The Montague Reporter

YEAR 20 – NO. 8

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JANUARY 6, 2022

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Erving Debates Allowing More Apartments Per Building

By KATIE NOLAN

Meeting in person at the senior and community center Monday night, the Erving selectboard spent four and a half hours considering proposed changes to the zoning bylaws, roadway layouts, funding for a sewer repair, department budget requests, and plans a winter special town meeting, likely to be held in

Most of the zoning bylaw changes concern multi-unit dwellings. The board debated whether they should go to a public vote at the special town meeting, or wait until the annual town meeting in the spring.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith said he wasn't concerned when the bylaws are presented, but that the timing of the vote would impact the review of proposals to redevelop the town-owned Pleasant Street School, as they would likely have more than four units, and current zoning restricts that district to two-family dwellings.

Erving's bylaws allow up to four dwelling units in the "central village" district by special permit, but these larger multi-unit dwellings are not allowed elsewhere in town. The new proposals would change the definition of multi-unit dwellings, remove the limit of four apartments to a structure, allow two-unit dwellings in any district, and allow multi-unit dwellings in any district by special permit.

According to town administrator Bryan Smith, there was "a lot of debate" at a December 16 planning see **ERVING** page A5

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

An Update From the Sidelines

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – Like most of America, my normal routine has been disrupted once again due to COVID. I must admit that the last sporting event I attended was on Thanksgiving. The high school winter sports season has been rife with cancellations and postponements as the Omicron variant rears its ugly head, and I myself am back in isolation until my latest test results come in.

This is especially difficult for me. Instead of attending five events every week and interviewing fans, coaches, and players, I have had to rely mostly on the internet and second-hand reports. That said, I will attempt to sum up the winter sports season thus far...

The kids have played on. Franklin Tech and Turners Falls High School have each fielded basketball teams this season, and the schools combined for swimming and cheer. Tech has also been competing in wrestling.

The **Turners Falls boys' basket-ball** team is 0 and 3 for the season so far, with Levin Prondecki, Brandon Truesdale, and Logan Addison leading the team in scoring. Their

see **SPORTS** page A8

Four Proposals for Old Highway Garage



The property at the southernmost end of Avenue A has attracted the interest of a number of local developers.

By JEFF SINGLETON and MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – The town of Montague has received four qualified responses to a request for proposals to redevelop 500 Avenue A, the former location of the town's public works department. On Wednesday afternoon the capital improvements committee reviewed the proposals, all of which came from businesses already active in Turners Falls property de-

velopment: New England Wound Care, Nova Real Estate LLC, Powertown Properties LLC, and Couture Bros. owner Christian Couture.

This is the second time the town has attempted to bid out the building. The first effort drew no response, in part because a Phase 2 environmental assessment of the property had not yet been implemented. At a selectboard meeting last October, town planner Walter Ramsey announced that a Phase 2 assessment had given the proper-

ty a "clean bill of health," and a fresh request for proposals (RFP) was issued. "It's a lot better than no responses," Ramsey told the *Reporter* when asked if he was happy with the result.

The property in question includes an 11,250-square-foot building now containing offices, a lunch room, several small car garages, and one large multi-bay garage formerly used for repair and storage. The .87-acre site, which

see **GARAGE** page A6

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Town Plans To Purchase One Thousand Rapid Test Kits

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard meeting of January 3 went nearly an hour over schedule, due in part to a complex set of updates and requests from the water pollution control facility, in part to a proposal from the finance committee to change the process for considering next year's budget, and in part due to several residents requesting, during public comment period, that the potential demolition of the Farren Care Center be placed on a future agenda.

The real stumbling block to an efficient agenda, however, was a confusing and often frustrating discussion of the process for obtaining rapid COVID tests and distributing them to town employees and the general public.

