

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 20 – NO. 5

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 9, 2021

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Masks Back for Town Buildings, 'Recommended' Everywhere Else

By JEFF SINGLETON

In response to a large increase in positive COVID-19 cases, the Montague selectboard reimposed a mandate for town buildings Monday night, but only "strongly recommended" mask wearing – in addition to social distancing, hand washing, and vaccination – at private venues.

These decisions came during a long meeting that included such diverse topics as the fate of the liquor licenses held by two Turners Falls restaurants that have closed due to COVID, the revision of town by-laws to address the siting of solar batteries, a proposal by the police chief for a significant expansion of

his department's staffing, and an update by the Eversource electric company on the removal of redundant utility poles.

The discussion of mask policy followed a presentation by health director Daniel Wasiuk of the town's latest COVID metrics. He said the week leading up to December 4 had seen 46 new positive cases, and the "two-week count" to that date was 73. Although Wasiuk did not put these numbers into context, that is a significantly larger increase than the spring COVID spike, or the seasonal increase in November 2020.

The health director then said that of those testing positive for the week ending December 4, 14 were

see MONTAGUE page A6

GILL SELECTBOARD

Police Chief OK After Crash; Police Cruiser, Not So Much



PHOTO COURTESY GILL PD

The cruiser will need to be permanently replaced. The town may opt for a hybrid.

By JERRI HIGGINS

The Gill selectboard heard an update Monday evening on a crash between the town's 2017 police cruiser and another vehicle. Discussions of a sewer rate increase in Riverside, fire department grants and burn permits, and a suggested French King bridge memorial plaque were among the meeting's other business.

An accident between the police cruiser and a 2014 Dodge Avenger sedan that occurred on Route 10 in Bernardston on the morning of Thursday, December 2 totaled the

police cruiser, town administrator Ray Purington told the board.

The cruiser, driven by chief Christopher Redmond, was rear-ended by the sedan. The two occupants of the sedan sustained minor injuries and were taken to Baystate Franklin Medical Center, while Redmond only received "a small scratch on his leg," said Purington.

"We heard from the insurance adjuster today that he determined that vehicle to be totaled," he said. The town is consulting with its insurer, the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association, to determine its

see GILL page A7

AG Announces Huge Fines for Bleach Plant In Fish Deaths

By SARAH ROBERTSON

COLRAIN – After a two-year investigation into an accidental release of sulfuric acid into the North River that caused a massive fish kill, the state attorney general's office announced Wednesday that the Barnhardt Manufacturing Company will be required to pay around \$1.5 million in settlements. The release killed an estimated 270,000 fish, investigators found, and damaged more than 14 acres of protected wetland resource areas along the North and Deerfield rivers.

"It's good that they're being held accountable," said Eric Halloran, vice president of Trout Unlimited's Deerfield River chapter. "It does seem like it's been a long time coming, but I don't think people forgot about it. Every so often I run into someone and they ask me about it."

Halloran lives along the North River, and was among the first to report the die-off to environmental police. He said he saw hundreds of dead and dying fish in the river that morning, and spoke with people swimming at its confluence with the Deerfield who reported their eyes had burned while swimming.

"The sulfuric acid spill caused by this company was devastating for the Colrain community and left long-lasting damage to the North River," attorney general Maura

see FINES page A6

Leverett Pond Public Hearing Continued to Early January

By SARAH ROBERTSON

LEVERETT – In order to maintain a healthy fishery and suppress the spread of invasive Eurasian milfoil, the Friends of Leverett Pond (FLP) want to use herbicides, hydro-raking, hand removal, and annual winter drawdowns as part of their management plan over the next five years. On Monday night the conservation commission continued a public hearing on the proposed plans, and heard from members of the public eager to see them finalized and approved.

"I know there's frustration with the length of this hearing, that the process is moving slowly perhaps, but it is moving consequently because information has been added to the picture every time we meet," con com member Gail Berrigan said during the public hearing.

Berrigan opened the hearing by saying the management plan had to meet the express goal of improving fish habitat to qualify as an "ecological restoration limited project" and comply with the state Wetlands Protection Act. If the plan is agreed

see POND page A4

Downtown Shopkeepers Look Forward to Holidays



JACKSON PHOTO

Swanson's Fabrics' Kathryn Swanson talks shop, and recommends gift certificates.

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – "There ain't much to say – it's retail," Allan Cadran tells me, leaning behind the sales counter at **Replay**. "It's up, it's down. It's always bad to our confessor, and to all the customers, 'it's better than it's ever been!' That's how it works."

It feels like it didn't used to get dark this early in the afternoon, even in December. I'm here in Cadran's shop – its walls and display cases jam-packed with used

guitars and gear, brass and woodwinds, strings, straps, and sheet music – following the vague idea that I should be out taking the temperature of the local holiday retail scene. At the moment, on a mid-week afternoon at least, all the way at the end of Avenue A, the temperature is extremely peaceful. I'm not quite sure if I'm the confessor.

"People get in different habits," Cadran says, "and now they've gotten in the habit of ordering things online.... Business is slowly

see HOLIDAYS page A8

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Tax Rate Down, Taxes Up

By GEORGE BRACE

Leverett's selectboard held the town's annual tax classification hearing at their Tuesday meeting, voting to continue to use a single tax rate for residential and commercial/industrial property for FY'23. An increase in property values would allow for a lower tax rate, but increases to the town budget would result in the av-

erage property tax bill going up by approximately \$200 for the year.

The board also discussed formalizing the provision of childcare at town meeting, among other business.

Associate assessor Jeffrey Reynolds cited the large difference in the amount of residential versus commercial property in the town as the primary reason the assessors

see LEVERETT page A5

Montague Con Com Stands To Inherit Land in the Dingle



MONTAGUE REPORTER / GOOGLE MAPS IMAGE

The commission would gain control of these six lots west of Montague Avenue.

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague conservation commission will be meeting Thursday to consider recommending the transfer of town-owned land in the village of Lake Pleasant to the commission. The land in question borders on a small stream which runs from the lake and is part of a steep valley locals affectionately call "the

dingle," apparently a word of Irish origins for a deep wooded valley.

The proposed transfer, according to town planner Walter Ramsey, was initiated by the town for several reasons, including the possibility that abutting landowners might seek to use it for small construction projects. Ramsey also noted that his department has recently surveyed the

see DINGLE page A4

REFURBISHMENT



ED GREGORY PHOTO

Ed Gregory took this photo of the work on the General Pierce Bridge last week from the Greenfield side. "It shows the westernmost pier section being demolished," Ed writes. "The old beams were of questionable integrity and have been removed. A new concrete pier section will support new beams that will connect the pier with the west abutment."

Pandemic Over

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Peculiar Phases

The publisher of the Shelburne Falls *Messenger* announces happily this week that this month will see the last of the paper as the customary village agony. This is about the fourth paper that has given up the struggle with poverty in that village in the last 25 years, each publisher experiencing the same hardships, and each one passing out to the old East Indian cholera epidemic refrain – “Three cheers for the dead already – hurrah for the next that dies.”

The *Reporter*, which has seen village newspapers come and go in all the larger towns of the region, has known the inward sources of peril to them all, their supporters to-day and their enemies to-morrow, the peculiar phases of human nature as unfolded to genius on a bread and water diet, could record a rather amusing history, and may be tempted to, later.

The present writer – who has gone through a long newspaper life without personally soliciting a subscriber, an advertising, or a piece of printing, leaving simply an open door for prince or pauper to come and do a legitimate business, or stay away as best suited his

convenience or pleasure -- has often been amused at the frantic desires of cheap politicians, who live solely at the public trough, to kill the *Reporter* by fair means or foul, little appreciating the fact that no trough containing the tolls of the tax payers ever yet fed a newspaper that lives just for the fun of living, and paying its way without carrying the pauper's basket for cold victuals.

– *Turners Falls Reporter*,
 December 11, 1918

It's always helpful to look back at our namesake paper, which had a 50-year run in this tiny village from 1872 to 1922, for encouragement and perspective. Sadly, it only lasted about another three years after editor Cecil T. Bagnall penned the above snark. These days it's hard to imagine finding joy in the suffering of another newspaper. Every one's a gem.

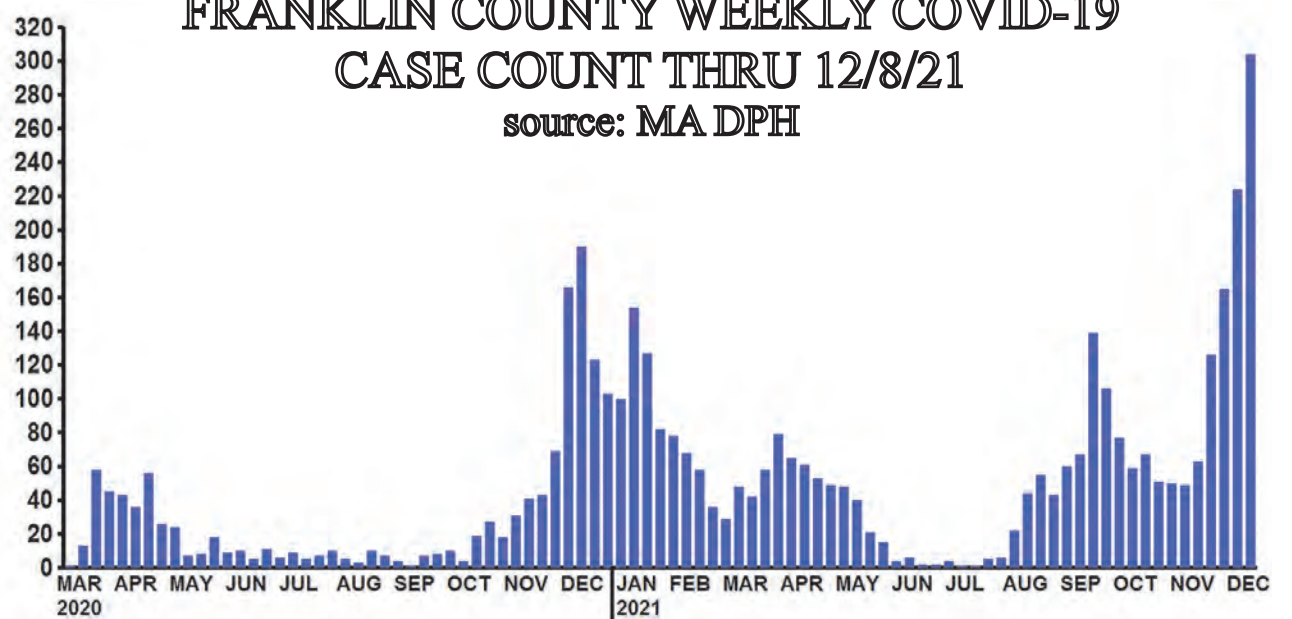
And as for pauper's baskets... An announcement is forthcoming, but our anniversary campaign is doing very well, and we would like to thank our readers. If you still have your envelope, send it in!



Denise Edwards uses clippers on a client at Ed's Barber Shop in Turners Falls, where men's haircuts are \$18 and kids are clipped for \$10. Denise started working with Ed Podlenski 36 years ago and has stayed on after his retirement. Her daughter Alyssa also cuts hair there on weekends.

FRANKLIN COUNTY WEEKLY COVID-19 CASE COUNT THRU 12/8/21

source: MA DPH



OP/ED

Beyond Resource-Based Habitat Management

By BART BOURICIUS

MONTAGUE CENTER – Modern humans evolved from their primate ancestors only in the last few hundred thousand years. The earliest forest ecosystems with true trees emerged hundreds of millions years ago, and managed themselves. The notion that humans must “manage” nature as “resources” within an industrial economic system is only a few hundred years old. Such management has caused mass extinctions and climate disruption.

In response to the dire consequences of this extractive system, eminent Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson has argued that we need to leave half of earth as undisturbed, to manage itself.

In a May 2021 article in *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change*, Robert Leverett and his coauthors note that the world's forests “accumulate carbon and reduce annual increases in atmospheric carbon dioxide by approximately 30%”, and if left undisturbed, recovering forests could nearly fill the entire gap “between anthropogenic [human caused] emissions and [carbon] removal rates.”

Land “management” by the Massachusetts Fish and Game Department is focused on resource extraction from the natural environment, whether of game animals, fish or wood products. Because of this narrow focus,

the department seems unable to respond to climate change with the necessary emphasis on natural carbon capture and storage that the climate emergency requires. They heavily log forests, spray herbicides, and release hundreds of thousands of non-native fish and birds (European Pheasants and Brown Trout), which compete with native species.

The Department's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) repeatedly congratulates itself because more carbon is annually stored on land it manages than is harvested from it. But justifying extractive management in this way is far from an adequate response to the climate crisis we now face. We must greatly reduce logging on public lands.

Undisturbed forests accumulate more carbon and harbor more biodiversity than any logging regime. Moreover, climate change already underway will increase the rate of natural disturbance; therefore, human-caused disturbance should decline in response.

Unfortunately, DFW is failing to do serious carbon accounting of their logging projects, such as gigantic clearcuts and the biomass burning associated with such clearcuts – at Muddy Brook in Hardwick and the Herman Covey and Birch Hill Wildlife Management Areas, to name a few. (See the detailed document at www.maforests.org/DFW.pdf for photos and information.)

Such management by logging releases into the atmosphere most of the carbon from tens of thousands of acres of forested land. The Division also plans to eventually cut 86% of all DFW forests on a rotating basis to create “young forest habitat,” which means that much of their over 200,000 acres of managed land will store much less carbon than it would if it was permitted to continue growing.

The DFW provided \$307,631 in 2019 (the most recent data available) in grants to private landowners, much of it for commercial logging projects to “create” young forest habitat – stumps and brush. This ongoing destruction of older forests prevents them from ever becoming old growth forests, which now comprise less than .05% of our state's forests. Old forests with very large trees are exceedingly rich in carbon and biodiversity, and ensuring their increase should be a conservation priority.

Logging transforms areas of living forest actively accumulating carbon into net sources of carbon dioxide for years afterward as remaining biomass decays, and it takes decades to rebuild the carbon stores removed in the process. The harvesting, transportation, and manufacturing of forest products also entail carbon emissions that must be considered, and only a tiny fraction of the products produced last for extended periods of time.

Left alone, our forests can continue to accumulate carbon for centuries. In the face of an ever-worsening climate emergency, we can ill afford to squander this carbon storage capacity simply for the short-term financial gain of a few.

The Baker administration has proposed that 50% of the state's goals of reduced carbon emissions should be met by purchasing carbon-offset credits from other states, rather than by maximizing forest carbon accumulation here. Governments or corporations buy these credits in order to continue emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Renowned forest ecologist Dr. Charles Canham notes that existing carbon-credit markets provide “no real offset to greenhouse gas emissions at all” and that “the flaws in the markets are structural and deep, and may be irredeemable.” (Dr. Canham's analysis can be found here at www.caryinstitute.org/news-insights/feature/rethinking-forest-carbon-offsets)

The future is up to us. Please ask your state representatives to support these forest preservation bills: **H.912**, An Act Relative to Forest Protection, and **H.1002**, An Act Relative to Increased Protection of Wildlife Management Areas.

Bart Bouricius is a member of the Wendell State Forest Alliance.

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The Gill-Montague elementary schools announce their **Sixth Annual Food Drive**, now through Friday, December 17. Sheffield, Hillcrest, and Gill elementary schools are looking for donations of canned vegetables, soup, protein, cereal, pasta, sauce, juice, peanut butter and jelly, rice, and other nonperishable food items.

Drop off items at any of those three schools, and they will get the food to the Montague Catholic Social Ministries food pantry for distribution. Please check dates on food; out-of-date items will be thrown away. You may access the school drop boxes from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The **"It's A Wonderful Night in Turners Falls"** holiday event takes place this Friday, December 10, from 5 to 8 p.m.

Santa Claus will arrive at Spinner Park at 6 p.m. Children and adults alike are encouraged to put a wish list in the "Magic Mailbox" located in Spinner Park, on the corner of Avenue A and Fourth Street, before he comes to collect them. The Great Falls Discovery Center is offering free bird feeder craft kits, and the museum store is open until 8 p.m.

Shops are open late in the downtown, many of which will be offering special discounts, such as 10% off gift cards at Buckingham Rabbits Vintage, Swanson's Fabrics, and FAB. Tangible Bliss, Breakdown Records, and Nova Motorcycles are offering merchandise discounts, too.

Enjoy live music at the Pioneer Valley Brewery with Danny Hessecock and Heath Lewis at 7 p.m., or at the Rendezvous, where Olivia Neid plays at 9:30 p.m. The 1946 Jimmy Stewart Christmas classic *It's a Wonderful Life* will be screened at the Shea at 7:30 p.m., with free admission.

Check on details at www.riverculture.org.

Greenfield also has several holiday shopping opportunities this coming weekend, including three-

day-long **popup arts and crafts markets on Main Street** at the Pushkin, GCC's Downtown Center, and the LAVA Center. Sales will run Friday, 4 to 8 p.m., Saturday 12 to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

It's also the **fifth annual DinoFest** in Greenfield this Saturday and Sunday, December 11 and 12. DinoFest blends science, arts, and community to bring local dinosaur history to life. DinoFest will feature Piti Theater's film adaptation of "Dexter and the Dinosaurs" at the Garden Theater and online.

