

The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JANUARY 20, 2022

Civic Leader Langknecht Mourned By Community

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE – Remembrances poured in to the Reporter office this week following the unexpected death on Saturday of Michael Langknecht, 62, a local woodworker, husband, father, grandfather, and civic leader.

Langknecht, a transplant from New Jersey by way of New York City, moved to Montague in the 1990s and immersed himself in the civic life of the town. Over the last quarter-century his involvement in local non-profits and the regional school district – where he would ultimately serve 17 years as a school committee member – made him a beloved, if at times controversial, fixture of the local landscape.

An actor by training, Langknecht made cabinets, decorative mirrors, and more for Hotsapp Woodworks, the business he co-owned with his wife Stacey. In 1997 he and fellow craft producers, including the woodworker Spencer Peterman, founded a Critical Mass: Arts & Crafts of Western Mass, operating out of a shared Third Street building with a mission “to assist in the long term economic growth and revitalization of communities and craft, art and other home-based, farm-based micro-enterprises” in the region.

Langknecht became a leader in grassroots efforts to rebuild downtown Turners Falls, joining the board of the Brick House Community Resource Center in 1999 and the then-struggling Montague Com-



Local craftsman Mike Langknecht was a fixture in town and school politics and community life for decades.

munity Cable (MCCI) in 2000.

The Brick House moved its operations into the firehouse owned by the cable-access group next to Langknecht and Peterman’s shop. After MCCI lost stewardship of the local cable station, it launched the Montague Reporter in the building in 2002, and the Brick House took over the mortgage in 2003. It was a hub of social engagement.

“When we first moved our offices next door to his workshop and our bathroom didn’t work during the winter, Mike welcomed us daily, for months,” Jared Libby, former operations director at the Brick House, remembered. “A small act, but a boldly communal one. Then he was really put on the spot when we needed hosts for our public access TV see LANGKNECHT page A8

Activists Make Urgent Call For Shelter Beds, Rental Aid

By SARAH ROBERTSON

GREENFIELD – Sub-freezing temperatures and snow are forecast through next week for Franklin County, and the area’s only overnight shelter is at capacity. While various measures exist to provide relief to individuals sleeping outdoors, local activists are calling for more to be done to address what some call a crisis of housing and human welfare.

“Many people that are on our waitlist are living with friends, family – the phrase is ‘couch surfing’ – doubled up, but there are a small portion on the waitlist that are living rough,” ServiceNet program director Erin Forbrush said at a meeting last Thursday convened by the Franklin County Opioid Task Force. “So that’s where we put our priority.... As a shelter provider, this is an issue

we deal with every single winter.”

ServiceNet operates the shelter on Wells Street in Greenfield, currently at capacity with 30 people staying there each night. Conway activist Mary McClintock asked Forbrush why the agency has not increased the number of shelter beds they offer, if there have not been enough in Franklin County for many years.

“I certainly echo the need to have more beds,” Forbrush said. “It’s just a matter of being able to get the funding, and the location, and going through all the other processes when you find the location.” Forbrush noted that it took ServiceNet more than three years to secure the Wells Street location, and 10 additional beds were added at the beginning of the pandemic.

“I know there has been money to see SHELTER page A2

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD Frustrations In Leverett Over Amherst District Budget

By GEORGE BRACE

Discussion at Leverett’s selectboard meeting Tuesday centered on difficulties in coming up with a budget agreement for the Amherst-Pelham regional school district, of which Leverett is a member along with Amherst, Pelham, and Shutesbury. Leverett has a voice in a budget process which selectboard members characterized as frustrating and flawed, and they expressed concerns about lower-quality education for students in the district, or inequitable financial burden among the towns.

Following a “four-town meeting” last weekend for town officials to begin budget discussions, Leverett’s selectboard deliberated on problems they saw with the process, and efforts that might be undertaken to come up with better results.

At issue for the board was the requirement that if all four towns can’t agree on the method for assessing members’ contributions, a statutory method kicks in by default under state law. Towns have the ability to use an “alternative assessment see LEVERETT page A7

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD Board Reviews Growth Plans In Several Town Departments

By JEFF SINGLETON

On Tuesday night the Montague selectboard began tackling the process of reviewing the town operating budget for the coming fiscal year before passing it on to the town finance committee. This means no joint Wednesday meetings with the fin com, but a heavy workload in January, and perhaps February.

As a result, the board spent nearly two hours on department budgets at the meeting, but failed to discuss two of the most important ones – police and selectboard. These were pushed forward to an additional budget meeting next Tuesday.

Before jumping into budget requests from departments proposing personnel increases, town administrator Steve Ellis presented a quick review of Montague’s revenue and budget estimates for the coming fiscal year. Ellis said these projections would be “finalized” next week.

Health Department

The health department requested one of the largest increases, from \$160,324 this fiscal year to a proposed \$194,875 in FY’23, an increase of 22%. Most of this is accounted for by an expansion of the hours of the town nurse from 10 to 17 per week, and an increase in pay to \$58 per hour. The budget proposal

see MONTAGUE page A7

Great Hall Show Looks Back At the Northfield Chateau



Local sculptor Jack Nelson shows off his ceramic scale model of the long-demolished Northfield Chateau, on view at the Discovery Center.

By ANNE HARDING and SHEILA DAMKOEHLER

TURNERS FALLS – Jack Nelson’s incredible, ceramic architectural model of the famed Northfield Chateau is on display at the Great Falls Discovery Center until the end of February.

The Chateau was built by Francis Robert Schell and his wife Mary, a wealthy New York couple who decided to spend summers in Northfield and then built a 100-plus room mansion to stay in. The Schells used it seasonally until Mr Schell’s death in 1928, when the palatial estate was sold and used for a variety of purposes until it was torn down in the 1960s.

The building became a fascination for Nelson when he settled in Northfield in the late 1980s, and his research led him into a project that culminated in the creation of this large, detailed model. Constructed in 1993, the model had its debut appearance at the Northfield Elementary School, then traveled to the Franklin County Fair, then the Big E, and later spent six weeks in the main rotunda of the Massachusetts State House.

Visitors to the exhibit at the

Great Hall will see a multitude of Chateau ephemera, information about its architect, Bruce Price, and some other more fanciful ceramic castle pieces sculpted by Nelson. The Chateau exhibit will be a trip down memory lane for some visitors, and an eye-opening view of years gone by for others.

A Wrong Turn

Nelson has been a painter, sculptor and potter for over 50 years and currently resides in Turners Falls. In an interview with the Montague Reporter ten years ago, he told reporter Anne Harding that he and his wife had made “an excellent wrong turn that changed our lives. We ended up in Northfield on our way to Winchendon from the Boston area.”

This week we learned more details of the wrong turn that turned out to be a major life change for Nelson and his wife, Eileen Dowd. The fateful trip took place in 1987 when the couple passed by a small cottage slated for demolition on Warwick Road in Northfield. There followed a U-turn, a conversation with Ken Miller, and the impulsive purchase of 214 Warwick Road!

see CHATEAU page A5

High School Sports Update: Some Winter Win Streaks

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – This week, the Patriots were booted out of the playoffs, the Turners Falls girl basketballers evened the score with Franklin Tech and extended their win streak to five, the Tech wrestlers won another match, and I emerged from isolation.

I finally got permission to return

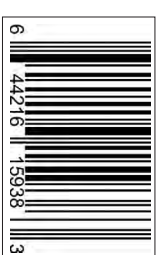
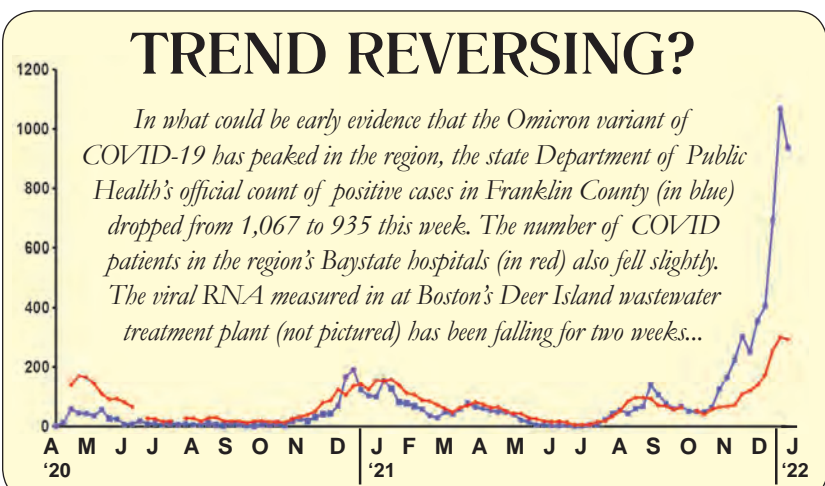
to the world this week after a forced quarantine. For the past few weeks I had been reduced to watching professional sports. I was not impressed by the conduct of the players, or the fans – Antonio Brown threw a tantrum on live TV, and in Dallas, the fans threw garbage at the officials.

Luckily, I finally made it to a high school game on Tuesday,

see SPORTS page B3



Turners’ Madison Liimatani signals as Abby Holloway looks to the net. FCPS players Jillian Crowningshield, Kendra Campbell, and Lea Chapman close in.



We Had To Really Squish

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The Montague Reporter

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SHELTER from page A1

put people in hotel rooms that hasn't been used," McClintock said. "What I hear is that if you go to the shelter and there isn't room, you'll get put someplace – that's what I hear from the shelter providers, and I trust they're not lying.... But what I hear on the streets is, that doesn't really happen."

When there is no room at the shelter, ServiceNet's policy is to connect people with motel rooms, paid for either by federal vouchers or other social service organizations. The Interfaith Council of Franklin County recently agreed to help cover the cost, according to member Amy Clarke, a responsibility that has historically fallen to the Salvation Army.

"We became aware at the end of December that the Salvation Army was also out of funds, so we were asked if we would pay for motel rooms at that point, and the Salvation Army would make the reservation because they get a good rate," Clarke said at Thursday's meeting. "But nobody was put up at the end of the month at the motel."

Clarke said she urged the Salvation Army to continue the program into 2022, but that as of last Thursday they hadn't paid for any stays.

"I feel terrible about it," Clarke said. "People are giving us money, because they're so concerned about people being out in the cold."

The Emergency Housing Voucher program, a federal program established under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), can also cover temporary hotel stays. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development website, the Franklin County Regional Housing Authority (FCRHRA) has received 15 such vouchers, and has issued six.

Stretched Thin

Forbrush said staffing issues are affecting ServiceNet's ability to meet the community's needs. The agency is currently advertising for dozens of positions in Hampshire and Franklin counties, including a full-time Shelter Housing Specialist with an annual salary up to \$35,000 and a part-time Direct Care Residential Counselor at \$15.75 per hour.

Pamela Schwartz, director of the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness, cited a "crisis" in salary levels at housing organizations statewide. "Until the state pays more, and raises its rates," Schwartz said, "people are looking down a very dark tunnel of not having the support and assistance that's necessary."

Some attendees asked in the remote meeting's chat room about immediate assistance for people sleeping outside, including someone who was pregnant. Schwartz said

that pregnant women are eligible for emergency assistance shelter administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development. For unhoused people with COVID-19, an isolation and recovery site was recently reopened at Quality Inn in Northampton; the rooms can be accessed via shelter providers.

"We're at an amazing time right now, in terms of dollars going into housing," said Jay Levy, regional manager of Eliot Community Human Services, Inc. "I'd be hopeful that this is the right time, with the pandemic and everything else going on, to turn this crisis into a great opportunity to reach these other regions."

Levy said that Eliot Services is stretched thin helping people in Greenfield and Turners Falls, with just one employee in Franklin County, and that there are currently no shelters in the North Quabbin area.

"There have been times when we've relocated a person from that area to places that are more resource-rich," Levy said. "But sometimes it's very, very difficult. Just to travel there and travel back takes time, and when we get there, we don't always find the person we're looking for."

Cate Woolner, one of several community members who organized a vigil outside the shuttered Farren Care Center in Montague City last month, called on leaders of the social-service agencies at the meeting to act immediately. "The fact that 100 community members showed up on such short notice on Christmas Eve to demand answers – both about the Farren, and to demand an emergency warming space right now – speaks to the community's urgent concern," Woolner said.

"If anyone freezes this winter for lack of available warming space, it will be on each of us," she added. "It's time to end the hand-wringing."

Shrinking Funds

Several attendees at Thursday's meeting cited a projection by experts that funding for housing assistance programs is projected to run out between April and May, raising fears that a long-postponed eviction crisis could push renters and homeowners onto the streets.

Of the roughly \$800 million originally allocated to Massachusetts rental aid during the pandemic, \$460.8 million has been spent so far, according to the state Eviction Diversion Initiative Dashboard. Advocates are pushing the legislature to use some of the \$2.3 billion in unassigned ARPA funds to keep the programs in operation beyond that.

To address issues of inequity exacerbated by the pandemic, housing advocates are urging the legislature



Paul Daley delivers boxes of food stuff donated by Walmart at the old Wendell town hall on a recent cold, snowy day. The Good Neighbors Food Pantry distributes food on Sundays to residents from New Salem and Wendell. They can be reached at (978) 544-3775.

to pass the COVID-19 Housing Equity Bill, which would require landlords to engage with assistance programs prior to filing for evictions, and provides protections for homeowners.

Black and Latino populations are overrepresented in the state's homeless population and eviction cases, including in western Massachusetts, said Keleigh Pereira, program director for the Three County Continuum of Care.

"The systemic issues of wealth disparity, and criminally unjust resource distribution, has really brought into the light an enormous racial and ethnic disproportionality," Pereira said. "The physical and mental health needs of this vulnerable population were high before the pandemic, and certainly we're seeing the ways that the systems that are meant to support them were not prepared to respond to this crisis."

"There is no way for us to track the informal evictions that go on behind the scenes," said Rose Webster-Smith, program director of Springfield No One Leaves, an advocacy group staffed by people who have experienced eviction or foreclosure, helping others in western Massachusetts navigate housing insecurity.

"There are no protections at all right now for people facing foreclosure," Webster-Smith added. "You can apply for funds... but the federal government has not approved the Massachusetts plan yet, so the money is technically not here yet. You can apply for when the money does get here, whenever that happens."

Webster-Smith told the *Reporter* an estimated 28,000 homeowners are in severe default, not counting those who entered forbearance agreements at the start of the pandemic.

"Those people cannot get assistance from the Homeowners Assistance Fund, because they only will help... owners whose defaults occurred after January 2020," she said.

