

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 20 – NO. 4

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 2, 2021

ERVING SELECTBOARD

## Two Proposals For Affordable Housing At Old Paper Mill

By KATIE NOLAN

“Ready?” asked Erving select-board chair Jacob Smith.

“Ready when you are,” replied town administrator Bryan Smith.

With that, Otis Wheeler of BCN-TV started the livestream of Monday night’s selectboard meeting, their first in-person meeting since March 2020. The senior and community center was nearly empty, with the exception of the board of assessors and principal assessor Jacquelyn Boyden, who joined for a tax classification hearing.

Two developers have responded to the town’s Request for Information that asked for conceptual plans for the former International Papermill property on Papermill Road, walking distance from downtown Millers Falls: The Community Builders (TCB), a nationwide nonprofit with a local office in Northampton, and Rural Development, Inc. (RDI), the non-profit development affiliate of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

Introducing the two responses, planning assistant Mariah Kurtz said both proposed residential use of the property, and both showed “interest in how close the river is, and how tucked-away the site is.”

In an 84-page formal submittal, TCB proposed a phased development of the property, starting with rehabilitating Building 2 – the main building visible at the property entrance – and converting it to 60 residential units, the majority for people

see **ERVING** page A5

## Northfield Responds to Open Meeting Law Violation

By JEFF SINGLETON

**NORTHFIELD** – The state attorney general’s office has ruled that minutes of a Northfield planning board hearing on three potential solar arrays being proposed for the town have been in violation of the state open meeting law. The heavily attended remote hearing took place last February 18, and involved controversial proposals to construct “dual-use” solar arrays on agricultural land.

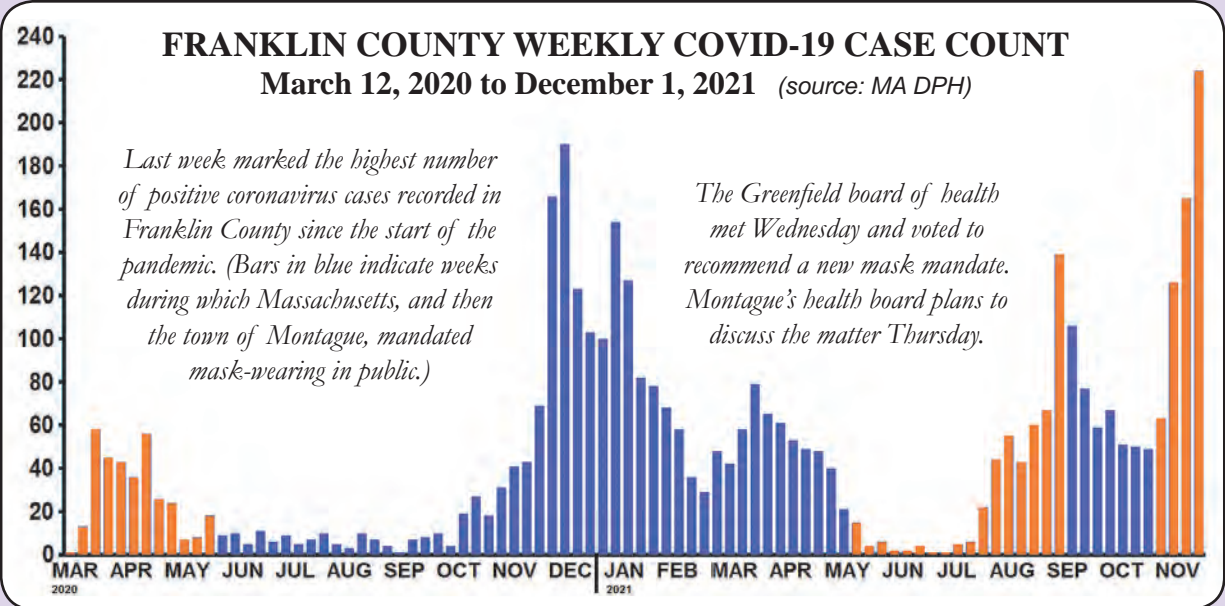
The minutes were challenged as inadequately reflecting the discussion at the meeting by resident Lisa McLoughlin last April, and the attorney general’s Division of Open Government issued the finding on October 4.

One of the primary issues in McLoughlin’s complaint was that the minutes often failed to describe any response to questions asked by the public attending the meeting, only noting the name of the responder. She estimated that no responses were recorded for 32 out of 35 questions.

The attorney general endorsed this complaint while navigating the complexities of the issue in a dense, two-page response. The response

see **NORTHFIELD** page A3

## Positive Virus Cases Skyrocket



By MIKE JACKSON and JEFF SINGLETON

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – “I hate to be the bearer of poor news, but the case counts have risen,” Montague’s public health director Daniel Wasiuk told the town selectboard Monday night.

Of the 27 active COVID-19 cases in the previous week, Wasiuk said, eight patients had been fully vaccinated against the virus, and the other 19 had received no vaccine. Ten, he said, were children under the age of 18.

Six days earlier, Gill-Montague school superintendent Brian Beck was making a similar report to the regional school committee. “Numbers across the state have been on the rise, and in many states across the country, as people begin to move inside,” he said. “Even in the face of vaccinations we certainly have a

number of breakthrough infections.”

Gill-Montague schools perform “pool testing” to catch outbreaks early, and up until last week, the tests had returned a trickle of isolated positive cases. The pool testing on the day of the school committee meeting, November 23, had returned 11.

“November 24 was supposed to be an early release day,” Beck said, “but I made the decision to close school.... It wasn’t worth having another half day of school the day before Thanksgiving, and taking the risk of potentially transmitting the virus more extensively before the holidays.”

Beck also reported that a planned school trip to France and Italy next year has been postponed, due to “exceedingly high case counts right now across

see **SKYROCKET** page A6

## The Newest Wrinkle in Sludge? PFAS.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – Concern is growing among Franklin County homeowners over the presence of PFAS in groundwater, with some local wells found to be among the most polluted in the state. At the municipal level, however, the larger challenge may not be in drinking water, but in wastewater – and in the vexing question of how to dispose of wastewater sludge contaminated with industrial chemicals.

A state-sponsored program to test private wells for the toxins is still underway. Potentially dangerous PFAS levels have now been detected in four wells in Leverett, prompting the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to provide the households with bottled water and filtration systems.

One tested at 456 parts per trillion (ppt) of PFAS – the second-highest level in any private well statewide, based on publicly available data.

The source of the Leverett contamination has not been identified. Board of health chair Michael Fair posted an update to a townwide listserv last week explaining the location and extent of the contamination



*While the current focus is on wells, a greater battle against PFAS may take place at municipal wastewater plants, such as Montague’s water pollution control facility (pictured above), adding to the existing challenge of where to dispose of sludge.*

without identifying any specific homeowners.

“An area along North Leverett Road has been identified by DEP as an area of concern.... This area is

see **SLUDGE** page A8

## High School Sports: Tech Takes Turkey Day Win

By MATT ROBINSON



*Franklin Tech seniors, from left to right: Andrew Esposito, Chad Adams, Max Bastarache, Dylan Matbieu, and Logan Call after last week’s Thanksgiving Day win over Smith Vocational.*

**TURNERS FALLS** – On Thanksgiving morning the Franklin Tech Football Eagles beat the Smith Vocational Vikings 32-16, to take a 2-1 advantage in the teams’ short-lived Turkey Day rivalry.

Technically, the rivalry between the Vikings and the Franks dates back to the 8th century and lasted until 911 when the Duchy of Normandy was established. Earlier this season, I agreed not to call Franklin Tech the “Franks” – until, that is, they played against the Vikings on Thanksgiving.

In the 2021 Turkey Bowl, neither team wanted to punt, and both consistently went for it on fourth down. This ground-and-pound four-down

see **FOOTBALL** page A4

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Board Weighs Administrative Expansion, Farren Demo

By MIKE JACKSON

The Montague selectboard met Monday in person, and decided its next meetings will be remote (see article, page A1). No major decisions were made, with much of the meeting spent discussing whether the town should expand its staff, and whether it should intervene to save a building from demolition.

The conversation about staffing comes as Montague begins to put together its budget for next fiscal year. Department heads who hope to expand beyond “level services” are encouraged to make their case, and this week Chelsey Little, superintendent of the water pollution control facility, and town administrator Steve Ellis were on the agenda.

Two weeks earlier, Ellis had introduced a request for two new positions, and he returned with a written proposal. One would be a half-time “selectboard clerk and HR assistant,” to lighten the load shouldered by executive assistant Wendy Bogusz. The other would be a full-time assistant town administrator, a proposal met with more probing.

The changes would increase the

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

## Wendell Vote On Property Cleanup Cost Falls Short

By JOSH HEINEMANN

After an hour of discussion Wednesday night, sixty Wendell voters decided by secret ballot not to take \$30,000 from stabilization to clean up a privately-owned property at 131 Lockes Village Road. Nearly 20 left the town hall after their votes were cast, even though the count was not tallied until the end of the special town meeting.

The property, owned by Andy Hamilton, has been a subject of concern since 2015; he has been repeatedly fined for keeping unregistered vehicles, and the board of health and conservation commission have both taken action on the property.

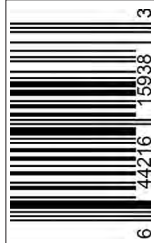
The town has hired Charlie Kaniecki, a man with 40 years of public health work and experience with hoarding in other towns, to help with the issue. A state superior court has ordered the property cleaned up, and town officials were proposing to pay for that work up front using money from the stabilization fund, which requires a 2/3 vote at town meeting.

Kaniecki was at Wednesday’s special town meeting, first giving a history of the issue, then answering questions. He said there is no way to tell if there is ground contamination on the property until the surface

see **WENDELL** page A5

### Bet They Don’t Make Papers Like This In The Metaverse

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# The Montague Reporter

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Victoria Maillo, *Spanish Page*  
Beverly Ketch, *Children’s Page*  
Gloria Kegeles, *Editorial Assistant*

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## Good Grief

A third major wave of COVID-19 is met largely with despair and exhaustion. The spike started before the holidays this year, rather than after, and a fast-spreading new mutation is still due to reach us. People are talking about a permanent pandemic, or at least a very long one. Contrarian positions are only hardening.

There’s not much of a pep talk to give, but for what it’s worth: we have better treatment tools; vaccines do slow it down; milder strains may evolve to outcompete deadlier ones; and the wealthy end of the world is finally awakening to just how stupid it was to ignore the other half. Stay safe, and try to remember no one is alone in this.

## Letter to the Editors



### A Burning Question

Word on the street is that the managing editor of the *Montague Reporter* is so knowledgeable about the minute details of the construction of this weekly that when someone suggested they burn old useless issues, he responded by explaining that the chemical composition of the inks in the more recent print runs of the paper might leave behind toxic compounds if they are burned.

One of my favorite pastimes is hovering over my compost bin and shredding up old issues to create some variety in my beany waste. Should I consider a different method of recycling? Does he by any chance know if trace amounts of these inks will make my asparagus taste different? Should I continue to “shred into the bed,” or nah?

Thanks,

**Neil “cloaca” Young**  
Turners Falls

### We reply...

This is a good question, and one that should be of general interest to our readers, so we’re glad you asked. Between 2012 and 2020, we were printed in Northampton at a press that used only papers and inks made from materials we would ourselves eat if we were hungry. That press closed, and there are very few left in the region.

Our understanding is that very few surviving newspaper presses use worm-friendly inks. A verbal misunderstanding in 2020 had led us to believe the ink these words are now printed in would be “vegetable-based,” but this past summer someone else asked us to verify this, and it turns out not to be the case.

The materials safety data sheets (MSDS) we were provided show that the yellow ink contains a “proprietary hydrocarbon modified rosin resin,” and the cyan, black, and extra black contain petroleum resins and distillates. While none of these are classed as carcinogenic or mutagenic, or listed under the Toxic Substances Control Act, data on their bioaccumulative potential and mobility in soil was listed as “not available.”

We contacted Amy Donovan, program director at the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, to ask what we should do with the extra copies that occasionally stack up here at the office – in the past, we’ve happily shared these with gardeners.

She advised caution. “If you are concerned about this, then don’t compost it,” she told us.

Our position is the same. (Another local paper moved its print operations out of that shuttered Northampton plant at the same time, and if we have shared readers they might want to ask them about this, too.)

We’re happy to forward the MSDS for the inks to any interested readers, and glad to know this is a shared concern. And while it’s not the same experience, we do offer digital-only subscriptions, and would be happy to switch readers over if they want to just browse the PDFs online. This is all a huge bummer, but our options here appear to be limited...

**Mike Jackson**  
Managing Editor

**Published weekly on Thursdays.**

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GUEST EDITORIAL

## As A Matter of Justice

By DAVID DETMOLD

**PLYMOUTH, MA** – On Thursday, November 25, I was honored and privileged to join with more than a thousand other people in observing the 52<sup>nd</sup> annual National Day of Mourning organized by the United American Indians of New England at the statue of Ousemequin, the Massasoit, overlooking the harbor at Plymouth, an area known to the Wampanoag as Patuxet.

Instead of feasting on turkey, we fasted in the brisk fall sunshine while prayers for healing were offered, and listened to speakers from many Native nations talk about their efforts to overcome centuries of colonial oppression, to reclaim the bones of thousands of their children from unmarked graves in government sanctioned boarding schools, and to stand up for Mother Earth in the struggle against fossil fuel infrastructure in British Columbia, Northern Minnesota, the Four Corners, and beyond.

But once again this year, the most poignant speech at the National Day of Mourning was the one delivered on behalf of imprisoned American Indian Movement (AIM) elder Leonard Peltier. His letter, written from behind bars in the federal penitentiary in Coleman, Florida, was read aloud by the grandson and namesake of Bert Waters, a Wampanoag elder who passed away in August of this year. The elder Mr. Waters had read Peltier’s letters to the annual Day of Mourning observances with pride. But he died before seeing Peltier’s long quest for freedom achieved.

Peltier, convicted in 1977 of aiding and abetting in the murder of two FBI agents during a general firefight at the Jumping Bull Ranch in Oglala, South Dakota, has been in prison for almost 46 years. He is now 77 years old.

For those not familiar with the case, Peltier was the only person convicted in that shootout, which ultimately involved more than 150 FBI agents, SWAT team members, Bureau of Indian Affairs police, and local vigilantes who had the Jumping Bull Ranch on Pine Ridge Reservation surrounded on June 26, 1975. The traditional Jumping Bull family had invited AIM members to camp and protect them during the period in the early 1970s known as the Reign of Terror, when the Pine Ridge Reservation was the murder capital of America, with at least 64 local Natives killed (and most of their murders still unsolved).

On that day, driving unmarked cars, wearing plain clothes, without announcing their presence, FBI agents Ronald Williams and Jack Coler drove onto the Jumping Bull Ranch, where approximately 30 AIM members and their family members were present at the camp. A shootout occurred, and in the aftermath one AIM member, Joe Stuntz, and both Williams and Coler were killed. Peltier, with other AIM members, succeeded in guiding the women and children in the encampment through the back country, past an intense law enforcement cordon, to safety without further loss of life. He escaped to Canada, but was extradited to stand trial in Bismarck, North Dakota on a perjured warrant.

Two other AIM defendants, tried separately for the deaths of Williams and Coler, were found not guilty on grounds of self-defense. Among all the participants in the incident at Oglala, Peltier was the only one convicted, based on eyewitness testimony later found to have been perjured.

As US attorney James Reynolds, whose office prosecuted the case against Peltier in 1975, wrote recently in a letter to President Biden, appealing for clemency for Leonard, “We were not able to prove that Mr. Peltier personally committed any offense on the Pine Ridge Reservation.”

But as Leonard Peltier has said, “Someone had to pay for the crime.” And pay he has.

Blind in one eye, suffering from severe diabetes, denied proper diet or much-needed health care, unable to see his family, prohibited from painting for the last 18 months, rarely able to see the sun or even exercise in the yard where he might see an occasional bird fly past, his only view of nature, Peltier has maintained his innocence, and remains steadfast in his refusal to bow to the authorities while he continues to hold out hope for his release.

Amnesty International says, “President Biden must grant Leonard Peltier clemency on humanitarian grounds and as a matter of justice.” Members of Congress, even Pope Francis have added their pleas for his release. Now it is up to you, each of you who read this letter, to add your voices to that call.

Please write to President Joe Biden, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20500, or [President@WhiteHouse.Gov](mailto:President@WhiteHouse.Gov) urging immediate clemency for Leonard Peltier. For more information on his case, go to [WhoisLeonardPeltier.info](http://WhoisLeonardPeltier.info).

As Leonard said in his letter to the National Day of Mourning at the statue of Ousemequin this year, “I wish all of you good health and happiness this year. You are in my prayers. I am grateful to all of you who have supported me, or will support me going forward. I still hold out hope that I can make it home to Turtle Mountain while I can still walk out under my own power.”

Leonard Peltier is America’s Nelson Mandela. We must free him now.