There will be a field trip to Dino Pocket park with the Jurassic Road Show, Dino Improv, and a presentation by a nine-year-old paleontologist. More information is available at www.ptco.org/dino.

Great Falls Books Through Bars holds their first indoor volunteer day in over a year and a half this Saturday, December 11 from 1 to 4 p.m. at 113 Avenue A in Turners Falls. Due to limited space, you will need to register to attend.

Volunteers will be reading and responding to letters, picking out books, and packing up packages for prisoners. There are over two million prisoners in the US today, which is 25% of the world prisoner population. Learn more, make a donation, or sign up to volunteer at www.greatfallsbooksthroughbars.org.

The Village Closet in Huntington needs **volunteers to help sort clothing and toy donations** at their donation center. Everything at the Village Closet is donated, and is therefore free to anyone in the community, no matter their income or town of residence.

Volunteers are also needed, Sundays and Mondays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Tuesdays 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. or make an appointment to come in at another time by contacting the organization at www.hilltownvillage.org or call (413) 650-3640.

The Opioid Task Force and the North County Coalition announce the fourth annual **Sober Housing Summit** on Friday, December 10

from 10 a.m. to noon. The event starts with a presentation entitled "The Ties that Bind: What is the Safety Net for Unhoused Individuals with a History of Substance Abuse?" Panelists will discuss available resources and actions needing to be taken to help with this problem. Find out more and register at www.opioidtaskforce.org.

Turners Falls artist **Karen Evans** is having a show of her paintings, "Neighborhood Sightings," at the Oxbow Gallery, which has recently moved from Northampton to Easthampton. The paintings show scenes around Montague, and are on view now through January 2, with an artist's reception on December 10 from 5 to 8 p.m. Find out more at www.theoxbowgallery.com.

Local stone **sculptor Tim DeChristopher** is also having a show at the PULP Gallery in Holyoke with artist Nora Riggs called "Wide Awake." The opening is this Saturday, December 11, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. and the show runs through December. For more information, visit www.pulpholyoke.com.

In Brattleboro on Saturday, December 11, Epsilon Spires will host **"Ritual for Covid-19," a community performance for healing** with Jin Hi Kim. This interactive work is inspired by Korean Shamanistic *ssitkimkut* ritual to purify the spirits of the deceased while releasing the grief of the living.

Kim creates a live interactive performance on the world's only electric *komungo* as she presents a range of projected images reflective of the coronavirus pandemic. A community procession enters the performance space where a 100-yard white cloth is symbolically used in a shaman ritual to release grief. For tickets to the 8 p.m. performance, visit epsilonspires.org.

All are welcome to attend a **Common Memorial** on the Greenfield Town Common this Sunday, December 12 from 2 to 3 p.m. Join with others in the community for a memorial celebration of the lives of people who died this year, especially those who were unhoused, died from COVID-19, or died without a memorial service. You're invited to bring prayers, the names of those who have died, a candle, and a chair to sit on.

Sponsored by the Interfaith Council of Franklin County. All are welcome; please wear a mask. Email interfaithcfc@gmail.com for more information.

On Sunday, December 12 at 7:15 p.m. Smart Solar Shutesbury will hold a webinar called **"Forest & Solar: We Need Both."** Expert panelists will discuss many industrial solar projects proposed in western Mass, their impacts on ecosystems and human communities, and how to achieve better solar solutions. Questions are encouraged. Register for the webinar at www.smartsolarshutesbury.org.

Looky Here, a multi-functional community art space in Greenfield, is soliciting **entries for their annual art show**, called "Looky Here 2022." Submission is free and open to all ages and mediums. Email photos of your work with a description that includes title and dimensions by noon on December

13 to lookyheregreenfield@gmail.com. The exhibit will open on Saturday, January 8 and will stay up for two months.

A free virtual program on **Birding the Life Zones of Costa Rica**, with David Moon, can bring tropical biodiversity into your living room on Tuesday, December 14 at 5:30 p.m. Moon will explain how such a small area can be home to so many species, and how Costa Rica managed to double their forested area in 30 years. Register at www.bookeo.com/northfield.

Local author and illustrator **Jarrett Krosoczka** will discuss his graphic memoir, *Hey, Kiddo*, about growing up in a dysfunctional family and finding the art that helped him survive, during a special Zoom presentation on December 14 at 6:30 p.m. The event is aimed at teens and adults, and all attendees are eligible to win a signed copy of the book. Sign up for the Zoom link by emailing csullivan@northamptonma.gov.

Adventure into the depths of a northern winter with New Hampshire author Anders Morley as he presents his book *This Land of Snow: A Journey Across The North in Winter* via Zoom on Wednesday, December 15 at 6:30 p.m.

The book is the story of his four-month journey through the wilds of northwestern Canada on cross-country skis. It is described as "a meditation on the coldest season and on the approach of mid-life." Morley will discuss and share anecdotes from his journey, read from his book, and show photographs from the trip. To register, email dmemlib@gmail.com.

On December 16 at 2 p.m., the Opioid Task Force and the People's Medicine Project will host a Zoom presentation on **Self Care and the Holidays**, with "a grounding movement / meditation / breathing activity incorporating the theme of trees" as well as "suggestions about how to build a relationship with trees for healing into one's life in a more practical sense."

Learn more and register for the event at opioidtaskforce.org/events.

A **holiday popup at the Shea Theater** with local artists and crafters is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, December 18 and 19, from 12 to 6 p.m. each day. Six juried artists (including myself) will set up their wares, and admission is free.

There will be pottery by Jaye Pope of Good Dirt Pottery, intricate wool knits by Anne Harding, photography by Thierry Borcey, old-school potholders by Denise Milkey, small rugs and paper crafts by Annie Levine (also this paper's business manager), adult coloring books, slugs, and other items made by me, and cloth masks and change purses by Kelly Moran.

Do you ride the local bus? The FRTA Advisory Board is looking for Rider Representatives to serve on the board and help make decisions about route changes, fare changes, and budget issues. Send a letter of interest by December 31 for a spot on the board for 2022 to michael@frrta.org.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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POND from page A1

upon and approved, the commission will issue an "order of conditions" outlining how the work is to be done and reporting requirements.

"We'd like to see this hearing closed and have the commission issue a set of orders," said Mickey Marcus, a consultant with SWCA Environmental hired by the FLP. To expedite the decision, SWCA recently submitted a draft order of conditions to the con com. Marcus and his colleague Naomi Valentine participated in Monday's hearing.

"In the past, primarily, the invasive species control has been herbicides," Marcus said. "This time we've tried to be more inclusive and come up with a range of solutions."

Con com chair Isaiah Robison said that chemical applications are not intended as a long-term solution. He said he thinks herbicides should be deployed strategically, in such a way that they are not necessary in the future.

"The chemical use is meant to be a crutch, or a stepping stone, that gets any particular pond to a point where you don't have to use the chemicals," Robison said. "Maybe the answer is more chemical use, to really beat things back to the point where Mother Nature can take over, or where its effectiveness would be more worthwhile."

Vice president of the FLP Mitch Mulholland reiterated the desire to minimize the use of chemicals too, and touted annual drawdowns of the pond's water as a better alternative.

"We're 100% for limiting herbicides," Mulholland said. "We want to do that as little as possible."

During the public comment portion of the meeting, members of the public spoke mostly in favor of continuing the FLP's management practices. Steve Freedman, who lives on the pond, said that with no chemicals applied in the last two years the milfoil has been "on the march."

"My logic is to continue doing what you're doing and the pond will continue running fine, just like an automobile," said Brian Emond.

Oxygen Levels

Relatively low dissolved oxygen (DO) levels caused by dense patches of milfoil could negatively impact the fish population in the pond, Marcus said. However, the fish population today is "robust," and dissolved oxygen levels are within a "good" range, according to SWCA's habitat analysis.

"We believe that is a product of our active management over the last 20 years, that we've been able to maintain a healthy fishery in the pond," said FLP president and selectboard member Tom Hankinson. "What Mickey and Naomi presented in the report is a fraction of the data that we collected on the pond. I see dangerously low levels of dissolved oxygen in many parts of the pond and I am convinced, I feel as though there is a direct relationship between milfoil, invasive species and its biodegradation, and the lack of dissolved oxygen."

SWCA reported 8.6 milligrams per liter (mg/L) of DO overall in Leverett Pond, but also shared data showing levels ranging as low as zero in some sections. Marcus said these measurements indicated the pond is "not eutrophic at this point, but the dissolved oxygen is surprisingly low."

Con com member Jono Neiger pointed out that DO samples shared by SWCA might not be representative of the ecosystem as a whole. The samples seemed to be taken at the end of July and early August, when oxygen levels are typically lowest in a shallow pond, he said.

"I don't see this strong trend that you say there is a correlation between dense vegetation and lower DO levels," Neiger said. "Your data don't really show that."

Scott Jackson, a UMass Amherst professor of environmental conservation, said that DO levels in a healthy pond can vary dramatically depending on the season, time of day, and location of the sample. A healthy shallow pond can have 8 mg/L of dissolved oxygen in some sections and close to zero elsewhere,

he said, especially in the early mornings or in areas of dense or decaying vegetation.

"In New England, a lot of ponds are not natural features in the landscape. Most of the ponds we have are either dug out or impounded. As soon as they're created, the open water begins to fill in with plants or silt," Jackson said. "That will over time turn into a wetland.... A lot of the time, efforts to maintain that open water state are fighting against the natural trajectory of these areas."

When asked about the threat that milfoil poses to a waterbody like Leverett Pond, and the possibility of eradicating the species, Jackson said there is no one easy solution.

"Is it a problem? Yes, it's a problem. Do we have any good control technology? Not really. Is it worth a try? Well, we aren't sure," he said. "History sort of adds to both sides of the argument. There have been abuses with chemicals, and there have been situations where the only way you can control something is with harmful chemicals. It really needs to be looked at carefully."

The Drainage Approach

Annual winter drawdowns are another management method being considered by the FLP, and were added to the plan in October. A drawdown is a serious undertaking, Neiger said: abutters with shallow wells must be informed, and more information is required about the ecological impacts before the commission can approve that method.

Marcus said that comprehensive studies of the impacts of a potential drawdown on fish and amphibian species are not necessary as long as the drawdown is kept within three feet.

"Whether you're using herbicides or a drawdown, it tends not to be very specific, so you're going to kill not just the milfoil - you're going to kill other plants as well," Jackson told the Reporter. "With non-specific approaches like drawdowns, herbicides or mechanical, you eliminate the native plants along with inva-

sives, and then the invasives come back faster. Where natives hold their own, you're limiting the spread."

Approving the plan will not green light every treatment method proposed by the FLP, Mulholland explained; the group would still have to notify the commission before any herbicide application, hydro-raking, or drawdown. The FLP would also continue to submit annual reports with their progress and future plans.

"It's not a free reign to do whatever [they] want," Marcus said. "It involves the town and the conservation commission in all future work."

If the FLP does not agree with the con com's order of conditions, they can appeal to the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Con com members said they are hopeful they can settle on a final order of conditions at their next meeting, scheduled for January 10, and voted to continue the hearing on that date.

Monday's meeting, Neiger said, was also the final one that conservation agent Tessa Dowling would attend. The town continues to advertise for the position.

Note: In our October 7 article on this topic, we reported that the conservation commission "agreed to remove" Andrew Young's "name from the online roster" of its members. The commission clarified in an op-ed in last week's edition that Mr. Young resigned. The commission also took issue with our description of the conservation agent position as being "vacant." As we have reported, Dowling continued to help with the position's responsibilities in a limited capacity until the position "is filled," in the words of the town's job advertisement. We apologize for the confusion. And in our November 11 article, which quoted Hankinson as saying "I did my part trying to find a conservation agent," we incorrectly reported that "his offer to help the town find an agent was declined." The commission reports that a candidate referred by Hankinson was interviewed.



DINGLE from page A1

area, and that another piece of land nearby was transferred to the con com several decades ago.

In an email to the commission and the Lake Pleasant Village Association, Ramsey listed benefits that could result from the transfer. He said the con com could guarantee better access to the "dingle" from Montague Avenue, which runs through the southern side of the village; prevent trees from being logged and residential encroachment on the "slopes"; and "create a buffer to help the viability of the wetlands in the dingle."

The con com, according to its website, is charged with administering the state Wetlands Protection Act and for "planning, acquiring, and managing open space." A review of the town's 2018 Open Space and Recreation Plan is on Thursday's agenda.

The Turners Falls Water District owns a good deal of the land in the dingle, and superintendent Mike Brown said he had "absolutely no problem" with the transfer to the conservation commission. "I'd offer them the rest of the land if they want it," he joked, noting that his agency had spent a good deal of time and money recently on forest management in the area.

Matt Atwood of the Lake Pleasant Village Association (LPVA) told the Reporter that "it seems like a good idea to preserve this land from development," but said he did not know much about the con com, or how it administers the land it controls. "Right now I am an uninformed citizen about this," he said, adding that he could not speak for the LPVA as a whole.

Sue Richardson of the LPVA participated in a walk through the dingle with Ramsey and other residents on Tuesday. "I was very impressed with

the open discussion," she said. "I think the most accurate description of the outcome would be that the response was favorable, with some outstanding questions."

Richardson said she would be attending Thursday's con com meeting.

Former building inspector David Jensen, who lives in Lake Pleasant, said he was "generally good" with the transfer proposal, but "not entirely." He expressed concerns with a small piece of the proposed property on the side of Montague Avenue across from the village basketball court, where people occasionally park.

"The town should at least hold on to that little piece," Jensen said, noting that parking in that area of the village is "really limited."

Deborah Frenkel, who owns two pieces of property that about the land in question, told the Reporter that she has "questions" about the land transfer, and plans to attend the meeting on Thursday. "As a homeowner in Lake Pleasant, I certainly support the idea of protecting the property," she said. "I certainly don't want anyone developing the dingle."

However, Frenkel said she has heard that the land along the stream was protected currently without the transfer. "I will be going to the meeting to ask questions," she told the Reporter.

Frenkel also said she had concerns about the recent survey of the area, which encouraged the transfer proposal, by the planning department. The area around the dingle - and throughout Lake Pleasant - includes a bewildering variety of small parcels of unclear ownership, and even small "ghost streets" that no longer exist.

When she initially purchased one property on Montague Avenue, Frenkel said she was told by

the bank that "Fifth Avenue," which does not exist, ran through her yard. The most recent planning department survey has apparently concluded that some of her land, that includes a shed, is not actually her land.

"I believe that shed has been there, and the land fenced off, since the 1940s," she said.

We asked Ramsey if the large number of small, poorly-documented lots and "ghost streets" was typical of other villages in Montague. "Well, it's normal for Lake Pleasant, but really an anomaly in town," he replied.

Ramsey speculated that this was probably a product of the village's history. Lake Pleasant was a seasonal encampment for "Spiritualists" seeking to communicate with deceased relatives in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Tents and summer cabins were constructed before modern zoning regulations and building codes were enacted, beginning in the 1920s.

Lake Pleasant historian and resident David James confirmed this impression. "Lake Pleasant has lots of confusing property lines, non-existent streets, and ghosts of all kinds," James told the Reporter, noting that a street called "Zenita Street" appears on maps of his property. "It goes right through my front yard," he said, "but there's been no common traffic on it for 100 years."

We asked James, who is a member of the Spiritualist Alliance, which continues to own a large building in the center of Lake Pleasant, if he thought ghosts might still walk on ghost streets. He said there were "various viewpoints on that," with some believing ghosts continue to haunt familiar places, and others saying that ghosts are lost souls wandering in a kind of limbo.



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recommended continuing with a single tax rate for the two classes of property. Reynolds said that in larger municipalities, tax burdens are often shifted to commercial property, but the small amount of such property argued against attempting to do so in Leverett. Reynolds said residential property accounted for 91% of the taxable property in town.

The assessors' report put the aggregate valuation of property in Leverett at \$304,634,462. The report recommended that in order to meet the estimated levy of \$5,800,240 needed to fund the projected budget, property tax rates should be reduced from \$19.73 per \$1,000 valuation to \$19.04, but it also noted that a 6.8% rise in real estate values would result in an average increase in total taxes of \$200 per household in FY'23.

Reynolds noted that taxes collected from new growth totalled \$52,347 in the current period, down slightly from the previous year. The town's "excess levy capacity," or the difference between the proposed levy of \$5,800,240 and the maximum allowable levy under state law, was determined to be \$807,530.

Childcare at ATM

Several residents sought the board's assistance in formalizing the availability of childcare at the annual town meeting, which is scheduled for April 30. Prior to last year's town meeting, members of the town's social justice committee conducted a survey which identified the availability of childcare as a significant barrier to voting, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities.

The results of that survey came in too late for an initiative to be taken up at town meeting earlier this year, and Tuesday's discussion was a continuation of the effort to address the issue ahead of next spring's meeting. Resident and school committee member Becky Tews reported that roughly 15 children were looked after at this year's meeting, though the number may have been low due to COVID.