The Homeowners Assistance Fund (HAF) is a federally-funded program administered by a consortium of state housing and finance de-

Letter to the Editors Clear the Sidewalks!

This is a plea to owners in Montague Center who have sidewalks. I know these past few storms have been very difficult, and especially Monday's snow/rain/ice. But I use the sidewalks at least twice a day walking my beast.

I would *truly* appreciate those owners scattering their choice on the ice either sand with salt (there's a pile in the parking lot next to the field for residents) or straight salt (not so great for the environment).

Generally, if you could, shovel the snow or find someone who could do it for you. It was scary walking on ice, and on frozen snow/ice, and at times I had to walk on the road. Plus, think of those less able to walk and unsteady on their feet trying to deal with it.

I thank you for your consideration. Warm regards,

Trish Mailler
Montague Center

partments. Webster-Smith said that Way Finders, the counseling agency helping homeowners process applications in the region, is receiving over 100 applications a day, with a six- to eight-week processing period.

Jumping Through Hoops

Recent changes to the way the state processes applications for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) have also made it harder for some tenants to receive benefits. Applicants must be behind on rent, instead of just at risk of falling behind, to apply; the maximum benefit has been reduced from \$10,000 to \$7,000; and households can no longer automatically reapply.

"It was not meant to handle this volume at all, whatsoever," said Webster-Smith. "If you don't know how to fill out that application, if you're not technically savvy, the chances of you completing that application are slim to none, because in the new central application you cannot save. Every time you start and you don't finish, you have to go back and restart."

In Franklin County, many housing assistance applications are handled by the FCRHRA.

"Demand has increased over the last few weeks, we are approving

over 25 applications a week, and currently processing applications that were submitted in the last week of November," executive director Gina Govoni told the *Reporter*. "We are still recruiting staff to assist with this temporarily, and we have staff available in Orange as well to assist clients who cannot apply online or make it to Turners."

According to Govoni, Massachusetts started diverting all RAFT applications to the HAF program last month, which "has caused some confusion among homeowners facing foreclosure."

"We remain concerned about homeowners who are falling through the cracks, either because they have non-mortgage delinquencies (most often, utilities) or are not far enough behind to qualify," she wrote. "There is no longer a way for these folks to access the RAFT program online."

"We are extremely nervous there is another crash coming in the market," Webster-Smith told the *Reporter*. "Western Mass never recovered from the first one, so it's going to be very, very hard for us to recover from the second one.... Until we go back and change the systemic issues that housing is built on, we are never going to truly have housing as a human right."

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LOCAL BRIEFS

LARKIN+ROSS ILLUSTRATION

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

¿Vives en Franklin County y hablas español? Want to practice your Spanish language skills, or speak Spanish with native speakers? Puede encontrarnos afuera en Hope Street al mediodía.

Come share a meal with other Spanish speakers outside Stone Soup Café this Saturday, January 22, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. ¡Ven a decir “Hola”! Email estergonzmar@gmail.com with any questions.

The Franklin Regional Transit Authority is **looking for bus drivers, van drivers, and dispatchers.** All employees are offered a 401k with employer match, paid holidays, personal time and sick time. Full-time staff receive health benefits, vacation time, life insurance, and short-term disability.

They are holding a virtual recruitment next Wednesday, January 26 at 10 a.m. To register for this online event, visit the job fairs and recruitment events page on www.masshirefhcareers.org.

The Athol Bird and Nature Club seeks someone to take in a **large, extremely heavy Newtonian tele-**

scope built in the 1950s by Brad Bingham, an inventor and amateur astronomer from Athol who left it to the Club in his will when he died in 1972.

The telescope weighs over 250 pounds. It has been in storage for 30 years, and the owner of the residence where it is stored would like it removed. The mirror is eight inches and the instrument is mounted on a base 48 inches long and 32 inches wide. It is free to a good home somewhere – hopefully in a place without a lot of light pollution to contend with!

For images and additional information, contact Max MacPhee at commustar@gmail.com.

The Deerfield Valley Art Association is **seeking entries for a student art exhibit** at Fiddleheads Gallery, 105 Main Street, Northfield on February 25 through 27 and March 4 through 6.

“Students do not need to be especially talented in art techniques; everyone should make and enjoy art!” writes the organization. The exhibit is open to public, private, and home-schooled students in grades 1 through 12 who are residents of Franklin County. All media are welcome; family-friendly

content a must.

Each student may submit up to three pieces of any size, and may sell their work for \$5 for grades 1 through 5, and \$10 for grades 6 through 12, or choose not to sell it. Contact Marge Anderson at margedvaa@gmail.com for more information. The deadline is February 2.

The LAVA Center hosts an **online performance by hip-hop storyteller Marlon Carey** on Monday, January 31 at 7 p.m. The press release says that “Carey, a.k.a. Inphynit, will perform a live set of new and classic material, that delves into his Jamaican immigrant background, growing up in a single parent home in Brooklyn, NY during the crack era, to being a father of three and balancing his art with his family life during the last two years of the pandemic.”

The event is on Zoom; to register, click on the calendar event at www.localaccess.org.

The **powerful documentary A Reckoning in Boston**, about the lives of two Clemente Course students, is available for streaming for free for 30 days at www.pbs.org after premiering on WGBH on Martin Luther King Day.

“Directed by James Rutenbeck, *A Reckoning in Boston* begins in the classroom of the Dorchester Clemente Course and follows two students, Kafi Dixon and Carl Chandler, as they navigate the violence, racism, and gentrification that threaten their place in the city. The Clemente Course is taught in 34 sites across the US to those who have experienced homelessness, transitioned out

of incarceration or faced barriers to a college education.”

Over time, the filmmaker is “forced to come to terms with a flawed film premise and his own complicity in racist structures.” The subjects become collaborators and producers, and all three “arrive at surprising new places in their lives.” Learn more at www.areckoningin-boston.com and watch it online now through February 17.

Greenfield Garden Cinemas announces an unusual screening: Harry Houdini plays an Arctic explorer frozen in ice for 100 years in 1922’s *The Man from Beyond*. The silent adventure movie will be **screened with live music** at the 361 Main Street cinema as part of the annual Greenfield Winter Carnival at 6 p.m. on Saturday, February 5. Tickets and more information are available at www.gardencinemas.net.

Got **medical and social questions about COVID?** The Nerdy Girls offer a compendium of online COVID information at www.dearpandemic.org.

“We are an interdisciplinary all-woman team of researchers and clinicians with expertise including nursing, mental health, demography, health policy/economics, and epidemiology,” they write. “Our mission is to educate and empower individuals to successfully navigate the COVID-19 information overwhelm. We provide credible, curated, and timely information about the pandemic.”

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

ELDERLY CAREGIVER NEEDED IN LEVERETT

Looking for a dedicated and reliable professional caregiver up to 20 hours per week for my elderly father. Duties to include: making meals, support personal hygiene, light housekeeping, providing company and overall support. References and proof of COVID vaccinations and booster required and willing to follow COVID safety precautions. Hours can vary. Hourly rate plus bonuses. Please call or text Jenny at (413) 687-5667.

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OP ED

Coverage Focused on Soapboxes, Not Science

By TANYA CUSHMAN

LEVERETT – For the past year, I’ve attended every Leverett Conservation Commission meeting for the Friends of Leverett Pond’s (FLP) Notice of Intent (NOI) to manage the pond with the best techniques possible. Managing a pond for nuisance and invasive plants is a complicated issue. I’m sure it’s difficult to report on.

Every time I read the article written after a meeting, I’ve wanted to write the editor to explain something further, to correct, to offer evidence. I have held myself back as I keep hoping that truth, fair reporting, common sense and more factual research and knowledge will prevail.

Sadly, the January 13 article on last week’s final public hearing on pond management might have been the worst. Instead of reporting on the full hearing itself, the reporter chose to highlight the two long opinion pieces that framed the more factual parts of the meeting. In fact, the article, with just a few asides, might as well have been titled “Anti-FLP Opinions on Leverett Pond.”

At the beginning of the meeting, a resident was allowed to read her letter to the ConComm because she had to be elsewhere. This letter was an opinion piece against the NOI, signed by this resident and other, unnamed, people. Besides the usual fallacy *ad hominem* that has been used time and again – that the argument for managing invasive and nuisance vegetation on the pond is no good because of the people who are doing so – she also brought up multiple issues that have been clarified or rebutted throughout the 15 months of these hearings. And this letter was long – probably about 10 minutes of uninterrupted air time. But fine – it was a public comment on the NOI.

However, basing a major part of the article on these comments and treating them as what the meeting was about was not.

After this resident had her say, the members of the commission asked questions of FLP and their wetland scientists. For some reason, most of this part of the meeting was omitted by the reporter. Many specific questions were asked and answered.

Much of this information would have been useful to an interested readership: that even with this NOI approved, FLP needs to come again to the ConComm with a proposal any year they would like to use specific pond management techniques; that every year FLP gives the ConComm an annual report on how things are going; that the use of a limited three-foot drawdown is being requested as a management tool because it is an effective non-herbicide management tool; that this proposed drawdown is a technique allowed under the DEP’s Generic Environmental Impact Report, and FLP will provide the ConComm with a detailed plan in advance of any drawdown; that the very effective, most recently used herbicide does not need to be used annually; that the Order of Conditions written by the commission can specify certain requirements, etc.

And then FLP requested that the hearing be closed; 15 months’ worth of information had been provided, and it seemed about time for the ConComm to work out how to craft their Order of Conditions or to deny the application.

Immediately after the public hearing was closed and the public and applicants could no longer speak, could no longer clarify or rebut anything, one member of the commission requested to speak. Again, in a very long opinion piece that seemed cleverly and almost unethically timed, he rehashed points that had been clarified or explained previously in the meeting or in the past 15 months.

In my opinion, this long oration on everything wrong with the NOI and with FLP sounded like it could have been written at the beginning of the hearing, back in October 2020. It was as if the commission member had not heard or learned anything in all these months despite having been provided considerable data that illustrate FLP’s understanding of current ecological circumstances and that demonstrates milfoil’s damaging effects, particularly on dissolved oxygen availability.

He was still showing disdain for the idea of managing invasive plants at all and for those

who want the pond to continue on as it is, as an open-water pond. He also made statements that questioned the findings of the wetland scientists and that questioned facts of pond ecology. He stated as fact his view of issues that have been explored multiple times, bad-mouthed those living on the pond, offered outright lies, and appeared, in my opinion again, to believe that he was in charge of creating the law, not implementing it.

Sadly, the reporter used this opinion piece as the second part of the meeting that was worth reporting on.

In the past year, I have been studying pond ecology, aquatic plants, and the Wetland Protection Act. I have attended Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissioners (MACC) workshops, got a certificate in invasive plants from UMass, attended pesticide trainings, and read many of the Massachusetts DEP publications about aquatic invasives and the allowed and best practices for pond management. I have been thinking deeply about the issue of managing invasive plants in Leverett Pond. It is not an easy subject.

And in the past six years, I have studied milfoil from my property abutting the pond. Aquatic invasive plants are pernicious. All invasives are – I know from spending the past 15 years trying to manually remove upland invasives from an area much smaller than Leverett Pond. However, aquatic invasives have characteristics and a location that make them even more difficult to manage.

And having tried to pull milfoil out by the roots and having seen how fast it can colonize and recolonize an area, I do not believe it is possible to keep Leverett Pond a diverse, accessible and open body of water without using the management tools proposed by FLP, tools that are allowed by law.

I write this letter a little late in the application process, but I’d like to suggest that some balance is needed while reporting on these meetings.

Tanya Cushman lives in Leverett.

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OP ED

The Farren: Cause for a Pause

By LILITH WOLINSKY

MONTAGUE CITY – The topic of what to do with the old Farren Hospital, comprised of a historic building and a more modern wing, has consumed the attention of many local preservationists and homeless advocates in recent months.

The current owners of the Farren are a large, multi-billion dollar “nonprofit Catholic health system” which operates 142 hospitals nationwide. They negotiated terms of closure for the Farren that included a “redevelopment study in partnership with the Town of Montague,” but have now said that the unilateral facility assessment they conducted instead cannot be released to the public related to “liability” concerns and for “proprietary” reasons.

After not having followed through on their agreement – no joint study was conducted, nor has a single reuse option been presented – they wish to proceed with a fast-tracked demolition of this much-beloved building.

At last week’s selectboard meeting, town administrator Steve Ellis stated that Trinity is seeking a “fairly aggressive time table” for their demolition, and that barring “an incompetent or non-code compliant” plan to the town, the town would have no recourse but to allow Trinity to proceed with demolition. While he stated this as fact, it is unclear whether the town has, in fact, explored every option available to them, given that Trinity has clearly not met the “required” obligations (per Senator Jo Comerford at the March 22, 2021 Montague selectboard meeting) of their Farren closure plan.

Town leaders are pleading that their hands are tied, but one can surmise that their passivity might in fact be fueled by false equivalences which hold the potential for a redeveloped Farren as limited,

based on the negative outcomes that occurred with the Railroad Salvage and Strathmore properties. While a concern, these situations are not the same. In a May 28, 2021 letter submitted to the Montague selectboard on this topic, Trinity expressed that they “have no intention of abandoning the property.”

Additional options for dealing with this situation would seem to include putting a pause on a demolition permit while seeking legal counsel which thoroughly reviews related case law, and simultaneously appraising state Health and Human Services secretary Marylou Sudders’ office of Trinity’s current stance – as Senator Comerford also stated, at the above mentioned meeting, “Sudders wants to be notified if [Trinity] does not follow through.”

While Montague is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan, the existing one from 1999 prioritizes historic preservation, and clearly states, “Preserve and enhance existing historic buildings to maintain the town’s character.” It seems reasonable, within this well-established context, for the town to put a pause on the demolition permit while re-use information is sought, in accordance with the terms of Trinity’s closure agreement.

In the letter from Trinity mentioned above, the company stated that if demolition of the Farren is forthcoming, “... we will want to explore any possible assistance in covering those costs, whether from grants or the trusts that have supported the property since inception...”

According to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, if there is any state or federal involvement through funding, permitting or licensing, the project must be reviewed by that Commission. This review, for impacts to historic and archeological properties, is trig-

gered “by the nature of the agency involved, not whether a property is listed on a State or National Register.” Montague town leaders should also be able to request a demolition pause while questions related to funding are carefully delineated, and a review is conducted, if required.

Additionally, at last week’s selectboard meeting, member Matt Lord proposed “tabling any further communication with [Trinity] until we can have the conversation with the community about what it is the community wants.”