*David Detmold is a founding editor of the Montague Reporter. He lives in a village he would prefer be called Great Falls.*

### WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS!

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

**Learn about bugs in winter** tonight on Zoom at 6:30 p.m. with entomologist Charley Eiseman of Northfield. Eiseman will give a virtual tour of his backyard, and expand upon clues he finds from overwintering bugs to describe their life cycles. "Local Insects and Spiders in Winter" is sponsored by Northfield Mountain and the Dickinson Memorial Library of Northfield. Register by emailing [dmemlib@gmail.com](mailto:dmemlib@gmail.com).

There is also a **benefit book reading** of Richard Grossman's newly-published *Fish Discover Water Last: Richard L. Grossman on corporations, democracy, and us* tonight, December 2, at 6 p.m. at the LAVA Center in Greenfield.

Grossman (1943 – 2011) was a researcher, organizer, and lecturer on the growth and powers of corporations, citizens' movements, and more. The book is a condensation of Grossman's talks compiled and edited by Anna Gyorgy and published by Human Error Press. Book sales benefit the LAVA Center and the Traprock Peace Center.

Are you looking for some new **holiday cookie recipes**? Join the Greenfield Public Library's Annual Cookie Exchange on Tuesday, December 7 at 7 p.m. via Zoom. Share favorite holiday cookie recipes, discover what others are baking, and chat about baking tips and shortcuts.

Send the recipe(s) of the cookies you are baking this year, and a photo if possible, and sign up for the Zoom meeting, by emailing [librarian@greenfieldpubliclibrary.org](mailto:librarian@greenfieldpubliclibrary.org). The deadline for submission is this Friday, December 3. The program, sponsored by the Friends of the Greenfield Public Library, is free and open to the public.

The Friends of the Montague Public Libraries' **monthly book sale** is back! The first one is this Saturday, December 4 in the basement of the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

There are hundreds of adult fiction and non-fiction books, young adult and children's books, as well as DVDs and jigsaw puzzles. Proceeds will benefit the library programs. Masks are required.

The **Junior Duck Stamp Show** at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls this December displays the work of students submitted for a statewide art contest. In the process of designing a stamp, they learn about wildlife, and gain awareness of wetland preservation. Now through January 2 in the Great Hall. Center hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

*Elf the Musical* is coming to the Ja'Duke Theater on December 3, 5, 17, 18, and 19. Spend a night out with the whole family and watch Buddy the Elf travel to New York City to find his true identity and spread Christmas cheer. Stick around to meet and take pictures with Buddy the Elf, Santa Claus, and the Hobbs Family. Find out more and buy tickets at [jadukecenter.com](http://jadukecenter.com).

RiverCulture is coordinating a **shopping event in downtown Turners Falls** on the next three Friday evenings from 5 to 8 p.m. There are special discounts available for this Friday, December 3 and live entertainment going on at breweries and restaurants.

This week's festivities will be capped off with a free screening of the holiday classic from 1947, *Miracle on 34th Street*, at the Shea Theater at 7:30 p.m. Visit the RiverCulture website for your shopping coupon and to check out the calendar of events.

The **Shutesbury Holiday Shop**, featuring local artisans, is coming back to the Shutesbury Athletic Club on December 3, 4, and 5. The pop-up will be "bursting with an affordable array of handcrafted work by local artisans, artists, crafters, authors, and musicians," according to their announcement. The SAC is at 282 Wendell Road, Shutesbury. For

more information, find the Shutesbury Holiday Shop on Facebook.

Leverett Crafts & Arts studio-holders Mudpie Pottery, plus area artists and craftspeople, will also hold the traditional **Annual Holiday Sale** at LCA on the first two weekends of December. There will be an exhibit of six- by six-inch paintings, and the proceeds from the sale of these tiny paintings will assist with the LCA building improvement fund.

LCA will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, December 4, and noon until 4 p.m. on Sunday, December 5, with the same hours repeating on December 11 and 12.

**Silverthorne Theater** announces their next live theater performance at the Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center in Greenfield on December 3, 4, 5, 10 and 11. They are staging a special production of *Bright Half Life* by Tanya Barfield, described as a "joyful and complicated chronicle of a deeply committed lesbian relationship." Find out more or buy tickets at [silverthornetheater.org](http://silverthornetheater.org).

The **Great Falls Apple Corps free table** is moving to monthly for the winter, starting with the December table this weekend. Meet them at Unity Park from 12 to 3 p.m. this Saturday, December 4. A schedule of dates and locations for the rest of the winter will be coming soon.

**Make a pinecone bird feeder** at the Discovery Center next Friday, December 10 from 4 to 8 p.m. as part of RiverCulture's "It's a Wonderful Night in Turners Falls" holiday celebration. Meet at the Welcome Desk to get your supplies. Each bird feeder craft bag will include instructions and information on which birds might show up at your feeder, and what they might like to eat.

The gift shop at the Discovery Center will be open the evening of December 10 as well. They are offering 10% off all items in the store, including many terrific stocking stuffers. All profits support programs at the Center.

**Find winter farmers markets** and places to buy holiday greenery, including local Christmas tree farms, at the CISA website: [buylocalfood.org](http://buylocalfood.org).

Sample a different spice every month at the **Leverett Library**, and pick up recipes, too. The library is also holding a silent auction for

eleven themed holiday gift baskets which you may see and bid on online and in person at the library. Check out the offerings and bid before 1 p.m. on December 14 at [leverettlibrary.org](http://leverettlibrary.org).

**Light Up the Fairgrounds**, a holiday light spectacular, runs for two more weekends, December 3, 4 and 5 and December 10, 11 and 12, at the Franklin County Fairgrounds in Greenfield. View light displays crafted by community members, organizations, and businesses. For a minimum donation of just \$5 per car (cash only), you may drive through the main gates of the fairground to see the "light extravaganza" between 5 and 9 p.m. Visitors are encouraged to vote for their favorite display through a ballot handed them upon entrance, so please bring a pen or pencil.

Jewish Family Services (JFS) of Western Massachusetts joins many agencies across the Commonwealth to **help resettle Afghan refugees in our area**, including in Turners Falls. Evacuees need transitional housing, and community members are starting to step up to help.

JFS seeks additional people to take in a couple, a young family, or a single person while secure housing is obtained for them. Landlords with suitable spaces available may contact Massara Almafrachi at [m.almafrachi@jfswm.org](mailto:m.almafrachi@jfswm.org).

There's also a Host Organization Support Team group forming in Turners Falls, spearheaded by Turners Falls local Suzanne Rubinstein. They are looking for volunteers who can help the refugees in any of these five different "pathways": housing, community connections, health, employment, or education. If you would like to join the Turners Falls HOST group, please email your contact information to [gghostgroup@gmail.com](mailto:gghostgroup@gmail.com) and let them know which pathway(s) you can help with.

Learn more at [www.jfswm.org](http://www.jfswm.org).

If you have **concerns about the mental health of a child or teen**, you are not alone. The latest Coalition Connections newsletter has a section devoted to resources for parents and caregivers who need to find helpful resources and a support network. Find out more and sign up for the newsletter at [www.communitythatcarecoalition.org](http://www.communitythatcarecoalition.org).

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

Any Montague resident interested in being appointed to the **vacancy on the Gill-Montague Regional School Committee** should send a letter of interest to the Superintendent's office – 35 Crocker Ave., Turners Falls – by December 6, 2021. An appointment will be made at the December 7 School Committee meeting.

*Jane Oakes, chair*

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**NORTHFIELD** from page A1

noted, for example, that minutes are not required to be a transcript of a meeting and do not need to include "every remark" made, but must "have enough detail and accuracy so that a member of the public who did not attend the meeting could read the minutes and have a clear understanding of what occurred." The AG found this criteria was not met, given that such a large percentage of responses to questions received no documentation.

The finding only imposed "informal action" on Northfield, requiring that the planning board submit revised minutes within 60 days.

Although the planning board eventually approved revised minutes to respond to the complaint, the *Reporter* found no evidence that either the AG letter or the approved revisions were discussed at the two meetings that followed the issuance of the finding. A review of a recording of the board's October 21 meeting showed that the state's finding was not mentioned, nor was it included with the agenda.

At this meeting member Joe Graveline, a critic of the solar array project as well as the norms of the planning board, attempted to revise a set of June minutes being discussed, but was ruled out

of order by the chair Steve Seredynski because he had not followed the procedure for minutes revision established by the board in September. This requires that proposed revisions be submitted in writing in advance.

During the discussion Seredynski stated that Graveline had "very much upset [the town secretary] with your continued criticism of her minutes."

Graveline, who said he had submitted the revisions in writing, called the process "a form of censorship." "If I am upsetting people, I apologize," Graveline said. "I am looking for transparency."

A planning board meeting on November 18, called to respond to the open meeting law violation by approving revised minutes for the February 18 meeting, lasted less than ten minutes.

This discussion began with vice chair Margaret Riordan proposing a motion to accept the revisions of the February minutes. Graveline began to object, but Seredynski ruled that discussion would take place after the vote on the revisions, which were then approved.

Graveline complained that the meeting posting, as required under the open meeting law, did not clearly state the topic for the public, but re-

lied on legal jargon; he suggested that this could itself be another violation of the open meeting law. He then said he would like to request some changes in the proposed revised minutes, but assumed the chair would not allow that.

Seredynski answered in the affirmative, saying the town clerk had spent "a total of eight hours, [and] I will not ask her to do it again." He said the minutes had been approved by the town attorney.

"This short-circuited a whole series of concerns I had about the minutes," Graveline said, "so there is not a lot I can do, but I suspect that is in itself an open meeting law violation." The board then took a vote to accept the minutes, which passed 3-0, with Graveline and Homer Stavely abstaining.

The *Reporter* emailed Seredynski several questions about the process his board had followed, which has been a source of contention, and encouraged him to make any other comments he might wish "for the record."

Seredynski responded that "[t]he meeting to approve the revised public hearing minutes was conducted under the direction and guidance of attorney Jeff Blake of KP Law. He is the town attorney and was present virtually for the entire meeting."



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## PAPER

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## OP/ED

# Unfair Slant, Errors in Pond Coverage

By GAIL BERRIGAN

**LEVERETT** – I am writing on behalf of the Leverett Conservation Commission in response to recent articles by Sarah Robertson – *Leverett Kicks Pond Decision Down the Road* (September 16) and *A Hobbled Con Com Again Punts Pond Plan* (November 11). These headlines are not supported by either the material in the articles or actual circumstances.

Over the past year, the Leverett Conservation Commission (ConCom) has reviewed an application submitted by the Friends of Leverett Pond (FLP) for a permit to manage invasive aquatic species in the pond. The multi-year permit under review involves a complex issue in terms of both ecology and the applicable provisions of the MA Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). Pond management is multifaceted, involving scientific and technical aspects related to water quality monitoring, habitat assessment, fish population studies, aquatic health indicators, and more.

At the request of both groups, the public hearing to discuss the permit has been “continued” (extended to a future date) a number of times. The extensions give both groups time to prepare and digest the hundreds of pages of material submitted as part of the permit application. Far from “punting,” the ConCom is engaging seriously with a complicated issue. Yet for some reason, the *Montague Reporter* articles hint at a pattern of negligence and disarray, placing blame on the Conservation Commission.

It is misleading to say, as in the September 16 issue, that “no decision was reached” at a meeting on July 6. The ConCom decided to seek the exper-

tise of a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) representative to determine how to handle the submission of two permit applications for the same resource area, which created a procedural complication. The WPA is a legal document that runs to roughly 180 pages, and conservation commissions routinely rely on consultations with the DEP to answer technical questions.

The November article continues the theme of inaction and delay, painting a picture of a commission awash in meeting cancellations – with no justification. Not having a quorum is not a “failure”; rescheduling due to a death in the family is not an inexcusable delay; and when important materials are submitted the day before a hearing, it is reasonable to request more time for review. All the reasons for the rescheduled hearings are a matter of public record. Anyone who is interested in the specifics can read the ConCom minutes posted on the Town’s website.

This same article reports a comment made by a member of the public suggesting that the lengthy hearing process is a sign of “incompetence” by the ConCom. The Leverett Conservation Commission includes a nationally recognized wetlands authority, an ecological restoration expert with five years of experience as a conservation agent, an ecological restoration and permitting specialist, and a professional landscaper with experience in the construction and design of drainage systems. It is an exceptionally well-qualified conservation commission.

A few other inaccuracies bear mentioning. The reporter’s statement regarding former commission member Andrew Young is a slight as well as an error. Mr. Young was not “removed...

from the roster” by commission members; he resigned following nearly 10 years of service. He leaves the ConCom in excellent standing, and is to be commended for his contribution and service to the town as a member of the ConCom for many years.

Another incorrect statement concerns the current conservation agent’s term of service. In September, you reported that the town “lost” its part-time conservation agent and “has yet to fill the vacant position.”

For the record, the conservation agent Tessa Dowling has given notice but is still serving in the role as best as she can, given her full-time job elsewhere – a remarkable display of dedication and commitment for which ConCom members are extremely grateful but not surprised, given the degree of proficiency and professionalism Ms. Dowling has shown throughout her time as Leverett’s conservation agent. This is a challenging position that requires technical and administrative skills.

Finally, regarding finding a replacement, your statement that Tom Hankinson’s “offer to help the town find an agent was declined” is simply incorrect, as we interviewed a candidate referred by Mr. Hankinson. The ConCom is actively seeking qualified candidates for the conservation agent position; for information on the position, visit the Town of Leverett website or email [leverettconcom@gmail.com](mailto:leverettconcom@gmail.com).

*This op/ed was submitted by Gail Berrigan on behalf of Leverett Conservation Commission members: Isaiah Robison, Chair; Ralph Tiner; David Powicki; Joan Deely; Jono Neiger; and Gail Berrigan.*

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## FOOTBALL from page A1

offense allowed the Franks to accumulate almost 400 rushing yards, and in the process gave one running back the chance to hit the 1,000-yard mark.

Although it’s been a week since Thanksgiving, I wanted to write about Tech’s Turkey Day extravaganza. After all, football is a Thanksgiving tradition, and we only had a couple of local games this year. Mohawk no longer plays Frontier, and sadly, the decades-long Turners Falls/Greenfield rivalry is no more.

But the tradition lives on between Mahar and Athol, and between the Smith Vocational Vikings and the Franklin County Technical Eagles.

Although the rivalry only dates back three games, people showed. Folks who grew up in the Valley came to watch their kids and grandkids before diving into their annual feasts. The Turners Falls-Franklin Tech cheer team performed, Kevin Hollister sang the national anthem, and Turners Falls golf legend Artie Burke ran the clock. And along the sidelines and on the bleachers, the Tech fans showed up in droves.

Before the game, the cheerleaders lined the gates and the Franklin Tech Eagles crashed through a paper banner adorned with all sorts of positive affirmations. The temperature was relatively warm, unlike the 18-degree temps we sat through a couple of years ago.

It was a great way to kick off Turkey Day.

The game didn’t start out well for the Franks. They fumbled on their first drive, giving the Vikings the ball deep inside Tech’s territory. But the Eagles held their ground and took over on downs.

On Tech’s first play of their second series, Chad Adams ran the ball to the Norse 35, and a penalty moved the rock to the 20. With 8:03 left in the first quarter, the Franks drew



SARAH UNDERWOOD PHOTO



ROBINSON PHOTO

*Left: The Franklin Tech cheer squad performed for the crowd. Right: Tech freshman Josiah Little was named game MVP.*

first blood as Josiah Little scored the first touchdown of the morning. The point-after kick was blocked, however, limiting the damage to 6 points.

Tech attempted an onside kick-off, but Smith recovered the bouncing ball on their own 47. Again the Frank D forced fourth down, but two consecutive off-side penalties gave the Vikes a new set. The defense again stepped up, and this time, Smith was unable to convert.

The Birds again took over deep in their own backyard, and the Viking defense forced their own fourth down. Tech went for it and moved the chains forward. Smith again forced a fourth, and Tech set up to punt. It was a fake – and the Eagles’ drive continued.

It took Franklin Tech all day to move into Norse territory and finally, with 6:21 left in the half, Gabriel Tomasi completed a 1-yard pass to Dylan Mathieu for the Eagles’ second touch of the morning. After a failed 2-PAT, the teams lined up for the kickoff with the score 12-zip.

The Vikings again jumped on the loose onside kick and took over on their own 49. They made some dents in the Franks’ defense, but Vincent Renaud picked off a tipped pass and the Birds took over. After some huge gains by Little, Max Bastarache scored Tech’s third TD. The 2-PAT was rejected, and the Vikings took over trailing 18-0 with 1:06 on the clock. Voc made some

noise, but the half ended with another Renaud pick-off.

In the fourth quarter, Tech increased their lead to 25-0 off a Tomasi keeper and a Jack Reynolds 1-point kick.

Up to this point, the Eagles had only kicked onside kickoffs, but now, leading by three-plus touchdowns, they kicked one deep. The ball went high and long – and was run back, all the way into the end zone, to give the Vikings their first points of the game. After their successful 2-PAT, the lead was narrowed to 25-8.

At this point in the game, the scuttlebutt on the sidelines was: “Can Little hit 1,000 yards?”