Board members and residents reported that childcare has traditionally been organized on a volunteer basis – most recently by the social justice committee, and in prior years by parents with help from the school. Residents expressed the desire for a more formal, town-funded arrangement, but were unsure of the process, and also had questions about liability insurance and the potential need for a licensed childcare provider.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said she would look into the insurance question, and suggestions were made on exploring the question of hiring a licensed provider.

Board member Tom Hankinson said that in order to receive town funding, a warrant article would need to be created and voted on at town meeting in April.

Hankinson said there was legwork to be done, and advised those interested "get their ducks in a row" about the costs and specifics of the proposal, and write an article that the whole town could read and understand.

Board member Melissa Colbert expressed an apparent consensus in saying that the town needed to adopt a system that could be relied on "year after year."

Town Personnel

The selectboard was asked to postpone implementing a change in the payroll schedule for town employees until as late as next summer, due to hardships workers could experience in going for a week without a paycheck in winter.

The town currently tabulates the payroll on Saturdays, before the pay period has ended. Board members explained that this does not give department heads time to look over the checks before they are issued, and puts a burden on the town treasurer. Issuing checks after the weekly pay period has closed is expected to be more efficient and accurate.

The board said they had no problem delaying the implementation, and would deliberate on when it should take place given the employees' concerns.

The board briefly reviewed several matters discussed at a personnel board meeting earlier in the day. Board members said they had heard pushback from residents over a request to increase the annual pay of the fire chief from approximately \$53,000 to \$73,000, with an additional \$20,000 in benefits, and that more information and analysis would be needed.

Chair Julie Shively said a request from town clerk Lisa Stratford to add three to five hours to her current 12-hour work week would be looked at by the finance committee, in the light of the budget and the job description. Both Shively and Stratford pointed out that recent changes, particularly those to election procedures, have added a significant amount of work to the position.

The board reported that new advertisements for the vacant conservation commission agent position had been placed, after a lapse due to emails to the agent's mailbox not being checked.

The board appointed two substitute library assistants.

Other Business

Board member Dr. Melissa Colbert provided a COVID-19 update, noting that cases have risen both nationally and in Franklin County in the past week. Colbert relayed the Centers for Disease Control's guidance that everyone over 15 years old should get a booster shot, and that it provides significant protection.

Residents with questions on electricity aggregation were encouraged to read information available on the town website before contacting the town clerk with their questions.

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MONTAGUE PLANNING BOARD NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO ZONING BYLAWS
BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE FACILITIES
 Tuesday, December 21, 2021 6:30 PM

The Montague Planning Board will hold a hearing to consider a petition by the Planning Board to amend the Montague Zoning Bylaws pertaining to the regulation of battery energy storage facilities. Specifically to define such use and allow it subject to Special Permit and Site Plan Approval in the Industrial and Historic-Industrial Districts in accordance with the revised submittals and special permit standards of Section 8.9.5. The hearing will occur at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, December 21, 2021 via Zoom.

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84692501510> Meeting ID: 846 9250 1510
 PassCode: 757445 Phone: (646) 558-8656

Full text of the proposed amendment is available for review at www.montague-ma.gov.

Ron Sicard, Planning Board Chairman

NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

New Floors for Hillcrest Top District's Capital Requests

By **MIKE JACKSON**

No candidates have stepped forward from Montague to volunteer to fill a seat on the Gill-Montague regional school committee left vacant by the resignation of Joanna Mae Boody last month.

"I would like to remind anybody listening, and also our members, that we do have an open Montague seat," chair Jane Oakes said at Tuesday's meeting. "If you know of anybody who might be interested, all they need to do is send a letter or an email of interest to the superintendent's office."

Superintendent Brian Beck reported that the coronavirus pandemic was continuing. "The case counts are higher than they have been since the beginning of the pandemic," he said.

Free vaccine clinics will be held next Thursday, December 16 at Hillcrest Elementary in Turners Falls, and Friday, December 17 at Gill Elementary. Both clinics are making booster shots, as well as flu vaccines, available to the general public. A "vaccine bus" is also visiting Sheffield Elementary in Turners on Monday, December 20.

That Wednesday will be a half-day of school, and the winter vacation begins December 23.

Beck said that the Thanksgiving break had allowed the district's main food vendor, which had been backed up six days on orders,

a chance to catch up, and orders are now only taking three days to fill. The company, Beck said, is "hopeful that the extension of the holiday break... will allow them to be back on track to getting orders to us again within a day."

A holdup at the district nurse's office prevented the request for approval for a field trip on Tuesday to reach the school committee until Tuesday night. Turners Falls High School teacher David Smith had taken 20 students to the Connecticut River Museum in Essex, Connecticut. Smith teaches a field-based study course on the valley's geography.

The committee retroactively approved the trip, 5 votes to 0. "Can we be sure we don't do this again?" Montague member Michael Langknecht asked of the lapse.

Business manager Joanne Blier reported that department heads have submitted budget requests, and her office was busy assembling a preliminary FY'23 budget. The school committee is scheduled to review it January 11, hold a working meeting January 18 to read it in more depth, and then vote on January 25.

"State aid numbers usually come out toward the end of January," Blier reminded the committee.

Capital improvement requests for the school buildings must go to the towns of Gill and Montague for their own budgeting process, and Blier presented two for the committee's approval.

The first was a multi-part request to abate asbestos and replace flooring at Hillcrest Elementary, a \$285,000 request to Montague. "No matter what's going to happen with that building, we do need to do something about these floors," she said. "Our hallway floors are cracking, and the wax is the only thing holding these things together."

The Hillcrest proposal included a \$108,900 quote for asbestos removal, \$109,450 for installing "seamless" floor coating in a number of areas, \$4,300 for design and monitoring services, \$3,200 per classroom for carpeting, and a contingency. If approved by town meeting, the project would go out to bid.

The second was a \$10,000 request to the town of Gill for the replacement of the computerized building management system at Gill Elementary. Blier said the existing system is 12 to 15 years old.

The committee approved both capital requests, 5 to 0.

Beck announced that Kristen Schreiber, currently a teacher in the Mohawk district, has been hired to serve as assistant principal at the high school and middle school. She will begin December 29.

Director of teaching and learning Jeanne Powers updated the committee on a racial equity initiative. 18 staff members and 10 students at Turners Falls High School have trained as discussion facilitators for a schoolwide screen-

ing of a film named *I'm Not Racist... Am I?*, scheduled for January 6.

"We really felt like it was most appropriate for [grades] 9 through 12 at the moment," Powers said, "and that we wanted to then turn this into a yearly thing for our 9th-grade students."

"I want to thank the number of people that were willing to participate [as facilitators]," said Gill member Bill Tomb.

The committee heard report-backs from members who attended last month's annual conference of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees in Hyannis. All resolutions before the Association this year passed. "Finding Hyannis is not the easiest thing," Oakes said.

The planning committee for a six-town district, which would merge Gill and Montague with Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, and Warwick, gave a presentation and held a public forum on November 22 at the high school. Both videos are available at montaguevt.org, labeled "STRPB."

The public hearing was scantily attended, and garnered a sole comment, from former longtime school committee member Joyce Phillips. "There's so many unknowns," Phillips said. "That's what's upsetting... plus, each community needs to compromise or give up who they are." She praised the planning board for "going slowly" in its study of the proposal.

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reported fully vaccinated, 4 partially vaccinated, and 28 not vaccinated. Nineteen of the cases were under seventeen years old, and only two were over 65, he reported.

Wasiuk then reported that the board of health had decided not to recommend a mask mandate for public and private "indoor spaces" by a vote of two to one, but rather to recommend a "strong advisory" for the public to wear masks. He said the decision to allow such "entities" to mask "as they see fit" is similar to the state position on mandates in cities and towns.

Health board member Michael Nelson recused himself from the discussion to avoid violating the state open meeting law, and because he had not attended the board meeting the previous Thursday.

Finance committee chair Jen Audley said she was "confused" about how there could be a two-to-one vote against the mandate at the health board meeting, if there were only two members at the meeting.

Nelson said Wasiuk had misspoken, and that he had emailed the health director "some comments." (The Thursday vote was 1-1, with Melanie Zamojski supporting the mask mandate recommendation and Al Cummings opposed.)

After discussing the matter at length, the selectboard unanimously voted to endorse two separate motions. The first would return to a mask mandate for town buildings beginning Monday, December 13, extending until April 4. The mandate would apply to "everyone," not just the unvaccinated, but could be relaxed for employees who were socially distancing.

The second would "strongly encourage" mask wearing as well as hand washing, social distancing, and vaccination. Wasiuk, Zamojski, and administrative assistant Wendy Bogusz were tasked with creating and distributing signage to businesses in town.

Police Request

The board reviewed a request from police chief Chris Williams to expand the department's staff by two officers and a sergeant, and the related dispatch department by one employee.

Williams said that in the mid-1990s the department had 18 officers. "Now we're down to 15," he said, "plus two school resource officers." Pointing to last year's review of police-community relations he said that the department is "primarily reactive - we don't have the resources to do anything extra, or to be proactive, whether it's a community policing officer or a community relations officer."

"I don't know where the budget is going to come out next year," said selectboard member Chris Boutwell. "I don't even have a clue of what this cost is going to be."

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz added up the cost estimates in

the meeting materials, and said the total cost of the proposal would be "in the range of \$250 K."

Selectboard member Matt Lord said he would like to see a "real overtime cost-savings analysis." He also said that there is not a "huge amount of crime and violence in this town that we need to throw extra manpower to tamp down," so if the staff expansion is intended to make "people's day jobs more sustainable... I think that distinction should be made."

"This is just our first discussion of this," said Kuklewicz. "I don't want anyone to think we are going to make a decision tonight." He also suggested that the town "did not need to do it all this year," so proposed the staff increases could be "phased in."

In The Pocket

The board discussed the fate of liquor licenses currently in possession of two Turners Falls restaurants, Hubie's Tavern and Riff's North, that have closed recently due to the pandemic. The discussion was assisted by Gregg Corbo of the legal firm KP Law. He said the state opposes closed businesses holding "pocket licenses" for lengthy periods, but would allow them a "reasonable time to arrange their affairs."

Shawn Hubert, who owns Hubie's Tavern, said he had received interest "from several parties" and had just "reduced the price for the business."

Michael McCarthy of Riff's North said his firm, which owns a parent restaurant in Easthampton, might consider reopening if it could address its labor supply problem. "Our business was flourishing," he said.

In both cases the board approved motions suggested by Corbo that the two licenses be extended until June 30, 2022.

Giant Batteries

Town planner Walter Ramsey gave a presentation update on proposed zoning amendments to the town bylaws to regulate electrical storage batteries. The issue has recently come up in discussions over the status of a potential battery in Montague City. A solar company inquired about the town's regulations, and residents of the neighborhood believe the company may be interested in a property on Masonic Street.

Ramsey said most communities do not have bylaws regulating larger "grid-scale" batteries, so Montague is "kind of ahead of the curve" in considering them. He showed a number of slides depicting various kinds of battery facilities, including one group installed next to a solar project on the former town burn dump.

Ramsey said batteries are currently allowed virtually anywhere in town, except places zoned "residential." The proposed bylaw changes

would limit them to areas zoned "industrial" and "historical industrial" by special permit. They would also strengthen criteria for special permits for such batteries, including planting vegetation for pollinators.

The map Ramsey displayed in his presentation showed that such batteries would be allowed on Masonic Street. The board voted to "accept" the bylaw from the planning board, and then sent it back to the planning board for a public hearing.

Double Wood

Two officials from the Eversource electric company gave the board an "update" on the many redundant electrical poles which have become a major concern to town officials. The redundancies are created when new poles are installed to handle system upgrades, but the old ones are left standing for many months. A reported cause of the problem is that Eversource has had difficulty getting other pole users, such as Comcast or Verizon, to transfer their lines to the new poles.

Anna Raby who is supervising the Montague upgrade and line transfer project for Eversource, thanked the board for allowing her to speak "on behalf of these double poles." Raby showed a map of Turners Falls indicating approximately 30 redundant poles, but estimated there were 200 extra poles "in the system right now," which the company was working to eliminate "as quickly as possible."

She added that Eversource had "good communication with the other attachers," who "understand the importance of getting this done."

Kuklewicz thanked Raby for her report and suggested that she come back for an update in mid-February.

Other Business

At Ramsey's request the board approved a change order for the design phase of a project to mitigate flooding on Montague City Road, and approved participation in a state-funded grant program called the Mass in Motion Wellness and Leadership Initiative to encourage bike paths and other healthy recreational opportunities.

A proposal to "forego" two required tax classification hearings this month, due to delays in getting the required data, was approved. The single hearing will be held in mid-December. The board voted to transfer \$2,000 from the Community Development Discretionary Unallocated fund to the Community Development Downtown Beautification Fund.

At the end of the meeting the board decided to reduce the FY'23 licensing fees by 50% due to the economic impact of the COVID pandemic. The reduction does not apply to liquor stores.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 13 via Zoom.

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Healey said in a statement. "Today's settlements will hold Barnhardt accountable for harming this rich ecosystem and will provide significant funding to restore nearby natural resources and fisheries."

The investigation also looked into Barnhardt's history of noncompliance with waste management and water quality regulations at its cotton bleaching and onsite water treatment facility in Colrain's Griswoldville village. Since the company bought the plant in 2007, wastewater discharges into the North River have repeatedly exceeded permitted limits, and staff improperly operated the facility and mismanaged hazardous oil, according to the AG's report.

Investigators found the company violated the state Wetlands Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Waters Act, Hazardous Waste Management Act, Oil and Hazardous Material Release Prevention and Response Act, and Inland Fisheries Statute. The AG's office ordered the company to comply with these laws moving forward, and to conduct additional training for employees.

"[N]ow we understand why it took so long, given the long list of state laws that were apparently violated," Andrea Donlon, a river steward for the Connecticut River Conservancy, told the *Reporter*. "The degree of damage was severe, and we are glad that the attorney general's office, together with the state resource agencies and EPA, negotiated a set of penalties commensurate with the impact."

Barnhardt will pay up to \$500,000 in penalties to the state, including \$292,000 to the state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and \$200,000 to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Fund. At least two state-listed rare species, the longnose sucker fish and the Ocellated Darner dragonfly, were affected by the spill.

The company will also pay \$300,000 to the town of Colrain for culvert replacement projects meant to "address the effects of climate change for years to come," company president Lewis Barnhardt said in a statement. Colrain's town administrator and board of health chair both declined to comment on this story, saying they were not involved in settlement negotiations and had no knowledge of remediation plans.

"We are particularly glad that there will be restoration projects targeted at the affected watershed," said Donlon. "In a state that is so heavily developed, the North River in Colrain is relatively pristine, which made the incident all the more unfortunate."

The EPA investigated the Barnhardt spill alongside the state, and issued its own civil penalty of approximately \$305,000 to be paid to the US Treasury.

"I have no idea how this compares to their bottom line," Halloran said. "Hopefully it has an impact on them."

Everything In Its Path

Barnhardt Manufacturing, owned by the self-proclaimed "First Family of American Cotton," is a global leader in bleached cotton and foam products. It operates eight plants across the US, and manufactures a significant portion of the cotton products used in medical settings.

"We are a fourth-generation family company based in Charlotte, NC that has taken seriously our responsibilities and have acted to address problems identified at the Colrain site," president Lewis Barnhardt said in an emailed statement. "We have hired experts to do inspections, reviews and maintenance. We also have made improvements to the wastewater treatment facility that also serves 20 households in town."

A leak in an outdoor storage tank containing a 93% solution of sulfuric acid had been discovered by employees days prior to the release in the early morning hours of September 1, 2019. Approximately 53 to 60 gallons of sulfuric acid "sprayed" from a corroded weld joint and traveled down a drainage ditch into a stream that led to the river.

"The drip was believed to be from a connection or seal and was being entirely held within the concrete containment area," Barnhardt said. "The company had previously decided to replace the tank and not allow it to take any more materials.... When the event was discovered, the tank was promptly drained, taken out of use, dismantled, and removed."

At first employees did not think the chemical had made its way into the adjacent stream, the company maintains, but public reports of a massive fish kill downstream brought the release to the attention of the Department of Environmental Protection.

Barnhardt hired consultants from Omni Environmental Group, who expressed doubt that several thousand fish had died as a result of the spill. The *Reporter* reported at the time that "tens of thousands" of fish had died, an estimate provided by the state Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, but the consultants wrote in a November 2019 assessment that that figure "may not be accurate," and was likely smaller.

According to the AG's press release, the acid solution "dissolved nearly everything in its path."

"Too often, we see polluting companies get away with harming our environment without any consequences," Mireille Bejjani, an organizer with the environmental justice group Community Action Works, told the *Reporter*. "I'm glad that our Attorney General and the EPA have followed up on Barnhardt's actions and held them accountable for the damage inflicted. We also need stronger regulations to ensure that incidents like this spill don't happen to begin with."

