish odyssey through the  
cobwebs of the mind."  
And, with that being said, we bid each other goodbye.

– Kevin Smith  
*Turners Falls*

## Contributors' Notes:

Al Miller lives in Montague with his wife and best friend Suzanne. A Vietnam vet, he has dedicated himself for a half century to opposing war. His work appears in War and Moral Injury. The poem in this issue is from an ongoing poem-memoir.

Kevin Smith, tuba player and frequent Poetry Page contributor, lives in Turners Falls with his wonderful and inspirational girlfriend, Stephanie.

Gary Greene won the bronze award in the 2021 Poet's Seat Poetry Prize. He recently published *Poems In A Time of Grief*, available through local bookstores and in a Kindle edition at Amazon.

John High is a poet, translator, Zen monk, and professor emeritus at LIU in Brooklyn. He has published ten books. The most recent, *Without Dragons Even the Emperor Would be Lonely*, appeared in 2020 from Wet Cement Press. He is currently at work on a long poem, "Scrolls of a Temple Sweeper," from which this poem was selected.

ALEXANDER ROTONDO PHOTO

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 19**  
Energy Park, Greenfield: *Jennie McAvoy, Russ Thomas*. 6 p.m.

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 20**  
1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Diana Jones*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: Barbès in the Woods Pre-Party with *Bosq, DJ Bon-gohead*. Free. All ages. Tacos. Fashion show outdoors at 8 p.m., DJs indoors at 9 p.m.

Northfield Drive-In, Northfield: *Shrek* and *E.T.* \$. 8:15 p.m.

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 21**  
Center Street, Montague Center: Barbès in the Woods global music festival feat. *Liraz, Son Rompe Pera, Kaleta & Super Yamba, Los Cumpleanos, Bigyuki, Arooj Aftab & the Vulture Prince Ensemble, Mamie Minch, Berkshire Bateria*, art, theater, food, and more. \$. Half-price tickets for Montague residents are available at the Village Store. See *barbesinthewoods.com* for more information. 3 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *DJ MentalDrift*, deep '70s classics.

Free. 6 p.m.

Palladium Outdoors, Worcester: *Dropkick Murphys, Rancid*. \$. 6:45 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: *Lunar Carnival*. 7 p.m.

Brewbakers, Keene, NH: *Thalia Zedek, Dredd Foole*. \$. 8 p.m.

Lady Killigrew Cafe, Montague Center: Barbès After-Party feat. *DJ LoveLite*. Free. 11 p.m.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 22**  
Iron Horse Music Hall, Northampton: *John Gorka, Lisa Martin*. \$. 7 p.m.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *The Roots*. \$. 8 p.m.

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 24**  
Look Park, Northampton: *King Crimson, The Zappa Band*. \$. 7 p.m.

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25**  
Forbes Library Lawn, Northampton: *Bunnies, La Neve*. Flywheel production. Free. 6 p.m.

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 26**  
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Pamela Means & the Reparations*,  
*The Soul Magnets*. \$. 5 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *SVB, th1rdm1nd, Rager*. Techno. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sun Parade, Gabriel Bernini, The Subletters*. Kickoff party for Green River Fest. \$. 8 p.m.

**FRI-SUN, AUGUST 27-29**  
Franklin County Fairgrounds: Green River Festival feat. *Jon Batiste, Shakey Graves, Ani DiFranco, Drive-By Truckers, Valerie June, Deer Tick, Antibalas*, and many more. \$. See *greenriverfestival.com* for information.

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 27**  
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Def Pleppard's Malfunctioning Radio*. Free. 6 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Salsa for Solidarity*, benefit for Altos de Lidice commune & Antioquia Diversa. Salsa lessons, 7:30 p.m.; party starts at 8:15 p.m.

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 28**  
Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *The Diamondstones*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *LUCY, Baby, Baby, Mary Jester, Ko T.C.* \$. 7 p.m.

118 Elliot, Brattleboro: *Tatsuya Nakatani*, master percussionist, *Bonnie Kane*. \$. 7 p.m.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Gelineau/LeBrecque Duo, H.A.N.D., California Job Case, Craig Douglas*. \$. 7 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Film, *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), with live Estey pipe organ accompaniment by *Ben Model*. \$. 8 p.m.

Luthier's Coop, Easthampton: *Rosie Porter & the Neon Moons*. 8 p.m.

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 29**  
Memorial Hall, Deerfield: *Michael Nix, Chris Divine*. \$. 3 p.m.

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3**  
The 413 Pub, Easthampton: *Dead Collective*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9**  
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Hiss Golden Messenger*. \$. 8 p.m.