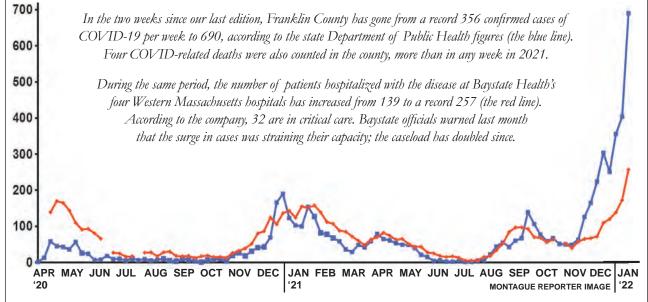
That issue came up just after health director Daniel Wasiuk reviewed the town's latest COVID metrics, which showed that there had been 84 new positive cases during the final week of 2021.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz asked if there was any data on the "severity levels" of those testing positive.

Wasiuk said that 12 confirmed cases from Montague were being treated at Baystate Franklin Medical

see MONTAGUE page A7

RECORD CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS



Northern Tier Train Study Rolling Down the Tracks

By JEFF SINGLETON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – After the successful completion of a study evaluating the feasibility of passenger rail service from Boston to Springfield, new state-level commission has been formed to evaluate the potential for a northern east-west passenger route between Fitchburg, where the Boston commuter rail ends, and North Adams.

The "Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study Working Group" held its first meeting on December 16. As the name implies, it will oversee a feasibility study of the costs and benefits of rail service. The study, which is expected to be complete in the spring of 2023, is currently being implemented by consultants associated with the transportation planning firm HNTB.

The working group that met on December 16, which totaled 18 participants, included state representative Natalie Blais, senator Joanne Comerford. Greenfield mayor Roxann Wedegartner, Franklin Regional Transit Authority administrator Tina Cote, and Linda Dunlavy, executive director of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

Makaela Niles from the state Department of Transportation chaired

The "minimum build" scenario identified by the study would use existing freight rail lines (shown in magenta) to connect North Adams to the Fitchburg commuter rail line (in blue).

Gazette Settles Union Contract, Ending Epic Negotiations

By SARAH ROBERTSON

NORTHAMPTON – After two years negotiating over working conditions and job protections, unionized staff members at the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* announced on December 27 that they had reached a contract with the newspaper's owner, Newspapers of New England (NNE).

Over the holiday weekend members of the Pioneer Valley News-Guild, affiliated with the Communications Workers of America, voted unanimously to ratify a two-year collective bargaining agreement with the company. The contract includes outsourcing protections, pay raises, paid breaks, and severance guarantees in case of layoffs.

"I am so proud of what we have accomplished as a union and am excited to see what the future brings for us and the newspaper we love," Bera Dunau, a *Gazette* reporter and

see CONTRACT page A8

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Johnson-Mussad Hired as Town Coordinator

By JOSH HEINEMANN

When the Wendell selectboard met for their December 22 Zoom meeting, they had already reached a verbal agreement with Glenn Johnson-Mussad to begin work as town coordinator on Monday, January 24. Until then, finance committee chair Doug Tanner will be doing the work in full bore on-the-job training, with office hours Tuesday and Thursday at least. Tanner is allowed to hold both positions, and accept pay as coordinator using under the state's "tiny town" exemption.

The agenda at the year's final meeting was long, but several items were quickly checked off as complete. Tom Chaisson will repair and paint the senior center ramp as he can fit it in. Renaissance Painting will paint the town office cupola, but not until spring.

Selectboard chair Dan Keller reported that insulation under the town hall floor is complete, with the final steps being an ozone treatment of the subfloor and supports to kill mold, followed by sprayed-foam insulation. That overall project was divided into pieces in order to fit the town's annual budget line item for

see WENDELL page A5

How Do You Plan To Distract Yourself This Time?

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The Montague Reporter

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Out the Window

Well-meaning brains across the United States melted this week when the Centers for Disease Control announced changes to the COVID-19 quarantine guidance relecting a new landscape of health risk and maybe, depending on who you ask, political pressure to get the old economy of work back in place.

If you test positive, don't have a fever, and aren't feeling sick, you only need to give it five days before you're out in the world now. The guidelines add that you should then wear a mask for the next five days when you're around people. Hmm.