"I think the river takes a long time to recover," said Halloran, who noted that he has seen fewer brown trout since the accident.

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GILL from page A1

the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association, to determine its replacement value." The board unanimously approved Purington to work with Redmond to find a rental cruiser, "to fill the gap between when the vehicle was lost, and when the replacement arrives," said Purington.

Reached for comment after the meeting, Redmond said that a third-party investigation, which was conducted by the Massachusetts state police to ensure impartiality, faulted the sedan's driver. The driver was cited for a marked-lane violation and failure to use care while stopping or starting.

Redmond said it was unclear if the town would be able to find a rental cruiser. The Montague police department was unable to lend a vehicle, and a rental company he tried to contact appears to be out of business. "[A]t this point we are just down a cruiser without a replacement," he wrote.

For a permanent replacement, Purington said he had contacted MHQ, a public safety and commercial vehicle vendor based in Marlborough that the town has used several times in the past. MHQ advised him that a hybrid cruiser may be available before a traditional cruiser is.

"Would we pay the difference?" board member Charles Garbiel asked.

"That is a conversation we should have, even if both are available," said member Randy Crochier. "I think we all knew that we were planning on purchasing a cruiser this year, and we were planning on a hybrid vehicle. I think it makes sense to look at a hybrid to replace this one."

Increasing Sewer Rates

Purington presented the board with four proposed sewer-rate scenarios for FY'22, a format he has followed for the last several years. "The big driver of our budget is what we pay to Montague for sewage disposal," he said. Montague raised its rates by 4.3%, retroactive to July.

The 113 sewer users in the Riverside water district currently pay an average of \$1,067 a year. Scenario A would keep the town's current rate, totaling about \$188,222 for the year. Scenario B would adopt a 1.5% increase, totaling about \$191,020, while C, a 3.1% increase, would total about \$194,050. Scenario D, matching Montague's 4.3% increase, would bring in about \$196,305.

"I think at this point I would be recommending the 1.5% or the 3.1% increase," Purington said. "We cannot afford to do nothing, but I do not think we need to go as high as matching what Montague did." He said the town would be able to cover the expense under any scenario without a town meeting vote, but recommended setting a \$192,000 target in order to cover

late payments and potential capital expenses.

"Even if we vote in the 4.3%, the average person is going to pay \$72 more in a year," said Crochier, "but there are ways for the people to reduce that amount.... Saving water is going to be the secret to a lot of this."

Crochier and selectboard chair Greg Snedeker both remarked that since John Ward left the board, none of the sitting members live in the Riverside district. "It is one of the few times that we have to vote on something that does not affect any of us directly," said Crochier. He invited Riverside residents to come to the board's December 20 meeting "to talk to and help us with this vote."

Snedeker asked whether sewer commissioners must be selectboard members. Crochier suggested adding two "at-large" commissioners from Riverside to serve along with the three selectboard members.

"I think that we need to raise the sewer rate somewhat, because our expenses are up," said Riverside resident and meeting videographer Janet Masucci. "But I also think we need to reinforce that people who are letting runoff, and things like that, go into the sewer are making it cost more for everyone.... More [water] is going into the sewer than is coming into the district."

Snedeker agreed, saying that the town has been fighting the issue of runoff into the sewers for some time.

Fire chief Gene Beaubien suggested that the board adopt a provision to allow him and a commissioner to check on water systems, or for sump pumps, during housing sales inspections in the district.

"I think it is important to codify it in some way," said Crochier. "Otherwise, it does run out of the scope of authority somewhere – unless the sewer commissioners appointed the fire chief as an agent to the board, for the purpose of checking sump pumps and whatnot."

Burn Permits, Firefighter Grants

Beaubien told the board that the state firefighter safety grant, which has awarded towns a standard amount in the past, will use a graded score system this year. He said he is applying for the grant this year to replace the "jaws of life" on the department rescue truck, which is leaking hydraulic fluid again after being repaired.

Beaubien also said that the town's last Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) fire truck grant application was rejected because the truck did not have enough call volume. "It is not our first piece out [on calls], because it is not safe," he said, under current National Fire Protection Association standards. "You could not make it into the next step of the grant if there was not more call volume."

FEMA has lowered its restrictions on fire truck age and call vol-

ume, and Beaubien has reapplied for the grant this year.

He will also apply for a grant to get a LUCAS, an automated CPR chest-compressor, to keep on the rescue truck.

Shelburne Control will no longer issue burn permits, Beaubien told the selectboard. He said applying for burn permits online is "an easy process." Permits are issued during the burning season, from January 15 to May 1.

Crochier said that through his Regional Health District work, he visits towns where there is no internet or cell service, and he wondered how their residents will be able to get burn permits. Beaubien said that some towns might have to continue issuing them through their fire departments, or residents can have family or friends help them complete the online form.

Memorial Plaque

Purington was unanimously approved by the selectboard to send a letter to MassDOT signaling Gill's support for a memorial plaque at the Erving side of the French King Bridge. The idea came through the efforts of Stacey Hamel, an Oxford resident who lost her stepson Bryan to a presumed suicide at the bridge in 2018.

"Stacey Hamel, who has been involved for a couple of years now in raising awareness with the problems of suicides at that bridge, reached out to a project manager at the MassDOT for the upcoming safety barriers project," said Purington, adding that she has "contributed a lot to get these barriers in place." The barrier construction is scheduled for 2022.

"I am extremely sorry for the loss Stacey has had," said Crochier. "She was able to get more done in a couple of years than we have been able to do in a decade. I think her input should be given."

Purington said MassDOT has asked Gill and Erving for input on the plaque proposal. "There is one plaque and two towns, and we do not want this plaque in the middle of the bridge," Purington said. "It does not feel appropriate or safe there." The Erving selectboard has suggested placing the plaque at the Silvio O. Conte memorial site.

Other Business

Snedeker and Garbiel approved signing onto a letter supporting a Mass in Motion grant through the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). Mass In Motion is an age-friendly, municipal wellness and leadership initiative to improve nutrition and physical

activity in Franklin County and the North Quabbin.

Crochier recused himself due to his work through the FRCOG.

Crochier voiced a public service announcement asking everyone to get their COVID-19 shots or boosters. "COVID numbers are way up," he warned.



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

Here's the way it was on December 8, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

**Health Center Moves
To Greenfield**

Moving is never easy, especially when a freak snowstorm in October causes additional delays, but for the Community Health Center of Franklin County moving into their new facility at the Cherry Rum Plaza in Greenfield makes it all worthwhile.

With 11 examination rooms for adults and seven for pediatric care, a spacious waiting room, and an on-site lab, the center is positioned to serve a range of health care needs in Franklin County for all comers, regardless of ability to pay. "Anyone who walks through the door will be cared for," said executive director George Barton.

The mission is not new, but the new space will allow the organization to serve more people, and the new location is easy to access. The FRTA runs buses right to the door, and the center is just off the exit ramp from Route 2.

Barton said the move to Greenfield from the health center's former home in a wing of the Faren Care Center in Montague City has not resulted in lost clients.

The center is serving 9,800 people per year, and Barton says he hopes to add 3,000 more over the next three years. "Retention is good," Barton said. "This is not a revolving door for doctors. They stay and get to know their patients and families over time."

**Montague Will Promote
Permanent Chief From Within**

The Montague selectboard agreed Monday night not to consider permanent police chief candidates from outside the current police department, so that the town can use the state civil service exams and assessment center without getting charged consulting fees by the civil services division.

With guidance from town ad-

ministrators Frank Abbondanzio and administrative secretary Wendy Bogusz, the board chose to open up the position to patrolmen, including detectives, from within the department, to ensure the town would have enough qualified candidates.

Forms are on their way to the civil service division to acknowledge the retirement of chief Ray Zukowski at the end of last month and the appointment of Christopher Williams as acting chief. Williams was promoted to the temporary post from the staff sergeant position. The board expects he will serve as acting chief for about a year.

Days of Yore in Wendell

On December 1, 30 people filled the Wendell library to hear former selectboard member, road boss, board of health member, firefighter, and longtime resident Ted Lewis talk about growing up and living in what is now Old Wendell.

Lewis was relaxed, conversational and entertaining. He was born in 1929, before the Depression. "Who knows?" Lewis said, "maybe I caused it." He moved to Wendell with his family in 1933, in one of the two houses that stood on West Street. There was no electricity in town, no telephone, and few cars. All the roads were dirt.

Lewis recalled going to the center school and taking the bus to New Salem Academy, with the big kids in back shifting their weight back and forth to make the drive wheels slip on the snowy hills to get the bus stuck. "We picked blueberries and sold them for five cents a quart," Lewis said. "On fair day, our parents would give us each a dollar to spend at the Athol Fair." He walked there.

In those days, a resident could work on the road crew *in lieu of* making a tax payment. On snow days the road crew first had to load sand in the truck with shovels, then spread it out on the road from the back of the truck with the same hand tool. Then, "We kids would sweep the sand off the road so we could go sliding."



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HOLIDAYS from page A1

coming back. People are not as nervous – that had a lot to do with it. My customers got a double whammy, because they were scared, but the people who were paying them got scared too, so they didn't have any gigs."

Replay is the last instrument shop in Franklin County, and Cadran tells me about his customers. He fixes gear, trades, and sells a little online, but in normal times 70% of his business is retail from musicians who make the shop a destination. 30% of that happens in the holiday season. "Just a few years ago, it started the first week of November," he says.

The pandemic cut his revenue in half the first year, but things are slowly getting better, and his customers are loyal. "Within the first week or two, I had quite a few customers email me and say 'hey, I'm going to send you this money, just hold it for me,'" Cadran says, "'when you reopen, we'll spend it.' And just within the last two weeks, one of those people came in and finally spent that money."

I poke around for a minute. The gear here is good, and interesting: a small collection of Japanese electric guitars ("they have their own niche"); half a room full of drums of various sorts; CDs and cassettes by local bands.

In terms of shopping for presents, Cadran firmly recommends putting money on a Replay gift card – though if you want to take a risk, he has a "pretty loose policy" on trades.

Outside it's just beginning to snow.

"Everything feels a little tardy this year," says Alex McGuigan. "The holiday season feels condensed and strange.... Things are not normal by any stretch, although I think the expectation is there that we're meant to kind of carry on as normal, or pretend things are normal."

McGuigan has gone all out on the window displays at her store on the corner of Third and A, **Buckingham Rabbits Vintage**, and she and other downtown shopkeepers have coordinated with RiverCulture to put a focus on Friday nights. The stores are open late, and this Friday Santa lands at Spinner Park at 6 p.m. McGuigan has found someone to mind the register after that while she goes caroling.

"We have a block and a half radius of walkable retail," she explains, "and people need more than one reason to take a trip outside the little zone they're in, so the one time we can count on seeing more business is when everyone is open at the same time."

BRV has a lot to offer the holiday shopper beyond the thrifted and remade clothes that serve as its bread and butter: jewelry, locally-made deodorant, cold-weather accessories, stuff for kids. Just like Cadran, she recommends gift cards – "those are always the go-to," she says, "and we have them online, too."

COVID wasn't exactly well-timed for anyone, but Buckingham Rabbits Vintage had just made the move onto the Ave from its previous location on Canal Road and held a



The gear at Replay, just waiting to be played.

grand reopening in February 2020.

McGuigan credits small emergency grants from the town of Montague, and breaks on rent, for making it through. "Having local landlords is a really big part of why we're all still here," she says, and by "we," I know she means the small cluster of vintage and upcycled shops that anchor the Turners Falls retail scene.

"The supply chain has been a hot topic, but we'll never run out of second-hands," she tells me. "It's really the core of the retail establishments – Replay, Swanson's, Loot. Loot's been doing it for ten years now! It's really the future, or it should be."

I encounter the same optimism about reuse next door at **Swanson's Fabrics**, but with the volume cranked all the way up. As it turns out, it's crochet night, and the back of the shop is full of masked people furiously, quietly crafting. I was expecting to inventory stocking-stuffers for our readers at home, but proprietor Kathryn Swanson is ready to jump right into the big picture.

"The pandemic has helped every part of this business," Swanson says. "I had a lot of friends who could help, because they were unemployed. Everyone started going through their stuff and evaluating what they had, everyone pulled out their sewing machines and reconnected with their craft, everyone started thinking about where their things were coming from. And capitalism stopped for a second. And the rent was cheaper!"

Swanson's scheme for the Friday night push is "First Look Fridays," when customers can have a go at freshly arrived stock before it gets dispersed through online buyers. Even I can tell the wool collection stacked up here is a serious resource, and while Kathryn keeps downplaying the material to talk about labor, I keep seeing more neat stuff.

"A 15-year-old in Hatfield makes these seam ripper tools," she says. "He turns them

on a lathe." Other local gems include braided rugs, stuffed animals, and a box of sorta-vintage wrapping paper, salvaged from Wilson's.

Swanson has recently acquired a lot of remnants from a Broadway costume designer, and will be offering customers material from *A Christmas Carol* – including "gallon-sized bags with scraps that say 'Street Urchin' or 'Cratchit Boy' or 'Ghost Buttons.'"

Continuing the evening's theme, Swanson calls gift certificates "micro-loans to local businesses," but she is also launching a *membership* program, with too many details to relate in this article, and she gives a sales pitch aimed straight for the heart.

"The only way to ensure that something that you have is 100%, without new human or environmental sacrifice, is to buy it second-hand," she says. "We should consider what's in our attics and basements as an American resource, as a natural resource, that we can start to take advantage of in a real way."

My last stop is **Breakdown Records**. Eric Magnuson says the shop is doing OK. He is always open late on weekdays, so he's automatically participating in the Friday night promotional. The focus here is on used vinyl, with a sprinkling of fresh presses, as well as DVDs and VHS tapes, ephemera, and good used stereo equipment.

"I have a coupon out there for 10% off any item, so if someone wants to buy a turntable, or a \$300 receiver, they can get \$30 off," he says.

I ask what's been selling. "A lot of pop stuff – Billie Eilish, Beyonce," he says with a grin, before adding: "It's hard to get new releases, because the mail has been slow." He ran a two-for-one Black Friday weekend sale on movies, and was inundated with VHS-hunters from Northampton.

Breakdown opened the summer before COVID hit, but Magnuson seems to be settling in. "Last weekend I had a lot of people,"

he shrugs. "Most of my business is on weekends anyway, partially because of my hours."

This week's Friday event ends with a screening of *It's A Wonderful Life* at the **Shea Theater**, a tradition of recent invention, but Friday the 17th needed something, so the crew at the Rendezvous stepped in. John McGuigan, Alex's husband, books bands at the bar, and had the idea to call up a Christmas novelty band from Boston to play the Shea.

"Simple things can be fun this time of year," he muses. The McGuigans moved here from Boston, and John saw the act in question, The Scrooges, a couple times. "People love them – it's hard not to. Maybe if you don't like the Stooges. But if you do, and if you'd enjoy the absurdity of it being played by guys in Santa suits who also love The Stooges..."

I will probably be paying the \$10 to go myself, as I do happen to like The Stooges. (They were a super heavy rock band in the '70s, kind of helped invent punk, Iggy Pop was the lead singer, dark unhinged stuff. Sorry to those of you who know this but somehow it is my job to explain this kind of thing to a general readership. Life is funny.)

McGuigan's boss at the **Rendezvous**, Chris Janke, fills me in on the background.

"One of the major components of the downtown mix, the Shea Theater, has been severely hampered in booking some shows," he says. "In 2019, a Shea show would take a good week for the Rendezvous and make it into a great week. Now, a robust series at the Shea makes a difference in the number of jobs, at the Rendezvous alone."

Janke has taken a day job at the Franklin County Community Development Corporation, and he speaks as someone with one foot clamped into the microeconomics of the local business sector and the other squelching away at the macro. I'm just going to run the tape from here out.

"It's a make-or-break time, and the pandemic is still in full force, as an economic force, for small businesses," he says. "Last year at this time, people were going for PPP loans, and there were all kinds of ways of trying to make it possible for your small business to make it through the winter."

"This year that's not the case at all, and yet the traffic has not returned to restaurants and to retail in downtown areas. As a matter of fact, it's fallen quite dramatically, even since the summer, for a lot of businesses...."

"We've been in a pandemic mindset for 18 months or more, and so habits have changed, and folks have new routines. But although the sun goes down at 4:30, there's other stuff to do."

"We're trying to remind folks within the area that there's a there's a downtown they can shop at that doesn't have supply chain issues. And that there are quite a few people who are employed in these businesses. And that we're trying to try to keep them."