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10**  
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield:

*Dead Beat*. \$. 8 p.m.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11**  
1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Christine Ohlman & Rebel Montez*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bella's Bartok*. \$. 8 p.m.

Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Mdou Moctar, Pure Adult*. \$. 8 p.m.

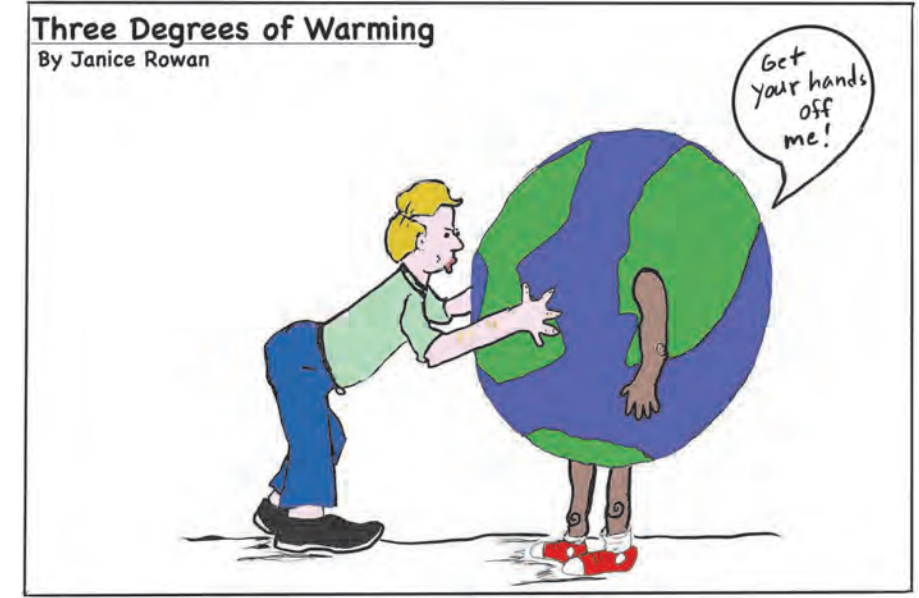
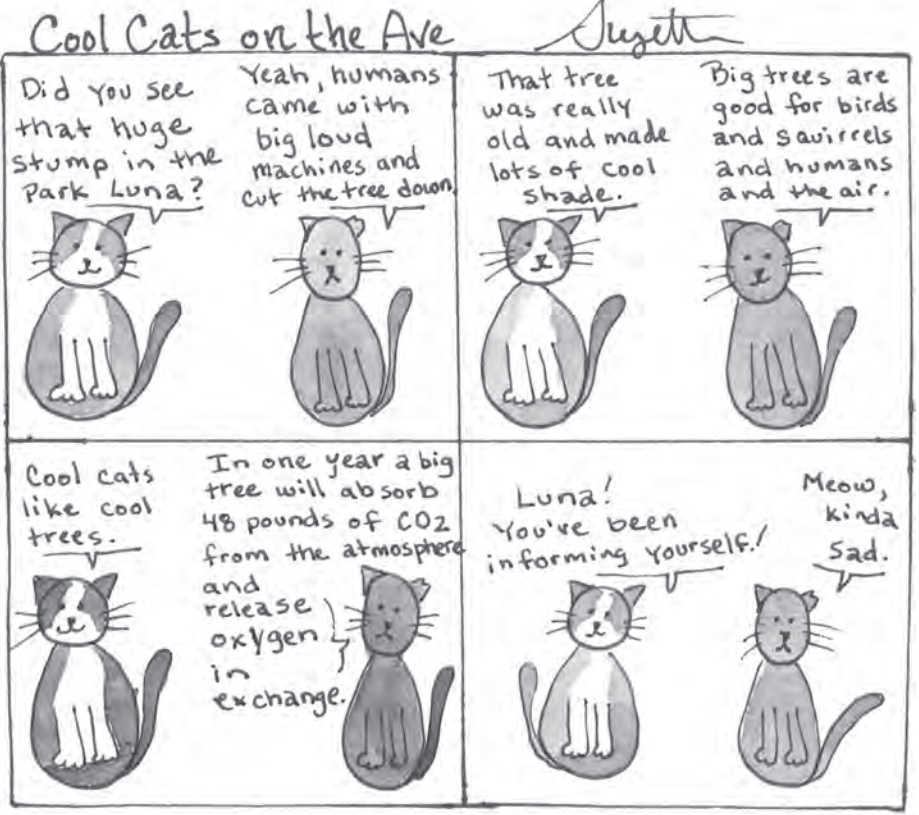
**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14**  
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Tank and the Bangas*. \$. 8 p.m.