Omicron is extremely contagious, and positive tests are going through the roof. With the majority of the population enjoying some immune support from vaccines and the data trickling in that this variant is, as was hoped, relatively milder than the previous ones, people's risk-taking calculations have been

thrown into absolute chaos. Is this a transition to a livable, endemic virus? Should we shrug and go the herd immunity route after all? Exactly to what extent should we be going out of our way to protect our immune-compromised neighbors and family members – or those who may have chosen to skip the jab?

Things are indeed changing, but keep a head on your shoulders. When hospitals are full past capacity, as they are now, danger can cascade; efforts to flatten the curve still reduce the number of extreme cases and thereby benefit public health.

And as for the sentiment that vaccine shirkers deserve to get sick... yes, everyone is beyond frustrated, but that's a slippery slope. In a country polarized by party affinity, we probably don't want both sides to become eugenicists. When a real environmental crisis hits, how are people going to respond?

New Openings

When the world shut down in March 2020, we braced ourselves for the worst at the *Reporter* office. We dealt with safety challenges and disruptions first, and tightened our belts as much as we could in anticipation of our revenue totally cratering. While we did face declines, they were tempered by a surge in donations from readers grateful to have a local independent press. Over the last two years we scrimped and saved and squeaked by, and our successful anniversary fundraising campaign this fall will relieve the stress for some time going forward.

That's the money end of things. The labor end is another story, and an interesting one.

The Reporter has only made it this far because our nonprofit model has allowed us to perch somewhere between a traditional business and a voluntary organization. A very significant part of the work that goes into each issue comes from dozens of community members pitching in their time for free. A significant part of the rest is done for absurdly low stipends.

When COVID hit, we actually found ourselves buoyed by a larger pool of volunteers, as people laid off or stuck at home sought meaningful ways to contribute to their community. We suspect unemployment benefits helped the overall equation.

Nearly two years in, we're

clearly in another phase. In the past couple of months a number of people have understandably moved on, and several more have let us know they wouldn't mind if we found them successors.

This winter we are looking for an ad manager, someone willing to work part-time who is detail-oriented and tech-savvy, and maybe even an ad salesperson who can help us drum up biz. Hours are flexible and can include work from home, and we can negotiate a little bit of pay and maybe set up a commission scale.

If you live in one of our coverage towns or Greenfield and could spare an hour every Thursday afternoon being a delivery volunteer around your own neighborhood, please let us know. If it turns out you don't have many neighbors who subscribe, all the better - you can help us out by running a little subscription drive, and change that!

We are looking for writers who can take on one feature reporting assignment a month, or better yet, one news reporting assignment. (You might think you aren't a writer. We can change that.) We can pay a small per-article fee if it helps.

There's a ton of other ways you can help, and everything's negotiable – just drop us a line at (413) 863-8666 or editor@montaguereporter.org and we'll work something out!





The Farren: A Space for New Ideas ...

What the people are scared about the Farren is, we had something of worth there and now there is nothing to replace it. I would like to look at it from a different

First, we look at the space that the Farren occupies. It's a large, beautiful space right in the center of Montague City.

I propose taking the Farren down and replacing it with a citizens' complex for all of Montague. What I mean is a place for the elderly, meeting rooms for the city and private entities, even a pool if you'd like to get more elaborate.

Next we should put a real park outside of it. Montague has no real park, meaning trees, grass, other plants. This would provide a place for our seniors and our very young to go, sit, and play among trees and nature.

If we look into the future we can see that this will be desperately needed, and would really boost the quality of life for the people of Montague.

> Brian M. Smith **Montague City**

... or: An Eco-Environmental Solution

property. If this is truly a wasteful society, does that include our communities and our leaders?