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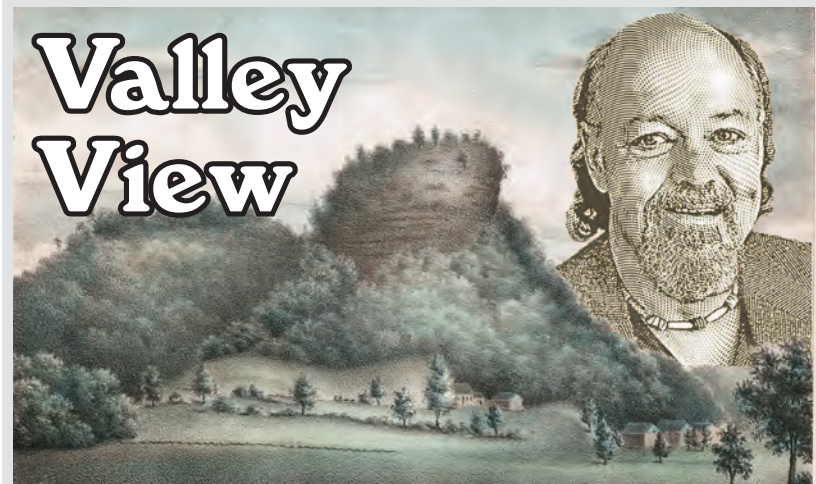
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DECEMBER 9, 2021

Above: Earlier this year, Joe Kopera met with this deer near Chestnut Hill in Montague.



Valley View

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Daybreak Friday. Light creeping in over the horizon, sneaking through the tall white pines across the street.

Waiting for the coffee-maker to gurgle its last breath, I've already begun to Springfield and back. Deer hunters are just now entering the woods, trying to be quiet, hoping this will be the day. Tomorrow will be even better. Saturdays bring more hunters into the woods, which tends to move deer from their beds.

Honestly, I can't say I miss deer hunting. I've turned the page. Don't need it. Been there, done that. Enjoyed it while it lasted. Love the woods, the solitude, the critters. Maybe too much to kill them.

I also love the slow, quiet transition from night to day on the way into a morning stand. Daybreak is the best time of day in my book. And not only for hunting. Mind sharp, body rested, it's ideal for writing, too. One never knows where the inner consciousness will dance off to at the crack-of-dawn keyboard.

In fact, that's the problem confronting me this very moment as I sit here trying to settle on a column topic. It happens from time to time, deadline looming, procrastination calling the shots. I've been here before, even on a much tighter deadline, pondering where my swirling thoughts will ramble off to. The seat I'm now occupying is couched in uncertainty. Better than being lost in the woods with nightfall near. That's for sure. Been there, too.

There's no time for delay. A three-cord load of primo cordwood, seasoned oak and rock maple, will be dropped in front of my sliding woodshed door tomorrow morning. After that, with rain forecast Monday, my first priority will be to get the load under cover. Thus, I must get something written today, anything, a first draft to be revisited at my convenience before Monday's deadline. That's my writing routine: blow out the first draft, akin to a black-and-white sketch, then pick away, adding a dab of color here, a dab there during rewrites, all the while tweaking the narrative. Fortunately, it's not my first trip down this road.

It's not like I don't have anything to write about. I've been on overload in recent weeks unraveling the settlement of Muddy Brook, a mid-18th-century Deerfield village that became Bloody Brook and is now known as South Deerfield, or in the eastern European dialect that arrived at the turn of the 20th century, "Sowdeerfeel."

Closing in on a year of intense deed research, I still have more questions than answers. Truthfully, it sometimes feels like a losing battle – like the more I learn, the less I know. Have you ever been there, looking for the next pebble to overturn, the next hintful thread to pull and see what unravels?

Along the way, I've learned of many new people, folks I'd never heard of who were big Muddy Brook and Bloody Brook players. What makes it even more interesting to me is that some are my ancient grandfathers, and many others are related, from peripheral tendrils growing off my root ball. But I'm not ready to write about them quite yet. Maybe never will be, if I can't pin down their occupations, their trades, their places of worship and political leanings during the Revolution and Shays' Rebellion. Little details to build an accurate profile.

I'm talking about members of the families named Arms, Frary, Barnard, Cooley, Russell, Dickinson, Dwelley, and Billings, to name some, also Parkers and Shattucks, Hardings and Andersons, and, yes, even my own Sandersons – all of them fascinating hometown pioneers. To me, researching these people, their place and mine, is addictive, an unquenchable thirst that intensifies with each forward step.

Take for example placenames that have been lost over time, hometown locations through which I have certainly traveled and never heard of. That would include Indian Plain, Sugarloaf Gore, and Willis Hill, to name the first three that come to mind. I want to pin these places down. Get it right. So, give me time. It's a laborious process.

I'll get there, though, and will lay out the so-called Long Hill Division of 1688 with my historian friend Peter Thomas. That land allotment divvied up among 48 early Deerfield proprietors a large chunk see **VALLEY VIEW** page B3

BOOK REVIEW

Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future* (Orbit Publishing, 2020)

By DONNA PETERSEN

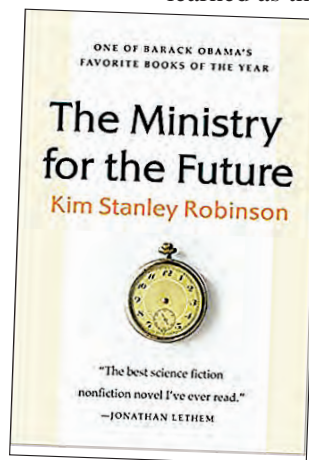
MONTAGUE – It starts with a heat wave in India, sometime in the near future. It is hot – *really* hot – and humid. And then the power goes out: no AC, no fans, no water. It goes on and on and people start dying. The crisis is so widespread, aid can't get there fast enough. By the time the heat abates, perhaps 20 million people have died. Will this be the catalyst that spurs real action on climate change, instead of the usual lip service and denial?

Welcome to a possible future as depicted in Kim Stanley Robinson's latest book.

Robinson has been writing science fiction about climate change and off-Earth human settlements for decades. He wrote about colonizing or "terraforming" Mars in the *Mars* trilogy, and about Washington, DC being hit by drastic and catastrophic weather in the *Science in the Capital* trilogy. He has been praised as "one of the greatest living science fiction writers... and as one of the most important political writers working in America" in *The New Yorker*. The *New York Times* wrote, he is "[the] one writer whose work will set the standard for science fiction in the future," *Time* magazine named him a "Hero of the Environment," and author Jonathan Lethem called this book "the best science fiction nonfiction novel I've ever read."

I have been a big fan of Robinson's writing ever since reading the *Mars* trilogy, in which some humans

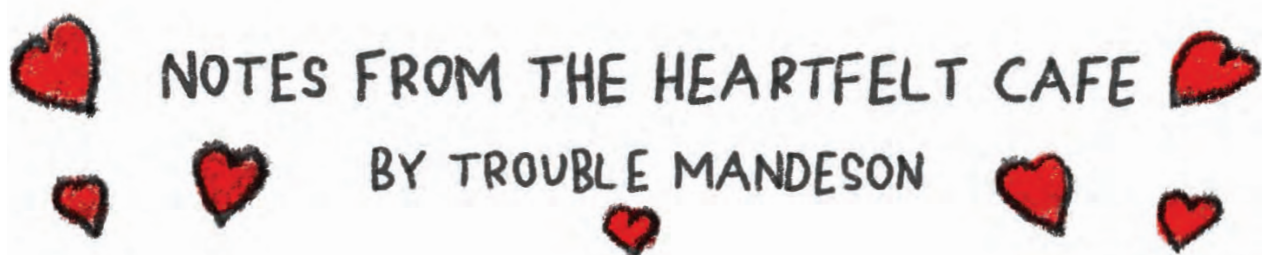
leave an increasingly problematic Earth and settle on Mars, terraforming it to make it habitable. Much of the engineering and science was over my head, but I learned as the book progressed.



I forced my neighborhood book club to read his 656-page, 2018 book *New York 2140*, in which New York has been inundated by water and is now the North American Venice. The remaining inhabitants travel by boat on "canals" formed over submerged roads, and have found ways to adapt to the unstable, watery city. The book deals with the harsh realities of a changed global landscape and it also has funny, almost absurdist scenarios. It seemed to me the author threw up his hands at the inaction of countries and corporations (and citizens!) and offered up a look at a possible future.

In *The Ministry for the Future*, Robinson gives us an international organization, the Ministry, as it tries to work with governments and fossil fuel companies to reduce CO₂ in order to mitigate the devastating effects of climate change. But how much can a poorly-funded organization run by an Irish woman and her rather small staff influence the powers that be and the ever-present "markets"? The fossil fuel industries want to get every penny out of extracting fossil fuels and to be subsidized by governments while doing so, while these same governments have to spend billions on disasters caused by climate change.

see **MINISTRY** page B4



GREENFIELD – During this month of holiday gluttony I thought I'd talk about how we can make our diets healthier by eating more of the fresh, local foods grown, raised, and produced across the Pioneer Valley – the vegetables, fruit, meat, milk, honey, maple syrup, grains, flour, condiments, fermented foods, kombucha, cider, beer, and wines coming from local producers.

I am not a nutritionist or medical practitioner, but I am responsible for this 60-year-old body which requires upkeep and maintenance. It helps to know a bit about how best to fuel it up efficiently and with optimal nutrition if I want to feel better and live better. I also do not believe in diets that restrict the healthy foods we need, like fats and proteins, so I'm suspicious of any diet that has you skipping important nutrients.

The concept of "healthy" is relative; to my mind, it means a diet rich in foods that fuel body and spirit without creating extra stress on



MANDESON PHOTO

Biscotti is the author's favorite breakfast treat.

my body. That means eating foods low in fat, sugar, and sodium, and high in vitamins, minerals, and the other good offerings that strengthen our immune systems, help us to fight off disease, and keep our physical bodies in good working shape.

I do not believe in deprivation,

but I also think eating in moderation and eating better food seems reasonable as a way to live day-to-day.

By better, I mean eating things as close to the moment they were pulled from the earth as you can get. The less processed a food is,

see **HEARTFELT** page B8

Pet of the Week



C. CARMODY COLLAGE

“NALA”

Are you looking for an easy-going gal who warms up quickly to people? A quiet kitty who's a sweetheart through and through? Then Nala is the cat for you!

Nala was very shy when she came to Dakin as a stray, but was moved to a foster home to tend to her kittens. There, she blossomed! She warms up quickly to people and even got along great with the foster's three-year-old tyke.

While she, like most cats, has an independent streak, she still loves getting attention. Nala would

do well in a home with or without children. Given the fact that she gave the foster's own cats the evil eye, she might prefer to be your one and only feline friend. Nala is done with motherhood and is ready to resume life as a single gal.

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



By **MISHEL IXCHEL**

TURNERS FALLS – Like everyone else, we stayed put last year during the holiday season. It felt so good to not have to adhere to obligations or expectations, which for years have dictated how I spend my time throughout the month of December.

This sentiment also extends to my – and therefore my kid's – social life. A silver lining for us, since we had the privilege to be at home during lockdown, was realizing just how much we love being at home. In particular, I realized just how much of my life and commitments had evolved into routine. A routine that was rarely questioned: I'd say yes to social commitments with people whom I considered close friends, and I kept busy and moving, often not realizing just how draining these routines had become.

During the pandemic I realized I actually thrive in isolation, in being a homebody, in saying no to social gatherings in general. For the longest time, I had sharpened my socialization tools, which aided me greatly as an adult and in my line of work, but which didn't really align with my authentic self.

During the pandemic, I often said no to playdates that I normally would have said yes to. Before, for

Getting What We Want For the Holidays

the sake of my kid, I would agree to gatherings that left me depleted in the end, and sometimes full of resentment. Yes, on the one hand my kid got to play with someone his own age, and it gave me a much-needed break from being the one who had to engage and entertain him; but on the other, I was paying the price of having to do things with people who didn't necessarily fill my cup.

This past year, I've let go of these expectations of myself as a parent, and now only agree to gatherings or playdates that will leave me also feeling good.

And so last year, staying home and keeping it low key allowed for a reassessment. It allowed for a softening, a gentle transition into the winter. It was such a magnificent breath of fresh air. The pressure was off and we were suddenly allowed the luxury of spending the holiday just as we liked.

Somewhere I read that “tradition is nothing but peer pressure from dead people,” and last December this definitely rang true.

Over the years, my holidays were patched together with activities that felt foreign. Yes, I got to see members of my extended family, but when I think about it and look back, every Thanksgiving and Christmas was a carbon copy of the last. My memories of these “holy” days are bland, and until the pandemic hit, they went unquestioned.

Instead, doing our own thing

(small as it was) at home and without much pressure, allowed for a reassessment for the type of tradition I and my little family would rather have. It gave us a clean slate on how we want to spend our time versus how we have to spend our time. We didn't do anything extraordinary or mind-blowing last year, but at the very least there was space for these questions to be pondered.

Often all it takes to live intentionally is to pause before you proceed. If last year was low key, this year we get to choose how we spend our time as a little family. We get to blend what's important to us, such as rest and nourishment, with the things we want to do, most of which are still to be determined. Though the world is reopening to travel and get together, we are choosing to ride this post-lockdown holiday in a way that fits our needs.

What do we want most this holiday, experience-wise? What do we most need? These are questions now being thrown around, allowing us the luxury to think about how we want to spend our most precious resource, time, and about what new traditions we want to start.

Ecuadorian-born and New York City bred, Mishel Ixchel is mama to a five-year-old, and currently resides in Turners Falls where she practices and teaches the art of sacred self-care. You can find her on Instagram @indiemamadiaries.

Senior Center Activities DECEMBER 13 THROUGH 17

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.

Monday 12/13

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Knitting & Needlecrafts Circle

Tuesday 12/14

10 a.m. Knitting Circle
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 12/15

9 a.m. Veterans' Agent Hours
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Bingo

1:30 p.m. Mobile Pantry

4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 12/16

10 a.m. Chair Yoga
1 p.m. Cards & Games

Friday 12/17

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. 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 12/13

9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge
10 a.m. Tai Ji Quan

Tuesday 12/14

9 a.m. Good for YOU
10 a.m. Line Dancing

Wednesday 12/15

9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10 a.m. Tai Ji Quan

12:30 p.m. Bingo

Thursday 12/16

9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge
10 a.m. Stretch & Balance

Friday 12/17

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.



Surviving Breast Cancer

By **Julie Cunningham**

Part 14: Through the Veil

AMHERST – What follows is something I wrote for an online support group that I am a part of. Someone posted that her sister lost her battle with breast cancer recently, and it caused a flood of emotions in me and other members of the group. When we lose a breast cancer patient, it's like losing family. So many women in these groups are in their 20s and 30s with young children. And they are not spared the horrors of cancer. Some of them have stage four, some have stage one.



It's unpredictable whose cancer will spread. There are women diagnosed stage one who suddenly find an area the cancer has spread to and now their staging has jumped three points. There are women diagnosed as stage two with aggressive cancer that hasn't spread. Sometimes we lose a sister. And that hurts.

There are challenges at any stage and it feels hard and draining, which is why it's so important to have a support group.

I will see you through the veil, pink sisters. On the other side the battle is easier. There is no more suffering or loss, no more pain. We will greet each other with open arms, each one welcoming the next. If you lose the battle, we will be there to soothe the ache. We will watch over the family you left, the sons and daughters, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives that you had while you were living.

I'll see you through the veil, pink sisters. No matter what, we are in it together. We are watching over each other, one by one making small progress to a time when our daughters will not know this pain. When I see you there, your light will be shining through. It won't be easy, but it will be worth the fight.

Someday, years from now, our granddaughter's granddaughter will look back on these days and remark, whimsically, about how hard it was “back then” to fight cancer. She will note the progress that was made, and how easy it is to overcome. She will tell stories, in partial disbelief, about what we went through. “Can you believe they used to *lose their hair!*” she will remark.

We will be watching, happily, through the veil. Each piece of the

puzzle representing a spirit that passed on, a battle lost to win the war. Each spirit quietly cheering. We will know peace.

Until that moment, one by one we will meet each other through the veil. A loving family to comfort through the loss of a life well lived. Loved ones left, families grieving, and hearts broken.

We will be there for you, you will be there for me. It will be a time of joy and sorrow, grief and jubilant rejoicing. Our story is written in pieces. It's one woman's fight to the finish, one woman's victory, and another woman's defeat. It is our hair that's lost, our time that's spent “in the chair” for hours and hours treating our cancer. It's our doctors, our nurses, our friends.

We will all meet each other through the veil, one by one. We will guard each new sister with care and grace, and give her strength to proceed.

When I see you there, I hope you know I love you. I've never met you, but our hopes and dreams are the same. I hope you know, although we've never met, my love for you is pure and true. We are one. We are the fight. I've got your hand, and you have mine.

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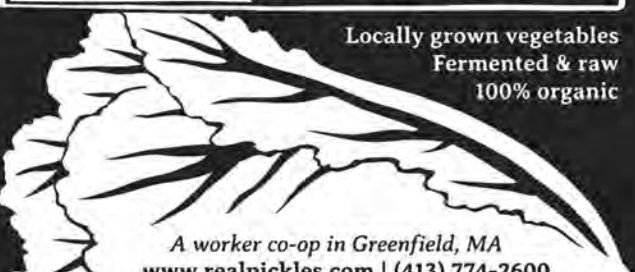
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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Emerging Writer Fellowship

NORTHAMPTON – Straw Dog Writers Guild, a cooperative organization of working creative writers in western Massachusetts, will grant an emerging writer of fiction a \$3,000 stipend and other professional benefits for a full year, beginning in May 2022. Applications are now open at www.strawdogwriters.org/emergingwriters.