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17**  
Academy of Music, Northampton: *Darlingside*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Yo La Tengo*. \$. 8 p.m.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18**  
Peskeomskut Park, Turners Falls: 3rd Annual Fun Fest feat. *The Gaslight Tinkers, Viva Quetzal, Musica Franklin students*. Free. 1 p.m.

Three County Fair, Northampton: Concert for the Homeless feat. *Marcy Playground, Lit, The Motels*, and more. \$. 1 p.m.



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NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE

BY TROUBLE MANDESON

**GREENFIELD** — Summer is upon us, and with it comes a plethora of summer squash, most notably the green striped and golden yellow zucchini that are filling bins at vegetable stands and markets. Surely you’ve seen that filled-to-the-brim box or basket set out somewhere, perhaps a corner of the farm stand or your neighbor’s yard, bearing a sign begging you to please take one or two — why not make it three — giant squash for making some lovely zucchini bread or muffins to share with — well, just about everyone you know?

One of these behemoths in its grated form will easily make four loaves or more. That’s my preferred method, to bake several at a time, and carefully wrap and freeze them to bring along to the homes of friends or to a potluck. Sometimes I leave one in the mailbox for the mail carrier, or hand one to the garbage man on collection day. It’s a tasty way to show gratitude to those who take on the everyday tasks that we often take for grant-

ed, and a great way to relieve yourself of multiple loaves of zucchini bread. Seriously, how many loaves can you pack in a freezer?

Who doesn’t love a nice, warm-from-the-oven slice of zucchini bread scented with cinnamon and dripping with melting butter? I love it best with my morning coffee.

I’ve been baking my zucchini bread with homemade date sugar to reduce my consumption of processed sugar. While too much of any sugar isn’t great, dates contain naturally occurring fructose, are low on the glycemic index, and are full of nutrients, minerals, and fiber.

Did I mention that date sugar is one-third of the calories of white sugar? My taste buds can’t tell the difference, and yours won’t either. I’m giving you my date sugar recipe and I challenge you to try it and see if you don’t still enjoy your sweet treats while lowering your intake of white sugar. Date sugar, while more expensive than other sugars, can also be found online, but it’s so

simple to make and even more satisfying to bake with and to eat.

Now that you’ll be using date sugar and eating your better brand of zucchini bread, make sure you enhance it with golden raisins, pecans, coconut, or chocolate chips — or if you’re like me, all of the above — and spice it up with ginger, cloves, cardamom, and cinnamon. I managed to get a bag of the baby ginger that is grown locally, and I like to grate that into my bread for a bit of ginger spiciness.

Personally, I will choose anything with chocolate first, so there’s a lot of bias here, but I do also love texture in my baked goods, and a slice of soft, moist, steaming bread studded with chewy raisins, crunchy nuts, and semi- or bitter-sweet chocolate is an absolute food turn-on. Toasted, with a schmear of cream cheese or peanut butter for some protein, is a great way to devour this all-around healthy and delicious snack. It doesn’t last long, which is why baking multiple loaves is a good idea.

The health benefits of zucchini and yellow squash are also a good reason to bring them into your kitchen and onto your plate. Squash has vitamins A, B6, and C, plus folate, magnesium fiber, riboflavin, phosphorus, and potassium. It has no fat, cholesterol, or sodium, and is low in calories.

The summer squashes are good raw or cooked: grated into salads, sliced, and ribboned onto kebabs; breaded and fried; stuffed with its own meat and a mix of herbs and other veggies and baked; or grilled, roasted, or broiled with a splash of olive oil or a vinaigrette marinade.

The beauty of the summer squashes is also their mild flavor, which makes them a great addition to rec-

DATE SUGAR

Place one layer of *pitted* dates, up to 2 lb., on a baking sheet. Bake in a preheated 400° oven for 15 minutes. They will darken considerably. Remove from the oven and let them cool completely.

Pulverize the dates in a food processor until they are crystallized. Store in a tightly covered container and keep in a cool, dark place. It’s okay if it hardens; you may have to break it up into pieces to use.

Use date sugar 1:1 as a replacement for processed white sugar, Turbinado, or coconut sugar, and see if your sugar cravings aren’t satisfied with this better alternative. It definitely won’t be the level of sweetness you’ll find in a bakery or commercially packaged dessert, but you’ll learn to enjoy less sweetness and more flavor.

For comparison in price to commercial vs homemade date sugar, I bought 16 ounces (1 lb.) of date sugar online for \$10.99, plus shipping, and to make my own I found 28 ounces (1¾ lb.) of dried dates for \$7.59 at a Hadley store that features Middle Eastern ingredients. The few minutes it takes to roast and grind it is surely worth the savings.



*Date sugar is a healthy, flavorful alternative to white sugar, and perfect for making that end-of-summer staple, zucchini bread.*

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