While I’m sure Matt had good intentions, this proposal is in direct opposition to the multiple requests made by community members, myself included, which have precisely and repeatedly requested data about the condition of the Farren prior to making plans to demolish it, or in fact to do anything else with it. I am not sure I understand the value in having a community session to speculate about the Farren’s future, although this meeting is apparently being planned.

Complicating matters further, town planner Walter Ramsey has been directed to organize this public discussion. While Walter demonstrates inherent gifts as town planner, he also has biases – as all humans do – and has not been shy about expressing his support for a seven-acre parcel of unencumbered land, while simultaneously focusing on the downsides of preservation.

If the town is truly committed to having this “cart-before-the-horse” community discussion, it makes sense for it to be facilitated by a neutral party.

Montague town leadership has chosen to focus on the negative possibilities related to preserving the Farren, but there are also many potential benefits to preserving this structure, for both Montague City and Turners Falls. Preserving

historic buildings has often been the impetus for revitalization, and no village of Montague needs this more than Montague City, which has been blighted for decades.

Property values tend to be higher in areas where historic preservation is in play, foreclosure rates tend to be lower, and historic buildings and districts attract creative, knowledge-based, and resilient businesses. Millennials, that illusive and oh-so desirable demographic, have shown strong preferences for living and working in historic buildings and districts, and attracting them should be a development priority for the sustainability of this community.

Environmentally, even the greenest new building takes decades “to recoup the negative climate change impacts of construction,” according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation. When a modest home is demolished, 62.5 tons of waste is sent to the landfill, the amount a single person would otherwise generate in almost 80 years. That waste would be multiplied many times over for a building the size of the Farren. And, surprisingly, buildings constructed over 70 years ago tend to use less energy than many buildings constructed more recently.

For all of these reasons, please join me in contacting town leaders – Steve Ellis, Rich Kuklewicz, and our new building inspector, William Ketchen – and reaching out to Marylou Sudders, Jo Comerford, and Rep. Natalie Blais to insist that a demolition pause be put in place while the above concerns are resolved. This building has survived for 120 years, and once gone, it can never be replaced. No compelling reason has been established as to why it needs to be demolished so urgently.

Lilith Wolinsky is a founding member of the Montague City Improvement Association.

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

New Challenge: Purchasing & Distributing Test Kits

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard has started meeting weekly instead of biweekly to deal with the recent dramatic increase in COVID-19 infections. As of January 14, Wendell has had 51 official cases since the pandemic was declared; seven were new cases in 2022.

Board of health chair Barbara Craddock joined the selectboard’s January 12 meeting to discuss slowing the spread. The Baker administration has distributed 26 million home COVID test kits to the 102 towns with the highest percentage of families living below the poverty level.

Selectboard member Gillian Budine said the guidelines for distribution are a bit confusing: “to constituents, but not to the general public.” Craddock said residents can get them, but they are not to be sold to an outside agency.

Finance committee chair and acting coordinator Doug Tanner said Leverett has asked for 50 of Wendell’s test kits.

The home antigen tests are less reliable than the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests that are ad-

ministered in testing centers, which take a day or more to get results to the user, but Craddock said that a pair of negative home tests coupled with an absence of symptoms is a reassurance of no likely COVID infection. Limiting contact with other people and wearing masks is the best protection.

Current prices for the home tests vary from \$10 to \$19 per two-test kit. Selectboard member Laurie DiDonato said the town has American Rescue Plan (ARPA) money in an account, but Craddock said the paperwork needed to allow the use of that money is impressive.

“What if we commit to buying 500 kits [for residents]?” Budine asked, and selectboard chair Dan Keller said he was ready to authorize Craddock to buy them for the town. Craddock said she did not want to make that purchase alone, but was willing to look for the best ways for Wendell to buy kits, and would return to the next meeting with a recommendation.

Erving distributes test kits through the school and the senior/community center. In Wendell, Good Neighbors worked well distributing test kits, but Good Neighbors serves New Sa-

lem residents also and not all Wendell families go to Good Neighbors.

Newly-hired town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad is scheduled to start work January 24. There is hope that he will be able to sort out CARES Act and ARPA restrictions and requirements.

Fire & Police Departments

The fire department planning committee is forming. Fire captain Asa DeRoode is willing to participate, and to talk with fire chief Joe Cuneo, who has announced his upcoming retirement. One citizen has volunteered.

DiDonato asked whether it would be a long-term committee, or focused on no more than finding replacements for Cuneo and DeRoode, like the prior police and fire planning committees.

Keller said the committee can do what it wants, and can increase its scope as regionalization becomes more of a necessity. (Committee positions are unpaid, and unlike the committee formed to investigate the Whitewater scandal, it cannot spend \$50 million if it expands its scope.)

The draft policing agreements between Leverett and Wendell are

still going back and forth between lawyers, especially regarding the lease arrangement for the Wendell police station. Part of the draft agreement includes an oversight committee to meet quarterly to address any concerns that come up.

The six-member oversight committee allows each town to appoint one selectboard member, one finance committee member, and one citizen. Tanner said Thomas Richardson was willing to be the fin com member from Wendell, and Keller volunteered to be the selectboard member.

Other Business

Town clerk Anna Wetherby has been acting as selectboard clerk, providing minutes of selectboard meetings, but is ready to stop. It is possible that Johnson-Mussad can take minutes, but Keller said he thought taking notes would interfere with participating. The selectboard meeting and minutes make up half the work of the clerk position, and the other half is day work done by Joy Gorzokoski.

The conservation commission is looking at town-owned properties to help find a new location for locating the wood bank.

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CHATEAU from page A1

Over the course of the next few years, they spent more and more time in Northfield, retreating from Long Island. Things were changing in New York at that time, and Nelson experienced a number of break-ins at his studio. Dowd and Nelson decided maybe it was time to take a break and live in Northfield full-time.

Plans to renovate the cottage to accommodate a studio were not realistic, and Nelson was soon looking for a building to accommodate a studio. As anyone who knows Jack would know, the more time he spent in Northfield, the more people he made friends with, and it wasn't long before someone suggested he investigate an unused, huge building on the edge of the golf course on Burnham Road.

Nelson approached the Northfield Mount Hermon trustees and ultimately bought the building in 1990 and began the renovation process. He also started teaching ceramics at NMH in 1991. It was around this time he learned that his new studio building was the former carriage house for the Schell Chateau and the Northfield Hotel, both of which had been demolished by then.

Nelson's fascination with the Chateau started with a simple postcard tacked to the wall at the Northfield Country Store. Curious about the ornate house pictured on the card, he flipped it over only to find it was located in Northfield!

A longtime history buff who grew up in a historic home that is now a museum, Nelson was saddened to learn the mansion had been

torn down in 1963. Nevertheless, his interest piqued and suddenly his next big project was underway. With the help of his friend Shauna Griffin and local auctioneer Ken Miller, Nelson started collecting information about the famed Chateau.

The Schells' Chateau

Nelson learned that Francis Robert Schell and his wife Mary, a deeply religious, wealthy New York couple, had become interested in D.L. Moody's work at Northfield. (Moody had established the Northfield Seminary in 1879, and the Mount Hermon School in 1881.)

The Schells first visited Northfield in the spring of 1890, staying at Moody's Northfield Hotel for a few weeks. Shortly after, Schell rented an adjacent cottage which he enjoyed so much he later purchased it, along with about ten acres of land. The couple continued to visit Northfield every summer, and Schell continued to improve and expand his property. He ultimately owned 125 acres and several homes, which were eventually torn down.

Following the death of his father, a bank president, Schell inherited a large fortune and decided to build himself a palatial summer home. He and his wife had traveled extensively abroad, and Schell evidently had long admired elaborate buildings. He hired famed architect Bruce Price to design his new home. Price was known for several buildings in New York as well as Quebec City's Chateau Frontenac and the Springfield home of firearms designer Daniel B. Wesson. A lengthy correspondence



DANKKOEHLER PHOTOS

The ceramic architectural model of the Northfield Chateau created by Jack Nelson in 1993.

followed between Schell and Price before the design was finalized.

The construction began in 1901 and was completed in 1903, during which time the Schells did not visit the site. It was reported that other houses on Schell's property were demolished and nearby hills flattened so the soil could be moved to the construction site to raise the Chateau's elevation for a better view.

The completed building was 130 feet square and resembled a French chateau, with more than 100 rooms including a private chapel, 36 bedrooms, 23 bathrooms, multiple parlors, 22 fireplaces, a billiard room, library, formal dining room, and breakfast room. It is reported that the 100-foot Central Hall could seat 250 dinner guests.

Mr. and Mrs. Schell spent their summers in Northfield from 1903 to 1928, typically arriving in June and departing in October. Following Mr. Schell's death in December 1928, his widow sold the Chateau, furnishings, and land holdings to the Northfield Hotel in April 1930 for the sum of \$34,000. It was then conveyed to the Northfield Schools in August 1930 for \$1.

Eleanor Roosevelt paid a visit in 1934 for the grand opening of

the first American Youth Hostel, run by Isabel and Monroe Smith in the Chateau's basement level. For many years the Chateau was used as an annex to the hotel, for meetings and conferences, and for the Northfield Schools' annual senior dance, which became known as the "Chat."

As the building aged, it was not well maintained, and it was torn down in 1963.

Nelson's Project

Nelson researched the Chateau for about a year with help from friends, and then applied for a grant from the Northfield Cultural Council to do a residency with fourth- and fifth-grade students at Northfield Elementary School. He regaled them with tales of the Chateau and encouraged them to write poetry, to put pencil to paper to bring to life their own imaginary chateaus. Finally he brought clay for student groups to work together creating three-dimensional chateaus. Meanwhile, Nelson was reporting back to the students on his own work re-creating the Chateau as a ceramic model.

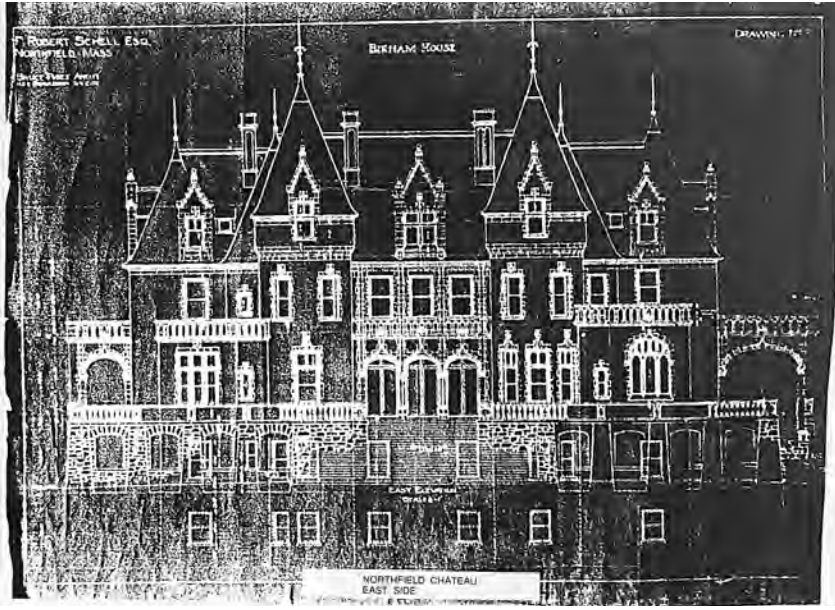
Nelson says it took about three months to build his Chateau. It barely fit into his largest kiln, and had to be carefully lowered into

the cavernous oven. Nelson recalls the long, slow, three-day firing and cooling process and waiting with bated breath to see if the piece survived the kiln – which luckily it did.

And so it was that 30 years after the demolition of the Northfield Chateau, a celebration was held at the Northfield Elementary School that included a tuxedo- and top-hat-clad Nelson unveiling his ceramic replica of the Chateau, accompanied by the children's art and poetry. And now, almost another 30 years later, we have a new opportunity to view the replica while it graces the Discovery Center's Great Hall through the end of February.

The public is invited to a special event called "A Community Remembers," when they may share memories of the Northfield Chateau – from prom nights to weddings and employment – on Sunday, February 20, from 1 to 3 p.m. (In the event of snow, it will be held on February 27.) Come and visit with people you may know from the Chateau!

The Great Falls Discovery Center at 2 Avenue A in Turners Falls is open Wednesdays through Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free.



Bruce Price's plan for the Northfield Chateau, built in 1903 and torn down in 1963.

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

If It's Not One Thing, It's Two More

By **JERRI HIGGINS**

Emergency repairs for a fire truck and a highway department vehicle topped the agenda at Gill's Tuesday night's selectboard meeting. The meeting was held Tuesday due to the Monday holiday.

Fire chief Gene Beaubien told the selectboard that the Engine 2 fire truck was brought to a repair shop in Vermont to reset its electronic control unit (ECU), and that shortly after leaving the shop, a warning light came back on. Beaubien said he called the shop before even leaving Vermont, and scheduled an ECU replacement for Thursday. The estimate of \$3,372 was brought down to \$2,626 after deducting a "core charge" for turning in the old ECU, which town administrator Ray Purington likened to a surcharge refunded upon turning in an old car battery.

Purington said he had also given highway boss John Miner emergency approval on January 5 for a crankshaft replacement for the town's 2009 International dump truck. The estimated cost is between \$9,000 to \$12,000, and Purington said repairs had begun last Friday.

Purington said that while that was "the good news," Miner informed him on Tuesday about a radiator problem in the department's 2005 Ford one-ton truck. Miner said his crew would attempt a temporary repair on Wednesday to get them by until they can get a replacement radiator, which they hope to have by the end of the week.

The selectboard authorized Purington to work with Paul Schroeder from the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC) on when to lock in FY'23 pricing for the town's diesel fuel and heating oil.

LPVEC began its Energy Management Program, a cooperative fuel purchasing program, in 1998. The program helps municipalities obtain the best group pricing for their energy needs.

Purington told the selectboard that quantities in the contract – 5,300 gallons of diesel and 2,500 gallons of heating oil – have "worked quite well for the last few years," and that the town has "been well-served in the last seven, eight, or 10 years" by working with the LPVEC on its fuel bids.

"When you lock in fuel prices, you want to try to lock in most, but not all," explained Purington, "so if you have a year where you do not use a lot

of fuel, you do not get stuck having to carry fuel over to the next year."

Purington told the selectboard that the Franklin Regional Council of Governments has requested Gill to list its priorities for assistance and funding through the state's District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program. He has requested input from town departments and committees, and will present their suggestions at the board's January 31 meeting.

Gail Cross was unanimously appointed to the Council on Aging through June 30, 2022.

The town's sewer commitment of \$44,598.15 was unanimously approved.