Now in its second cycle, the Emerging Writer Fellowship Program will go to a woman or gender expansive writer of color who is based in western Massachusetts and in the early stages of their career. The Fellowship was created to help emerging writers negotiate barriers that may prevent them from accessing mentorship and pursuing publication of their work.

The award recipient will receive the grant to cover writing-related expenses, along with a membership in Straw Dog through 2023 and access to mentors who can help with the craft of writing, publishing, and

promoting their work, or with other needs as determined.

The recipient will also receive a professional website designed by Valley of Writers (www.valleyofwriters.com) and hosted for three years. Fellows will have the opportunity to read their work at Guild events, teach in the Guild's workshop program, and shape the artistic vision of the Guild as it grows.

Applicants should be 18 years old or older, and self-identify as a woman or gender expansive writer of color who demonstrates a passion for writing fiction but has not published a book nor has one under contract. They must live in Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, or Berkshire County.

The process for applying includes an application form and writing sample submitted before December 30, 2021. Finalists will be interviewed by the Fellowship Committee and a recipient selected and announced on March 1.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Crack In Everything Reported; Determined To Be How The Light Gets In

Monday, 11/29

11:22 a.m. 911 caller states his child's mother broke into his room, turned his cameras off, stole his belongings, and is now threatening to sell them. Female party requesting to speak to officer about her rights. Female calling 911 to report that male will not let her into the residence. Both parties calmed down; no issues.

3:04 p.m. Report of a motor vehicle accident with property damage on Bulkley Street; female party reportedly backed into a parked car, left her name and phone number on the vehicle, and left to go to an appointment. Report taken.

6:11 p.m. Party into station requesting to speak to an officer regarding a firearm dispute with his ex-girlfriend. They still live at the same residence; her firearm is missing, and she is accusing him of stealing it. Officer spoke with reporting party, who stated that he does not have access to her registered firearms. Advised of options.

Tuesday, 11/30
11:04 a.m. 911 caller from Lake Pleasant Road reporting a house fire. Caller transferred to Shelburne Control. PD and FD confirming all occupants out of the home. PD closing road from Old Northfield Road to Route 63. Pan Am also notified due to a fire hose going across the tracks.

1:53 p.m. Caller states that she believes she saw two males drinking alcohol while outside of Food City; believes that they walked towards the park. No officers available due to structure fire in Lake Pleasant.

9:16 p.m. 911 caller states that a male is stumbling around on the Industrial Boulevard loop; usually nobody is around the area at this hour. Unable to locate.

Wednesday, 12/1
7:31 a.m. 911 caller reporting that another vehicle collided with hers while turning from Sunderland Road onto the crossover. Citation issued.

1:04 p.m. Caller states that a truck went onto Beach Road and is dumping junk. Area checked; no trucks found; no trash located.

2:43 p.m. Officer checking on cloud of smoke coming from behind Atlantic Golf and Turf on Industrial Boulevard. Employee advised it was coming from their boiler. Smoke is becoming less and less at this time.

4:09 p.m. Caller states she received a suspicious package today and is concerned because she has heard of people sending stuff like COVID in the air pouches. The package is all that was in her box; no other items. Caller advised to throw away package if she is concerned.

5:43 p.m. Caller from Walgreens states that a male has been panhandling for hours and she is now getting complaints from customers; would like him moved along. Services rendered.

7:45 p.m. Caller from Avenue A states the neighbors are banging on walls and slamming doors; believes they are trying to antagonize her. Officer stood by for a while; all was quiet.

11:31 p.m. Caller from Avenue A believes someone who was over earlier is in

her house, but she cannot find him and has checked the entire house. Officer advises that when he rang the buzzer, the female party asked who it was, and upon the officer announcing their presence, female stated "Yeah, so what?" Officers were able to make their way into the building and knocked on the caller's door several times; caller dismissed them. Caller called back and stated she wanted it on record that her neighbors are causing noise again. She does not want a response at this time.

Thursday, 12/2
2:08 a.m. Caller from Third Street reports people being loud and a lot of foot traffic in and out of the apartment. Officers made contact with individuals on the third floor and advised them of the complaint.

2:21 a.m. Caller from Avenue A requesting officers respond for neighbors being noisy. Officers advised they stood by waiting for the caller to come to the door, but she did not. No loud noises heard.

5:46 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street reports that a grey pitbull who resides in the house near the bike shop attacked his truck this morning; would like this logged. Caller states he has called in the past to report this.

4:59 p.m. Vehicle hit a deer on Turners Falls Road. Officer advises that Turners Falls Rod & Gun Club came and picked up the deer.

Friday, 12/3
12:32 p.m. Report of ongoing harassment of an employee at Franklin County Regional Housing Authority; they would like this on record. Advised of protective order options and how to obtain a no trespass order.

6:32 p.m. Caller from Third Street states that his upstairs neighbor might be having a party later; not looking for a response right now, but he might call later with a noise complaint.

10:35 p.m. Bartender at Millers Pub stated that there is a male party outside swinging a golf club at vehicles and being aggressive towards people. While on the phone with dispatch, caller stated that the male was currently attacking people and that a couple of other male parties had to get him off of a female party he was attacking. He also went into the pub and started swinging pool sticks around and banging on the windows and broke the door. A 30-year-old male was arrested and charged with malicious

destruction of property worth over \$1,200; assault and battery with a dangerous weapon; assault; assault and battery; disturbing the peace; and disorderly conduct.

10:59 p.m. Caller from FL Roberts states that someone there looks drunk or high and is having trouble getting into their car. Caller is not sure they should be driving. Car took off towards downtown area. Caller called back reporting that the vehicle is now at Cumberland Farms. All officers still dealing with previous call.

Saturday, 12/4
4:21 a.m. Caller from Third Street states there is a lot of banging and hooting and hollering going on and that there have been over 50 people in and out, up and down the stairs all night. Officer noted no audible noise from apartment.

11:09 a.m. Larceny of cord wood reported. Wood was picked up by the wrong person. Parties will work it out among themselves.

3:10 p.m. Caller reports that she left her wallet in a shopping cart at Food City and when she realized and went back, it was gone. Caller states the store has video of someone taking it. Caller called back to report that someone dropped off her wallet at her old address. She will call back once she retrieves it if anything is missing.

4:47 p.m. Caller reporting that she backed up in the Family Dollar parking lot and may have hit another car. Caller is unsure; stated the other vehicle has damage already. Report taken.

10:42 p.m. 911 caller reporting that the vehicle in front of her on Turners Falls Road hit a dog and continued driving. Officer advised that the dog owner is on scene and took possession. Unable to identify vehicle that hit dog.

Sunday, 12/5
7:17 a.m. Icy road conditions reported on Unity Street. DPW notified. Second caller reporting same.

2:03 p.m. Caller from Shine Laundromat in Amherst reports that a male came into the business and put empty shoeboxes on a shelf. The boxes have children's writing on them. He also left a basket with a single sock in it, then left in an unknown vehicle. Info forwarded to Amherst PD.

6:12 p.m. Caller reporting someone dumping couches on Lake Pleasant Road near Mineral Road. Officer states it was a church pew. Message left for DPW.

VALLEY VIEW from page B1

of land that became South Deerfield, including the outlying neighborhoods of Mill River, Pine Nook, and Sugarloaf.

Nothing against newspapers, but I don't believe a column with space constraints like this could ever do justice to what I've learned thus far, never mind what's yet to come. The story of South Deerfield, largely ignored by haughty Old Deerfield-centric George Sheldon, is too comprehensive – of book-, not newspaper-length. Maybe I could piecemeal it out once I understand the whole picture. But can I do so in a paper that doesn't serve Deerfield? It doesn't seem to fit.

Still, a South Deerfield addendum to Sheldon's tired old *History of Deerfield* should be published. And what better time to do so than in conjunction with the town's upcoming 350th birthday celebration in 2023? It needs to be done for posterity, and we're on our way.

But enough of that. I just couldn't resist providing a little nibble into my current pre-occupation, and the fact that I am at this very moment infected with writer's block, which, I suppose, is better than the Omicron variant.

Too bad I can't get out of this doldrum by going full Hunter S. Thompson on our current state of affairs in Washington DC. Isn't the time ripe for a full-frontal Gonzo attack on the Supreme Court, the Trump Crime Family, Fox News, and the racist Southern foundation of the Republican Party, otherwise known these days as the Trump base? Formerly the George Wallace, Southern wing, which was not insignificant, it seems to be gaining steam these days – even in places where one wouldn't expect it to catch hold. Yes, even here.

The late Hunter Thompson was on to it way back in 1968, teargas in the air. That's when Nixon pulled Wallace's loyal Dixiecrats into the Republican fold to defeat Humphrey in a razor-tight race. Now Thompson is dead, hostile right-wingers rule the GOP, and many respectable, dyed-in-the-wool, New England Republicans with both oars in the water are still onboard. Yes, even after witnessing the Capitol insurrection in vivid hi-def, with the Stars and Bars flapping in the breeze like they did at Gettysburg and Bull Run.

You must be kidding me? Is this unlikely GOP support blind partisanship? Can these loyal partisans not see that the party of Lincoln is now ruled by the secessionists who went to war against him? Are they not aware that home-grown fascism and right-wing thuggery is in the air? Oh my! Where will it end?

It's crazy-making. Where's Dr. Gonzo when you need him?

The problem as I see it is that Hunter S. Thompson is the only person who could get away with telling it like it is, in his spicy, unedited diatribes. We need the story told in a style free from heavy-handed, self-appointed arbiters of good taste and bad words sitting in staid ed-

itors' chairs. When HST spoke, people listened, and it resulted in millions of dollars in profit. Yet now an industry on life-support won't print new voices with Gonzo mojo and moxie. Go figure.

As the timid print-media establishment gasps for air, social media wingnuts and Fox News execs are raking in the millions for quite intentionally poisoning the well. Why does the "objective" print media insist upon keeping it clean while the other side muddies the water with raw sewage from the likes of Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity, to name a couple? Has the word objective come to mean afraid to tell the truth?

It now looks like Mitch McConnell's Supreme Court is going to reverse *Roe v. Wade*. Really? Is McConnell Joe Q. Average American these days? The polls indicate otherwise. So how can this be happening in a country that *elects* its leaders? No clue. You tell me.

All I can say is that I grew up in the '60s and early '70s, and never in my wildest dreams thought this could happen here. I thought Joe McCarthy, the Nixon Administration, and J. Edgar Hoover were dead and buried, never again to be heard from. Well, guess what? They're back, and the tribe is growing like COVID.

Which reminds me, has anyone else had their fill of "balanced" reporting about global warming and climate change? Could you live without the annoying auto-insert disclaimer that reads, "some scientists question whether global warming is caused by human beings." The obvious question to that cautionary garbage is: who signs these "experts'" checks? It's beyond ridiculous. There is no denying that humans are destroying our planet on many levels, including global warming.

What we don't need now is a GOP takeover of Congress in 2022 and a second Trump term in 2024. If that comes to fruition, some may decide it's time to flee the country or, heaven forbid, even go so far as re-enacting HST's final act that unfolded on February 20, 2005 at his secluded Owl Farm refuge in Aspen, Colorado. There, the high priest of Gonzo journalism treated the media to a front-page story with one thunderous roar of his .357 Magnum.

In a flash, the life of a visionary New Journalist was over. Sad and sudden. A great loss to many who gobbled his prose, wanted more. He must've had his fill and sensed what was coming down the pike. He didn't want to stick around for fascist takeover.

Enough! I don't want to get carried away.

But first, please, just one more little digression – a recommendation for those who enjoy classical country music. If it's pickin' and grinnin' at its finest that you seek, go to YouTube on your Smart TV, crank up the volume as loud as you can stand it, and take a listen to Norman Blake and the Rising Fawn String Ensemble in concert at Ohio University. Taped in 1980, it never gets old.



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MINISTRY from page B1

Robinson has lots of economic information. Rates! Indexes! Market forces! And he has a lot to say about economists, none of it nice. I talked to a friend who is a well-respected economist and they gave a thumbs up to much of the author's take on the economic forces at play.

With all that the book addresses in its 500-plus pages, it mainly offers some possible solutions to processes that affect CO₂ levels and the resulting climate changes, as well as ways to adapt to those changes. Solutions from the book include different kinds of geo-engineering, including pumping out water from under Antarctic glaciers, getting humans to change their habits and lifestyles, and influencing corporations to reduce emissions through "carbon coins." Some of the financial deals seem almost like extortion at times – and probably are.

Some of the solutions are propelled by radical actions by unknown activists. Private and commercial jets start falling out of the sky. Huge cargo ships mysteriously end up underwater. Earth First! has nothing on the Children of Kali group. And could the Ministry itself have a secret direct action group, unknown to head Mary Murphy? Things do start to change as cargo ships become sail/solar vessels, and high-tech blimp airships replace jets.

Some efforts are successful, and CO₂ levels do go down. Earth will require a lot of time to heal, and there is hope, but it requires drastic changes to human resource consumption and lifestyles. Sadly, the countries who contribute the least to climate change are often the ones that will suffer the most until CO₂ decreases substantially.

The characters in the book are compelling, from Frank, an Amer-

ican Aid worker who survived the India heat wave but has terminal PTSD, to the staff of the Ministry and the refugees in Lucerne, Switzerland where the Ministry is based. There are numerous short asides, short chapters that often seem Vonnegut-esque to me. Photons speak! As do History and Code! And the sun gets a voice as well.

There is so much in this book. The science is good, the politics powerful, the economics insightful and frustrating, and there is real passion for the planet, its inhabitants, and its wildlife and land. I love this guy's brain – he writes smart, funny, and humanely, and pulls no punches when calling out the bad guys. I eagerly await his next book!

With the Glasgow climate summit just completed, one wonders how much will actually happen and how much will just be platitudes and unfulfilled pledges. Some of the reporting I heard seemed to come right from this book. It is easy to be pessimistic; little has happened since the 2015 Paris summit and we have seen heat waves and fires and storms, and more will come. But there are millions, maybe billions, who care and understand, and I guess we need to find a way to, as the saying goes, "be the change" and force governments to act. Go Greta!

Note: *The Ministry for the Future* is a very long book, at 563 pages. There is a short nonfiction book by Elizabeth Kolbert, the author of *The Sixth Extinction*, called *Under a White Sky* (Crown, 2021) which is basically five or six chapters on different efforts to conserve species and mitigate climate change. If you are seeking something specific and brief about climate change, I recommend it, and it is a useful supplemental resource to pair with Robinson's book.



The Montague City Rambler:

Inner and Out

By LILITH WOLINSKY

MONTAGUE CITY – Each year, Thanksgiving catches me by surprise, this year more than most. The gardens are barely to bed, and the baby trees not yet staked against the bidirectional river winds may be buffeted into bonsai come spring. I've been in a thick fog of details and options unrelated to soil and leaf, each option laden with human consequences too numerous and unpredictable to sort.

Feelings of responsibility and grief permeate my dreams with layered images of floods, quiet streets full of snow, compost for the laying, and animals – cats, dogs, birds, the wildness and heft of bears, and an occasional moose standing still in the forest. Perhaps normal dream companions when taking on responsibility for a changing, distant, and much-loved parent who inherited – and transmitted – a deep well of trauma, and complexity.

My reverie is impressed upon, "dented" by the immediate demands of the world around me: my two sweet and funny cats, vying

for the best position on my supine body, as we sleep each night in what I think is a delightfully chilly room; and the spare, somewhat sloppy details of the demolition proposed for a different anchor, the graceful old Farren – right up the street and beautiful still, although marred by a bland block of red bricks, sixties-style, at her southern wing.

It's amazing how an old building can separate and divide. Even those who have spent no time in Montague City, and know nothing of the history here, have off-the-cuff, seemingly well-informed opinions about the Farren's value, and when and how quickly she should be reduced to rubble, their eyes glinting with the possibility for the seven-acre parcel just minutes from both Turners Falls and Greenfield. How quickly we turn from our elders.

My work as a social worker also reaches in, and forces me outside of myself. It's part of what I love, and why I chose it years ago: a way to pay rent on the planet, my tiny *tikkun olam*, and further, a profession which readily stimulates growth.

Last week I met with a client,

a combat veteran, who told me he became suicidal watching conservative news that barked the imminent demise of the American military. This news furthered his own latent fear that his service, the screams of which he still barely speaks, the culture to which he is devoutly committed, could vanish at the hands of the wicked unknown now in power.

He had an inkling that I did not share his political beliefs, as he told me "Trump got the job done," adding with a side-eyed glance, "but he was crazy." And I, in turn, expansively open to him, a traumatized and ill old man, encouraged him to abstain from the television that stimulates his fear, rage, and helplessness, and his chronic, close-to-the-surface, desire to die. I was able, via my role as helper, to reach across the political chasm, and he met me there, human to human. I am grateful for it.