Coming into the game, freshman Josiah Little needed almost 250 to hit the millennium mark for the season. But as the game progressed and he kept making huge gains, it seemed within reach.

On Tech’s next drive, after another long run by Little, Adams scored Tech’s final touchdown of the game. They took a commanding 32-8 lead after a Reynolds kick with 10:13 left to play.

With Little just five yards short of 1,000 and Coach Gamache getting ready to send in his subs, it seemed doubtful that he would reach this milestone. But he stayed in. After a three-yard gain, he banged ahead for another five more, and with 4:13 seconds left in the game, Little end-

ed his freshman season with 1,003 yards on the ground.

Smith picked up some pride points at the very end of the game. A 50-yard pass-and-run play gave them another touchdown, and the game ended with Tech taking the rubber match 32-16.

Tech amassed an amazing 386 yards on the ground, 31 in the air, and 38 more in interception returns.

The MVP – picked by Smith’s coach – was Josiah Little, who had gained 252 yards from scrimmage. Chad Adams just missed the century mark with 97 yards on the ground, and Reynolds, Tomasi, Bastarache, Zaydrien Alamed, and Caleb Johnston also carried the ball for Tech.

Under center, Tomasi went three-for-seven for 31 yards, threw an interception, and passed for two touchdowns. Mathieu and Bastarache were his targets. Tech’s five touchdowns were scored by five different players – Tomasi, Mathieu, Bastarache, Adams, and Little – with Jack Reynolds contributing 2 points.

Defensively, Logan Call made eight solo tackles, Charlie Boyden made a 7-yard sack, and Renaud made two interceptions.

So it’s over. At least for another year. But hopefully this tradition will continue on, until one day the current players return to watch their own kids and grandkids play football on Thanksgiving morning.



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**WENDELL** from page A1

junk is removed. In response to a question, voters learned that there would be no way to prevent the owner from bringing more junk onto the property after the town pays for a cleanup.

“The situation is terrible, but stable,” Kathy Becker said. She suggested that if the town puts its hands on the property, the town will own part of the problem.

Myron Becker said the situation called for compassion – for the resident, but also for the town, and for the neighbors whose view is a cluttered mess.

Doug Smith said New Salem had the same problem with Hamilton, and that he had cleaned up his property there by moving the clutter to Wendell.

Sylvia Wetherby asked whether the courts can order help for the owner.

Kaniecki said that in his view, hoarding is an old New England tradition, and a common response to the experience of poverty, knowing that items kept may some day become useful. In his own family, Kaniecki said, he had a lot to clean out after his grandparents and parents passed.

Jesse Davis said there is a lot of scrap metal on the property, and pointed out that prices are high now, and that someone could make money by taking it to Kramer’s.

Finance committee chair Doug Tanner said that the stabilization fund is low now – about \$259,000 – and that passing the article would make it lower. “The last road repair cost \$140,000,” he added. Tanner said that banks walk away from properties like the one in question all the time. The property is current-



Sixty Wendell voters attended the special town meeting Wednesday night.

ly in foreclosure, but Kaniecki said the bank is taking no action towards that foreclosure.

Dan Leahy said he felt that if the town cleaned up the property, it would be rewarding bad behavior.

A court hearing had been held earlier in the day Wednesday at which the judge said he would wait for the town meeting decision. The next court date is January 20, and Hamilton is at risk of being found in contempt of court, Kaniecki said.

After about an hour of discussion, a vote was held by secret ballot. 21 citizens voted in favor of Article 1, and 39 voted against it.

**Solar Moratorium**

The remaining half hour of the meeting was devoted to the five other articles on the warrant. Three, which involved moving municipal light plant (MLP) money, were passed over because the amounts in the MLP’s account have not yet been

certified by the state.

Article 5, to extend the town’s moratorium on large-scale solar installations by another year through May 2022, was passed unanimously.

Conservation commission member Mary Thomas proposed an amendment to Article 6, which extended the moratorium on battery installations, also until May 2022, to include the words “... or alter the stormwater control plan.” Her amendment passed unanimously.

Morgan Mead made several comments relevant to the article. Climate change is pressing, he said, and there is not a lot of time to act. It is not too much to ask of Wendell to sacrifice something when others will lose so much more. In the event of a total “Mad Max”-style collapse of civilization, he added, Wendell citizens can loot the battery installations for their material.

Article 6 passed as amended.



**NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD**

# Wendell Temporarily Coordinated

By **JOSH HEINEMANN**

The Wendell selectboard met by Zoom on November 24, but as benefit the eve of a holiday, only for an hour and with a fairly short agenda.

The first item on that agenda was accepting a bid of \$30,000 from Dukesm LLC for the clean-up of the property at 131 Lockes Village Road, pending town meeting approval of the expense. At the November 10 meeting, finance committee chair Doug Tanner said the town had already spent \$20,000 dealing with that property. Article 1 on the December 1 special town meeting warrant would take the \$30,000 from stabilization.

The special town meeting was scheduled so a vote can be taken to extend until May 2022 the town-wide moratorium on large-solar installations and batteries before it expires on December 7. The extension was requested by the planning board, to allow them more time to create a solar bylaw for the town.

Good Neighbors provided their air filtration system for the event, the first town meeting held indoors since 2019.

**Temp Coordinator**

The selectboard formally appointed Tanner as temporary town coordinator, to work in that capacity until a full-time coordinator is hired. Tanner was in the selectboard office during the meeting so he could find any papers that were needed.

Board members discussed where

to place ads for a replacement town coordinator, including the state Central Register, the *Greenfield Recorder*, the *Athol Daily News*, the town’s listserv, and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. Selectboard member Gillian Budine suggested the UMass job listing, which is free.

Several people reportedly expressed interest in the job even before advertisements were placed.

**Proclamation**

Selectboard chair Dan Keller shared a letter he had received from the Kingdom of David. It began, “Greetings to All to whom These Presents Shall Come, To Planet Earth and all inhabitants Thereof... to all levels of existence Throughout the Cosmos, to all local and galactic realms and beyond...” It is a “Proclamation of Peace and Prosperity.”

Police chief Scott Minckler said it was a boilerplate document of about 20 pages, and it can be filed.

Others who were addressed on the document were president Biden, Governor Baker, Franklin County sheriff Chris Donelan, and William Galvin, secretary of the Commonwealth.

**Wood Pile**

Tom Chaisson now owns the property at 97 Wendell Depot Road, which is where the town has been storing wood potentially for the town’s wood bank. Chaisson said that logs may stay where they are through the winter. The road crew

needs to find another place to store what they cut from the roadsides.

Treasurer Carolyn Manley has a list of over 100 town-owned properties, and board members have to compare that list with a map and lot plan to find another appropriate place for the wood bank and its processing center.

Budine said she never did see a safety plan for processing the wood, and member Laurie DiDonato said she would mention that to tree warden Cliff Dornbush.

**Policing**

Keller said, “I think there is a slight majority [of people in town] in favor” of the limited patrolling that the Leverett police have been conducting in town. He asked if another listening session like the one held last month would be worth it, and if so what format it should take. “Someone suggested a party,” he said, with Leverett police attending out of uniform but identified as officers. Or another event.

Before the Leverett police began coming to Wendell, chief Scott Minckler expected up to 15 calls a month from the town. They have averaged over 40 calls a month since they began.

**Other Business**

The board accepted by unanimous vote a state Community Compact grant contract for best practices in IT security, and for cooperation among neighboring towns for services.

**ERVING** from page A1

with incomes lower than the area median income (AMI).

Building 8, located near the Millers River, would be retained and renovated as “support space for the proposed outdoor recreation on site or other commercial/amenity space,” and all other onsite buildings would be demolished.

During Phase 2, TCB proposed a new building east of Building 2, for “senior housing, commercial/industrial or other use seen as desirable to the residents of the Phase 1 building and the Town at large.” A short “riverwalk” was also proposed, which would be built in the first phase and extended in the second. TCB listed mortgage, state and federal grants, and loans and tax credits as its funding sources.

RDI executive director Gina Govoni wrote to town administrator Bryan Smith, “RDI sees great potential in this site, but lacks the capacity to make a full response to this RFI at this time.” In her three-page letter, Govoni proposed building 40 affordable residential units, up to 20 condominium units, and “destination retail” such as a coffee shop, restaurant, brewery, or gallery. She proposed demolishing two buildings and portions of a third, while using two for commercial purposes, six for residences, one for common uses or amenities, and two left as “open structures” or “building as sculpture.”

RDI’s financing would be through grants and tax credits.

Selectboard member William Bembury called the proposals “encouraging,” but wondered about the need for increased school and police costs with an influx of new residents. However, he said, “The building has to have something. Something has to happen.”

Selectboard member Scott Bastarache said he was surprised at the predominantly residential proposals, but was “happy” with the responses, though he agreed that “an increase in residents does have an impact on services.” He said the purpose of the project would be to increase the town’s tax base.

The board decided to study the two responses further, and started review of a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) prepared by Kurtz and Bryan Smith. An RFP defines a project and its goals and seeks bidders to complete it. The board plans to review the draft at their December 13 and January 10 meetings, and release the final RFP on January 26. Responses would then be due March 30, and the project would be awarded to a developer in May.

Kurtz, Bryan Smith, and the board discussed how to weigh features when reviewing proposals responding to the RFP. Board members said they did not want a rubric that favored either residential or commercial/industrial uses. Bastarache asked that each type of development have separate criteria.

Kurtz asked whether the RFP should include priorities for retaining buildings, for open space and recreation, or for public art.

“I don’t want to scare off developers who might have a really good vision that I don’t see,” Bastarache replied.

Kurtz said the town had qualified for \$600,000 site-readiness grant from MassDevelopment that could be used for building demolition at the former mill. However,

she said, the grant “is intended to prepare a site for redevelopment into commercial/industrial use properties. They can have a residential component, but cannot be primarily residential use.”

She said MassDevelopment would “try to hold on to that money for us” until the town decides on the best plan for redevelopment.

**Tax Hearing**

Erving’s 2022 real property tax rates will increase slightly over last year after the selectboard approved a 65% “minimum residential factor” (MRF) at the town’s tax classification hearing. The residential rate will increase by \$0.31 to \$7.90 per thousand dollars of property value, and the commercial and industrial rate will increase by \$0.55 to \$12.92 per thousand.

Under the MRF, commercial and industrial property owners, primarily the Northfield Mountain Project, are projected to pay 85% of property taxes owed to the town. The split rate shifts the tax burden away from residential to commercial or industrial property owners.

The board also approved exemptions from the commercial tax rate to seven qualifying small businesses in Erving.

**Special Town Meeting**

Bryan Smith presented a draft warrant for a special town meeting, likely to be held in January.

The warrant so far includes 13 articles, including payment of a bill from FY’21; moving money into stabilization; establishing the layout of Care Drive, Public Works Boulevard, Highland Avenue, and Pleasant Street; joining a regional mosquito control district; authorizing the disposal of the 17 Moore Street property; approving an easement on Pratt Street; and four zoning bylaw changes, including a revised zoning map.

A revised draft warrant will be reviewed on December 13.

**Other Business**

Bryan Smith reported that temporary repairs to Poplar Mountain Road, damaged in flooding last July, had been completed.

The selectboard accepted the resignation of George “Moonlight” Davis from the planning board.

The board authorized Jacob Smith to sign a letter of support for the Appalachian Mountain Club’s efforts to obtain conservation restrictions on the approximately four-mile section of the New England Scenic Trail in Erving. The trail passes through private land, including Northfield Mountain Project land owned by FirstLight Power. Kurtz said the club has started reaching out to landowners about permanent protection for the trail.

After the meeting adjourned, the selectboard members removed their lapel microphones and, looking more relaxed than they had during the meeting, discussed how it felt to be broadcast. They agreed that they were glad early in the meeting when Wheeler turned off the large monitor visible from their seats.

Jacob Smith read aloud texts from his wife, with comments about background noise and how the senior/community center décor looked on the screen. Looking at three holiday wreaths, each one hanging behind a board member’s head, he commented, “We’re all decorated!”



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**SKYROCKET** from page A1 Europe” as well as the “instability of the airline industry.”

Children 5 to 11 are now eligible for vaccination, and the district has been hosting a number of clinics, many of which are open to the public. For those who have already received a “full” vaccination, booster shots are now widely available.

Mask requirements in Montague, Greenfield, and other local towns have changed repeatedly over the past six months: abandoned during the summer, reimposed during an early-fall COVID spike, and withdrawn again following declines in late October.

Each week in November, however, showed the virus spreading throughout Franklin County, from a low of 49 cases to 63, then 126, and then 165. The number for the final week of November, released on Monday, was 224, shattering the previous record of 188 set in

mid-December of last year.

At Monday’s selectboard meeting in Montague, talk turned to reinstating the mandate. The selectboard deferred to the board of health, who had scheduled an emergency meeting for this Thursday, timed to follow a meeting of the Greenfield board of health on Wednesday.

“We’ll take that into account,” Wasiuk said of the Greenfield meeting.

“It would be good if we could have a coordinated discussion [with Greenfield],” selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said. “My suggestion would be that we strongly recommend people wear masks, or keep distance, in public settings as best as possible.”

Montague town administrator Steve Ellis said he was “certainly encouraging” all town staff to receive vaccines. “You are far and away more likely to contract this, and further, you are more likely to

be more seriously ill,” he warned unvaccinated listeners.

The selectboard has been meeting at town hall with “hybrid” participation via Zoom, but on Monday they agreed to hold their next four meetings, from December 6 to January 3, entirely remotely. “It’s one of those things that we can do to minimize congregation in public spaces,” said member Matt Lord, who was already attending remotely.

“Better safe than sorry,” member Chris Boutwell agreed.

**Across the River**

The Greenfield board of health voted unanimously Wednesday night to “urge” the mayor of that city to reimpose an indoor mask mandate on buildings open to the public.

The motion did not immediately impose the mandate – though chair Nancee Bershof said she believed her board had that power – but appeared to leave it up to the mayor, and perhaps the city’s emergency management team, to make the fi-

nal decision. The motion also did not specify in any detail which “public” buildings would be covered under the mandate.

Mayor Roxann Wedegartner, who participated in the discussion, said she would “take it under advisement and look at the numbers.” She said she was “not opposed by any stretch to a mandate,” but also believed that the “vast majority” of residents wear masks in indoor public places without one. “The problem with this virus is, it mutates and keeps us on our toes,” she said.

Greenfield health director Jennifer Hoffman said there had been 162 new cases in the city during November, and public health nurse Megan Tudryn pointed out that this was over three times the number for the same month last year. “The next month could be a disaster,” Tudryn said.

Many who spoke at the meeting pointed out that the number of deaths due to the pandemic, and the impact on local hospitals, has so far been less severe than during previ-

ous COVID spikes.

Several attendees from “the public” said their organizations would welcome a mandate in order to take some of the “enforcement” burden off their staff. Jan Maher of the LAVA Center, an arts incubator space on Main Street, said that without the mandate “we become arbiters, and that puts us in very stressful situations.” Maher said it is easier to simply point to “the law,” and believed that many merchants in the city feel the same way.

Ellen Boyer, the city’s library director, stressed the wide variety of people the library serves, including “tiny little kids” who have not been vaccinated and older people who “refuse to wear a mask.” She said her staff had increasingly resented being “mask police.”

One member of the public asked how the mandate would be enforced in bars and restaurants. “Well, we can’t get into all the details at this meeting,” said Bershof.



LOOKING BACK:  
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on December 1, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

**Tribes Work Together  
To Clear Airport Hill**

The new moon brings new beginnings, and so it was on Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, when Native Americans from the Wampanoag Tribe of Gayhead, Aquinnah and Narragansetts from Rhode Island journeyed to the place once known as Great Falls – now called Turners Falls – to work together, with the blessing of the Turners Falls airport commission, to clear saplings from a hill they consider a site of ancient ceremony.

The airport commission once planned to bulldoze the hill and use the material for fill for an extended runway. But the tribes and the commission seemed ready to put years of difficult negotiations about protecting the hill behind them, and turn over a new leaf on a holiday weekend when most New Englanders, and most Americans, spent time celebrating a tradition rooted in the saving grace of the Wampanoags, who welcomed and succored the starving Puritans.

Turners Falls airport manager Mickey Longo called the joint tribal work party on the ceremonial hill “good news. The trees are a safety concern on the side of the runway in that area; they have to be trimmed. The birch trees are a good 15 foot high already,” since the airport commission clear-cut the site five years ago in preparation for leveling hill. “They grow quick.”

Doug Harris, preservationist for ceremonial landscapes for the Narragansett tribe, said the hill above the Great Falls at the Connecticut River features a stone formation that is the first Native ceremonial site east of the Mississippi listed as eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

“In ancient time it would have been kept burnt off and clear,” Harris said, as “the center of a cere-

monial calendar that views Mount Pocumtuck, over by Heath, 15½ miles away. You would be able to see the fires that would have been lit on Heath on Burnt Hill, just half a mile to three-quarters of a mile further west. What you have at Mount Pocumtuck are two notches in the horizon line, and the sun sets at one particular time of year in one of those notches, when the Perseid meteor showers come by between the 11th and 13th of August.”