Purington said he posted a link for brush burning permits on the town website. Burn permits are now only available online.

Selectboard member Randy Crochier said that free COVID-19 test kits are now available through *covidtests.gov*, but cautioned people to pay attention to their mail if they order a kit, because the tests can become ineffective if they remain in low temperatures for several hours. Concerned residents, he said, could contact the test kit manufacturer for more information.

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¡Feliz y Próspero Año a todos los lectores de Aquí se habla español!



GCC gana una subvención para conectar con la comunidad latina en el área

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

GREENFIELD – *Greenfield Community College* ha recibido recientemente una subvención de 194.212 dólares por su proyecto curricular destinado a fortalecer el estudio de las humanidades en el oeste rural de Massachusetts.

La subvención fue concedida por *National Endowment for the Humanities* (NHE) dentro del programa *Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan* (SHARP). GCC es una de las 300 instituciones educativas que han recibido esta subvención como ayuda para recuperarse del impacto económico de la pandemia, contratar y retener trabajadores y reabrir instalaciones y programas.

Al conocer estas buenas noticias para nuestra zona, me puse en contacto con el decano de humanidades, Matthew Barlow, que me cuenta que esta subvención les va a permitir realizar diferentes proyectos, entre ellos incrementar la tecnología en las aulas de humanidades, y así mismo aumentar la oferta de cursos de entrenamiento en español para diferentes profesiones en GCC. Acompañan al decano durante la entrevista la profesora Charlotte Gifford, que es la jefa del departamento de *World Languages* y la profesora Norma Quesada que pertenece al mismo departamento.

La profesora Gifford me cuenta que GCC ha estado ofreciendo este tipo de cursos desde 1998 y añade que uno de los objetivos que permitirá esta subvención es explorar, por ejemplo, español para profesiones de la salud, un curso enfocado a personas que están en ese campo profesional y les presta las herramientas para usar en funciones básicas de su profesión en español. Los estudiantes aprenden a emplear español en una serie de rutinas sin tener que requerir un intérprete y esto permite que las instituciones sanitarias puedan utilizar esos recursos que se ahorran para cuando sean realmente necesarios.

Las clases se enfocarán no solamente para profesiones de la salud, sino también para otras profesiones como educadores, trabajadores de emergencias como paramédicos, conductores de ambulancias o bomberos, y profesiones relacionadas con las fuerzas del orden público. Estos cuatro ámbitos son las más importantes en este momento para los cursos que ofrecen. Las personas que deseen tomar estos cursos no necesitan un conocimiento previo de español.

Gifford puntualiza que este tipo de cursos son diferentes de los del aprendizaje general de idiomas o las llamadas clases regulares ya que no es necesario una secuencia de cuatro semestres. Se consigue aprender en un semestre escenarios básicos para su trabajo, por ejemplo, la rutina para tomar la presión arterial en español, que permitirá no solamente construir una mejor relación con el paciente de habla hispana, sino que esto puede ayudar a la organización a ahorrar dinero en ciertas áreas porque hay muchas



Matthew Barlow, Norma Quesada y Charlotte Gifford.

partes del trabajo que en realidad no necesitan un intérprete y se pueden destinar estos recursos para escenarios de necesidad crítica como por ejemplo decidir si tu hijo necesita una operación quirúrgica o no, ya que esto es una respuesta mucho más abierta.

El profesor Barlow añade un punto importante en la conversación y es que la demografía del oeste de Massachusetts está cambiando y el español va a ser una herramienta cada vez más importante que puede ayudar a los habitantes de esta parte del estado a conseguir un puesto de trabajo o mejorar en el que ya tienen.

Cita como ejemplo a trabajadores de las fabricas o maquinarias, que probablemente no necesitarán los créditos, pero sí nociones básicas de español para su trabajo ya que cada vez más se necesitan más trabajadores que puedan hablar español debido al cambio de población en el área.

El departamento está ofreciendo esta primavera un curso de español para profesionales de la salud. Se trata de un curso combinado para quien no desea o no necesita el crédito universitario y aquellos estudiantes que necesitan los créditos académicos. El estudiante está en la misma clase o aula virtual con todos los demás estudiantes y con el mismo material, pero no termina su curso con el crédito universitario y esa es una forma de ahorrar dinero.

Hay otra opción, que ahora mismo está en el proceso de aprobación por parte del estado, es el enfoque modular sin créditos y que estará altamente subsidiado y, por lo tanto, se podrán llevar esos cursos a hospitales del área o centros médicos una vez aprobados y ofrecidos en el catálogo de las ofertas patrocinadas por el estado por un coste cero o muy reducido.

GCC va a ofrecer el curso de español para

profesionales de la salud ya preparado para ser enseñado totalmente en línea, en principio fue presencial y más tarde se desarrolló y modificó con éxito para una clase asincrónica completamente en línea, que es como se enseñará este próximo semestre. Así que este curso se puede ofrecer también en persona o como un curso híbrido.

Gifford nos dice que esto permite también que si un hospital del área quiere que vayamos a dar clase dos veces por semana durante las próximas 14 semanas enseñando cara a cara, este curso estará listo para ofrecerlo de esa manera. Su deseo es que, cuando corresponda, todos estos cursos podrán impartirse de cualquier manera, por lo que tendrán esa máxima flexibilidad. Hay un solo nivel para cada uno de estos cursos implementados ya que, por el momento, lo básico está incluido en cualquiera de estos cursos.

La profesora Gifford subraya que cualquiera puede aprender otro idioma porque no hay requisitos previos para esto. Incluso si has tenido algo de español antes, tienes una pequeña ventaja notablemente en el sistema de sonido, pero seguramente no has aprendido este tipo de lenguaje técnico en la escuela secundaria. Debido a que estos cursos ofrecen un lenguaje técnico de todos modos, todos los estudiantes son principiantes de esa forma.

Gifford cree que en términos de ser buenos miembros y productivos de la comunidad y que se basa en relaciones comunitarias no se puede depender solamente de su idioma nativo y su cultura dominante, ya que así se está privando de una buena parte de la comunicación y, por lo tanto, si se desea facilitar una comunicación más fácil para el profesional y su paciente, cliente, o vecino, el primer paso es dar el paso de aprender la lengua y ser ca-

paz de trabajar en dos idiomas y culturas.

No es difícil, hay que tomarse un tiempo para esforzarse, pero si está dispuesto a hacerlo, GCC ha demostrado que puede enseñarle las habilidades que necesita y brindarle el éxito que está buscando. Muchos estudiantes tienen una epifanía, como una especie de chispa mágica después de ser capaces de poder utilizar lo aprendido clase en contexto laboral.

La subvención ofrece la oportunidad al departamento de *World Languages* de aplicar sus habilidades creativas a una necesidad muy real y a disfrutar haciéndolo. Gifford nos cuenta que ella misma pasó 10 años trabajando en el campo de la salud y considera que cualquier forma de aprendizaje de idiomas es una habilidad real y crítica.

Gifford cree que, como universidad, esta subvención les ayuda a usar sus valores como institución y a aplicar la misión mucho mejor porque podemos hablar sobre equidad e inclusión de forma real.

El decano dice que para GCC recibir esta subvención en un momento en que las humanidades están bajo ataque en muchas instituciones, aunque no específicamente en GCC, permite aumentar los valores principales como institución comunitaria.

Todos me puntualizan que respecto a las personas que se sientan intimidadas por la tecnología, no deben tener miedo de investigar estas opciones ya que durante la pandemia la institución y especialmente la biblioteca de GCC han desarrollado muchas herramientas para ayudar a las personas. Ahora mismo cualquier persona que pueda hacer *click* en un enlace y ver un video puede aprender en línea y navegar por el sistema de administración. La biblioteca tiene un sistema de préstamo de tecnología, conexiones *wifi* y *hot spots* para ayudar a los estudiantes que lo necesitan. La mayoría de las lecciones de estos cursos son en gran medida una base de video, y los estudiantes pueden trabajar en su propio horario.

La profesora Quesada piensa que estos cursos profesionales son una buena forma de empezar a estudiar una lengua y sentirse más seguros y cómodos si quieren continuar con ello.

Por último, Charlotte Gifford añade que, si las personas de la comunidad perciben una necesidad o un área específica, simplemente deben comunicarse con el departamento porque este puede ofrecer un modelo de curso corto, y esto es difícil de conocer para ellos desde su oficina o salón de clases. Su departamento está abierto a cualquier opción de desarrollo laboral que sea importante para nuestra comunidad.

Así mismo el departamento ofrece micro-credenciales que pueden ser muy importantes para incorporar a un diploma y poder encontrar trabajo. Estas credenciales demuestran no solo que usted tiene la capacidad de hablar español, sino que puede desempeñar ciertas tareas de su trabajo en esta lengua.

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MONTAGUE from page A1

also called for an increase in the salary of the health clerk.

To justify these increases, the board of health's budget narrative stated that "the Board of Health office has been over the last three years and will continue to be a central hub consisting of not just administrative duties but responsible for a large scope of community outreach, media and marketing information, special projects, instituting and carrying out protocols and emergency management throughout the town community... Thus, we are asking for increases."

Both selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz and member Chris Boutwell questioned the size of the personnel increase. Ellis suggested that the board would need more detail on the specific activities being allocated to the town nurse for the extra hours.

Several speakers, including fin com member John Hanold, questioned the wage increase for the health clerk, which involved moving the position to a higher grade, outside the context of collective bargaining agreements.

The board decided, in Kuklewicz's words, that "it still has questions to review before we make a decision on this."

Water Pollution Control Facility

On the other hand, the board approved the request of the water pollution control facility (WPCF) which funds the creation of a new position of "laboratory manager." WPCF superintendent Chelsey Little argued that a dedicated laboratory position was needed to address "new testing requirements" that will come with new licenses being negotiated with the federal Environmental Protection Agency, and

would free other staff for "preventive maintenance."

Ellis noted that creating a dedicated lab position had been discussed for several years, and that it would address EPA concerns about the plant's "industrial pre-treatment support."

Member Matt Lord said that if the position was not filled, the town is "going to have some outside entity" address the new testing requirements, at a greater expense.

The WPCF's overall proposed budget would increase from \$1,751,791 this year to \$1,960,151 in FY'23, an increase of approximately 12%. The increase is primarily driven by projected rise in sludge disposal rates.

Town Clerk

The board also approved an increase in the budget of the town clerk from \$155,173 to \$192,153, an increase of 23.8%.

"Our budget is entirely driven by the election cycle," said town clerk Deb Bourbeau, noting that there would be three elections in the next fiscal year, and estimating the cost to run each election at \$10,000. "It's big this year," she said.

Bourbeau also said she planned on hiring an outside contractor to properly archive the town's "social media accounts," and on purchasing a fireproof file cabinet.

Parks and Recreation

There was a somewhat more complex discussion of the request of the parks and recreation department for a \$192,153 appropriation, a 5.3% increase over the current year. The increase was driven primarily by the department's desire to hire a summer groundskeeper for the town's various parks.

According to a budget narra-

tive submitted by parks and rec director Jon Dobosz, "[w]hile grounds-keeping duties have traditionally fallen under the auspices of the Department of Public Works, we have noticed significantly less DPW presence due to other duties and requests they have received in the last couple of years. Unity Park is almost a daily obligation, and with additional refurbishment of other parks we need a groundskeeper specifically dedicated to the Parks & Recreation Department."

However, at Tuesday's meeting Dobosz said he was "walking back" his request, in part due to the uncertainties surrounding the adult softball league. He said he had spoken with public works superintendent Tom Bergeron, and they were considering a summer position shared by the two departments.

Kuklewicz asked if the budget increase would be transferred to the WPCF. Bergeron estimated the extra position could cost his department as much as \$6,840 for twelve weeks, and Ellis said this proposal would require a resubmission of budget requests.

Kuklewicz said there was a consensus that there would be "a slight shift in the DPW's budget, and a slight decrease with this one."

Turners Falls Airport

The board also endorsed the proposal of airport manager Brian Camden for a 53.7% increase in his budget to \$316,787. This increase, funded by a variety of revenues including grants into the airport "retained earnings," is heavily impacted by a large increase in debt service, but also reflects increased hours and benefits for Camden's assistant, the "operations manager," who will now be working 30 hours per week.

These increases, which Camden

said have been in his long-term plan, are a product of the 2020 acquisition of the private company Pioneer Aviation, which provided storage, fueling, and training facilities for the airport.

"The Pioneer purchase is going smoothly," Camden reported. "Our revenues are right where we expected." He said he was expecting to end the current fiscal year with a surplus of \$9,000.

Police Dispatch

The last items were the police department, which includes the police and the dispatch budgets, and the selectboard itself, which has requested significant additions to the town hall staff. The board decided to discuss the selectboard and police requests at a special meeting next Tuesday.

The dispatch budget as presented by police chief Chris Williams increased by 20.2% to a total of \$372,901, mainly to hire a fifth dispatcher.

Williams' memo to the board noted the increase in dispatch salaries approved by town meeting last year, which he said helped stabilize a department in crisis, but he described in some detail the problems filling three shifts a day with only four regular and several "per diem" dispatchers. He proposed hiring a fifth dispatcher to reduce the pressure on the staff, and also assist the dispatch manager with "adminis-

trative duties" such as filing reports and preparing public records.

Lord said he was a little "reticent" to support the request so soon after town meeting voted an increase in the dispatch budget the previous year. Kuklewicz said that during the dispatch "crisis," it had become clear to him that the department needed five dispatchers.

The board appeared to support Williams' proposal, but wanted him to "spend a little more time with Steve... to see what the shift utilization is really going to be," in Kuklewicz's words.

Other Business

At the end of the meeting, the board approved an amendment that increased a state grant for the Fifth Street footbridge project by approximately \$770,000 and extended the term of the grant.

The board also executed a \$100,000 grant agreement with the state to support the Turners Falls Canal District Master Planning Project, and executed the purchase and sale agreement with Judd Wire, which is purchasing a town-owned parking lot on Sandy Lane.

The board then retired into an executive session to discuss real estate negotiations with FirstLight Power. The next regular meeting will be held Monday, January 24, and the discussion of budget requests will continue the following evening.



LEVERETT from page A1

method," but only if they do so unanimously.

"It's just not right. It's a problem of consensus," said chair Julie Shively. "One group can control the outcome, even if all the others agree."

According to Shively, that group is the town of Shutesbury, who she says has "dug their heels in year after year" in an effort to shift more of the cost of funding the middle and high school on to the other three towns, or else provoke a default to the statutory method, which Shively said she fears would result in inadequate funding to meet the other towns' educational goals.