A well-attended December 24 rally at the Farren, the erstwhile

CORRECTION

are many citizens who are creative problem solvers. Compare this to property owners and politicians who claim they must demolish the giant brick structure. There is a pressing need to repair, retrofit, designate, and sup-

port a secure habitat for homeless, senior, low-income housing. It is logical to look at potential of structures, the monumental costs of decommissioning, the cleanup and wastefulness of thousands of bricks, infrastructure wiring, plumbing, and lost opportunity.

Community rehab planning is supported by an existing Montague City citizens' group. Ask neighbors how to fix a local problem, and many creative solutions will be expressed. Creative bold planning offsets the costs of destruction and wastefulness.

It is time for the government of Montague to seek community

Wastefulness need not be iden- full medical, senior, social ser- support and say "No!" to the outtifying of our society, our political vice, and health care facility in of-town owners of the site and representatives, or owners of a Montague Center, proved there buildings, Trinity Health Senior Communities, for their request for a demolition permit. If their cost analysis was to rehab Farren as a hospital, then there can be reconsideration for the differences in the cost of rehab as senior housing, low-income rentals, or transitional homeless sheltering sustained by available federal and state monies.

Several prior workers at that now multi-faceted facility spoke at the rally and alerted the crowd to inside knowledge of the infrastructure: rooms with private baths, a kitchen and community room access on each floor, and an industrial kitchen on ground level.

Retrofit the Farren. That is the Eco-Environmental solution to what ails our society, and the logic and need will inspire those who make decisions.

> Nina Keller Wendell

In our most recent edition our

absent-minded editor wrote that the Gill-Montague school committee meetings this month are on January 4, 11, and 18, with the middle one being a working meeting on the budget. This was untrue. They are on January 11, 18, and 25, with the middle one of those being the extra special budget session.

If anyone tried to go to the school committee on Tuesday because of that, we apologize. We have a 2022 office calendar now so it won't happen again.

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

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Happy New Year to our readers! We are thankful for your support during 2021, and encourage you to engage with us in 2022 – that is, to write more letters, draw more cartoons, send us more photos and news bits, and pitch us more stories!

We appreciate your timely renewals and welcome your donations, and are thankful to all the volunteers who spend countless hours nursing this paper through production and getting it to your doorstep. It's a bit miraculous, really.

The new year means filling out my new pocket datebook and hanging a new wall calendar. I know it's outdated, but I do like paper - real newspapers, magazines, books, all that hardcopy stuff. No NFTs for me. Here are some calendars we've gotten notice about:

You can get a free "Consumer Calendar" featuring helpful information about scams and other issues. Call (413) 437-5817 or email Anita Wilson, director of the Consumer Protection Unit at the Northwestern District Attorney's Office, at anita.wilson@state.ma.us.

Great Falls Books Through Bars, a local organization which supplies books to incarcerated people in the US, also offers two calendars as fundraisers. "Certain Days: Freedom for Political Prisoners" calendars feature art, essays, history, poetry, biography, reading lists, and all sorts of information. It is a collaboration between organizers inside and outside the prison walls, and GFBTB sells them on a sliding scale from \$5 to \$20.

The group also offers a single-page, 11-by-17-inch "Books Through Bars" calendar featuring art by GFBTB collective member Eli. There's no room for scribbling on this one, but you can see the year at a glance.

To purchase either of these, email gfbooksthroughbars@riseup.net with "calendar" in the subject line. They'll work out the details with you from there, while supplies last!

The Montague Public Libraries offer children and teens a takeand-make craft project for a fridge magnet snow person. Pick up an envelope filled with materials at all three branches - the last day is this Saturday, January 8.

On Saturday, January 8 at 1 p.m., take a Powertown history stroll with FirstLight's Northfield Mountain staff. During this leisurely walk along the Canalside Rail Trail in downtown Turners Falls you will learn how the Great Falls have shaped the history of the community. This free, guided walk will be 1 to 11/2 miles in length. For participants 18 years or older, with masks; pre-registration is required at www. bookeo.com/northfield.

During January and February, an exciting history exhibit will be featured at the Great Hall at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls. "The Northfield Chateau - Remembered, Revisited" will present local sculptor Jack Nelson's architecturally accurate ceramic model of the former mansion called the Northfield Chateau.