Harris added, “The stone ceremonial site is part of the ancient ceremony that acknowledged the passage of the energy of people who are deceased into the spirit realm of Cawtantowitt. For Narragansetts, that is a passage to the west. It is one of many places of ceremony in Franklin County, a very powerful place of ceremony for Native people.”

**The Ayes Have It**

Things are happening in Montague, and there’s a pile of paperwork in town hall with signatures to show for it.

The selectboard signed the phase one Unity Park improvements contract with Berkshire Design Group; the Community Development Block Grant application for 2012, which includes housing rehabilitation and phase two for Unity Park; the Turnpike Road Energy Park master planning contract; a memorandum with the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office for a regional dog officer, control and kennel program in Montague; and an addendum for the electricity supply contract between the town and the Hampshire Council of Governments.

What does this mean in practical terms? Better parks, cheaper electricity for both the town and residents of the town, better housing with fewer code violations for some income eligible homeowners – and a chance to share our home town kennel off of Turnpike Road with other lost or homeless doggies in the county.



EARLIER NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Contact Tracing, Corner Lighting, Annex

By JEFF SINGLETON

As the number of positive COVID-19 cases in Franklin County appeared to be headed for a winter holiday spike, the Montague selectboard voted at its November 22 meeting to accept a two-year \$250,000 grant from the state Department of Public Health for contact tracing, and to apply for a grant of up to \$300,000 for “shared services” with other towns.

In his weekly report on case counts, public health director Daniel Wasiuk said that the number of positive tests over the week leading up to November 20 had been 11, and for the two weeks leading to that date was 18. He said that of the eleven new cases, six were fully vaccinated and five not vaccinated.

Wasiuk said the increase in “incidence rates” had occurred in all counties in Massachusetts. “The numbers have increased across the US, and also globally,” he added. He went on to state that a case rate of 25 or more over a two-week period “would put us in a red state state” on the state map. “That’s really a point of concern,” he said, adding that the board of health would need to meet “possibly next week” to discuss “imposing restrictions.”

Two grants discussed by board of health member Melanie Zamojski would be shared with Greenfield, Sunderland, and Deerfield, with the city of Greenfield designated the “lead applicant.”

In addition to supporting more contact tracing – a labor-intensive process whereby public health officials reach out to people who have tested positive for COVID, and then the people they have had close contact with – the first grant would also potentially fund a “part-time epidemiologist.”

Town administrator Steve Ellis said he believed the process of applying and implementing the contract-tracing grant would improve collaboration with other towns in Franklin County. “The epidemiological support in particular would provide us with a clear set of indicators that would be shared indicators, and potentially identify critical triggers,” he said.

The “shared services” grant several towns are applying for, according to Ellis, is designed to “provide additional capacity to support community-level health needs [and] outreach to underserved populations including non-English-speaking individuals and homebound individuals.”

**Dark Sculpture**

The November 22 meeting began with a public comment from Tim de Christopher, creator of the *Rock, Paper, Scissors* sculpture on the corner of Avenue A and Third Street. De Christopher said that town officials had committed to improving lighting on the corner “two or three years ago” after several acts of vandalism, but does not seem to have followed through.

“What, if anything, is done, has been done, is going to be done?” he asked.

Pam Allan, de Christopher’s wife, added that River-Culture director Suzanne LoManto had an idea for the lighting, but “then she said the idea didn’t work... but we don’t know what the idea was, or why it didn’t work.” “Nothing has been run through my desk relative to

that project,” said Ellis. He added that he would be “happy” to follow up with LoManto, as well as town planner Walter Ramsey and public works superintendent Tom Bergeron, to see “what we might be able to do.”

**Reuse, Recycle, Stretch**

Ramsey asked the selectboard to “take a moment to consider the reuse of the town hall annex, a one-story building connected to [the rear of] town hall that has been vacated by the Department of Public Works.” He said he had begun conversations with architects to consider viable reuses for the building, but that before the town gets any further “down the road,” recommended it needed to “step back” and consider potential uses.

He noted that the community access station MCTV had expressed interest in the building, but suggested that he “reach out” to town departments to see if they had space needs.

In a separate discussion, the board approved a draft Green Communities Annual Report, which the town is required to file with the state. The designation, according to Ramsey, helps the town “bring in funding for energy efficiency projects.”

Ramsey reviewed five criteria for continuing Montague’s Green Community status. These include adopting new zoning rules, expedited permitting, and “stretch” building codes to promote energy efficiency. The criteria also include targeted goals for energy reduction. He said the town had “hovered around” the required 25% reduction from 2008 for the last few years.

**Other Business**

The board approved an application from Michael Nelson to use Peskeompskut Park on October 22, 2022 for the annual Great Falls Harvest Festival. A request for a one-day beer and wine license and permission to place a sign at that location for 20 days prior to the festival were also approved.

Tim Niejadik, director of Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans Services, requested that the board execute an agreement with the district, which serves 26 towns in the region. The board executed the agreement, which runs from July 2022 through June 2025.

Acting as the personnel board, the selectboard accepted the resignation of Melinda Georgeson as a library assistant, and then appointed her to the position of library substitute.

The board approved a request from town treasurer Eileen Seymour to execute two sets of bonds for town projects – “taxable” bonds, including borrowing for the airport’s purchase of Pioneer Aviation and its fueling station as well as for work on the Strathmore factory complex, and “non-taxable” bonds to fund the new public works facility on Turners Falls Road.

The board approved a request to spend \$400 from the town’s “Unexpected Engineering and Surveying Costs” account for a PERC test at a Federal Street property, and executed a contract with the state Department of Environmental Protection for a “sustainable materials” grant.

The board then retired into two executive sessions, one to deal with property taking and the other to discuss negotiating strategy with the FirstLight power company.

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**MONTAGUE** from page A1

selectboard budget by \$117,000, or 60%. “Is this common for a town the size of Montague – this structure, this adding another position?” asked John McNamara, a downtown business owner.

“It appears to me that the result of this reassignment is to have, in a sense, a chairman of the board job and a chief executive officer job,” said finance committee member John Hanold. “That implies to me a very substantial change in how the town is run.”

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz, who said he discussed the idea with Ellis for “the last six to eight months,” disagreed with Hanold, pointing to a list of the two positions’ duties included in the meeting packet.

The new role would take on matters of economic development, capital and infrastructure planning, and outreach to businesses; Ellis’s job would shift toward governance and policy, collective bargaining and human resources, and “intergovernmental relations.”

“Communities that invest in themselves are able to accomplish important work that leads to prosperity,” Ellis argued. “I see the business community as wanting more from Montague town government, not less.” He named items the town could benefit from: IT planning; a wage and class study that would shape bargaining with the town’s unions; and grants the town currently passes up.

“I don’t think there are many businesses that have close to 100 employees that have no HR,” Kuklewicz said. Department budgets are due December 13.

Chelsey Little’s proposal at the wastewater plant is for a full-time laboratory manager. A previous employee split lab and office duties, she explained, but now that work is split among a number of operators, and Montague currently outsources a number of tests it could save money by performing in-house. She warned that when the plant renews its permits, it will acquire new mandates in sampling and testing for PFAS (*see article, page A1*).

Little gave an estimate of 1,889 hours a year of lab work. “Just preliminarily, I’m only looking at a 2.4% increase in the budget with this added position,” she said.

“I’m not sure we’ve ever had a full-time [lab] person,” Kuklewicz said. Little will flesh out the proposal.

On another topic, she announced the winner of a contest to create a mural on the facility’s main building. Lake Pleasant artist Lahri Bond was selected from among 23 entrants. His piece would be a ten-foot-diameter circle depicting a number of local wildlife species. The project is expected to be completed by early spring.

#### Farren Fury

The floor was granted to citizens concerned over Trinity Health’s plan to demolish the Farren Care Center

building in Montague City. The former Catholic hospital turned longterm care facility was evacuated and decommissioned last winter, and the nonprofit has told the town its cost-benefit analysis points to knocking the structure down and granting the cleared land to the public.

Lilith Wolinsky, a founder of the Montague City Improvement Association, condemned the town’s inaction. “This proposed demolition comes at the tail end of 50 years of civic neglect,” she said. “We are sort of the forgotten village.” Wolinsky argued the town should push for a “thorough and community-informed redevelopment study, as was promised by Trinity last December.”

Jeff Singleton, who previously covered the issue for the *Reporter*, contested an assertion by Ellis that Trinity’s plan had been “foreshadowed” last June. “I don’t see how you would have known, in retrospect,” he said. “This bodes ill for all historic buildings in this town.”

Town planner Walter Ramsey said the town has few tools to leverage. He ran through a number of plans and inventories the town has made over several decades, none of which identified the building as an important resource. Montague City is not a recognized historic district.

Wolinsky said this proved her point. Ramsey also urged residents to look on the bright side. “I don’t want people to overlook the value of the proposition that is before us,” he said. “This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to rebuild the village center.”

Kuklewicz said he worried that the town could “fight to gain control” of the building only to have “a facility... that could lay fallow for years and years.” In the end, though, he agreed the town should “push a little harder,” with the help of state legislators, to encourage Trinity to explore alternative uses for the building.

#### Other Business

Selectboard member Matt Lord suggested a committee to set priorities for how the town spends its cannabis impact fund, expected to swell in the coming years as new cultivation facilities begin operation. The discussion swirled around the pros and cons of a formal, appointed committee – which seemed to be Kuklewicz’s preference – and encouraging the public to form an outside advisory group. Lord agreed to think it through some more.

The selectboard approved an application for a grant for a bench outside the Carnegie Library, plus four internet hotspots to be lent out to library patrons.

The board agreed to amend St. Stanislaus Society’s license to open at 10 a.m. on Sundays, rather than at noon.

At the end of the meeting, the board recessed into an executive session to discuss contract bargaining with police chief Chris Williams. The next selectboard meeting will be held December 6.



#### NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

## Cannabis Shop, Opioid Suit, Dementia Friendliness

By JERRI HIGGINS

The selectboard met Monday, November 22, to hear the decision by the zoning board of appeals (ZBA) on Leaf Joy, LLC, a proposed recreational marijuana retail store. Signing Gill on to a national opioid class action settlement and applying to join a network of “age- and dementia-friendly communities” was among other business discussed.

Town administrator Ray Purington told the board that the Leaf Joy retail marijuana shop was green-lighted by the ZBA at their November 16 meeting. Parent company PGM Property Management’s proposal to purchase and use the former Green River Powersports property at the intersection of Route 2 and Main Road was approved, along with Leaf Joy’s site plan.

Petr Faiziev, PGM Property Management’s owner, will oversee the physical property, while his son, Greg Faiziev, will run the dispensary.

“The next step for us is negotiating the host community agreement,” said Purington, telling the board that he had “gathered about 12 or 15 host agreements from other towns of similar size as ours” to guide him in drafting the town’s host agreement.

#### Our Aging Population

Purington was approved by selectboard chair Greg Snedeker and

member Charles Garbiel to draft an application letter to the AARP Massachusetts state director requesting to join their network of age-friendly cities and communities, part of LifePath’s age- and dementia-friendly project in Franklin County and North Quabbin.

LifePath, a local non-profit elder and disabled service organization, has teamed up with the Massachusetts chapter of the non-profit AARP, formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons. The collaboration is intended to create more inclusive, sustainable communities and living for elders in Franklin County and surrounding towns. According to the “Livable Communities” section of AARP’s website, one in five people in the United States will be 65 or older by 2030, and by 2035, adults over age 65 will outnumber those under 18.

Board member Randy Crochier abstained from voting due to his program manager position at the Cooperative Public Health Service, which oversees a paid employee involved in the project.

“From what I have read,” said Snedeker, “I think it is a good program – and especially for Gill. We have a pretty considerable number of retired residents.”

“If I take my selectboard member’s hat off – and put on my program manager’s hat – we do,” replied Crochier. “Most of Franklin

County has a population that is aging quickly. ‘Over 60’ is going to be a big number soon, and there are some really good opportunities here – many of them for free.”

Crochier expressed his appreciation for the public health nurses he works with, who already work with other towns in the network, and have offered their knowledge and support to Gill.

Crochier seemed impressed at a recent age- and dementia-friendly informational meeting where one of the public health nurses encouraged greater awareness about casual phrases such as “having a senior moment” to describe forgetfulness: “Are we actually saying that every senior is forgetful? You’re just changing that terminology.”

Purington said that “identifying what some of the livability needs for elders are” through the program could help the town in grant applications, or through other avenues, “to improve or enhance elders’ lives. Being able to get more money to do more would be great,” he said.

#### National Opioid Settlement

The selectboard approved Purington to sign the town onto a national opioid settlement agreement. Purington said that after verifying with the Massachusetts attorney general’s office that a letter received by the town was a legitimate class-action filing, he told the board that he

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### TOWN OF LEVERETT

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

### *For the first of two phases of the development of a Master Plan*

The Town of Leverett seeks professional consulting services to prepare the first phase of a Comprehensive Master Plan in accordance with MGL Chapter 41, §81D to be completed no later than June 30, 2022. The successful proposal will come from consultants with a broad knowledge base in land use planning, housing, economic development, cultural asset development, smart growth, open space, historic preservation, municipal services, geographic information services (GIS), climate adaptation, and community resiliency.

The deadline for proposal submission is 12/30/2021 at 2:00 p.m.

Email [townadministrator@leverett.ma.us](mailto:townadministrator@leverett.ma.us) or call (413) 548-9699 to request a copy of the RFP.

The contract will be awarded to the proposer offering the most advantageous proposal, taking into consideration minimum required criteria, comparative evaluation criteria as set forth in the RFP, and price. Contract will be awarded by the Selectboard. The Town of Leverett reserves the right to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, and to waive irregularities and informalities, when at its sole discretion it is deemed to be in the best interest of the Town and to the extent permitted by law.

felt it was worth signing onto.

“The exact amount that cities and towns might end up with, [it] is way too soon to tell,” Purington said, adding that it will depend on how many cities and towns are involved, and what any lawyers’ fees amount to. “I think it may also come down to the relative impact of the opioid crisis to each city and town,” he said, “but any money would be more money than we have received, and be able to put toward any of the opioid epidemic programs.”

“Or even just getting some Narcan,” responded Crochier, referring to the nasal spray that can reverse the effects of an opiate overdose.

#### Other Business

Gill was awarded a \$4,200 recycling dividend program grant for FY’22.

Two more dates are available for the COVID-19 vaccination “VAX bus” for children aged five to 18. The clinic is also open to anyone over 18 who would like their booster, or even their first or second shots.

The bus will be at Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School in Shelburne Falls this Thursday, December 2 from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., and Leverett Elementary School on Friday, December 3 from 2 to 6 p.m. The Pfizer, Moderna, and

Johnson & Johnson vaccines are available, and appointments can be made through the Franklin Regional Council of Governments website or accessed through the Gill website.

“They have about 10% extra of each vaccine,” said Crochier, “so they can also accommodate a few walk-ins.”

The Gill Cultural Council has created a survey questionnaire, available for download through the town website. While Purington said that the council was aiming for a November 30 return date, they would like the resident survey responses back as soon as possible.

Eve Brown-Waite was unanimously appointed to the council for three years, through November 22, 2024.

The Slate Memorial library will host the first of its 2021-2022 poetry reading events this Thursday, December 2, from 7 to 8 p.m. Organized by Amy Gordon and Patricia Crosby, this month’s event features local poet Paul Mariani, with guest poets Marina Goldman and Ginny Sullivan. While all the poetry events are free and open to the public, there is limited seating, and wearing face masks is required.

The library will also host a holiday card-making event this Saturday, December 4, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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SLUDGE from page A1

approximately between Richardson Road and the Montague town line (possibly further),” the board wrote. “Low levels of PFAS were detected in the Landfill groundwater plume located around the Cushman Road area.”

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, are a class of several thousand man-made chemicals used in a wide range of commercial and industrial products including nonstick pans, firefighting foam, and waterproof clothing. PFAS are sometimes called “forever chemicals” because they do not break down in the environment, and accumulate in living tissue.

The health impacts of PFAS are not fully understood, but they are believed to cause problems of the liver, thyroid and kidneys, and are linked to certain types of cancer. Last year, Massachusetts set its first drinking water safety standard for PFAS at 20 ppt.

Of the four Leverett wells that have exceeded that standard, three surpassed the “imminent hazard” threshold of 90 ppt, requiring immediate action. The state’s Bureau of Waste Site Clean-up is currently reviewing remediation plans with Leverett’s health agent, according to the board of health.

“It will likely involve more well tests to identify all contaminated wells and then investigating the source of the contaminants,” the board wrote. “If your well is not located in the two locations mentioned your well water is likely safe.”

Identifying the party responsible for the PFAS contamination can impact who pays for the remediation, MassDEP has confirmed to the *Reporter*.

Over 150 wells in Franklin County, including 38 in Leverett, have been tested under the state’s free program, which began last spring. While the program is no longer available in

Leverett, Fair urged anyone concerned about PFAS to get their water tested independently. At least 20 wells have been tested in Wendell so far, but testing has yet to begin in Erving, according to MassDEP’s website.