Shively said that if the towns fail to reach an agreement, "we will really be degrading the school."

The selectboard and school committee member Becky Tew discussed ways the process might be improved, ranging from changing the agreement under which it is conducted to providing information to decision-makers and the public about the potential financial consequences of reverting to the statutory method.

Shively said that in the past she has analyzed each town's revenues and expenses to look at their financial positions, and Shutesbury always came up with a higher surplus than other towns. "If it was Pelham, I'd understand," she said. "They're broke." Shively added that both Pelham and Leverett have shouldered disproportionate burdens in some recent years.

Board member Tom Hankinson suggested it might be helpful if a "contingency budget" could be created to show exactly which specific programs might not be available under different budget scenarios. He and Shively pointed out that some programs have already suffered cutbacks, and suggested showing where further cuts would be necessary if an agreement is not reached might be helpful. Shively said she would contact regional school superintendent Mike Morris on the subject.

Tew suggested reaching out to the Shutesbury school committee, and seeking greater coverage and analysis in the local news media.

Board members spoke favorably of a proposal to replace the track at Amherst Regional High School. "It's not in very good shape," said Hankinson. "They

need a new track."

Shively mentioned the possibility of using Community Preservation Act funding for the project, but suggested further discussion should take place in the context of the four-town budget meetings.

School Flood

A flood at Leverett Elementary School over the weekend due to frozen pipes in the sprinkler system causing two breaches was described by Hankinson as "looking worse than it should turn out to be," and "not too severe." Board members asked if better maintenance and inspection procedures could be introduced to prevent such flooding in the future.

Hankinson, highway department superintendent Matthew Boucher, and a workman involved in repairing a similar breach several years ago responded to the flooding on Sunday and got the system back in temporary working order. Hankinson said further work would be needed, and that the town would receive a quote for that work shortly.

Other Business

Library director Hannah Paessel presented a draft budget, reviewed and approved by the Library Trustees, in line with the board's recommendation of no more than 3% growth.

Paessel, who started as director last summer, also provided a general update on the status of the library, saying that improvements to scheduling and staffing are working out great, and the library now has faster and cheaper internet and the Kanopy streaming service for movies. Paessel added that she is looking forward to adding more programming when the COVID-19 epidemic ends.

The board considered moving supervision of the animal control officer from the selectboard to the police department, and will take up the matter again at its next meeting. Finance committee member Jed Proujansky said the fin com did not have an opinion on the move, but that in general, it was better to have town employees report to full-time supervisors rather than part-time boards.



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

Here's the way it was on January 19, 2012: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Governor Patrick Praises Gill Elementary

Gill Elementary was buzzing with anticipation as principal Kathleen Adams stood in the doorway with her staff and a few chosen students, waiting for governor Deval Patrick to arrive. When he pulled up the curving drive through the first slushy snow of winter, Adams and her crew gave the governor a warm welcome, and then led him to the classrooms.

The governor seemed right at home, whether he was reading to kindergarten students, joining in on a hands-on project with second graders, answering serious questions on international trade with sixth graders, or talking about his own personal experiences with Lori Rinaldi's third-grade class. He was engaged, charming, easily answering the students' questions, posing them new ones, and clearly enjoying himself every minute.

Patrick began in Kelly Gobeil's kindergarten class, reading to students from *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey, a good book for someone visiting from Boston to read. Patrick used an expressive style, stopping at each page to show the students the well-known illustrations, also by McCloskey.

In a statement to the press, Patrick said he was visiting Gill El-

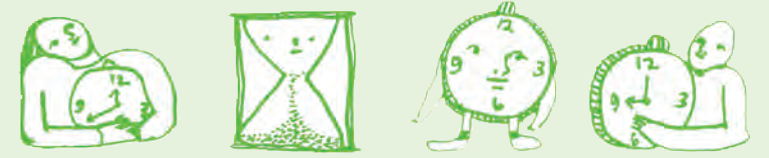
ementary School Thursday in part to congratulate its selection as a Commendation School, one of 127 schools to achieve that recognition statewide for improvements in student achievement this year.

Leverett Examines the Cost of War

On Friday night, as a light snow blew along the back roads of Franklin County, two dozen residents gathered in the chilly meeting room of the town hall to discuss the implication of the nation's military spending on the town of Leverett.

Tom Wolff, of the Leverett peace committee, an *ad hoc* citizen's group whose educational efforts were endorsed by town meeting in May of 2011, called the meeting together by pointing out that Leverett taxpayers contributed more money to the military in 2011 - \$6,977,688 - than the entire 2011 budget for running the schools and town departments - \$5,148,863.

He asked those in attendance to come up with an alternative "peace budget" for town departments, by taking just a quarter of the total Leverett spends now on the military and divvying that money up in ways that may better reflect local priorities, including allocating a fraction toward programs "to foster a sustainable, resilient culture of peace locally in Leverett that includes commitment to a global vision of people living out a just peace in harmony with nature."



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LANGKNECHT from page A1 show – he was happy to volunteer.”

“He gave countless volunteer hours in service to our board of directors, not to mention putting sweat equity into endless building projects,” Libby continued. “It was a lot of work and not a lot of glory, but he showed up again and again because that’s the kind of guy he was. I’m so fortunate to have had the opportunity to work alongside him – I think his only motivation was to see his community and the people in it thrive.”

Langknecht would serve on the Brick House’s board for 15 years, and at the time of his death was president of MCCI’s. He helped the station recover the cable-access assignment, move its operations into the Crocker Building, and enter the digital age. He was also part of an unsuccessful campaign to renovate the “Cumby’s” building into a cable studio and Turners Falls welcome center.

“When we were working on the proposal for the ‘Cumberland Farms,’ he made a scale model out of foam board, which he spray-painted and painted windows on – it was probably two feet square,” said Mik Muller, who joined the organization at the same time as Langknecht. “He just dropped this giant thing on the table and was like ‘So, this is what I worked on over the weekend.’ He really put himself into his participation.... He had a major impact.”

Muller also credited Langknecht with “pioneering” the idea of serving pizza at meetings, paying for it out of pocket. “I was glad that he was on the board, because he was a steady hand on the wheel,” he said. “Mike was a good guy to have a conversation with, he was ridiculously knowledgeable about what was going on in town – and he was very funny.”

“He had a ton of personality, and a great sense of humor of the understated kind,” said Jeff Singleton, now a reporter at this newspaper. Singleton described Langknecht as “a resident of Montague Center, but knee-deep in Turners Falls as a political activist and a craftsman.”

Langknecht’s three children went through the Gill-Montague public schools, where he and Stacey were active as volunteers. In 2004, he ran for an open one-year seat on the regional school committee.

“I believe it is impossible to separate education from community,” he wrote in a candidate statement in the *Montague Reporter*. “That is why I believe one of the best educational experiences our children can have is to see their community hard at work making that education happen.”

It was a contentious era for the committee, marked by escalating budget clashes between the district and towns. Langknecht cast the sole vote in 2007 against the closure of the Montague Center School, where his own children had studied.

“Watching school committee was like a soap opera – people used to tune in to see the latest episode of the explosions, and we had like five-hour meetings,” former Gill member Sandy Brown recalled. “It was absolutely crazy.... I loved serving with him. I think he had a good mind.... He knew everything, he was a real fixture in Montague. And he was always willing to do more than his share. If somebody else wouldn’t step up, he would step up.”

Though the budget work became easier after the district and towns worked out a “compact” in 2010, Langknecht was serving as chair in 2017 when the committee passed a controversial motion to retire the “Indian” athletic logo at the high school. Not regarded as a supporter of the logo, he nevertheless cast a dissenting vote after objecting that the move to end a deteriorating series of dialogues in favor of a vote had “shut off portions of the community from the decision-making process.”

“He did it to keep the peace,” says former Montague member Marje Levenson. “I don’t think he did it because he believed in it, necessarily, but he did believe in consensus.”

Langknecht lost a re-election bid that May amid popular anger over the decision, but when a seat opened up a month later, the committee appointed him to fill it. He was re-elected the following year.

Montague member Cassie Damkoehler, who had ousted Langknecht from his original seat, told us he quickly became a mentor to her. “Why would you want to get rid of him? Even if you don’t agree with him, he dedicates so much of his own time to this community,” she said.

“At my second or third meeting, another member had sort of snapped at me, and I was still learning. And Mike called me the next day, took me out to lunch at the Rendezvous, and literally just spent like two hours kind of just teaching me the ropes.

“And that’s who Mike was.... I was struggling with something, I could go to Mike with it and he could be a voice of reason, or at least a support. I think that that’s what I’m going to miss the most.”

“You end up spending more time in complicated conversation with people on some of these committees than other people in your life, when

you’re working on things,” said Jane Oakes, the committee’s current chair. “Mike is a person who does what he thinks is right, and that’s a real strength. He was extremely intelligent, he had a good sense of humor, and he was very active – I think right now he was on five subcommittees.”

Langknecht’s death, Oakes said, has “hit the people on the committee hard. It’s kind of overwhelming to think about getting someone else – I can’t say to replace him, because I don’t think that’s possible.”

Former member Lesley Cogswell read a statement at Wednesday’s Friends of Sheffield meeting, where a moment of silence was held. “Mike fought for every child and employee in our district, and was a staunch believer in our community, and doing what was just and right in the name of education,” she wrote. “Mike had big, outside-of-the-box visions for our district, one time telling me he wished he had all the money in the world to build a K-12 school in the middle of Sheff’s Field that would also serve as a community center for the town of Montague.... [His] voice at the table will be sorely missed.”

“He was a great guy, and he tried to do it all, he really did,” said Levenson. “He was so gregarious, and he never complained. And he always tried to do what was right. It never would have occurred to any of us that Mike would be gone – he’s kind of like an anchor.”

“There was so much more to him than what you saw in meetings,” said Damkoehler. “You end up spending so much time with these people. Like, right now I was on three different negotiation subcommittees with Mike. He’d sign on from his woodshop, and there’d be sawdust everywhere. I have so many funny text messages, so much banter.... And he just loved his family so much. Talking about his granddaughters, his entire face would light up.”

This reporter served on the board at the Brick House with Mike Langknecht for four years, and can attest to his dedication and energy. Mike had seniority and a wealth of local knowledge. He would roll in with a 32-ounce mug of coffee, his foot tapping relentlessly.

He shared his vision of the Brick House as a space where motivated people could walk in and be handed the tools they needed to realize their dreams. While we all sought consensus, we often disagreed. Sometimes Mike would argue a point passionately and then lose a vote, and it always surprised me how quickly he

OBITUARY

Michael James Langknecht

July 16, 1959 – January 15, 2022



Mike Langknecht of Montague, MA died unexpectedly on Saturday, January 15, 2022.

Mike was born July 16, 1959 in upstate New York and spent most of his childhood in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. He attended college at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts and studied acting and producing. He loved the craft and had the talent but hated the pavement pounding life of auditions, so he turned to his other passion, woodworking. He had a business for many years and then worked for Peterman Boards & Bowls.

In addition to his work, he served on the board of The Brick House in Turners Falls for 15 years, and the board of Montague Community TV since the late 1990s. He was also a member of the Gill-Montague Regional School Committee for 17 years, serving on several of their sub-committees as well.

Mike leaves his wife of 39 years, Stacey Langknecht, as well as their three children: Shayna Reardon, Jesse Langknecht, and

Troy Langknecht. Shayna’s husband, Mike Reardon, Jesse’s wife, Caroline Langknecht (Sena), and Troy’s partner, Tony Bassett, also became their children. Mike’s two grandchildren, Elyse Reardon and Amelia Reardon, brought him light and love every day.

In addition, Mike leaves his mother, Ann Sanderson, his brother and sister-in-law Hank and Shirla Langknecht, his mother-in-law Rhoda Kahn, his brother-in-law Anthony Kahn, his nephews Adam and Jake Langknecht and their wife and fiancée, Raquel and Katie, respectively, and his niece, Madison Kahn.

We will forever miss him.

There will be a small, informal gathering for close family and friends Thursday afternoon. If community members are interested in attending, please email shayna.reardon@gmail.com. Donations in Mike’s memory can be made to Cummington Wildlife at www.cummingtonwildlife.com, MCTV at montaguetv.org, or The Brick House at www.brickhousecommunity.org.

bounced back, ready to support the group’s plan with good humor.

When it was through he would go back to work next door, sawing and sanding wood into rustic cutting boards and serving trays. Hotsapp Woodworks became a back-burner project in later years, but Peterman’s Boards and Bowls has grown wildly successful, and Mike always had orders to fill from Spencer.

And when Mike stepped down from the board, he let us know he would be right next door and could answer questions. I took him up on

the offer frequently, first with Brick House business, and then more often the school district beat for the *Reporter*, and eventually just because.

Working late at night, running a power saw, wearing ear protectors and listening to the Dead loud enough to get through those, he wouldn’t hear my knock, but he would grin and stop the machines when he saw me come in.

And he was always helpful, and funny, and sympathetic – and yeah, there was definitely a lot of sawdust.



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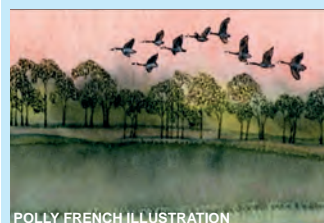
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JANUARY 20, 2022

Above: A recent sunset over Turners Falls.



**WEST ALONG THE RIVER
IN THE TEETH OF JANUARY**

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – Tuesday, *January 11* is apparently one day after Plough Monday according to the Old Farmer’s Almanac, although here in New England unlike Old England, we would be plowing snow and not the warming fields of Yorkshire. This day dawned at zero degrees and a biting wind. It rattled the old kitchen door, and chuffing through the house, caused the parlor door to shudder against the door jamb, even though I thought I had shut it tight coming down from the upstairs bedroom.

I put coffee on, then dash outdoors to tend to the birds waiting to break their night’s fast.

Icy nights do cause the birds to shiver and burn up all but the last of their stored calories from the day’s meager foraging. The smaller the bird, the quicker the body heat is lost, and the closer to death the chickadees and thumb-sized kinglets get.

Food first thing on a winter’s morning is the life line for them, and I’m glad to be the provider. No worry, they’ll pay me back in full with their offerings of bright color and songs in the spring. Their survival is a reaffirmation that life will continue in spite of all. In spite of the calamity and insanity in Washington, in spite of this, the coldest part of the year.