Managing my mother's care, even with professional skills in geriatrics, health care, and congregate living, has been a too-frequent exercise in frustration and loss, flush with bureaucratic tangles, and examples of casual neglect. Although impaired, my mother retains insight, humor, acuity, and an occasionally astonishing vocabulary, and these things perplex her caregivers, a number of whom seem most comfortable with charges of the passive and pliant variety. It is a situation over which I have official control, although true control is elusive, and mastery, that essential component of ease, is even further out of reach.

I move between inner and out, tending each and grateful for the variety and interest my life affords. As we approach the darkest day of the year, I wonder: what will the next phase bring?

Montv

MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

#42: J. Burkett

CYNTHIA MEADOWS PHOTO

This week's column is a little different... I'm the one who usually does the interviews, but one of our readers, Troy Curry, was wondering about someone interviewing me. So we turned things around and let him, the reader, interview the interviewer.

Here we go! (If anyone out there has ideas for this column, please get in touch. We also review new albums, CDs, and cassettes.) – J.

Interview by TROY CURRY

MMM: Would you like to discuss your early years?

JB: Yes, sure. Since this is a music column, I'll talk about music stuff.

I've been obsessed with music most of my life. I played in the school bands in elementary and high school. Then I joined a REM-type band called Plaid Lunchbox... and underground punk bands too. One of them, the Shrinners, still plays! (Go see them ASAP). In college years I was in noise/psychedelic-style groups, which was unusual for the early '90s. One of the more well-known ones was called Vermonster.

I also started collecting records really early on, and went to every kind of concert you can imagine. I lived near UConn, so tons of bands played there, including all the NYC hardcore bands. I had a radio show and worked at a record store back

then, too, so I got pretty deeply immersed early on.

I was one of those people who was really saved by music... I didn't fit in anywhere until I got into music. I spent a lot of time making cassette comps, and made my own little universe while listening to music all the time. I would dream of making my own albums and all that, which I did do later in my life.

It was a little bit like that movie *The King Of Comedy*, where DeNiro has a fake audience in his room, and thinks he is famous like his heroes, ha ha.

MMM: And starting Mystra Records?

JB: It was started around 2010. The idea behind it was to help share stuff with the world that wasn't getting out there enough. The label was about helping people, not making money, etc. After many years of playing out, doing shows, and that kind of thing, it became very obvious how unfair things were, and how many musicians weren't appreciated enough. There are so many insanely great people, bands, and records all around that just get lost in the shuffle.

The first releases were a local comp and a reissue of a homemade CD-R by the great banjo player Ralph White, which was his first solo LP. At some point the label boiled down to almost all western Mass-based groups, as there are so many great bands and folks around here.

The newest Mystra series has been CD-Rs with hand-painted sleeves, and there are about 40 of those releases. We have also done some LP releases, and a few tribute/thematic tapes. One of them is easily the strangest Bob Marley covers ever assembled in one place. Ha!

Like some other cool folks all around the world, we are trying to construct a better reality through music. Great stuff can come from anywhere, and all sorts of people could be into these kinds of records. It seems like a lot of clueless rich/snobby/too-cool kind of folks have taken over this new vinyl(s) apocalypse, and we hope we aren't lumped in with that, ha ha. And yeah, we mostly put out CDs and tapes anyway.

I co-run the label with a friend, and we are so thankful for all the interest and help in the label over the years from so many talented folks! Like you, Troy... thanks!

MMM: Your artworks and recent mural?

JB: The LP art I've done? That started early on, too... When I was just out of high school, I did album art for records by Vermonster and Crystallized Movements. Since then I've done more than a dozen album covers, for releases like Mazozma, Joe McPhee, Paul Flaherty/Sam Gas Can, and more... And I have done many of the Mystra release covers, and art for my solo albums.

I actually think of myself as more

of a visual artist than musician. I am basically always making art.

Yes, I've done a couple murals now – I'm looking for new spots for them if anyone has ideas. The newest one is at the Swanery in Gill, just over the river from Turners Falls.

MMM: And your forthcoming release on Feeding Tube, and the collab with Tucker Zimmerman?

JB: The Feeding Tube label has just reissued my newest solo album (!), and I'm really thankful to them. They also reissued another one of my solo LPs a few years back. I think they are doing some cool releases over there, which you should check out if you are into underground music. This release has new artwork, and a lyric sheet, too.

The next LP I'm involved with is this collaboration I did with Tucker Zimmerman. He lives in Belgium, so we sent recordings back and forth online. He is one of my all-time fave musicians from the past (and onward), and is criminally under appreciated – he is basically just known by a few record collector types. I met him around 2012 when I was over there, and he is such an amazing, great person, I was so glad we met.

I actually don't think I've been this excited about anything in a super long time. Anthony Pasquarosa, John Moloney, and Mary Lattimore are on the album, too. It should be out soon!

see M/M/M next page

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THEATER REVIEW

Bright Half Life Closes the Silverthorne Season

By ELLEN BLANCHETTE

GREENFIELD – The Silverthorne Theater Company's production of *Bright Half Life* by Tanya Barfield opened on Friday, December 3, for three performances in the Perch at Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center in Greenfield. Starring Kyle Boatwright and Katie Mack, the play is directed by Gina Kaufmann, professor of theater arts at UMass Amherst. Kaufmann previously directed the feminist comedy *The Revolutionists* for Silverthorne.

At its heart, this play is about two women and their relationship as it develops and evolves over the decades, reflecting the romance of its beginning and the issues they face as a gay couple. There are challenges and disagreements over life choices, and in dealing with family and forces in the world beyond their control. All of this gradually becomes clear but is presented in a unique and sometimes startling way that keeps the audience's attention riveted, if only in an effort to understand what they are watching.

The play opens with Vicky (Kyle Boatwright) and Erica (Katie Mack) bounding onto the stage in a scene that lasts about two minutes before a loud sound and bright light abruptly interrupt it, and everything changes. The stage has minimal sets with only a few benches and a platform, with a stark empty background. The actors move from sitting to standing, jumping, lying down on the platform that doubles as a bed, and so on.

Several other quick scenes with similar abrupt changes follow. Each time the action, mood, and language changes entirely to another time, a

different issue, or another feeling being expressed. They may be happy, romantic, getting to know each other one moment, and then arguing and stressed at some other time the next. There is no logic to the sequence of these scenes that appear in quick cuts. It's as if someone chopped the play into little pieces and rearranged them at will.

Gradually, the scenes get longer, and the actors circle back to earlier scenes and play them out a little further. The story of their romance starts to emerge. The challenges of workplace romance, of a lesbian relationship not approved by society, are gradually revealed. The story of a longtime relationship, even marriage, shows itself, along with the stress of the imbalance in their positions. Not all of this is clear. It continues to be an out of time, non-linear play that clings to the format above, allowing for revelations of feelings and personal stories of the individual characters.

The tensions become clearer over time as the couple marry, have children, and gradually move apart. At some point, Erica says, "I don't know who I am." Vicky doesn't know how to respond to this. The relationship moves towards divorce. Much of the fighting is over things that all couples face as their lives change, and this is no different.

While much of the time the actors are in what seems perpetual motion, whether joyous or arguing, there are a few moments of stillness. Scenes in the elevator offer an opportunity for reflection, and a chance for them to express their true feelings. Elevator music is playing, and they reach out their hands to each other. It is a moment of peace where we can see

they still love each other.

However complex and chaotic the form of this play may be, it is still a story of love, and the difficulties people face in a complicated world to hold onto what is important to them. Finding that peaceful moment gives us a glimpse of hope for Erica and Vicky, something to ponder as we look for purpose in our own lives.

In what must be a challenging play to perform, these two actors manage to give strong, quality performances, holding tight to the moods within each scene, maintaining the continuity and integrity of the story. It is impressive watching how well they stick to the moment, and shift without hesitation to the next, never slipping or stepping out of character.

Kyle Boatwright has been in previous Silverthorne productions, including *The Revolutionists* and the recent musical production, *A Broadway Cabaret*. Boatwright plays Vicky, a professional business woman working as a supervisor in what appears to be a corporation. Boatwright has a strong, dynamic presence onstage, with a wide emotional range that could be powerful given a wider opportunity to be expressed. She takes long strides, moves across the stage in a way that makes you watch, her skirt flowing out around her. She speaks with authority, her voice drawing attention, her words clear, powerful.

Katie Mack is an actor from New York City who has appeared in several Off-Broadway productions. She plays Erica, a young woman who is hired to work for Vicky, a position that initially puts them in an awkward situation but clearly this is



Kyle Boatwright (Vicky) and Katie Mack (Erica) in Silverthorne Theater Company's production of *Bright Half Life*.

quickly overcome by their attraction to each other. Mack is quick-moving and light on her feet as Erica. She jumps for joy naturally, and moves with grace and expresses anger and fear with passion. The two work well together as a team, their strengths complementing each other well.

It takes a lot of people to put on a show. Lucinda Kidder is the producer. John Iverson is the company's invaluable technical director and set designer, the lighting director is Billy Waisnor, and the sound

director is Wynn MacKenzie. All those backstage people deserve thanks for their hard work.

The production continues for two more performances, this Friday, December 10 and Saturday, December 11, at 7:30 p.m. The theater company offers this play in contrast to their usual holiday production, saying it is a "universal story of the power and importance of love in everyone's lives." For tickets and information, go to silverthorne-theater.org or call (413) 768-7414.

M/M/M from previous page

MMM: Would you like to talk about concerts at *Mystery Train*? And *Frozen Corn*?

JB: Sure. I have helped organize concerts at *Mystery Train* in Amherst for a long time now – so, so many very memorable and special events! Thanks to everyone who has played or helped. The last one was with the Shrinners, Gracious Calamity (check them out, they are so great), and *Frozen Corn*.

Frozen Corn is my banjo-based band. The other members are Tony Pasquarosa and Chris Carlton. We play what is known as "old-timey" music, but we have our own take on it. We are playing at the *Rendezvous* on December 18 with the great Allysen Callery, Post Moves, and Jeff Gallagher.

MMM: And the Western Mass music scene? New music in general? *Magical Turners Falls*?

JB: The scene in western mass seems epic and endless! I don't even know how to start with all of that stuff. I've lived out here for 25 years, and have set up so many shows, and played too... the best times.

And yeah, lots of great new music is still happening. I am normally one of those people who think everything was made better in the past, but seriously. So much is happening now! It's really good to stay open to all music. So much is happening right now as we speak ... in basements, small venues, bedrooms, on the street even....

Oh yes, and *Turners* really is a magic place. YES! It has cool history, lots of events, and there are lots of artists and other characters here. It also has its slow and sleepy side. And there's stuff like the amazing river, and the skate park.

MMM: What is your fave album right

now? And older stuff, and books?

JB: Well I've been way into this Donovan album *Neutronica*, engineered by the guy who worked with Scott Walker, Peter Walsh. It's D.L.'s strange entry into the '80s. Some songs are amazing. I hadn't heard it in a while, and yeah, the great songs on there are something. It has weird vibes, too.

I really think music changes as we grow older, but with all the childhood memories, too. And later there can be bigger perspectives and new layers. That can hit epically – Donovan is amazing, by the way, way beyond what most people realize.

I'm reading two books right now – I usually just read old stuff. *The Book of Ebenezer La Page* by Gerald Edwards, and *Shakey*, the Neil Young biography. I have read *Shakey* before, but has been a while ... still insane.

MMM: An artist or person who has been influential on your growth as a being, and seeing the world?

JB: Oh, that's a hard one. I think we all have so many influential folks in their lives. Some of my teachers, for sure; I wouldn't have made it through life without them. Like Ham Nelson, my great, eccentric high school writing teacher (he made all his kids watch *The Wall*), and Sharon Dunn in college, who still teaches, and is like a female Sun Ra.

Also my Grandmother, who was a deep artist, and my Mom, and dad too, who both helped me get started with my deep love of nature.

MMM: How about your cats – what do they enjoy listening to? Or do they prefer no music?

JB: I haven't noticed them react to music... ha ha. But I do spare them death metal and hip hop, etc. That stuff sounds better in the car, anyway.

MOVIE REVIEW

Old Henry (2021, dir. Potsy Ponciroli)

By SEAMUS TURNER-GLENNON

CHARLEMONT – There's no denying, really, that as a genre the Western is in fairly dire straits at the moment.

Granted, a small handful of truly great Westerns have been released here and there in recent years – *Bone Tomahawk*, *The Hateful Eight*, *The Sisters Brothers* – but it's pretty unanimously agreed that the genre has been on a fairly rapid decline, both commercially and artistically, since around the end of the early 1970s; there are quite simply fewer Westerns. In recent years, though, the state of the genre has been particularly rough; its output has become a realm for dull "feminist" critiques of a the perceived masculinity of a genre decades past its commercial peak and stagnant, formally inert lens-flair montages.

That's why it's easy, to some degree, to overrate something like *Old Henry*, the 2021 entry in the genre starring Tim Blake Nelson, whose previous genre credits include the titular singing cowboy in *The Ballad of Buster Scruggs*.

Old Henry is a sturdy, slow-burning work which strays away from modern trends of generic deconstruction (which, honestly, should have ended for the genre after Eastwood's untouchable *Unforgiven*) in favor of a real, honest, purely genre satisfaction in the tradition of Western greats like Budd Boetticher and John Sturges.

Nelson stars as Henry, a grizzled, stony-faced old farmer who, through an unfortunate series of circumstances, finds his family farm under siege by a group of ruthless outlaws. He's a natural for the part, of course: Nelson's been cast in countless historical dramas at this



point, if for no other reason than the simple fact that he has an extremely old-looking face. The now 57-year-old has had a sort of sternness and austerity to his appearance for decades now, and it's hard not to envision him in an Old West environment of some kind.

Old Henry isn't all just siege and survival. The plot takes a highly unexpected turn into revisionist history territory in its third act – which I'll let you experience for yourself – but it is an exceptionally simplistic movie in its intentions. Its interests lie in atmosphere and pacing and tension and an unabashed willingness to be capital-G Genre.

Old Henry isn't embarrassed to be a Western. Nor should it be.

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TV REVIEW

CMA Country Christmas 2021

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I love country music, and have seen the CMA Country Christmas special several times. I have seen the times it was hosted by Jennifer Nettles from Sugarland. She did a lovely rendition of “All I Want For Christmas” on the show, and a good duet with Idina Menzel, the singing voice of “Let It Go” in the movie *Frozen*. I am also sure I have seen it hosted at least once by Reba McEntire.

Eldredge did a nice job of singing “A Holly Jolly Christmas” one of the times. Lucy Hale turned out to be not just an actress, but can also sing very well – she did the song “Baby, Please Come Home for Christmas.” I also enjoyed hearing an individual named Mickey Guyton singing “Don’t You Want to Build a Snowman.”

Tim McGraw did “It Wasn’t His Child” on last year’s special, and did a reasonably good job singing the song. Also, last year a group called For King & Country did a rendition of “Little Drummer Boy.” They made the song sound very cool. The group works well with

country music. I say that because they have also done a duet with Dolly Parton that I have heard.

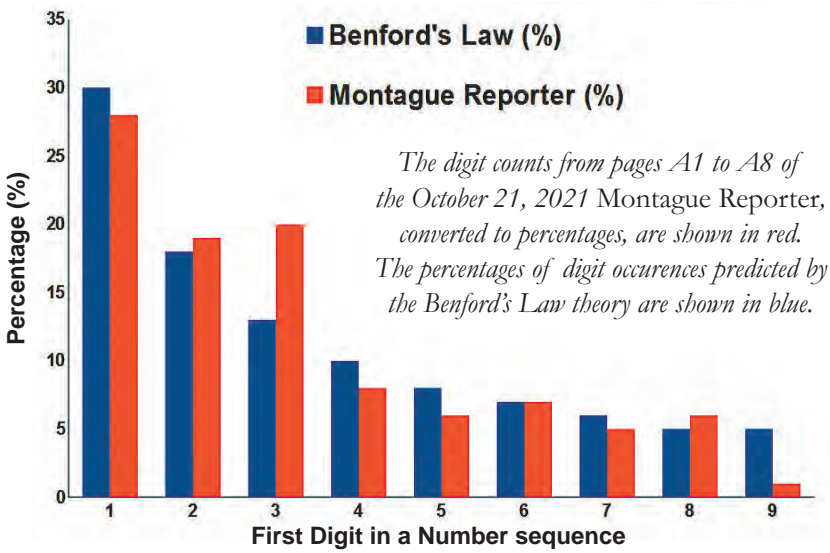
This year’s special was on November 29 on ABC, and was hosted by Carly Pearce and Gabby Barrett. My favorite parts were Lady Antebellum with a song called “Christmas Through Your Eyes,” Pearce singing “Silent Night,” and Carrie Underwood doing “Mary, Did You Know.”

“Mary, Did You Know” is a song I know very well, and have heard sung by several people. Some of them were country music people: Kathy Mattea, a duet between Wynonna Judd and Kenny Rogers, Rascal Flatts, and a group called Pentatonix. Wynonna and Kenny’s is still my favorite rendition of this song. My second is the one by Pentatonix, and my third is the one by Rascal Flatts.