State and town officials are also trying to determine the source of PFAS contamination at the Swift River School in New Salem. Multiple tests have shown that the elementary school’s well has more than double the safe limit of PFAS in the water, with levels increasing during recent months.

Scaling Up, Spreading Out

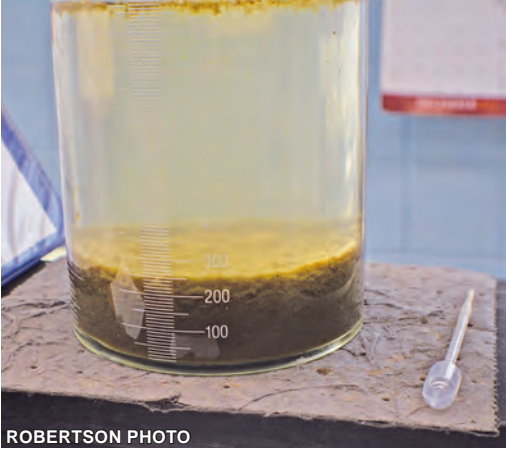
Addressing PFAS contamination on an industrial level poses a new set of challenges to the waste stream, particularly for wastewater treatment plant operators.

“We’re not the ones making it and profiting off of it, but the burden of dealing with PFAS is on us,” Chelsey Little, the superintendent of Montague’s water pollution control facility, told the *Reporter*.

Little says she expects regulations of PFAS in wastewater effluent and sludge are coming soon, and her department is considering joining a class-action lawsuit that would help pay for the upgrades necessary to meet them. A suit initiated in 2018 by the National Rural Water Association would target the global manufacturers of PFAS – companies such as 3M and Dupont – but not any local companies using those chemical products.

In a residential setting, an activated carbon filter costing several hundred dollars can remove PFAS from drinking water, Little explained, but the technology necessary to treat PFAS on an industrial or municipal scale could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Little shared recent test results with the *Reporter* showing no detectable levels of PFAS in Montague’s sewage sludge. The



Waste solids settle in a beaker at Montague’s water pollution control facility. Superintendent Chelsey Little says greater regulation of PFAS is around the corner, and could prove costly.

Montague plant is required to sample sludge for PFAS quarterly and report the results to MassDEP, but there are currently no state or federal standards for safe amounts in effluent – the water the plant releases into the Connecticut River – or in sludge.

PFAS contamination may also complicate another growing crisis in wastewater management: the rising cost of sludge disposal, and the dwindling options for where to dump it.

To address this existing problem, Montague officials are considering building a regional sludge composting facility behind the town transfer station. The Franklin County Solid Waste Management District (FCSWMD) is currently conducting a feasibility study that looks at the potential for the town to begin composting its own sludge, as well as that from other towns in the waste management district.

“It could benefit the other communities if Montague had a composting facility,” said Jan Ameen, executive director of the FCSWMD.

“The solid waste district would become a customer of the Montague treatment plant – they could become one of our disposal outlets.”

Little calls the proposed composting program “near and dear to my heart,” because of its potential to reduce sludge disposal costs for the town – while recycling organic material back into the environment which is currently being sent to an incinerator in Connecticut.

“We have resources here that can be renewable, and we should be using them,” she said.

One goal of the feasibility study, which Ameen said will be completed in three weeks, is to determine appropriate end uses for the composted sludge. She said it would probably be used on turf fields or flowers, but not edible crops due to the likelihood of contamination. While bacteria and pathogens are killed in the composting process, composting would not remove chemicals that traditional treatment plants can’t handle – including PFAS.

“PFAS is certainly a concern right now,” Ameen said. “It’s such a moving target, because there aren’t really any standards right now.”

About half of all sewage sludge generated in the US is already applied to land, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. In Vermont, sewage sludge-based fertilizer applied to land has contaminated groundwater with PFAS. In Maine, a hunting advisory was recently issued warning residents not to consume deer meat from the vicinity of a farm that was spread with sludge-based fertilizer.

“It can be a total game changer depending on what the regulation and what the limits are,” Ameen said. “What if Montague sludge doesn’t have high levels of PFAS, but they take something in from someone who does? Everyone has to be paying attention and testing their sludge.”



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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER DECEMBER 2, 2021

Above: Aredvi Azad captured the crescent moon and Venus one early evening last month from the Food City plaza.

# EXHIBIT

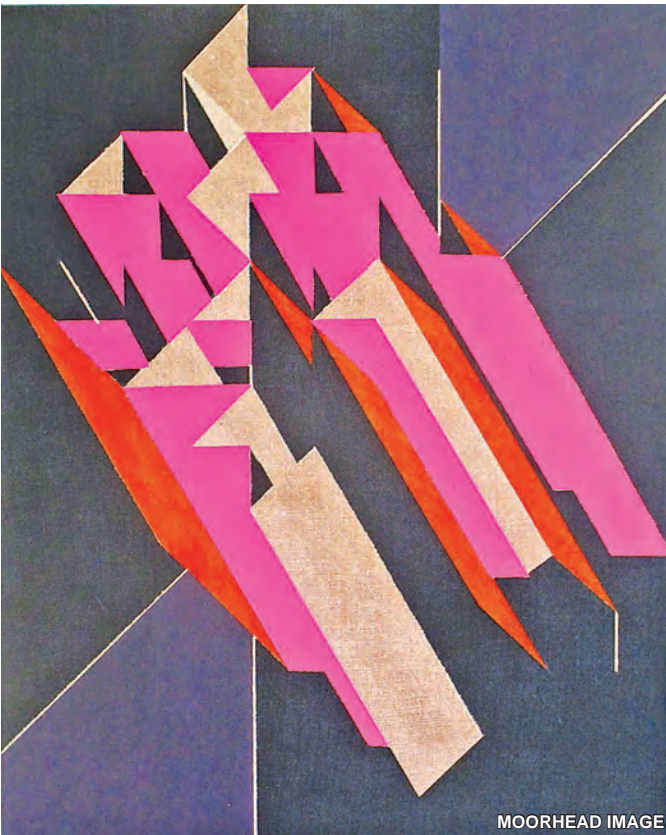
## A Robert Moorhead Retrospective at Deerfield

By LEE WICKS

**DEERFIELD** – I’ve known Robert Moorhead for about twenty years as a teacher of architecture at Deerfield Academy, where I also worked, and as a graphic designer. He designed my novel and my memoir, and never spoke much about his paintings. Now, decades of his paintings are displayed at the Von Auersperg Gallery on the Deerfield Academy campus in a solo retrospective titled *Robert Moorhead: Visions & Transitions: Paintings 1971-2021*.

It’s delightful to find out that Robert has successfully juggled teaching and painting for so many decades. Since his retirement in 2014, Robert has been able to spend most mornings in his studio in Greenfield, where he has been experimenting with color, shapes, calligraphy, and new technologies as they have emerged. We caught up with each other at the gallery recently.

I was particularly drawn to a series of paintings in the exhibit entitled “Calligraphic or Arabic Visions.” There is something familiar and exotic about this work that is composed of the Gothic and Arabic alphabets. Barely recognizable letters seem to dance and twist against backgrounds that change colors depending on the light. Black see **MOORHEAD** page B8



Some paintings by Moorhead, like this one called Free Fall, reference architecture, one of the subjects he taught at Deerfield Academy.

## Welding a Family Tree, Part II



Above: Jeremy Griswold and Jon Bander install a branch quadrant on the tree prior to lighting it up for the first time. Below: Bander and Nina Rossi tighten bolts on the base of the tree.

By NINA ROSSI

**TURNERS FALLS** – In our October 28 issue I described working with my son, Jon Bander, on a large metal sculpture of a cherry tree this fall, but I left the story of the project unfinished. Now I am happy to report about how it was finished and installed on November 19 in the courtyard of the Park & Ford condominium complex in Alexandria, Virginia.

The sculpture was a commission obtained by ModVic, a Palmer, Mass.-based steampunk design company spearheaded by Bruce Rosenbaum.

Steampunk, for those who haven’t heard the term, is a style that combines anachronistic technology inspired by science fiction with Victorian elegance, using lots of embellished industrial materials. (This description was inadvertently cut in the first article, which said steampunk is “a style that combines materials”!)

The cherry tree sculpture has a George Washington theme because its destination is on land once owned by Washington – there are axe heads and sawblades and George’s signature on the trunk. Other “easter eggs” hidden in the sculpture include a heart with “GW & MW” carved on the trunk, Washington quarters in the bark, 13 stars climbing the tree for the 13 colonies, and the dates of Washington’s term of office.

see **WELDING** page B6



POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

### WEST ALONG THE RIVER

## DECEMBER 1941

By DAVID BRULE

**ERVINGSIDE** – Around this time of year, and especially now eighty years after the fact, I get to thinking about those events of 1941 to 1945 that marked families of my generation forever.

Those events set in motion impacts on what were to be the lives of our friends, our families, and our own selves, even though we were not yet born.

Indeed, we who had not yet drawn our first breath would first see the light of day within a year or two after the War had ended. We would unknowingly carry forward the generational trauma, memories, and the impacts of that war far into the future of our lives.

What began as the attack on Pearl Harbor and launched events that lasted for four years was to affect so many of us of the post-war generation for a lifetime, even into today in the year of 2021.

Young women and men of the 1930s and 1940s would find themselves drawn into that war. Many of those girls and boys would meet and marry shortly thereafter, and begin producing children, we who would become part of the Baby Boom.

Future fathers from our villages left high school in 1941 or 1942, and within a year would find themselves in places they had never imagined, enduring unthinkable horror. Some would storm the beaches of Normandy and fight all the way to Berlin. Some would be sent to fly high over Tokyo on bombing runs. People living around us, neighbors and fathers would do extraordinary things, some lucky then to live to tell about it, and resume their quiet lives back in their hometown.

And as our generation was born and grew up into the 1950s and 1960s, if we were lucky, we would hear stories from some of them. To their credit those young men and women gave many of us post-war lives that, looking back and compared to today’s world, were the best of times.

A neighbor of ours, whom we shall call by his Turners Falls nickname, Babe, told calmly of spending weeks fighting door-to-door in Paris, liberating that City Of Light from the four-year German Occupation. That was the same Paris where, 20 years later, I was to enjoy walking those beautiful boulevards, stopping in small cafés to read the newspaper, savor a glass of wine. The privilege afforded by a time of peace. Yet our neighbor had been caught up in a life or death struggle right there. Still, he did come home to settle next door

to us and raise a family. He lived out a quiet life, but tormented by nightmares for the rest of his days.

The father of another classmate would win medals in the war for having destroyed single-handedly a German machine-gun nest. Being a Turners boy of a staunch Polish immigrant family, he managed to strike a blow for his people whose homelands had been invaded and overrun by Germany for generations. Tall and silent, he never said a word about it.

Another classmate’s father had been a flight surgeon, patching up shattered pilots and helping them to get back into the action. That man became our family doctor for decades.

Other future fathers, like my own, spent years at sea in the South Pacific on ships and aircraft carriers called the Ticonderoga and the Hancock, while his friends named Barney Whiteman or Rudy Mazeck never came back to Turners Falls. Their photos remained on the wall of our family home well into these last few years. I grew up seeing the pictures of those heroes, lost somewhere in the vast Pacific, smiling back at us throughout those years.

Father did make it back after three years at sea, the war over, and married a Millers Falls girl in 1945. This was not a rare story; so many of us were born in 1946 and 1947 that we were known as the Baby Boomers. And so we grew up in those immediate post-war years, sheltered by parents determined to provide a better life for us. Names like Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, FDR, Tojo, Hitler, Mussolini, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki were names we heard talk about all through our formative years. We inherited that trauma, and those tragedies, along with the victories and the peace time well-being.

So now, eighty years after the Day of Infamy, most of those boys and girls whose lives were changed forever on that day, those who were to become our parents, are gone, we have laid them to rest. We too are now in our 70s and 80s. Some of us can remember those years before we were born as if we had actually lived them, those days were so much a part of our young parents’ lives.

Now our Boomer numbers are dwindling too, and with us will go the sense of what those war years felt like, what it did to our families and our town. We did grow up in the best of times, thanks to that Greatest Generation.

They made it possible for us to feel that we could change the world, after they had gone out and saved it.





C. CARMODY COLLAGE

## “BONNIE”

Bonnie’s list of endearing qualities goes on and on! This adorable girl is happy to meet just about everyone - adults, kids, and even other animals! She is house trained, good when left alone, and is well-behaved at the vet and the groomer. She is used to regular grooming and will need a haircut every few months or so.

Like most senior animals, Bonnie has a few medical issues that may require further treatment and diagnostics. She has a mid-grade

heart murmur and also tends to get ear infections regularly.

Having an established and ongoing relationship with a veterinarian will be important for Bonnie in her new home.

Interested in adopting? Animals at Dakin are available only in Springfield currently. Contact adoption staff at [springfield@dakinhumane.org](mailto:springfield@dakinhumane.org) and include your name and phone number. For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org).

## Senior Center Activities DECEMBER 6 THROUGH 10

### WENDELL

Wendell Senior Center is open for a foot care clinic the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Senior Health Rides are now available. Contact Susan von Ranson at (978) 544-3758 to set up a ride.

### GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for drop in visitors.

Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. For more information call 863-9357. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open.

The Gill Montague Council on Aging has access to grant money to help low to moderate income seniors make home repairs, particularly those related to home safety. Please call 863-9357 for eligibility criteria and more information.

### Monday 12/6

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
1 p.m. Knitting & Crafts Circle  
**Tuesday 12/7**  
10 a.m. Knitting Circle  
3 p.m. Tai Chi  
**Wednesday 12/8**  
9 a.m. Foot Clinic (by appointment only)  
4 p.m. Mat Yoga  
**Thursday 12/9**  
10 a.m. Chair Yoga

1 p.m. Cards & Games  
**Friday 12/10**  
10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

### ERVING

Erving Senior Center is open 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Open for cards, coffee, and billiards. Fitness room also open. Exercise classes will be limited to 15 people per class.

No lunch will be served. We will continue with Brown Bag the first Thursday of each month. For any questions or concerns, please call Paula at (413) 423-3649. Mask required if not vaccinated. Proper handwashing and social distancing are still required.

### Monday 12/6

9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge  
10 a.m. Tai Ji Quan  
**Tuesday 12/7**  
9 a.m. Good for YOU  
10 a.m. Line Dancing  
**Wednesday 12/8**  
9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning  
10 a.m. Tai Ji Quan  
12:30 p.m. Bingo  
**Thursday 12/9**  
9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge  
10 a.m. Stretch & Balance  
**Friday 12/10**  
9 a.m. Quilting Guild

### LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held on Zoom on Wednesdays. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 5, or [coa@leverett.ma.us](mailto:coa@leverett.ma.us).

## DECEMBER LIBRARY LISTING

### Montague Public Libraries

Turners Falls: Carnegie (413) 863-3214  
Montague Center (413) 367-2852  
Millers Falls (413) 659-3801

### MONTAGUE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

**Every Wednesday:** *Story Time Online.* Meet Meghan Doyle for stories, songs and a Take-and-Make craft. Craft bags available in the children’s room at the Carnegie Library. Find the event link at [montaguepubliclibraries.org/calendar](http://montaguepubliclibraries.org/calendar). 10 a.m.

**Every Thursday:** *Music & Movement Online.* Bilingual English–Spanish series for children with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson. Find the event link at [montaguepubliclibraries.org/calendar](http://montaguepubliclibraries.org/calendar). 10 a.m.

**2nd and 4th Fridays:** *Grab & Go STEAM Bags.* Hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math activities designed for grades K-4. Free kits available at the Carnegie, and also at Montague Center and Millers Falls when those libraries are open. Each bag contains instructions and the materials you may not already have. While supplies last.

**Thursday, December 2:** *Friends of the Montague Public Libraries Meeting.* Seeking new members! Carnegie Library, 2nd floor; agenda sent in advance. For more info, contact Vicki Valley, [vgatvalley@gmail.com](mailto:vgatvalley@gmail.com). 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

**Saturday, December 4:** *Used book sale.* Hundreds of recent books, and also puzzles, DVDs, and CDs. Hardcover \$1 each, paperbacks and kids’ books \$0.25 each. Proceeds benefit Montague Public Libraries programs. Carnegie Library, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Monday, December 6:** *Beaded Snowflake Kit Take-and-Make.* Free kits for adults and teens, available at all branch locations. While supplies last.

**Saturday, December 18:** *Gingerbread House Take-and-Make.* Free kits for children of all ages and their caregivers. Each bag contains candy, graham crackers, and icing to make an easy gingerbread house. Kits also available earlier in the week at the branch libraries during their open hours. While supplies last. 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**Holiday Closure:** The Montague Public Libraries will be closed Friday, December 24 and Saturday, December 25 for the holidays.

**Erving Public Library** (413) 423-3348  
**Gill:** Slate Library (413) 863-2591  
**Leverett Public Library** (413) 548-9220  
**Wendell Free Library** (978) 544-3559  
**Northfield:** Dickinson Library (413) 498-2455

Weather, etc. sometimes causes changes in library events; you may want to call ahead to confirm events.