Snowglobe snowfall swirling under the street lights coated dog and writer, out on our last walk of the day at 9 p.m. Snowflakes driving into the eyes, I had to look downward to avoid snow blindness and a private whiteout. Nicky the Siberian could care less, ears perked, tail erect, squinting those almond-shaped snowdog eyes into the darkness beyond the last street light.

The hulking shape of Mineral Mountain is only a dark mass

above this hamlet of a neighborhood, almost encircled by the rushing river. I know that bobcat and black bear are hunkered down up there in the cliff caves and hemlocks of the darkness.

Great horned owl doesn’t give a hoot about the cold, although the squall will make hunting difficult tonight. His throaty voice, booming like someone calling from inside a hollow log, comes from the distant gloom of a January night. He’s busy hunting and looking for a mate. February is coming, he needs to reaffirm his hunting and breeding territory.

Life and Nature never really are at a standstill. There’s always a lot going on out there, even if we really don’t understand it.

January 12. The month of January has its own personality, no question about it. In spite of this month’s Roman totem two-faced Janus, there’s no ambiguity this year, the weather is blunt and to the point. Now the fierce wind blows cold, and the bare trees lean and twist.

Last night as we drew close to the campfire out back, we heard the wind high up on the ridge line on the edge of the Plains. It roared like a freight train passing through. The roar passed overhead through those sentinel white pines, some 90 feet tall, way up on the ridge. They bowed and swayed but did not break. Down here below the ridge rim in the cup of our valley, the wind only managed to stir some random branches.

Although days are already noticeably longer, there is no increased heat involved with the extra minutes of sun. The evening has us hunkered close to the woodstove, feeding and cajoling it, praising it so that it glows with pride.

This old Glenwood C cookstove, entering its one hundred and see **WEST ALONG** page B6

KEVIN BRULE PHOTO



First snow at the railroad trestle on upper Main Street in Millers Falls.

NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE
BY TROUBLE MANDESON

GREENFIELD – I recently cleaned out my spice cabinet and started ruminating on the difference between *spices* and *herbs*. I know I use both in my cooking and I often hear them referred to interchangeably, but I never really researched what made them different. They both come from plants, but what makes each unique?

I discovered that herbs are the fresh parts of a plant used to enhance the flavor, texture, aroma, and color of food – think basil leaves over fresh mozzarella, or rosemary sprigs on a lamb roast. Herbs are also used medicinally; for instance, aloe vera gel to cool a burn, or mullein leaves steeped in tea to treat a cough.

The Roman Emperor Charlemagne declared herbs “the friend of physicians and the praise of cooks,” see **HEARTFELT** page B4



MANDESON PHOTO

You can use either fresh or dry herbs in Trouble’s Cozy Beef Stew (pictured: ingredients, ready to go).

THE AUTHORS’ CORNER: JENNIFER LYNN BARNES

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

TURNERS FALLS – Happy New Year! I recently finished reading *Little White Lies* by Jennifer Lynn Barnes. Before even reading this novel, I fell in love with the cover art, and the synopsis on the back of the book. I am so happy to review *Little White Lies* for you in today’s article!

Little White Lies is about an 18-year-old girl named Sawyer Ann Taft. Sawyer is awfully poor, and lives with her single mother, Ellie. One day in July, Sawyer receives a call from her mom, saying she fell absolutely head over heels in love with some stranger and is going to be spending a couple months with him, and to ask if Sawyer will be okay on her own for a little bit.

Against Sawyer’s best wishes, she replies saying, “I’ll be fine... I always am,” ending the call.

Then Sawyer’s grandmother, Lillian Taft, appears completely out of the blue in Sawyer and her mom’s apartment, dressed for a high society brunch. Sawyer has never once met her grandmother; her mom had told her that she and Sawyer were kicked out once her grandmother found out that Ellie was pregnant.

Lillian Taft explains to Sawyer that she would be willing to pay for Sawyer’s college education, on

one condition: Sawyer must “participate in the annual Symphony Ball and all Symphony Deb events leading up to [her] presentation to society next spring.”

Sawyer is absolutely disgusted at the thought of becoming a debutante, but she signs the contract her grandmother presents her with so she can have a proper college education, and because her mom is going to be MIA for the next couple months anyway. She is also interested in the prospect that Ellie Taft used to be a debutante – as in before she got pregnant, meaning that one of the people in Lillian Taft’s world may be Sawyer’s biological

father, who has always remained a mystery for Sawyer.

Once Sawyer arrives in her grandmother’s glittering world full of soirées and limousines, she realizes that everything is not as perfect as it seems. Sawyer’s new friendships lead her to discover twisted secrets about the other debutantes and their families. Her new situation makes it impossibly difficult to find out who her biological father really is, and puts Sawyer in an awful lot of danger herself.

I fell so in love with *Little White Lies*! It was refreshing to read something a little different from see **AUTHORS** page B4



PHOTO COURTESY IZZY V-C

Our correspondent loved the book, and even liked its cover.

Pet of the Week

By AREDVIAZAD

TURNERS FALLS – If you ever wondered how a 10-pound malte-poo could hog an entire bed, you should have met Dexter. Dexter, whose soul peacefully crossed over to eternal life on Sunday, January 2, 2022, was the dumping of my cuddle ladles and the middle spoon of every snuggle sandwich. From grimy laundry piles to shiny linen stacks, Dexter never missed a chance to cradle himself in soft fabric and warm embraces.

Dexter's spirit stretched beyond his affinity for cozy comfort; his love for life was playful and his kindness unbounded. "He was a legend," "I would say he was an angel, but he was more than that," and "he was the only dog I've ever liked" are testaments uttered by those who knew him. Among Dexter's countless offerings, three of his lessons left a lasting imprint on our hearts: enduring pain with graceful patience, healing the heart with compassionate love, and living the magic of the timeless now.

During his 14 years of life, Dexter's service to humans found its way from the aisles of grocery stores to hospital beds and homeless shelters. The window of his eyes, ornamented with a corneal graft and two inches of black eyelash, invited joy into wounded hearts, transforming dog-neutrality, and even dog-negativity, into passionate ear scratches and belly rubs. Dexter enjoyed bag rides as much as any small and curious service dog, and he was praised for his polite bag manners. Children and the elderly were the most likely to spot "the bag dog" out and about,



"DEXTER"

hollering anything from "he just made my day" to "that's the best thing I've ever seen in my life."

Dexter was a masterful player with a solid grasp over the rules of this finite dream called life.

Chasing oversized sticks, running after crusty balls, and digging up jaggedly-sandy rocks were his tried-and-true training tricks for capturing the fleeting attention of preoccupied humans. Underneath his tri-colored curly hair, soft pink skin, and brittle bones, Dexter was a mischievous bundle of joy giving the universe a worthy excuse for tasting itself.

Although his aging body proved too limited for his boundless spirit, Dexter's ongoing presence remains the most precious gift of my life. I can no longer pick him up as he is curling in an impeccable donut on the couch, perch him on my shoulder,

kiss him back after he tickles my neck with a nuzzle, and wrap myself around his tiny happy body emitting divine heat, but I feel him taking up more space in my heart than ever.

Blessed by his indifference to my shortcomings, Dexter's love carries me through my greatest challenge yet: transfiguring the dreadful sorrow of his physical absence into the blissful celebration of his eternal presence. Like a Kintsugi artist restoring a broken bowl with gold, Dexter shattered my heart into pieces only to reconstruct a stronger one deserving of holding his love, and love itself. I sink into deep gratitude. I wipe my tears with the soothing balm of his memories. I remember the truth of who he is.

Thank you for being in my life; thank you for everything you've given me; thank you, little pup.

MAGIC PROFILE

Grand Illusions by the Blooms

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – At the 2021 Franklin County Fair, I saw a magic act called the Grand Illusions performed by The Blooms. Before I saw them, I learned they were going to be performing there on the website for the Fair. I believe that they were a magic act, and thought they would be a good topic to write about.

I was right about both. They did a decent trick involving colored sand and water. People seemed to enjoy their performance.

I talked with John Stevens Blooms about his act. He told me he has been in magic for 33 years, and that he and his family have been doing this for "over 20 years as a family act." I also learned from another individual who knows him that when they first started they didn't receive training, and then they received training from a magician named Peter White.

Blooms's family consists of him, his wife, and his daughters. Besides the Franklin County Fair in Greenfield, they have performed in Las Vegas, Mexico, and Nebraska. They generally do fairs and theaters – the names of other fairs they have performed at to add to the list are the Cass County Fair in Weeping Water, Nebraska, and the Van Wert County Fair in Ohio. The one in Ohio was apparently for a bunch of dates.

It's not the same old show every time in these locations. "We changed the show every year," Blooms said. They also have eight effects in a show, and use two different ones for each fair. People want them at these fairs because they draw a decent crowd – "that's why they had us," he told me.

I thought it was rather interesting that this act somehow got to perform in Mexico. Here is how: "It was 1998, a producer from California came and asked them to perform in Mexico." As for exactly where in Las Vegas they ended up being at, it was the Texas Station Casino in April 2002.

Their whole going to fairs and theaters thing is a tour that they do, but not too long of one. "We have been on the road for eight weeks," Blooms told me. "We traveled over 5,000 miles through 14 states."

One other trick that I saw them do at the Franklin County Fair involved, I believe, a sleight-of-hand movement, and then one of his daughters appeared on stage. This was neat, and it was another thing that the audience probably enjoyed. If any of their different tricks each time they change the show are as good as the ones I saw, then the audience's time is well spent watching The Blooms, in my opinion.



Magician John Stevens Blooms.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Icy Roads, Bad Drivers... A Little Of Each?

Wednesday, 12/1

9:25 a.m. Made contact with a subject parked on the French King Highway. Subject states he's waiting to go home at 10 a.m. and denies any suicidal intent.

2:39 p.m. Assisted a citizen on West Gill Road. The box came off his white Chevy pickup, and he was looking for assistance getting it back on.

3:24 p.m. FedEx driver on the French King Highway called to report he backed into a driveway, taking out some low-hanging lines.

5:33 p.m. Caller from French King Highway states there was a subject in a wheelchair in need of a room; he is worried about him being on Route 2 at night.

Thursday, 12/2
8:42 a.m. Officer advises he was rear-ended on Route 10. He will advise on personal injuries.
10:13 a.m. Caller looking to fill out a stolen motor vehicle report.

4:35 p.m. Welfare check on Main Road. Party was unconscious in the front seat, caller unable to wake him. Party was taking a nap after a funeral; no issues.

Friday, 12/3
8:43 a.m. Caller from Center Road reports someone apparently drove off the road, taking down her

mailbox and street number.
6:46 p.m. Medical emergency, River Road. 80-year-old male was having difficulty breathing. No responder due to call volume.

7:27 p.m. Caller from the French King Highway advises that her cell phone is lost. It was on the roof of her car when she left Erving, and she heard it come off and hit the bridge.

Saturday, 12/4
7:25 p.m. Fireworks complaint on Highland Road.

Sunday, 12/5
1:49 p.m. Assault, Purple Road.

6:33 p.m. Abandoned 911 call on Cottage Row. Upon callback spoke to a female who didn't want to give her name, and advised she did not have an emergency.

Monday, 12/6
12:41 p.m. Report of past dog bite on Main Road.
5:09 p.m. Caller from Chappell Drive requesting assistance. Party backed her vehicle up too far and is stuck hanging over the brook.

Wednesday, 12/8
8:12 a.m. Caller states a truck hit the side of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Fluids leaking, unknown whether air bags deployed, unknown injuries.

8:58 a.m. Caller from Main Road states there was a dog on the road they are

taking to the dog shelter.

Thursday, 12/9
12:56 p.m. Drilling on Boyle Road.

Friday, 12/10
2:03 p.m. Welfare check, AMR transported to Baystate Franklin.
11:28 p.m. Driver on Pisgah Mountain Road slid on black ice and hit a tree.

Saturday, 12/11
6:23 a.m. Caller asking whether a backpack was turned in. Located at school.
5:14 p.m. Caller reported an older man put a *Greenfield Recorder* paper in her paper box behind her house. She thought it was weird.

6:08 p.m. Van slid off a driveway on South Cross Road and cannot be moved.

Tuesday, 12/14
12:33 p.m. Caller from the French King Highway states a car backed into his car, and took off toward the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge.

Wednesday, 12/15
1:59 p.m. Driver refused to back up to allow a tractor trailer to turn onto the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Roadway reopened; officer spoke with party in the Gill Mill parking lot, issued citations for various offenses.

Thursday, 12/16
11:51 a.m. Assisted Montague PD with bank robbery on Avenue A.

Monday, 12/20

1:36 p.m. Caller from the French King Highway reporting a driver speeding up to 100 mph, passing in no-passing zones.

Wednesday, 12/22
9:29 a.m. Clerk at Gill Mill requested an officer. A customer reports she feels in danger from a male party.

4:05 p.m. Assisted animal control officer on Main Road with dog surrender forms. Paperwork served without incident.

Tuesday, 12/28
5:50 a.m. Caller advises that a fuel truck is stuck on Main Road; he is unsure if it needs assistance.

4:46 p.m. Caller from West Gill Road heard noises in backyard. Confronted two youths and moved them along.

Wednesday, 12/29
8:51 a.m. Caller from French King Highway advises an auto parts box truck left the address without securing its fuel cap, and is leaking fuel.

Thursday, 12/30
3:53 p.m. Caller from Boyle Road reports horses on the road. Horses have been reunited.

Friday, 12/31
5:23 p.m. Checked on a car parked on the French King Highway. Driver is homeless and sleeping before work.

Senior Center Activities JANUARY 24 THROUGH 28

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 Jonathan 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 1/24

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

Tuesday 1/25

12 p.m. Tuesday Morning Knitters
1 p.m. Chair Yoga
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 1/26

11 a.m. Aerobics
11:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 1/27

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

Friday 1/28

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.

Mondays

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

Tuesdays

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

Wednesdays

9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10 a.m. Tai Ji Quan
12:30 p.m. Bingo

Thursdays

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

Fridays

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.

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



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OUT OF THE PARK

JANUARY 2022

By JON DOBOSZ

UNITY PARK – Hello everyone, hope you all had a great holiday season. Pretty chilly these last few days. Bundle up, get outside, walk, and breathe in the fresh air.

If you prefer indoor recreation this time of year, consider coming up to the Turners Falls high school swimming pool and partake in some aquatics. We just started our **Open Swim Program** at the TFHS pool, which is held on Tuesday and Friday evenings through March 11. Family Swim is from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., with Adult Lap Swim from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

We have COVID rules that must be adhered to during the program. For additional information and admission rates, please visit our website at www.montagueparksrec.com or give us a call. Please note that sometimes the weather gets the best of us this time of year, and we need to cancel due to snow and icy conditions. The best way to be informed of cancellations is to visit our Facebook

page or call us at (413) 863-3216.