Carly Pearce, Lady Antebellum, and Carrie Underwood were what I liked the best out of this year’s special. Pearce also did a good duet of the song “Sleigh Ride” with Gabby Barrett. I will probably watch it again next year, because it’s something I enjoy seeing repeatedly each year.

A CONTEST

Benford’s Law vs. the Reporter



By HANS HERDA

LEVERETT – Benford’s Law is a mathematical model approximating many real numerical data sets well, such as first digits of numbers in booklets of railroad time tables, eight pages in a newspaper (here 377 data points), or lengths of US rivers.

Cited are one *Montague Reporter* issue’s number’s first digit (1 through 9) occurrences are sufficient, and are compared to Benford’s Law first digit occurrences. (Phone numbers and month and year data do not follow Benford’s Law, and were omitted.)

The graph above shows that the Benford’s Law data and the *Montague Reporter* data are generally in good agreement.

There are notable disparities for digits 3 and 9. The considerable variation between some theoretical data and the real data is a feature of many such comparisons. Benford’s law is:

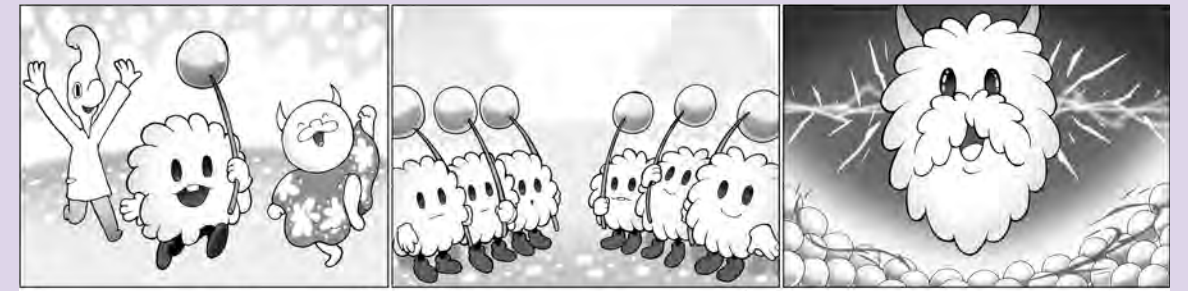
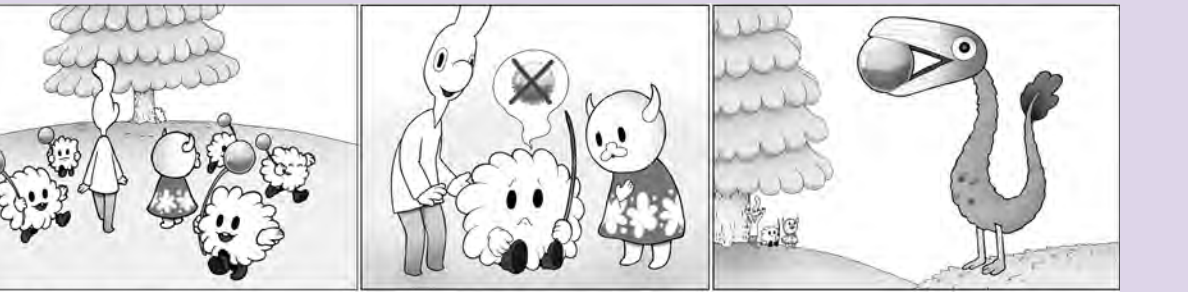
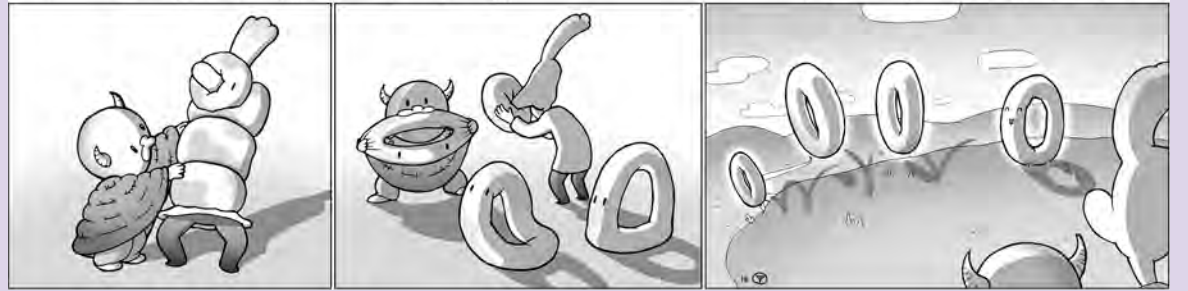
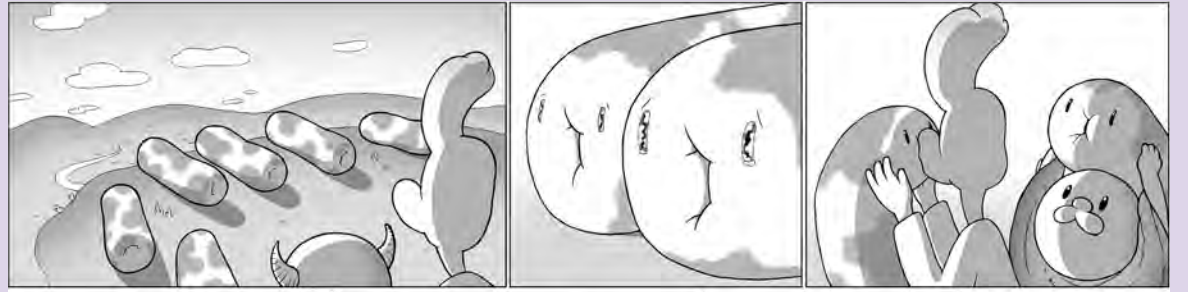
$$\text{chance}(d) = \log(1 + (1/d)) \text{ and } \sum_{d=1}^9 \log(1 + (1/d)) = 1 = 100\%.$$

Episode 4 of the Netflix TV show *Connected* deals with Benford’s Law, but does not mention notable disparities.

Hans Herda is a mathematics professor living in Leverett.

WEIRD HEALING by OPERTURA

The Children’s Page will return in January. In the meantime, enjoy these Weird Healing comics, which ran in our pages in early 2016. Opertura is currently based in Greenfield – check out opertura.org.



Montague Community Television News

Access the Power of Cable

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – MCTV has new meeting recordings up from the Montague selectboard, the Gill selectboard, and the Gill-Montague regional school committee.

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

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

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

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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, Moon Racer*, one more TBA. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Movie, *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946). Free. 7 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Danny Hescoock, Jr., Heath Lewis*. 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Ditrani Brothers, Moon Hollow, Lavedula*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *William Hooker Trio*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: *Kate Barry*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Olivia Nied*. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Sun Parade, Carinae, Gift, C. Moon, DJ Quills*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Whalom Park, The Tumbletoads*. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Kaleta & Super Yamba*. \$ 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12

Bishop's Lounge, Northampton:

Owsley's Owls. \$ 10 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: *Piebald, Her Head's On Fire*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Experimental Santa; Baby, Baby; DJ*

Heartballoon. \$ 8 p.m

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Heather Maloney*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Seven Mile Line*. \$ 8 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *The Scrooges*, Xmas-themed Stooges cover band. \$ 9 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Masala Jazz*. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18

Mount Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: *John Sheldon*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Pete Bernhard, Morganeve Swain* (Brown Bird, The Huntress and Holder of Hands). \$ 7:30 p.m.; *DJ Lucas, 22BB,*

Weird Dane, Kala. \$ 10 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Ye-men Blues, Midwood*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Allysen Callery, Post Moves, Frozen Corn*. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Nellie McKay*. \$ 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30

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

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Rubblebucket, Carinae*. \$ 9 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31

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

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Rubblebucket, Home Body*. \$ 9 p.m.

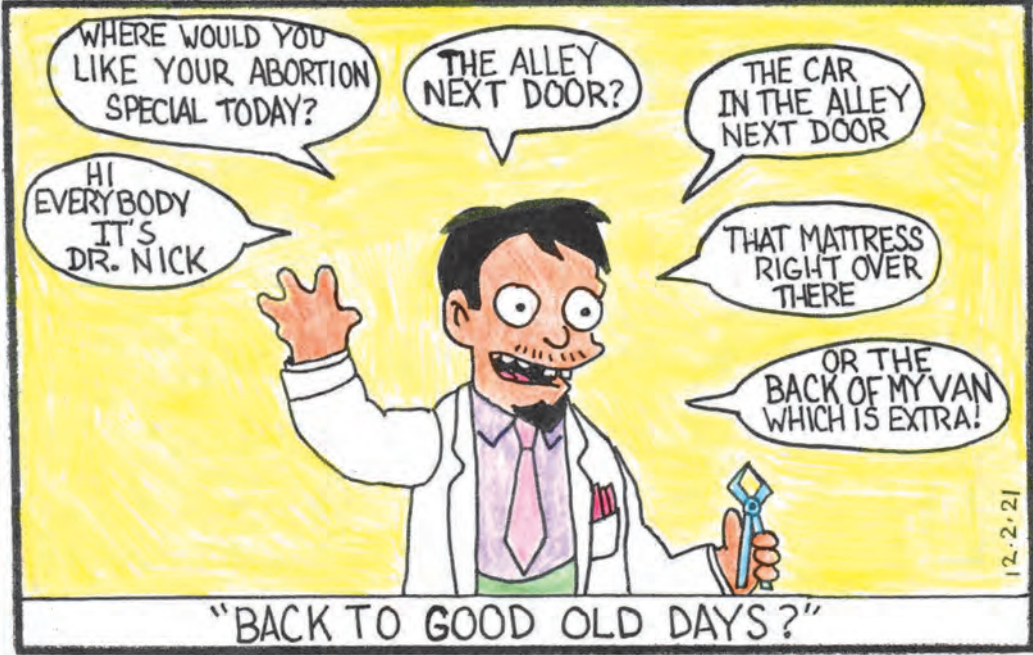


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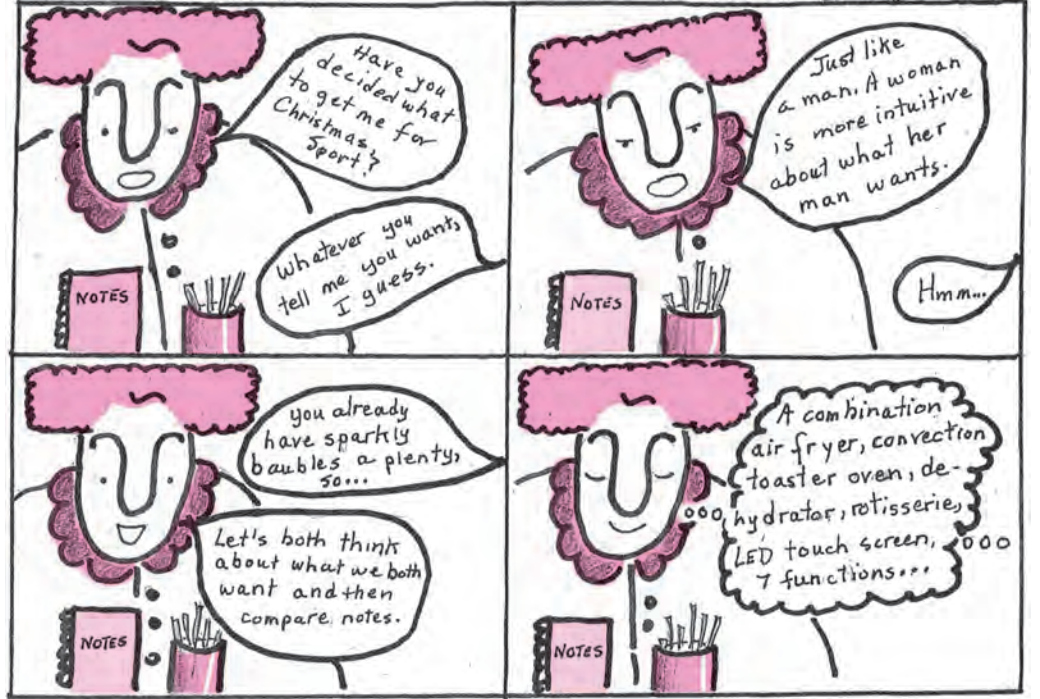
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HEARTFELT from page B1
the better your body will be served. If you had a choice between eating whole milk yogurt with a gorgeous layer of cream on top from the farm down the road, or any one of the dozens of low-fat, low-flavor, and low-nutritional value yogurts peddled by big corporations, which do you really think is the better choice to feed your body?

In my childhood we would buy corn and strawberries from a local farmer in summer, but I had no concept of where the rest of my food came from. It arrived in our home pre-packaged, canned, or frozen from the supermarket where my mother shopped. We did eat fresh food too, but feeding a family of six requires creativity and, often, processed foods that are cheap-

er and easier to obtain than fresh ingredients.

I grew up during the Betty Crocker era, so dinner was generally a casserole of some kind with a can of cream of chicken soup, frozen cubed vegetables served on the side, and an iceberg lettuce salad with quartered tomatoes in a simple vinaigrette. Blue cheese dressing was something we only ate in restaurants, and a roast for all six of us was a treat.

When I first moved to Franklin County I overheard a farmer talking about a load of meat from a recently slaughtered cow. I asked if I could purchase some of his beef and he sold me 75 pounds for \$250. The farmer literally pointed out a spot along the Connecticut River where the cows had spent their days. It was a marvel to eat meat from cows that were practically neighbors.

The hard truth is that food that is less processed, including organic, is more expensive because it's grown and produced in smaller quantities. In contrast, big corporations can offer a multitude of choices for low prices that undercut the bread baker vending at the farmers market.

The consumption of foods that do terrible things to our bodies has become the acceptable choice, and I wish it weren't so. I realize it takes some strategizing to make eating healthier foods a reality for many families. I know that food deserts – neighborhoods where fresh foods are not available – exist, but I think that with creativity and effort, anyone can improve their eating habits.

One way to bring fresh produce into the home for those with SNAP benefits is the Commonwealth's Healthy Incentive Program, or HIP, which rewards SNAP shoppers with extra monthly dollars when they purchase fruits and vegetables from approved vendors. SNAP benefits can also be used to pay for a weekly CSA farm share, and just like that, more families around the Commonwealth can



You may add squash or sweet potato to the recipe instead of eggs.

“EVERYTHING GOES” BISCOTTI

- ½ cup butter, softened or solid coconut oil
- ½ to 1 cup sugar or date sugar
- 2 eggs or ½ cup baked squash, pumpkin, or sweet potato
- 1 tsp. flavored extract
- 1½ cups flour + ¼ cup flax meal (or all flour)
- 1 tsp. baking powder (most are gluten-free)
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 cup chopped nuts and/or seeds
- 1 cup chopped dried fruit
- 1 cup chocolate chips or chunks



MANDESON PHOTOS

These three logs of baked dough are ready to be sliced into biscotti and returned to the oven to get crisped.

Preheat the oven to 325° and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Cream butter or oil with sugar, and add in eggs or other substitution and flavoring. Mix well.

Add in flour, baking powder, and salt; the mixture should be sticky. Add a tablespoon or two of water if too dry.

Add in nuts, fruits, and chocolate.

To make biscotti, divide the dough into two, and using your hands roll each one into a log and flatten down into a 9-by-3-inch mound. Bake side by side for 35 minutes.

If you are using squash or sweet potato, it may darken faster, so

check at 25 minutes and only bake another 10 minutes if needed.

Remove from the oven and slice with a serrated knife into 1-inch diagonal bars, spreading them apart on the sheet to cool for 20 minutes. Bake for another 25 minutes. Cool.

have access to local foods.

Here's a suggestion to change how you eat breakfast. Imagine that instead of buying that sugar-laden boxed cereal, you've set aside an hour every week or two to make up a batch of your own granola, or biscotti from the recipe below. You'll have breakfast at the ready for the next week, it will be full of the good things and flavors you personally enjoy, and you'll save yourself a few bucks by not buying the next box of Cap'n Crunch. Once you begin the cycle of homemade foods, you'll start to buy ingredients in bulk and save even more money.

You can find granola recipes galore online, but the basic premise is simply raw oats mixed with nuts, seeds and/or dried fruit, some

type of oil (coconut oil is good, nut butter will work, olive oil adds a savory flair), a sweetener such as honey or maple syrup, flavorings like cinnamon, cardamom or flavored extracts, and a slow, low bake in the oven until golden. Store in a tightly-sealed jar or Tupperware or freeze. You'll begin to perfect your quantities with each batch until you can make it by rote, using up less of your precious time.

This month I'm sharing my favorite breakfast recipe with you. The original was a cashew-cheri biscotti recipe in the *NY Times*, but I make them with substitutions. It takes me about 15 minutes from start to finish to get a batch of about two dozen in the oven. They are baked twice with a cooling down

period in between, so make sure you've planned for a longer baking cycle before making these.

I warn you, they are addictive. Note that they are still high in fat even though the sugar content is low. They should be eaten in moderation (spoken by your author through a mouthful of crumbs). If you see me around town, let me know how your granola or biscotti came out. I'd love to hear from you at troubleerinmandeson@gmail.com.

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



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