### ERVING FREE LIBRARY

**1st Mondays:** *PAWS to Read.* Kids can come to the Erving Library and read to one of our volunteer dogs. Grab a book and sit down to enjoy a nice session of petting and reading. Call (413) 423-3348 to reserve a spot.

**Every Thursday:** *Ukelele Sing-Along.* Bring your uke and/or singing voice and join fellow musicians for a very informal sing-along! Outside on the beautiful back patio if weather permits, or inside in the spacious community room. Masks required. 1 p.m.

**Wednesday, December 8:** *STEAM for All Ages.* If you are curious about the world around you and like to try new things, STEAM is for you! Pick up your kit, then join us on Zoom or just follow along with the provided directions. A snack is always included. December’s kit is “Inflatables.” Call (413) 423-3348 to reserve a kit. Zoom with Jean at 3 p.m.

**Sunday, December 19:** *Winter Sing-Along.* Some old favorites and maybe a few new tunes. The Green River Ukulele Players will join us and provide accompaniment. After the sing-along, cocoa and cookies will be provided by the Friends of the Erving Library. 2 to 3 p.m.

### LEVERETT LIBRARY

**All December:** *Monthly Spice Tasting: Star Anise.* Stop in for a sample and suggested recipes. While supplies last.

**Every Monday and Wednesday:** *Online Qigong.* Calm your mind. Improve your balance. Enhance your health. Qigong is an ancient Chinese health care system integrating slow movements, breathing techniques and focused attention. Suitable for all levels of ability and any age. You may join this free class at any time. Taught by Dvora Eisenstein. For more info, email [CommunityQigong@gmail.com](mailto:CommunityQigong@gmail.com). 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

**Monday, December 13:** *Ukulele Strum-Along on Zoom.* Julie is here to play and sing, and you are invited to do the

same – all instruments welcome. Chords and lyrics included. Brought to you by the Friends of the Leverett Library. Contact Julie Stepanak for more details: [julie@musicjulie.com](mailto:julie@musicjulie.com). 7 to 8 p.m.

### NORTHFIELD: DICKINSON LIBRARY

**Every Tuesday:** *Story Hour.* Music and stories for toddlers, preschoolers, older siblings and caregivers. (No story on 12/28, since no school.) Pre-registration required. Contact Deb Wood for more info: [woodd@pvrsk12.org](mailto:woodd@pvrsk12.org). Masks required. 10 a.m.

**Every Thursday:** *Thursday Afternoon Knitting Group.* Join fellow knitters and crocheters for an afternoon of chatting, sharing projects, and (maybe) getting some work done on your current projects. We meet at the community table on the main floor of the library. All are welcome! 2 to 4 p.m.

**Every Friday:** *Kids’ Fridays.* 12/3 – LEGOs. 12/10 – Read with Rio. 12/17 – MCBA Group Book #3. 12/24 — no school, no activity.

**1st Saturdays:** *Friends of the Library Puzzle Swap.* In need of a new puzzle to work on? We have dozens of new-to-you puzzles (for kids and adults). This event is free and open to all. For more info, [friendsofdml01360@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofdml01360@gmail.com). Come to the back door of the library. Masks required. 10 to 11:30 a.m.

### WENDELL FREE LIBRARY

**Every Tuesday:** *Art Group.* In the Herrick Room. Space is limited. Masks required. 5 to 6 p.m.

**Every Saturday:** *Storytime.* Stories aimed at ages 2 to 6, but all ages are welcome. Space is limited to 15 participants in each time slot; arrive before the start time to reserve your space at the front desk. Masks required. 10:30 and 11 a.m.

**Wednesday, December 15:** *Gingerbread House Decorating Party.* Come decorate a non-edible cardboard “gingerbread” house and hear gingerbread stories. Please contact the library to register, as space is limited: [staff@wendellfreelibrary.org](mailto:staff@wendellfreelibrary.org), (978) 544-3559. Masks required. 2 to 3 p.m.

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EVENT PREVIEW

Light Up the Fairgrounds 2

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – Last year, I was looking for a good topic for an article for the holidays, and I found an event called “Light Up the Fairgrounds” at the Franklin County Fairgrounds. It involved a bunch of lighting displays that you see while driving through the grounds. I enjoyed seeing it very much – so much so I believed that there would be another year of the Franklin County Fairgrounds hosting this event.

I ended up making the right call about that! The Bear Country 95.3 FM radio station is involved with this again, and they are still offering cash prizes for the attendees’ favorite lighting displays. The event started at the end of November again this year, and will go through part of December.

I also learned that the Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter and Ciesluk Farm will both have lights in the event again. The person who told me this was Dan Guerin, the general manager of the Western Mass Radio Group, which is behind Bear Country. He has been in that job for “over 20 years.”

Guerin mentions there will be “34 different businesses and individuals” involved in this event. Last year apparently had thousands of vehicles driving through. They raised close to \$30,000 for charities. One of them is Big Brothers Big Sisters of Franklin County.

Other places that have light displays as part of this year’s event are the Franklin First Federal Credit Union and the Salvation Army.

Last year, the lighting display for the animal shelter featured an outline of paws in blue lights. I



would describe the one they had for Ciesluk Farm as being a “Christmas on the farm” one. There were also displays based on the *Nightmare Before Christmas* movie, and I believe *National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation*. I would be surprised if there isn’t at least one lighting display this year based on a well-known holiday movie for us to see.

Another cool thing they did was while you drive through the fairgrounds, you listen to holiday songs on your car radio. This year you can tune into Easy 107.5 FM for those holiday songs.

As for whether there will be a third year of this event, Dan Guerin said yes to being hopeful about that.

“People enjoyed it last year,” he added. It brings the community together.”

It will be interesting, in my opinion, to see which displays will be voted the favorites this year, and win the cash prizes.

Spit Harvester; A Class-A Crash; 26 Cars Looted; Suffering Skunk; Private Eye; Homeless Camp

Monday, 11/15

9:56 a.m. Concerned caller worried about the integrity of a tree on J Street that appears to have a crack in it. DPW foreman advised and will be responding.

5:05 p.m. 911 caller from Turnpike Road reporting that on Friday a male party came to her house in full PPE and requested a mouth swab for a test that was ordered by her doctor. She contacted all of her doctors later to ask what it was for, and they stated that no tests were ordered and that if they did need a mouth swab, she would have had to come into the office. Caller stated that she is getting phone calls from a number that is a Valley Medical number, but it is not actually anyone from Valley Medical. Referred to an officer.

5:16 p.m. Caller reporting that there is a group of turkeys in the area of Coolidge and Vladish avenues that have been chasing people and getting on people’s porches. The turkeys are currently roosting in a tree for the night. Message left for animal control officer.

Tuesday, 11/16

11:25 a.m. Caller reports that her son was struck by a vehicle (intentionally, she believes) on Avenue A. Caller advises that vehicle left the scene and that her son is mostly uninjured, other than a bump on his knee; declined ambulance. Other involved party called and advised that she wants on record that she has had problems with the involved parties in the past, and that the mother and son were blocking her way at the crosswalk intentionally. Report taken.

4:38 p.m. Caller from Coolidge Avenue reporting wild turkeys on her front lawn. Officer advised.

Wednesday, 11/17

9:04 a.m. Officer advises that a trailer came off of

a town vehicle and did minor damage to a lawn on Davis Street. Town will take care of the damage.

3:27 p.m. Party from Ivy Street into station to report that someone vandalized his Christmas lights again. He is still waiting for his new camera to come in and would just like this on record.

5:30 p.m. Multiple calls reporting a single-vehicle accident at the corner of L and Montague streets. Officer advises that a pole was involved and wires are down. Eversource contacted. A citation was issued for possession of a Class A drug.

8:31 p.m. Caller from Third Street reporting that a male who does not live in the building is sitting on his porch. Caller asked what the party was doing, and he stated that he was “keeping busy.” Caller would like the party moved along. Services rendered.

Thursday, 11/18

6:21 a.m. Caller states that maintenance staff at Turners Falls High School are leaf-blowing the parking lot at 6 a.m. and is wondering what the noise ordinance times are. Referred to an officer.

8:45 a.m. Caller from Twelfth Street would like it on record that her car was gone through last night. Nothing appears to be missing.

8:01 p.m. Multiple callers reporting deer struck on Turners Falls Road. Caller reports deer is alive and is being dragged to the side of the roadway. Caller who struck deer advises of minor damage to his vehicle; requests it be logged. Animal removed by local club.

Friday, 11/19

7 a.m. First of 13 reports of unlocked vehicles being entered overnight on Dell Street, Oakman Street, Charron Street, High Street, and Stevens Street. Stolen items included medication, cigarettes, money, cookies, and rings. Caller from Crocker Avenue has footage of someone leaving his driveway on foot at 12:30 this morning.

Saturday, 11/20

12:15 a.m. Caller states that there is loud music, possibly from a vehicle, coming from the area of the old bridge pier on Unity Street. Parties in vehicle were just hanging out and have left the area.

10:55 a.m. Caller from High Street states that he discovered that his vehicle was broken into overnight and a laptop was stolen. Report taken.

4:36 p.m. Caller requesting to speak to an officer regarding some concerning activity that has been happening at Great Falls

Middle School involving his son and a few other students and staff. Hoping to get some advice on how to take legal action.

Sunday, 11/21

9:49 a.m. Caller from Ivy Street would like it on record that his Christmas lights were cut again last night.

2:01 p.m. 911 caller from Food City reporting that a male party snatched a wallet from an elderly female and started running. Witnesses reporting he was on foot on the bike path running toward Eleventh Street. Report taken.

4:13 p.m. Caller reporting that he was bitten by the owner’s dog at Crestview Liquors and was on his way to the hospital to have it looked at. Not looking to press charges. Message left for board of health; copy of call put in ACO’s box.

8:15 p.m. Caller from Montague Street states that a blue Subaru has a spotlight on top of it that is shining into her home and around the area. Officer advises that the driver has an LED light on a rack on top of the vehicle and was advised that they are not allowed.

Monday, 11/22

7:16 a.m. Report from Seventh Street of a skunk that appears to be suffering. ACO advised; unable to locate.

9:33 a.m. Report from Sunderland Road of a deer with a possible broken leg. ACO unable to locate deer.

1:39 p.m. Caller from Crocker Avenue reports that both of her vehicles appear to have been broken into; nothing is missing; no damage caused.

2:57 p.m. Caller requesting that an officer attempt to make contact with a party who chased her kids home from their bus stop today. Described as a male in his 40s, usually wearing a fishing hat and riding a bike with a “deaf person” sign on the back. Referred to an officer.

Tuesday, 11/23

6:43 a.m. First of eight reports of vehicles entered and gone through overnight on Grove Street, Chestnut Street, Third Street, and Maple Street. Stolen items included money, a work bag, medication, and cigarettes. One vehicle’s window was broken with a rock. Reports taken.

5:14 p.m. Caller on East Main Street reports that his neighbor has been stealing packages. Advised of options.

6:18 p.m. Caller wants on record that his neighbor has been accusing him of slamming his door and calling him vulgar names. 9:27 p.m. Walk-in party reports that three males were kicking a small black vehi-

cle around 10 minutes ago on Third Street. Involved male called to speak with an officer. Investigated.

Wednesday, 11/24

10:21 a.m. Caller from O Street states that her vehicle was gone through last night and some change was stolen.

10:27 a.m. Caller states that a silver sedan is parked on Eleventh Street and that the male party inside covered up the back window and reclined the seat. Caller is concerned that drug activity may be occurring. No issues; private investigator.

Thursday, 11/25

11:18 a.m. Caller very concerned because three cooking pots have gone missing from her apartment. She had used them earlier in the morning, cleaned them, and then placed them on top of the dishwasher. Now they are gone. Officer advises missing cookware has been recovered.

7:56 p.m. Caller states he is currently at a bar in Millers Falls and someone took \$500 from his wallet. Officer pulling up to scene advises possible fight in progress. Call not as reported; property issue; dispute was settled; all items returned.

Friday, 11/26

9:40 a.m. Caller requesting animal control to assist with a squirrel stuck in a bird feeder in their backyard. ACO advises that the squirrel had freed itself when he arrived.

12:59 p.m. Officers checking on reported homeless camp near the tracks on East Main Street. Clothing and other items located; site appears to be no longer in use and on town property. Officer requesting DPW be notified.

1:56 p.m. A male party was arrested on two active warrants.

Saturday, 11/27

11:58 a.m. Caller from Oak Street who had reported a flashlight being shined into her house a few nights ago would like on record that her neighbor told her that the same night, he heard someone walking in the woods near that area and saw a flashing light. Caller requesting additional patrols in the area at night.

9:32 p.m. Caller states that a vehicle parked outside of the Five Eyed Fox keeps having the alarm go off and is disturbing the neighbors. Vehicle gone upon officer’s arrival.

Sunday, 11/28

11:26 a.m. 911 caller reporting a contractor taking sand from the residents’ sand pile at the highway garage. Caller hung up before giving more information. Unable to locate.

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Montague Community Television News

Catch Up on Six-Town Talks

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Six-Town Regional Planning Board held a public meeting on November 22 to discuss combining the Gill-Montague Regional School District and the Pioneer Valley Regional School District. The public forum was filmed by MCTV and includes informative slides, as well as a Q and A.

The Gill-Montague school committee also held a meeting the following day via Zoom, of which the recording is also available on *Montaguetv.org* via the “Videos” tab. The Montague and Gill selectboards also held meetings this week, which can be found there.

The Exploded View group opened their submission show “Maintenance and Repair” this month, and MCTV documented the reception, as well as conducted interviews with some of the

participating artists.

And lastly, if you missed the 49th Annual Thanksgiving Festival presented by the Salvation Army Citadel Band in Manchester, CT, we know someone who was really there, and brought back a video of the sermon for our viewing pleasure!

All MCTV videos are available online; you should check out the website when you have the time. Or, if you find yourself by a TV, try switching it on to Channel 17. There you will find all the movies we’ve made, which are featured as well on our Vimeo page.

And don’t forget that *you* can make movies, too! MCTV has all the equipment for you. Cameras, tripods, microphones, lights, and even assistance so you get it just right! Do you happen to know of a thing folks should see? Get in touch with the station, and there we will be. Contact us at (413) 863-9200, and at *infomontaguetv@gmail.com*.

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# Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

**NORTHAMPTON** – Now that dismal winter weather is coming, many of us will be huddling and cuddling under blankets with humans or pets, watching Netflix/HBO and chillin’. Luckily, there are now a number of high-quality, sex-positive series to choose from.

Remember, we live in an erotophobic culture where anti-sex agents remain very much invested in inculcating sexual shame as a way to control bodies and inhibit healthy sexual expression. (I’m looking at you, Texas.) This oppression especially remains targeted at sexually active ciswomen, femme women, and erotically marginalized folks like our LGBTQIA siblings. Therefore, any time we assert or embrace sex positivity is a crucial act of defiance against physically and mentally harmful oppressive messaging.

First, a brief list of my top nine favorite recent sex-positive series, in alphabetical order. After the list I will reveal my current favorite series.

*Awkwafina is Nora from Queens* (Comedy Central) is a hilarious comedy with vulva- and vibrator-friendly scenes, as well as diverse casting – starring Asian Americans, and including LGBTQ folks.

*Bridgerton* (Netflix) is a Regency-period romance series with diverse casting and fairly realistically depicted erotic scenes. Shonda Rhimes (*Shondaland*) went so far as to hire an Intimacy Coordinator to check in with the actors around consent, and to help promote more realistic depictions of sexuality.

*Broad City* (Comedy Central/Hulu): If there is some remote way you missed this series, then go flagellate yourself immediately before commencing a watch-a-thon. This hilarious comedy about two best friends in NYC is very vagina- and queer-friendly (Ilana identifies as bisexual).

Two hilarious episodes stand out: Season 2, Episode 4, “Knock-Offs,” features Abby getting comfortable with “pegging” her cis-male date. Season 4, Episode 6 features Ilana meeting with a feminist sex guru to regain her orgasmic ability after being orgasm-blocked post-Trump election.

*Grace and Frankie* (Netflix) is a hilarious comedy depicting two older ciswomen, adorably portrayed by Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin, who make lube, vibrators, and other inventions for the aging population. Great role modeling of elders and positive sexuality, along with positive LGBT depictions. (Sam Waterston and Martin Sheen play an equally adorable long-time gay couple.)

*Insecure* (HBO): I adore this series, which is produced and created by co-star Issa Rae as a follow-up to her original YouTube series *Awkward Black Girl*. *Insecure* authentically explores the insecurities, friendships, and dating/sexual/romantic experiences of two Black women, with realistic and positive depictions of sexuality.

*Motherland: Fort Salem* (Freeform/Hulu) is set in an alternate reality where the US military

embraced the power of witches 400 years ago rather than burning them at the stake. Hence, this drama involves a modern-day military training base in Salem where young ciswomen soldiers from the matriarchal witch lineage are trained in witchcraft and military arts. It features a diverse, mostly female cast depicting empowered ciswomen and their sexuality, including an equalizing lesbian romance storyline.

*Mrs. Fletcher* (HBO) is a funny and positive exploration of a middle-aged mother finally exploring her sexuality through all kinds of research.