We also still have a few spots remaining in our **American Red Cross Babysitting Course** scheduled for Tuesday, February 1 and Wednesday, February 2. Those participating will obtain the knowledge and resources to become a great babysitter! This is a fun and interactive course that teaches students first aid and safety skills, as well as helpful tips on how to prevent and respond to emergencies.

The course is open to youths ages 11 to 15, and fees are \$40 for Montague residents and \$45 for non-residents. Please note that this is one course that spans two evenings.

That's about it from here. Be sure to stay active. For additional information on our programs and services, check out our webpage and Facebook page. We'll talk to you next month, when you may get a sneak peak at our spring offerings!

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

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Loose Pits; Bar and Funeral Fights; Burning Coop; Backfiring Cars; Flipped Plow Truck; Mediations

Monday, 1/10

12:31 p.m. Landlord of a Fourth Street property believes that drug activity is occurring on the second and third floor porches. A contractor found trash and drug paraphernalia when he went there for repairs. Information forwarded to detective.

10:24 p.m. Caller requesting an officer to go to his brother's house and tell a female party there to stop calling his parents. Referred to an officer.

Tuesday, 1/11

11:51 a.m. Staff member from Kostanski Funeral Home reporting a fight inside the funeral home. Peace restored; all parties advised of their civil options.

4:48 p.m. Caller states that two dogs are loose in the area of East Main Street and Route 63; dogs are just

wandering in the street. Caller is concerned they will get hit. One described as white with tan spots; both believed to be pit bulls. Officers in area for another call advise no sign of loose dogs at this time.

5:21 p.m. Caller states that he was driving near the bridge near the paper mill on East Main Street and noticed a rope tied to the guardrail hanging over the edge of the bridge. Officers advise ropes were put there for a reason; possibly a bridge inspection coming up. Nothing suspicious.

6:52 p.m. Caller states she heard a noise in the backyard near her pool; believes there are some boots or shoes out there. Caller advised that the prints were made earlier when officers were trying to locate her; nothing new.

9:37 p.m. Control received a 911 hangup call from an East Main Street address associated with other 911 hangups and a disturbance within the last month. Control attempted a callback, and female party hung up on them. Verbal argument between two parties on site. Parties were already separated upon officer arrival. All is quiet now.

10:21 p.m. Following a vehicle stop, one party was arrested and charged with having no inspection sticker and operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license.

Wednesday, 1/12
7:48 a.m. Accidental push of button in an elevator by a contractor. No assistance needed.

2:42 p.m. Passerby reports black smoke coming from basement vents on Charon Street. Info forwarded to Shelburne Control.

2:51 p.m. Report of a male party soliciting for Ever-source on Carlisle Avenue. Officer advised party to obtain a permit.

3:34 p.m. Party into station to fill out soliciting permit application.

3:50 p.m. Caller states he was just scammed. Someone called about his slow internet and requested access to his computer. Caller granted access to computer, then the person got into his checking account and took all his money. Caller spoke to bank and opened a new account, but not before his money was taken.

4:38 p.m. Following a vehicle stop on Swamp Road, a 40-year-old Athol man was arrested and charged with having no inspection sticker and operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license.

5:18 p.m. Caller states there is a shed or some-

thing on fire on Carlisle Avenue. Caller states there is a boat next to the shed. Information given to Shelburne Control. Received a second call from homeowner stating their chicken coop is on fire. Fire department on the scene.

5:24 p.m. Caller looking for information on how to get his ex-girlfriend out of his apartment. Officer advised caller of civil options.

10:39 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that the past few nights around this same time someone has been throwing snowballs or rocks at her house. Caller states that during the call one hit a window; she is concerned about a window being broken. Officer checked area; unable to locate.

Thursday, 1/13

7:56 a.m. 911 caller would like to speak to an officer about ongoing issues with an ex-girlfriend. Advised of options.

8:05 a.m. Caller would like it on record that a male party was swinging a stick at her this morning while she was sitting in her car on Second Street. She has seen him around, and he is always carrying a stick and yelling. Services rendered.

11:13 a.m. Caller states that she saw three people "shooting up" on the Eleventh Street bridge. They have since left the area on foot. Advised caller to call right away instead of waiting until after the fact.

2:33 p.m. A 55-year-old Millers Falls man was arrested on a default warrant.

3:39 p.m. Caller requesting to speak to an officer regarding vandalism that occurred in his apartment by the tenants that just moved out. Advised of options. Caller will take pictures and come to the station to fill out a statement.

5:50 p.m. Caller reports that two vehicles in the East Main Street area are making loud noises and possibly racing; one is a Chrysler with a flag in the back, and the other is an older Subaru. Unable to locate.

Friday, 1/14

10:57 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that someone broke into his apartment this morning and stole the TV he was renting. Report taken.

2:22 p.m. Walk-in reporting that someone hit the back of her car while on the Canal Street bridge. They both got out and saw there was no damage to her car, but a little damage to his. Male party stated that since it was his fault, he would deal

with it on his own, then left. Advised caller that we would put this incident on record for her.

4:33 p.m. Caller reporting that he saw something shoot out of a vehicle on French King Highway near Factory Hollow Road. Vehicle turned onto the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge heading into Turners Falls. Upon callback, caller clarified that he saw the driver's hand come out of the window and then he heard a bang. Officer advises he made contact with the registered owner of the vehicle, who stated that there was another Volkswagen in the area at the same time that was backfiring.

Saturday, 1/15

12:01 a.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road reports being home alone and hearing knocks at her door. Officer advises no signs of forced entry; all appears to be OK. Officer spoke to neighbor, who reported hearing a loud bang which woke him up from a sleep. Nothing observed.

12:09 a.m. Multiple callers report hearing a loud noise and hearing a vehicle go up Unity Street towards Scotty's store. Officer spoke to people in the area who witnessed a Subaru go up the hill at a fast rate of speed and backfire.

9:57 a.m. Control advising they have units responding to the Wendell-Montague town line for a plow truck that flipped over; unknown injuries. Vehicle owner called and reported he got a ride home along with his dog, who was injured in the accident. Investigated.

3:58 p.m. Report of ongoing issue with two dogs running loose in area of West Main and Federal streets, causing cars to have to stop for them. One dog described as a white and black pit bull; the other is a white and tan terrier. Unable to locate.

7:12 p.m. Report of two males fighting on a side street near Between the Uprights. Caller states they are in a full-on punching match. Officers checked area; unable to locate.

Sunday, 1/16

3:45 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that kids from another building are running around the halls of his building and they are being loud. Officers advised.

9:01 p.m. Caller states that he and his son are not getting along and he would like some help dealing with him. Situation mediated; peace restored.

SPORTS from page A1

January 18. I was relieved, of course, by the conduct of the fans and players from Turners and Franklin Tech.

Basketball

FCTS 47 – TFHS 25

TFHS 34 – FCTS 24

TFHS 33 – Pioneer 24

Back on January 11, the Franklin Tech boys defeated Turners 47-25. Turners kept it close in the first half, but a 15-2 third quarter doomed the Thunder.

Noah Ausikaitis led Tech with 21 points, followed by Ty Sadoski (14), Gabe Tomasi (4), Vincent Renaud (3), Josiah Little (3), and Robert Murphy (2).

For Turners, Levin Prondecki led with 10, Brandon Pollard and Alex Quezada each scored 4, and JJ Charles sank a free throw.

A week later, on the 18th, the Turners girls evened the score, defeating the Eagles in a defensive 34-24 battle.

The white-shirted Eagles came off the bench hot and shot out to a 10-6 first-period lead. This could have spelled disaster for the Thunder, because they only suited up seven players, while on the white bench it was sitting room only. But the Blue Thunder went on an 11-2 run in the second quarter to lead it 17-12 going into halftime.

In the third, Tech coach Joe Gamache instituted a full court press, and Turners coach Jim Cadrán followed suit with his own defensive formations. As a result, Tech held Turners to just 6 points in the quarter while only scoring 3 themselves.

So, going into the final quarter, Thunder held a 25-17 lead. Tech immediately narrowed the gap to 6 points, but that's as close as the Eagles came, and Blue held on to win it, 34-24.

Madison Liimatainen led the Thunder with 13 points, Lily Spera and Holly Myers each had 6, Abby Holloway netted 5, and Emily Young

finished with 4.

Four Tech players accounted for all of their points. Kendra Campbell was the lead scorer with 10 points, while Hannah Gilbert (7), Lea Chapman (5) and Cordelia Guerin (2) also contributed.

The girls extended their winning streak to five games on Wednesday with a home win against the Pioneer Black Panthers. (This time I was at work, but I caught the second half on the radio.) Going into the final period, the Cats clung onto a single-point lead, 20-19, and then Blue caught up and tied it at 22.

In the last three minutes of the game, it transitioned from a nail biter to a runaway. Leading by one point with time ticking away, Emily Young hit a three-pointer. Then Pioneer went cold, and the Thunder took advantage.

The Panthers were soon forced to foul, but Young sunk three shots in four attempts to give Blue the 33-24 win.

Wrestling

Speaking of winning streaks, the Franklin Tech grapplers are currently riding a two-match wave. Their latest battle came against the Northampton Blue Devils. Josh Brunelle (152) and Brody Williams (195) each made pins in the win.

NFL Football

Buffalo 47 – New England 17

On Saturday night, as sub-freezing wind chills swept through Highmark Stadium, the Buffalo Bills sent the New England Patriots packing via a 47-17 drubbing.

In the win, Buffalo was the first team in NFL history to finish with no punts, no turnovers, and no field goals tries. They also broke the playoff record by scoring seven touchdowns on their first seven drives.

New England fans now bank their hopes on one Tom Brady, as the Tampa Bay Bucs host the Rams on Sunday.



Montague Community Television News

You, Too, Can Watch Meetings

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – The most recent Gill selectboard, Gill-Montague regional school committee, Montague finance committee, and Montague selectboard recordings are all updated on the MCTV Vimeo page, and will air on local cable Channel 17. All MCTV videos are available on our Vimeo page, which can be found linked to the website, montaguetv.org, under the tab "Videos."

All community members are welcome to sub-

mit 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 checkout, 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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MONTAGUE / TURNERS FALLS – Are you a senior Montague resident who might be confined indoors and in need of sand for icy steps or sidewalks? Sand for Seniors has the solution for you!

An exciting new partnership has been formed in the town of Montague to provide residents in need of sand. The Turners Falls Fire Department, the Montague Department of Public Works, and Greenfield Savings Bank have joined together to deliver sand to home-bound seniors in need.

Feel free to contact any of the folks listed below for arrangements:

Turners Falls Fire Department: Captain Luke Hartnett, (413) 863-4316.

Department of Public Works: Superintendent Tom Bergeron, (413) 863-2054.

Greenfield Savings Bank: Linda Ackerman, (413) 775-8261

During the phone call, your name and address verification will be documented for program records. This is a pilot initiative that will hopefully be a huge success and provide a degree of safety to prevent falls in the inclement weather coming our way.

Please note that this program does not involve sanding your property, just the delivery of sand to your residence. The partnership looks forward to helping local seniors stay safe!

HEARTFELT from page B1

and Patience Grey, a 20th century English cookery author who made use of everything from her environment, felt that “the cheering effects of herbs and alliums cannot be too often reiterated,” an opinion I couldn’t agree with more. As far as I’m concerned, every dish should start with garlic.

Spices, on the other hand, come from dried parts of plants such as the leaves, stalks, seeds, and fruit. The word spice comes from the Latin *species*, meaning an item of special value. This is appropriate for something that can completely change the flavor of a dish. With spices, less is more: their flavors can overwhelm if used in too large of a proportion.

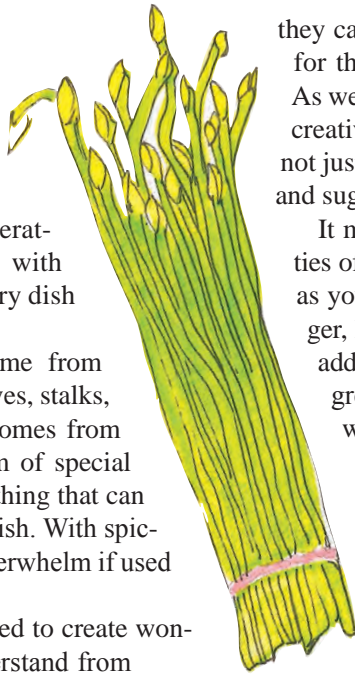
Herbs and spices can be combined to create wonderful flavor profiles which, I understand from my research, is a skill much like painting, where too many ingredients or too much mixing can muddy the colors. Layering is very important in cooking, but care must be taken not to allow one flavor to dominate any others. The key is using them to enhance the natural flavor of food, not to obscure or disguise it.

One basic flavor profile used by the French cook is the *bouquet garni* or “garnished bouquet,” a bundle of herbs tied together with string or stuffed together into cheesecloth or muslin and tied and used to flavor soups, stews, and stocks. It’s generally thyme, bay leaf, and parsley, but may include other herbs and vegetables like onion, carrot, and celery.

Every culture has their own favored flavors: the heat of curry found in Indian food, cooling mint in Greek dishes, and the piquancy of lemongrass in Asian cooking.

Cooking with herbs can differ in how to prepare and when to add them. Some are best added at the beginning of a dish in order to impart a stronger essence, others do better when added at the end to minimize cooking off their flavor. I like to throw a cinnamon stick or two into my simmering applesauce just for a slight flavoring, since cinnamon can be too overwhelming when added at the end.

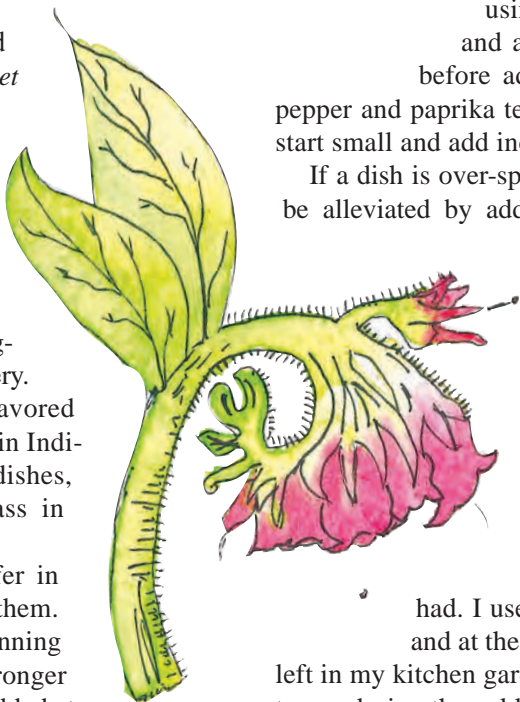
One of the great things about herbs and spices is that



Above: Garlic chives can add flavor to many dishes.