*Tales of the City* (Netflix) is a serial drama with diverse LGBTQ casting and complicated love triangles, and positive depictions of threesomes, trans individuals, and gay men negotiating using PrEP (the anti-HIV drug).

*We Are Who We Are* (HBO) is an incredibly poignant drama set in Italy on an American military base. It follows the teen children of military personnel as they explore gender and sexuality, with a diverse cast and beautiful cinematography.

And now, my current favorite sex-positive series – drumroll, please! It’s the aptly named *Sex Education* (Netflix). This whipsmart and stylish British comedy series, set in a bucolic English hamlet, begins with Otis Milburn (played by Asa Butterfield), the sensitive only child of sex therapist Jean Milburn (played by Gillian Anderson), providing a proxy sex therapy “clinic” to his high school peers. His mother eventually also becomes involved in providing sex education and information to Moordale Secondary School.

The two of them, plus Otis’s unrequited love interest Maeve, help high schoolers address many kinds of challenges. These include feeling self-conscious while having sex; difficulty having erections or masturbating; same-gender and different-gender attractions (bisexual and pansexual); using contraception, including the morning after pill; and learning about asexuality.

Otis also helps correct a lot of misinformation including about how STIs spread, explains how most people with clitorises do not orgasm with vaginal penetration alone, and how porn in general does not accurately depict healthy sexuality. He consistently and wisely en-

courages folks to explore their own bodies, and to communicate to their partners what they like.

In Season 2, an inveterate bully from Season 1 comes out as gay, explaining much about his Season 1 mean behavior. The Season 2 finale is a spectacularly ridiculous, cosmic-themed *Romeo and Juliet Sex Musical*.

In Season 3, gender nonbinary folks explore and share their gender expression journeys, including chest binding. Season 3 finally remedied the thing that irritated me the most – vulvas constantly being mislabeled as “vaginas” – with a character making vulva cupcakes, and the school making a graffiti wall of vulvas in protest of the sexually repressive new headmaster, Hope, who wants abstinence-only instruction. Jean Milburn thankfully points out that abstinence-only education is correlated with higher pregnancies and STIs.

Other things I appreciate about this series are the best friend relationships, particularly between uptight White British Otis and his best friend Eric, a Nigerian immigrant. Self-harm, perfectionistic anxiety, addicted parents, the foster system, and sexual trauma are all beautifully addressed throughout the series. Different definitions of “sex” are articulated throughout, showing the huge variety in how folks define sexual acts. For some, sex is only when there is anal or vaginal penetration. For others, things like manual and oral stimulation are also part of sex.

Every episode begins with a funny or inventive sex scene or montage. And, sealing the deal for me, an episode in Season 3 references my favorite modern sexual self-help book, Nagoski’s *Come as You Are* (2015).

Lastly, for a show ostensibly about sex education, its greatest service may be providing valuable insights and depictions of emotional intimacy as well, in all the genders (and generations) represented throughout.

*Stephanie Baird, LMHC is an OWL Facilitator, EMDR Consultant and Psychotherapist, certified in Advancing Clinical Excellence in Sexuality (ACES), and encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health. She welcomes feedback and suggestions at sexmatters@montaguereporter.org.*

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

## Safely Dispose of Wall-Mounted Thermostats and Fluorescents!



**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – Have you upgraded to a new programmable thermostat or LED lightbulbs for your home or business? Great!

But be careful – never put old wall-mounted thermostats or fluorescent lightbulbs in the trash or recycling, as they contain mercury. Mercury is hazardous to human health, wildlife, and the environment. Handle these items carefully to avoid breakage and bring to one of many local free or low-cost collection sites.

**Old wall-mounted thermostats** contain a significant amount of liquid mercury. These thermostats are safe to use on the wall, but once removed, careful disposal is important. Free disposal is available at many local sites.

Handle items carefully, place in a sealed plastic bag, and hand to a staff member at one of the following sites. Keep thermostats intact; do not remove ampoules.

Mercury-bearing items such as old wall-mounted thermostats, thermometers, switches, gauges, blood pressure monitors are accepted by 17 municipal transfer stations in Franklin County: Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Deerfield, Heath, Leverett, Montague, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Rowe, Shelburne, Warwick, Wendell, and Whately. Resident permits may be required.

Greenfield residents can call the Greenfield Wastewater Treatment Plant for free drop off and safe disposal of thermostats and other mercury-bearing items: 772-1539.


Additional drop-off locations for mercury thermostats, such as plumbing/HVAC contractors and plumbing supply stores, are listed at [www.thermostat-recycle.org](http://www.thermostat-recycle.org). All locations accept mercury thermostats for free.

**Fluorescent light bulbs** of all shapes and sizes should never be put in the trash, because they contain mercury. This includes “green-tipped” lamps. Free recycling for

compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), or “light bulb-sized” fluorescents, is available at Home Depot. Lowe’s Stores accept all sizes and shapes of fluorescents free of charge, including circular and straight lamps.

Every transfer station in Franklin County, including Greenfield, accepts fluorescent light bulbs of all sizes; some may charge small fees (example: 50¢ to \$1 each). Handle fluorescent bulbs carefully, and hand them to the attendants.

The newer “light-emitting diode” (LED) bulbs do not contain mercury and can be thrown away (or, when available, recycled) at one of the places listed above. Old-fashioned incandescent or halogen bulbs must go in the trash; no recycling is available. To avoid accidental injuries, wrap them in used paper or plastic before placing them in the trash.



**If a mercury ampoule breaks or mercury is spilled**, ventilate the area for 15 minutes. Evacuate people and pets. Do not use a vacuum cleaner or broom to clean up. Wear old clothes that can be discarded if contaminated. Wearing disposable gloves, collect the droplets of mercury using two stiff pieces of paper or cardboard. Small drops can be picked up on tape. Place these items, and the broken thermostat, in a doubled plastic bag and seal tightly. Remove the gloves, and any contaminated clothing, and bag it and dispose. Contact the Franklin County Solid Waste District for disposal information.

Fluorescent bulbs contain **mercury vapor**. If one breaks, it can be harmful to human health and the environment. If you break a fluorescent bulb, evacuate and ventilate the area for 15 minutes. Put on gloves and scoop up the pieces with two pieces of cardboard; use moist paper towels to clean up small pieces. Again, do not use a broom or vacuum. Put all pieces and paper towels in a sealable plastic bag or container and bring to one of the sites above.

For more information on any of these programs, or to learn more about recycling, composting, and hazardous waste disposal, contact the District office at (413) 772-2438 or [info@franklincountywastedistrict.org](mailto:info@franklincountywastedistrict.org), or visit [www.franklincountywastedistrict.org](http://www.franklincountywastedistrict.org). MA Relay for the hearing impaired: 711 or 1-800-439-2370 (TTY/TDD). The District is an equal opportunity provider.

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## Florida's Sporting Gulf Coast

**DEERFIELD** – Central Florida's Gulf Side is full of outdoor adventure, from mild to wild. Pasco County, known as Florida's Sports Coast, is full of fun activities that families can dive into and full of inexpensive restaurants, campsites, and affordable motels to make a first-class vacation for people on a budget. In April 2021, as the pandemic began to wind down, I flew down to Orlando from still-chilly New England.

Our trip started an hour's drive north, in Marion County, the Horse Capital of the World. Big claim, no doubt, and wouldn't Lexington, Kentucky be fighting for that honor?

Well, with 83,000 horses spread out on more than 1,200 horse farms, Ocala, in Central Florida, legally owns the slogan. Indeed, it's a bitter rivalry, and here is where it's being fought. Four regions in the world have a large concentration of horses in a small area: Newmarket, England; Chantilly, France; Lexington; and Ocala. There is a "uniqueness" to those areas in terms of the horse population.

There is a private airport in Ocala where the most frequent passengers are horses!

Whether we choose to quibble with this phrase that Ocala trademarked, suffice it to say that this place is horse crazy, and it's the place to visit the World Equestrian Center. Horse-loving spectators are welcome at the many equestrian events held here, in vast, luxurious arenas with many paddocks abuzz with thoroughbreds. Clydesdales are also bred here, and some have made the ultimate cut by joining the Budweiser team. Go Bud!

The equine competitions are free and open to the public. Spectators at the World Equestrian Center can park in designated areas at the front of the facility. If you're a horse parent or just love riding, you gotta visit this place.

### Glass-Bottomed Boats

But we didn't spend any time in the saddle on our visit. Instead, we enjoyed the springs that water the fields where the horses graze, in the famous Silver Springs State Park. Here, a fleet of glass-bottomed boats takes up to 20 people at a time into the shallow waters fed by hundreds of underground springs.

This is a storied place for Floridians, who have been coming here since 1852. Over the years this location has been used to film classic movies like *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* and the briefly popular early '60s series *Sea Hunt*, which starred Jeff and Beau Bridges' father Lloyd Bridges, as the

Find out more about Florida's Sports Coast at [flsportscoast.com](http://flsportscoast.com).

Explore the city of Ocala at [ocalamarion.com](http://ocalamarion.com).

For information about all of Florida, check out [visitflorida.org](http://visitflorida.org).

SCUBA diver who kept getting into underwater wrestling matches.

The glass-bottomed boat tour includes interesting historical tidbits about the most popular water-dwelling creatures here, the Florida manatees, who depart after winter to find warmer waters, as well as the impressive strange things you can see clearly down on the bottom of the river. These include wood once used to make an Indian canoe, and a rowboat from 1912, the predecessor of today's larger glass-bottomed vessels.

### Hiking in the Forest

After the 30-minute boat ride, we drove to the Ocala National Forest to take a short hike in the Silver Glen Springs recreation area, a popular swimming and picnicking area.

One of the things I really enjoy is noticing the different flora and fauna of each place I visit. Here the deep forest drips with Spanish moss, and it is pine-scented, with large-leaved plants on the forest floor.

Well-marked paths and the white trash cans all locked up to be bear-proof are evidence that we are not alone here in the deep forests. Coyotes, bobcats, and deer also live here. In the shallow water, signs advise against wading, even though some youngsters flaunted the law on the sunny morning we visited.

Masks were nowhere to be seen in the park – where social distancing was easily achievable – but after a full year of living the pandemic life, it was fine with me to hang with my cohorts and not mask up the whole time in nature.

### The Sports Coast

After Ocala, we drove southeast along arrow-straight state highways, dotted on either side by every chain store you can imagine. The shopping plazas all looked new as if they had been built very recently, and there were almost none of the dilapidated old buildings that usually mix in along these old state roads. Here it seemed as if it was all new developments and modern centers. We were headed for a fun little town near the coast called New Port Richey.

We found the perfect place to learn more about what makes this little town of 16,000 so special, and it goes back to the roaring '20s of a previous century. According to a book published about the city's history, this was a spot for famous actors, singers, and directors. Many silent film stars were lured here by millionaire silent film star Thomas Meighan, bandleader Paul Whiteman, and composer Irving Berlin, who built houses and spread the word about the warm climate and friendly locals. It caught on.

Shirley Temple's aunt had a waterfront bungalow, and she came, as did the in-laws of legendary singer Johnny Cash. Cash and Carter liked to socialize here with their famous friends, the Reverend Jerry Falwell Sr. and his wife, who also had a house here. They liked to go fishing in the Gulf.

The center of action in the town of New Port Richey is right downtown at Sip on Grand, a wine and craft beer bar and restaurant run by Sean Fulton. He opened right as COVID was coming down hard on the US, and survived by the goodness of neighbors who came for takeout and wine to go. Happily, Sip is mostly back to its fun old self, with weekly music, a "secret" speakeasy room, and plenty of locals who love it here.

One of the funnest things you can do here is to take a dive and forage for the delectable bay scallops that lie just offshore. Every July for a brief few weeks, locals and tourists descend on the scallop beds and, using snorkels, dive down and pick bushels of them. It's a time-honored tradition, and the funny part is that sometimes the mollusks bite back.

### Anclote Key

Anclote Key Park, reachable only by boat, is made up of four small islands: Anclote Key, North Anclote Bar, South Anclote Bar, and Three Rooker Island. The 403-acre park is home to more than 43 species of beloved birds, including the American oystercatcher, bald eagle, and piping plover. A picturesque 1887 lighthouse stands as a sentinel on the southern end of the islands. Visitors can swim and sunbathe at the beach, fire up a grill and enjoy a picnic, or pitch a tent and enjoy a night of primitive camping under the stars.

One of the biggest reasons that this part of Florida rebranded a few years ago to call itself the "Sports Coast" was the impressive array of youth sports facilities that have sprung up here. The growth continues, with more soccer and baseball fields and hotels for parents being built in the years to come. We toured the huge Advent Health Systems Arena, which is large enough to house eight basketball/volleyball courts and acres of soccer fields. Its official name is "AdventHealth Sports Arena at Wiregrass Ranch Sports Campus of Pasco County."

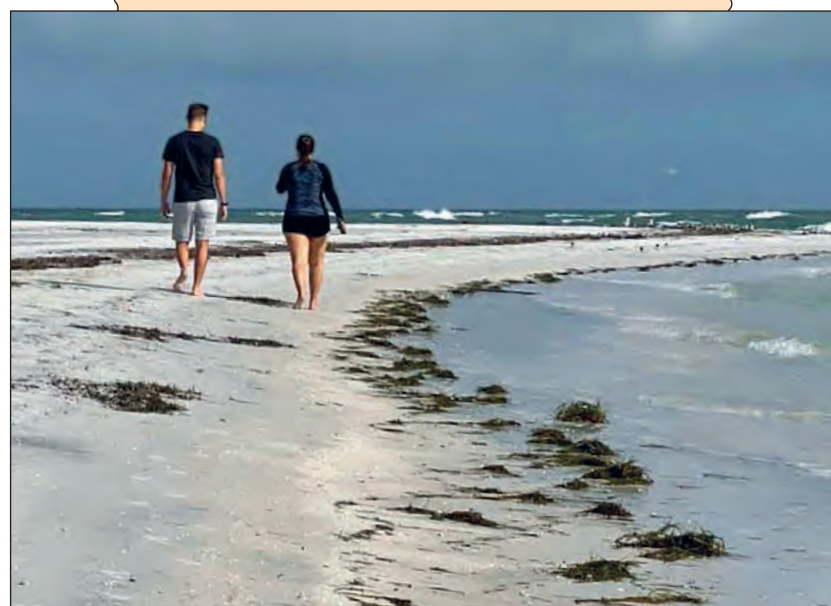
Next door, with a large terrace overlooking the fields, a hotel is being constructed to house visiting parents. In less than a year, there will be hundreds of moms and dads clutching drinks, watching little Jimmy play his sport on these vast playing fields. The amazing thing here is that this entire building and these grounds were all paid for by hotel room tax and corporate sponsors, not the local government. It's truly "if you build it they will come," as evidenced by the backlog of school-age athletic tournaments and the many professional athletes who use the state-of-the-art arena and its fitness center for their own off-season practices.

Travel editor Max Hartshorne writes about traveling around our region, and a little beyond. Max is the editor of *GoNOMAD Travel*, a website published since 2000 in South Deerfield. Find him online at [www.gonomad.com](http://www.gonomad.com).



HARTSHORNE PHOTOS

*A Clydesdale welcome at the Holiday Inn in Ocala, Florida, a top equestrian center.*



*Anclote Key, an island four miles off the Florida coast, is known for its wonderful birding and hiking.*



*A glass-bottomed boat tour in Silver Springs, Ocala.*

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WELDING from page B1

Besides fabricating the trunk, limbs, and branches out of hundreds of feet of pipe and rod, we stamped out, trimmed, and formed 1,500 aluminum blossoms and fastened them to twigs to make the tree look like it is in full bloom. Twenty-six bottle lights are attached to the branches, and a glowing red brass lantern sits at the top of a 13-foot-tall stovepipe snaking around the trunk. (This feature also incorporates a waterproof junction box for the wiring.)

Two anemometers ride on top of this red-lit lantern, set to catch wind in different directions, and vintage brass propellers are attached to the sides for more kinetic effect.

The Final Stretch

The project started the first week of September. When I left on vacation the last week of October, Jon and I had been working an assembly line of sorts to weld twigs onto branch sections and fasten each blossom between two nuts. At that point I assumed I'd be back at the shop helping for the final push in the first two weeks of November.

But while I was gone, Jon zoomed through the rest of the branches, installing them on the tree and then finishing welding the texture of bark on the trunk and branches. "I've used 40 pounds of MIG wire – four spools' worth – on the bark texture, all told," reports Jon. "I also added up over 400 feet of quarter-inch rod used for the project."

(Perhaps my amateur welding was actually holding him up just a bit? But he swears that is not the case!)

Another task Jon completed during the final three weeks was applying a patina. "I use a copper sulfate solution, then a hydrogen peroxide, vinegar, and salt mixture. The copper sulfate makes a darker green and red, whereas the other solution adds depth and texture and a real rich, red-orange rust look," says Jon. "I spray it on, then wash it. With the peroxide mix, I also throw more salt on it. There are also some parts I heat up and then put linseed oil on to turn them black."

When I asked how he knew about these patinas, his one-word answer was no surprise: "Google."

The branch sections come off the main trunk at four flanges, and the trunk itself was flanged into two 600-pound sections. This means all the wiring clips together at those seams, and the tree can be taken apart for transport on a rented trailer.

As we fabricated the branches, Jon and I were careful to leave room for the wires to pass through to the tip by not making sharp bends in the pipe. On the solid branches, this didn't matter, and I drew those rods through the bender willy-nilly, trying to achieve a deliberately random "natural" effect. Nevertheless, my random manipulations also shared characteristic bends, divisions, and blossom ter-

minations that resulted in a nice, organic rhythm.

Jon decided to include a cardinal, the Virginia state bird, on the tree, and made one out of spoons and other cutlery pieces. He welded it to a branch and painted it red.

I wondered how Rosenbaum was able to find an electrician to tackle wiring this thing. "The project needed a wiring specialist and inventor who could work with the 'organic' forms of the tree branches and design, and build the hanging electrical sockets," Rosenbaum explained. "Jeremy Griswold, a creative problem solver, was the perfect person to make it all come together."

Lighting the Tree

The tree's first assembly and lighting took place on November 13 in Palmer. With heavy rains and winds threatening that day, the crew decided not to try to assemble it outside the garage doors of the workshop at the former Converse School, but to put it together indoors.

"With the 12-foot-high ceilings in the workshop, it was not quite high enough to see all the assembled pieces together," said Rosenbaum. "We put it all together for the first time in the school's gymnasium with 30-foot ceilings."

When I arrived at the school it was blustery, and night had fallen. Once inside the doors, a heavy rain began throwing sheets of water against the building. I hurried down the dark hallway towards the golden glow of the gym, anxious to see how things were going in there.

The tree was at the near end of

the basketball court, with its trunk bolted together. One branch quadrant was installed, with the other three sections on pallets nearby. A cart full of boxes and electrical supplies stood ready and there were three ladders set up.

Rosenbaum, Jon, and Jeremy paced around the tree, gazing upwards. Was the ceiling leaking? I looked at the doors and realized that the two trunk sections must have been assembled inside the gym. How did they put the upper section of the trunk onto the lower part, given that it weighed about 600 pounds – did they lift it up by hand?

It turns out that the three of them used the basketball backboard frame coming down from the ceiling to attach a chain hoist, and lifted up the top of the tree. Then they slid the bottom under it and lowered it gently down.

The team installed the top of the stovepipe with the lantern light, then tried to put on the next quadrant, but found they couldn't. The electrical stuff had to be clipped together while the flanges were within inches of each other, and the holes then had to be lined up just right for the bolts to pass through.

The big, awkward, heavy-but-delicate tree section was hard to grasp and hold. The crew attached a rope around the ceiling girders, hooked the hoist to that, and wound straps around the branches. Rosenbaum worked the hoist, with Jon and Jeremy on ladders to guide the flange into position. They snapped the connections together, and threw home the top bolt as Rosenbaum

lowered it gently down.

Section three went up the same way, and the fourth was light enough to do by hand. We left for dinner while Jeremy stayed to hook up the lights.

When we got back, all the bottles were hanging from a rod-and-disc device that Jeremy had machined, which fit inside the bottle necks and then attached to a hook on the tree branch. This took the strain off of each wire as it went from steel pipe to glass container. Three of the bottles were actually antiques, made by bottle companies that had once been at the condo site.

They plugged it in – hooray! It works! "It was an incredible magical moment! As if the tree came to life right before our eyes," says Rosenbaum.

Jon recalls that he had "spent so much time around it, seeing it in pieces, without seeing it all together. I felt relief – it worked! That was great! But it's hard to be really excited about it after spending so long building it. I wish I could see it for the very first time as other people do."

Installation

On November 18 Rosenbaum and Jon drove down to Virginia, towing the tree sections bolted and strapped down to a 12-foot trailer. Bubble wrap protected the blossoming branches from road dirt and wind burn.

At the construction site, both the general contractor and some ironworkers were there to get the job done. They unloaded the trailer at 8

a.m. and then set up a gantry crane to lift the pieces into place in the courtyard planter. By 2 p.m. all the pieces were assembled on the tree.

"It took a few hours to get all the bottles and lights on, and then to waterproof the connections," says Jon. "I didn't realise the buildings were so big. Fourteen stories! It looks a lot smaller there. But there are some other trees in the courtyard about the same size, so it kind of fits right in." He spent a few hours walking around the tree, taking pictures, even laying down underneath it.

"I was amazed and impressed that it went up without a hitch," says Rosenbaum. "The only small repair was putting back the 'F' in 'Park & Ford,' because it fell off during transit – nothing a little JB Weld couldn't fix. The owners saw the fully installed tree and were blown over! I'm hoping that Jon and I will have more projects with them in the near (retro) future."

This week, Jon says he is glad it's over. He put almost 500 hours into the project. "I've been thinking about that project for about a year. Working it out in my head, and then doing it step-by-step. The first month was the most intense part, doing 12-hour-plus days and driving two hours a day." "But," he adds, "it was really fun working with you, Mom."

Check out more steampunk projects at Rosenbaum's website, modvic.com. Jon Bander's work is also online at notorious-weld.com.



WILLIAM HAYS PHOTO



BRUCE ROSENBAUM PHOTO

Left: Electrician Jeremy Griswold, Bruce Rosenbaum of MocVic, sculptor Jon Bander, and the author at the first assembly and lighting of the tree in Palmer. Right: Bander (in front) with the ironworkers who installed the tree on site at the Park & Ford condominiums in Alexandria, Virginia.

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

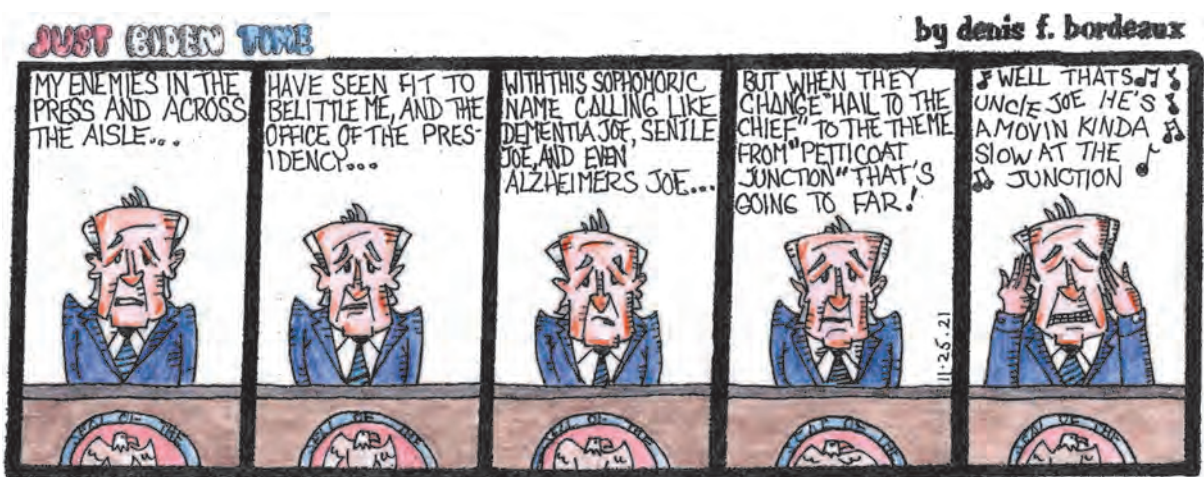
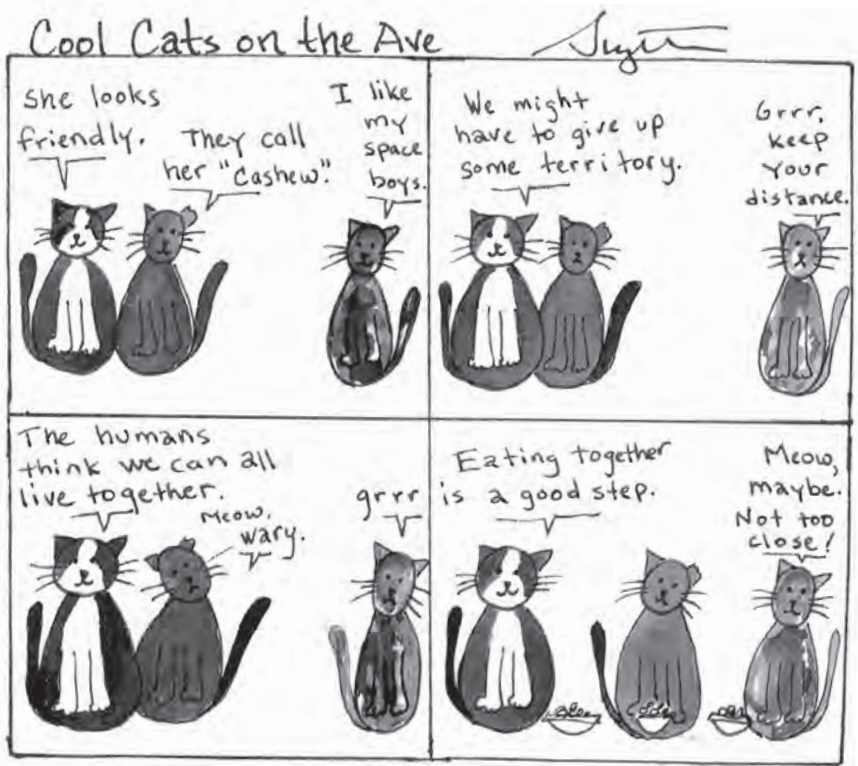
**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2**  
10 Forward, Greenfield: *Baldwin/Silbert, Nace/Meginsky*, and *Powers/Rolins* duos. \$. 8 p.m.  
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Boyfriend Machine, Dino Gala, Alright Thanks*. \$. 8 p.m.  
**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3**  
The Perch at Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Play, *Bright Half Life*. \$. 7:30 p.m.  
10 Forward, Greenfield: *Bill Nace, Julie Bodian, Matt Krefting, Noise Nomads*. \$. 8 p.m.  
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Mtali Banda presents "Black Boy Fairytales."* \$. 8 p.m.  
**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4**  
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Harvest & Rust*. 7 p.m.

The Perch at Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Play, *Bright Half Life*. \$. 7:30 p.m.  
Parlor Room, Northampton: *Kimaya Diggs & Friends*. \$. 7:30 p.m.  
SCDT, Northampton: HUT XXXI feat. *Jules Slood*, movement; *Margot Doualhy*, words; and *Julie Bodian*, sound. \$. 8 p.m.  
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Riff Raff*. \$. 8:30 p.m.  
**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5**  
The Perch at Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Play, *Bright Half Life*. \$. 3 p.m.  
Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Pat Martineau*. 7 p.m.  
**MONDAY, DECEMBER 6**  
Rendezvous, Turners Falls:

*Open Mic Night*. 8:30 p.m.  
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Squirrel Nut Zippers, Weege & the Wondertwins*. \$. 8 p.m.  
**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8**  
Bombyx Center, Florence: *Sweet Honey in the Rock*. \$. 7 p.m.  
**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9**  
10 Forward, Greenfield: *Salsa for Solidarity*. Salsa, cumbia, reggaeton; salsa dance lessons; benefit for the Survivors' Historical Memory Committee (El Salvador). \$. 6 p.m.  
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Brook Batteau, Brown Bones*. \$. 7:30 p.m.  
Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Advance Base, Ruth Garbus, Moon Racer*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Olivia Nied*. 9:30 p.m.  
**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10**  
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Movie, *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946). Free. 7 p.m.  
10 Forward, Greenfield: *Ditrani Brothers, Moon Hollow, Laven-dula*. \$. 7:30 p.m.  
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *William Hooker Trio*. \$. 7:30 p.m.  
**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11**  
10 Forward, Greenfield: *Sun Parade, Carinae, Gift, C. Moon, DJ Quills*. \$. 8 p.m.  
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Kaleta & Super Yamba*. \$. 8 p.m.  
**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15**  
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Jeff Parker, Steve Gunn*. \$. 8 p.m.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16**  
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Sweetback Sisters' 13th Annual Country Christmas Singalong Spectacular*. \$. Kids' show, 5 p.m.; adults, 8 p.m.  
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Psychedelic Thurs with DJ MentalDrift*. 6 p.m.  
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Lez Zeppelin*. \$. 7:30 p.m.  
Pearl Street, Northampton: *Pie-bald, Her Head's On Fire*. \$. 7:30 p.m.  
10 Forward, Greenfield: *Experimental Santa; Baby, Baby; DJ Heartballoon*. \$. 8 p.m.  
**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17**  
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Masala Jazz*. 9:30 p.m.



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**MOORHEAD** from page B1  
becomes greenish-gold, or silver.

Robert offered a technical explanation for the whimsical result. “The black letters (gothic) and the Arabic alphabets were scanned, and a series of images resulted from using Photoshop filters and effects,” he said. “The printouts of these images were then ‘gridded’ and blown up in scale. Corrections and changes to the distorted letter fields were made and applied to canvas. Interference acrylic paint was employed. It becomes a different color depending on the direction of the light source.”

A viewer standing before this triptych doesn’t need to know all of that to appreciate the image, but I enjoyed learning how new technologies can be combined with classic techniques. It’s not either/or, but both, that led to the success of these pieces.

Other paintings in the show take a bow to architecture. Dynamic shapes and colors look like the building blocks for a box, a building, a quilt, or a space station. There is room in this show for the artist’s imagination and the viewer’s to work together.

In fact Robert, always a teacher, provides a handout of questions for gallery visitors. He asks: What words come to mind after spending time observing the work? What connections can you make between you and the work? How does the work connect to bigger stories about the world and our place in it? and more. This gesture creates a partnership between Robert and the

audience, a reciprocal relationship similar to what happens in a live performance of any kind.

Some images are made with repeating words and phrases that appear like shadows beneath brooding colors. This work is strongly influenced by Robert’s wife, Andrea Moorhead, who taught Latin and French at Deerfield Academy. She is a poet and editor of *Osiris*, a multi-lingual poetry journal Robert and Andrea started in 1972.

“Andrea has introduced me to the world of English and French poetry,” Robert told me. “I find her words to be evocative and powerful. Her poems deal with both international crises like climate change, and a response to intimate moods and observations. I find the use of her words in the text paintings reflects how I feel about many things. They offer a creative and evocative atmosphere. My selection of colors is often dictated by the text.”

This creative couple live and work in Greenfield. Robert said COVID has not really had much of an impact on his work schedule, but it has made the possibility of interacting with others at a show difficult.

He added, “I imagine, at an unconscious level, images or shapes and colors will emerge that are related to the world wide pandemic we are all enduring.”

Robert’s commitment to art started early. He took art every year between 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade in secondary public school, and attended Saturday morning classes in art at the Carnegie Institute in



WICKS PHOTO

Robert Moorhead’s retrospective is showing at the Von Auersperg Gallery at Deerfield Academy, where he taught for many years.



One of the paintings in Robert Moorhead’s “calligraphic or Arabic visions” series, made with acrylic interference paints.

Pittsburgh. He went on to attend Carnegie Mellon University (then Carnegie Institute of Technology), earning a BFA and an MFA in Design in 1969. He studied design, sculpture, and calligraphy.

Robert taught at Union College in Schenectady, New York from 1972 until 1976. One of his students had attended Deerfield Academy, and after learning that Robert and An-

drea wanted to move to New England, suggested they look at his old prep school. That suggestion resulted in a 38-year career at the Academy where he taught architecture and design, AP Design, calligraphy, video and film, gallery installation, multimedia presentation with a science teacher, and industrial design.

He said teaching and doing his own work have been complementary, rather than competing, activities. “The teaching and my own work in painting have always felt right,” he added. “I enjoyed bringing out and supporting the creative aspects of my students’ work, even though I always knew very few of them would go on to a career in the arts. They saw very little of my own work until this current show.”

Since his retirement he has shown at Williston Northampton School in Easthampton, Jones Library in Amherst, Mitchell-Giddings Gallery in Brattleboro, Oresman Gallery at Smith College, and Geissler Gallery at Stoneleigh-Burnham School in Greenfield. His advice to anyone starting out in the arts is to paint or create what seems right: “Trust your intuition. Ignore the marketplace and criticism.”

Robert does not know in what

direction his work will take going forward. “The paintings tell me,” he said. “I do not work from sketches or plans. My sketchbooks do exist, but the drawings are not ‘mini-paintings.’ My work has been greatly influenced as a result of years of working as a graphic designer. Certain ways of viewing a page or layout has made its way into the paintings. The interaction between a solid two dimensional plane and illusion on that plane is a factor I always confront.”

Robert confronts that interaction, and does the hard work for us so that we may simply view and enjoy the results. I had the benefit of a private tour and the opportunity to ask him questions about his work, and it was wonderful to get to know my friend as an accomplished painter. Come to the gallery and enjoy this immersion into shape and color.

Visions & Transitions will be on display until December 18 at the Von Auersperg Gallery in the Hess Center for the Arts at Deerfield Academy. The gallery is open on weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., and by appointment by emailing lhempfill@deerfield.edu.



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