MANDESON ILLUSTRATIONS

Below: Comfrey is an herb often used for a poultice or tea.



they can be used as an alternative to salt, especially for those who need to watch their sodium intake. As we all know, trying to give up salt requires some creative substitutions especially as we have become not just used to but addicted to the high levels of salt and sugar in our commercial processed foods.

It might be good to start by adding small quantities of herbs and spices, that way you can add more as you go. Try adding bay leaf, garlic powder, ginger, lemongrass, or tamarind to soups and stews to add some zest; celery seed, dill, and marjoram are great additions to fish; vegetables can be tossed with anything from curry powder to anise.

When adding seasonings to cooking, don’t pour dried seasonings from the jar directly over the pot. Instead, crush them in your hand and then add them. Doing it this way not only avoids getting moisture into what’s remaining in the jar, which might make it clump up or spoil, but it immediately releases the flavor. Just crush a handful of dried rosemary or thyme in your hand and breathe it in.

When adding herbs and spices to uncooked foods like salad dressing or fruit juices, add them several hours before serving to allow the flavors to meld. When using vinegar, add the spices to it and allow them to stand for a while before adding the oil. In particular, red pepper and paprika tend to intensify as they cook, so start small and add incrementally.

If a dish is over-spiced, too much chili powder can be alleviated by adding heavy cream, yogurt, sour cream, even coconut milk, which counteracts the chemical compound capsaicin that is causing the burn. A little sugar or honey or lemon juice can neutralize heat, and vinegar is recommended for dishes that are too sweet or too hot. I’ll leave you with a recipe for my beef stew which my wife says is the best she’s ever had. I use fresh herbs in warmer weather and at the end of summer I dry whatever’s left in my kitchen garden so I have the next best thing to use during the cold months.

Except for the thyme out back... I planted it a decade and a half ago, and it has been so tenacious that even in winter I can dig through the snow down to the paving stones and pluck out a few sprigs.

Enjoy this cozy stew on a cold night with a nice crusty bread.



AUTHORS from page B1

my usual books. *Little White Lies* is set in the South, which in this case is full of fancy parties, debutantes and squires galore, and lots of mysterious secrets! I almost never read books set in the South. Most of the romantic stories I read take place amid famous shops in Paris, or famous schools in London, while in *Little White Lies* most of the story takes place in country clubs and or fancy Southern mansions.

I also love almost all the characters in *Little White Lies*. My favorite is a girl named Sadie-Grace, who is best friends with Sawyer’s cousin Lily. Sadie-Grace is awfully anxious, especially around boys she likes, and she tends to do ballet when she is extra nervous.

At the very beginning of the story, Sadie-Grace is described: “Almost of its own accord, her left foot began tracing out graceful little half circles on the floor. ‘Are you... dancing?’ I asked. With great effort, Sadie-Grace stilled the rogue foot. ‘I *rond de jambe* when I’m antsy,’ she whispered. ‘It’s involuntary, like the hiccups, but with ballet.’” She is also always described as looking like a real-life Disney princess, which I love!

I also absolutely love reading about fashion, and

given all the fancy soirées the debutantes attend, *Little White Lies* is full of outfit descriptions. One of my favorites is the costume for the masquerade ball worn by Campbell Ames, one of the other debutantes: “Her ball gown was black, made of a fabric that shimmered when she moved. The skirt was full, but the bodice was tight, and the threadwork – in a fine, hand-stitched silver – looked like a spider’s artfully spun web. Her mask was plain black and covered only half of her face. The other half was made up to the nines, her eyes accented by tiny black and white jewels, affixed to her face and arranged in elaborate swirls.”

And while I don’t usually talk about my preferences for book covers, I especially love this one. As you can see in the picture, *Little White Lies*’s cover features three girls in white ball gowns, with weapons held behind their backs. I love this cover so much because it combines elegance with mystery, which are some of my favorite themes for stories.

I am so in love with *Little White Lies*! It is full of glitter, masquerade balls, and endless mysteries, and is so exciting to read. I hope that if you decide to read this story, you love it as much as I do!



TROUBLE’S COZY BEEF STEW

Take 1 to 1½ pounds of cubed beef stew meat and put it in a paper bag with a handful of flour and some salt and pepper. Shake it until the meat is completely covered, and add it to a hot pan with oil. The flour will help the liquid to thicken as the stew simmers.

Sear the meat on high and then turn down the heat to medium-high. Add in chopped onions and garlic and cook until translucent.

Add 3 to 4 cups of liquid. You can use vegetable, chicken, beef, or bone broth – even water if that’s all you have – and stir the bits off of the bottom of the pan. You want enough liquid to cover all of the meat and vegetables, but not so much so it won’t cook down over the next hour.

If you’re going to use bouillon, please don’t use the dry cubes, as they are loaded with salt. Find a paste version – they come in many varieties, including vegan.

Next, add largely chopped pieces of carrots, celery, parsnips, turnips, celeriac, and/or kohlrabi and allow the pot to simmer for an hour, maybe more.

Add fresh herbs to the pot too – dried if that’s what you have – remember to crush them first. I generally throw in sprigs of one or all of thyme, sage, rosemary, or parsley.

Depending on the quality of the meat, it may take longer than an hour to tenderize. That’s the reason for big chunks of veggies: you don’t want them to cook down into mush. For potatoes, white or sweet, add them later as they will cook quickly and break down faster than the other root vegetables. Stir the pot on occasion, and add more liquid if it’s getting too thick, too fast.

Towards the end of cooking, add in a dollop of marsala or madeira, both fortified wines used in cooking that I keep in my pantry, or use sherry if you have it. The alcohol cooks off, and you’re left with a nice flavor.

Trouble lives in Greenfield with Wifey and Mama Catt Elliott and manages the office part-time for a nearby farm. She loves to talk, read, write, garden/farm, cook, and make art.



MANDESON PHOTO

Beef stew doing a cozy simmer.

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 20
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Grateful Dead Night*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 21
The Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Moon Hollow*. 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22
The Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Ragged Blue*. 6 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Bad History Month, Danny Kemps*. 7 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Movie with live soundtrack, *The Boxer's Omen* (1983) with music by *Sunburned Hand of the Man*. \$ 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sunset Mission, Zoe Lemos, Addie, Fake Sisters*. \$ 7 p.m.

Palladium, Worcester: *Thursday, Cursive, Jeremy Enigk, The Appleseed Cast*. \$ 6:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Get Down With Your Hometown*, online festival. See getdownhometown.com for full lineup. \$ 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29
The Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Rosie Porter & the Neon Moons*. 4 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Get Down With Your Hometown*, online festival. See getdownhometown.com for full lineup. \$ 6 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Cinemastorm*, mystery movie

double feature: "Strange animation." Free. 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4
Parlor Room, Northampton: *Cloudbelly*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5
The Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Little House Blues*. 6 p.m.

Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Max Creek*. \$ 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Editrix, Godcaster, Underwear*. \$ 8 p.m.

Iron Horse Music Hall, Northampton: *The Nields*. \$ 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8
Palladium, Worcester: *Cattle Decapitation, Creeping Death*, more. \$ 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Mannequin Pussy*. \$ 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Della Mae*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12
The Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *The Wildcat O'Halloran Band*. 6 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Peter Mulvey*. \$ 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13
Bishop's Lounge, Northampton: *Owsley's Owls*. \$ 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Sto-*

rypalooza 3: Danger! \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19
Bombyx Center, Florence: *Angel Bat Dawid & The Brothahood*. \$ 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Rubblebucket, Carinae*. \$ 9 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25
Palladium, Worcester: *Cannibal Corpse, Whitechapel, Revocation*, more. \$ 6:30 p.m.

Tree House Brewing, South Deerfield: *Iron & Wine*. \$ 7 p.m.

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

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26
Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Movie with live soundtrack, *Peter Pan* (1924) with harp score by *Leslie McMichael*. \$ 7 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Bruce Cockburn*. \$ 8 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: *The Diamondstones*. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 3
DCU Center, Worcester: *Tyler the Creator, Kali Uchis, Vince Staples, Teezo Touchdown*. \$ 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 4
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Superchunk, Torres*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 5
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Pioneer Valley Jazz Shares presents *Michael Musillami Trio*. \$ 8

p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Lich King, Stone Cutters, Toxic Ruin*. \$ 8:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 6
Academy of Music, Northampton: *Rickie Lee Jones*. \$ 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, MARCH 8
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Stephen Marley*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 11
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Iceage, Sloppy Jane*. \$ 8 p.m.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Animal Collective, L'Rain*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 12
Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Movie with live soundtrack, *The Arrival* (1983) with music by *The Em-pyreans*. \$ 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 13
Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Son Volt, Jesse Farrar*. \$ 8 p.m.

Symphony Hall, Springfield: *Boyz II Men*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 19
Academy of Music, Northampton: *Henry Rollins*, spoken word. \$ 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 24
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *David Bromberg Quintet*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 25
MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Car Seat Headrest, Barteas Strange*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 26
Hutghi's at the Nook, Westfield: *One Master, Ritual Clearing, Subterranean Rites*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 1
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Amy Helm*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 2
Northampton Center for the Arts: *mssv* (feat. Mike Watt), *Gloyd*. \$ 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Hubby Jenkins*. \$ 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 7
Calvin Theater, Northampton: *The Magnetic Fields*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 8
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Suitcase Junket, Philip B. Prince*. \$ 8 p.m.

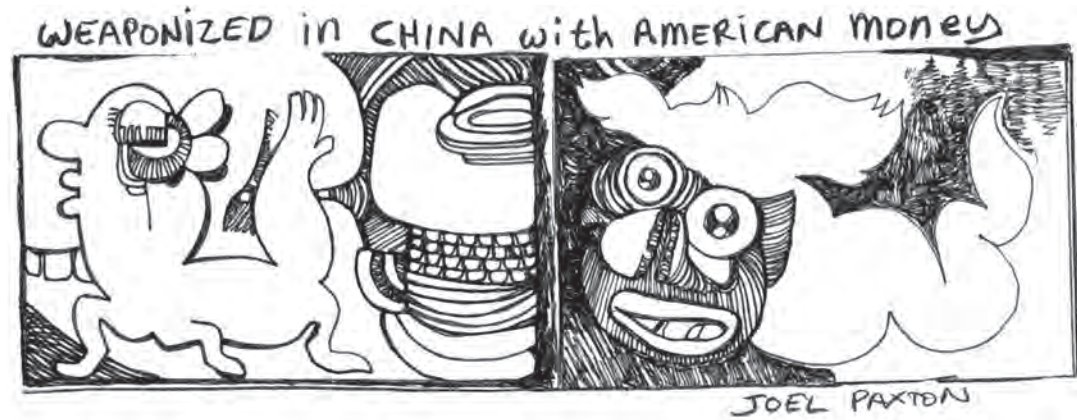
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13
Academy of Music Theater, Northampton: *Cowboy Junkies*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 16
Academy of Music, Northampton: *Godspeed You! Black Emperor*. \$ 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, APRIL 19
Colonial Theater, Keene: *Melissa Etheridge*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, APRIL 24
Iron Horse Music Hall, Northampton: *John Gorka*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Janis Ian*. \$ 8 p.m.



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WEST ALONG from page B1
 twentieth year of service, is our January guardian. Stews, chicken, turkey or lobster, you name it, the stove has seen and cooked it all. The Greenwood has dried socks, boots, mittens, and dogs, toasted cats, and warmed feet that felt like blocks of ice. Because of this heirloom, January holds no dread for us in spite of the wind that creaks the rafters high up in the attic of this 1872 homestead.



The Millers River, seen from the railroad trestle on upper Main Street.

Deep in our comfy chairs, books or breaking news may distract us, but the deep toasty feeling of rural simplicity, indoors and out, mark this dark season. The trees may be bare, but there are already rising expectations for a new year. You don't get that state of mind in March. Maybe in May, but definitely not in November.

Soon there will be a *drip, drip* of January thaw, but not tonight. No chance of that, the thermometer is taking us on a deep dive again, down to the depths of zero and below. All will be crystal-coat-

ed in the morning. But for tonight, Orion will rise in clear skies, cross the dark velvet skyscape. Stars will light the frosty dark.

January 14. I muse over the first few weeks of this month, which keep me in a sort of Christmas hangover. Not that there was an excess of alcohol involved but rather a kind of excess of expectations. Christmas is a sort of state of mind that I never got over, being born on Christmas

Eve, in another world and a long time ago. In spite of myself, year after year, those expectations build all December long. Sometimes they are met, oftentimes not. Will we find the right tree? Will I ever find just the right gifts for the family? Will it snow on Christmas?

Then suddenly it's over, empty bottles, turkey and lobster carcasses clutter the kitchen. Yet there are good feelings that we have made it to Christmas once again.

Many have not been so lucky. I think back to the memories of a number of my friends born the same day, same ward as me, our mothers laboring through it, back in the old Farren Hospital. There were at least four of us that year, that day of Christmas Eve. We drew our first breaths and then spent all our youth together in the same schools, same village. Then we went our separate ways to our separate destinies.

So in some ways, I enter the New Year like a new child. Optimistic and hopeful, the New Year brings a clean slate, even sometimes fresh snow. After the rise and fall of December, January is all simple again. The trees are bare, the earth covered in ermine, and strangely, thoughts turn to summer and gardens, even though I'm not a gardener. Seems like the sharpest images of the seasons come at calendar opposites: thinking of December in the middle of July, summer in the middle of January.

I am dwelling alone with my

thoughts in the kitchen this morning of January 17, in the aftermath of a much-ballyhooed Monday snowstorm dud named Izzy. I feel pretty rich looking out the kitchen window surveying my domain. Like, I've got 50 blue jays in my back pocket, a dozen more small change juncos jingling between my fingers, and a bank account full of snow.

Family is still asleep upstairs, coffee in the pot, dog sleeping on his back, four paws in the air.

Sometimes, life can be simple in January. I felt triumphant in my ability to successfully put new batteries in the flashlight, and have it work again! Even changed a lightbulb for the kitchen table lamp. And it sent out its new refreshed, bright circle of light! Miracle! January tells me to keep it simple, savor such small victories as that, savor the new year.

We know this feeling of small successes won't last, but let's make a good run of it while it does. February is just around the corner.



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