There will be interior and exterior photos, artifacts, a brief history of the architect Bruce Price, information about the original owner, Francis Robert Schell, and details about the use of the Chateau as it evolved into a most revered building with decades of memories. The exhibit includes a six-foot panorama photograph taken

from the roof of the Chateau upon its completion in 1906.

Attend a presentation about the Chateau from 1 to 3 p.m. this Sunday, January 9, and meet Nelson. The Center is open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Leverett, Erving, and Northfield libraries are sponsoring an event next Tuesday, January 11 called "A Conversation about Racism - staying curious, moving forward, and being part of the solution." This program will focus on the experiences of three local Black people: Jeanne Hall, Gloria Matlock, and Dick Hall.

The trio have offered to share what it means to be Black in Franklin County and the US. Their experiences will be the starting point for a conversation about racism moderated by educator and racial justice advocate Allen Davis. Register for the online event by emailing dmemlib@gmail.com.

The Montague Center branch library is starting a book club in January and February on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. The novel How To Be Both by Ali Smith will be discussed on January 11. Contact Kate at kmartineau@ cwmars.org for more information.

If you would like to learn about Cooking Soup For Health and Happiness, join a free Zoom demonstration with an internationally renowned vegetarian chef, Leslie Cerier, next Tuesday, January 11 at 6:30 p.m. There will be time for questions and discussion. Email leslie@lesliecerier.com to register and get your Zoom link.

Curious about turning wood on a lathe? Put down the spiralizer and check out a demonstration by master woodturner Jeff Bower at HatchSpace in Brattleboro. Bower will demonstrate how to make a piece from start to finish, and the admission is only \$5. Bower designs and creates turned wooden art, often inspired by astronomical themes, at his studio in southern Vermont. Nearly all of the materials used in his pieces are sourced locally.

It's happening next Wednesday, January 12 at 5:30 p.m. at HatchSpace, at the corner of High and Green streets in Brattleboro, but space is limited, so register at brattleboromuseum.org.

This event is offered in connection with the BMAC exhibit "Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers: Evolving Traditions," which showcases innovative work by 15 members of the Guild of Vermont Furniture Makers and six collaborating artists, on view through February 13.

Northfield Mountain invites you to learn how to snowshoe on Saturday, January 15 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Northfield Mountain Recreation Center on Route 63 in Northfield.

This very popular winter sport is low cost and easy to do, while providing good exercise. Learn tips on equipment, technique, and clothing and why it has been called "the best bang-for-the-buck, fat-burning workout in winter" by Dr. Ray Browning at the University of Colorado's Health Science Center.

This is a free outdoor program for those who are 18 years or older and comfortable hiking over moderate terrain. Snowshoes are available to rent for \$16, and masks are needed for group gathering. Space is limited and registration is required at www.bookeo.com/northfield.

The Franklin Hampshire Career Center sent notice about free construction trades training that is about to start on January 18. It is open to all ages, genders, and backgrounds at the Gould Construction Institute in Woburn, MA. This introduction to construction includes a CORE construction curriculum 6.0 (82 hours), an OSHA 10 construction card (10 hours), and Hotwork certification (8 hours). Attend on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon from January 18 through March 24.

Contact Steve Sullivan at buildingmasscareers@gmail.com or (781) 281-6860 for more information.

> 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.

GOOD TENANT

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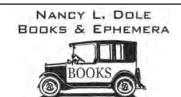
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Fiscal Health and 'Excess Taxing Capacity'

By JOHN HANOLD

TURNERS FALLS – A couple of comments about "excess taxing capacity" have come to members of Montague's Finance Committee, and the term is worth some explanation. More conversations may follow, but here's one person's view of the meaning of the term. (These views are my own, and do not represent the Committee's position.)

For many years, Montague has set its real estate tax rate at the maximum level allowed by the state's Department of Revenue. As we regularly reviewed the town's needs, there were always a number of initiatives and projects originating from our town departments that we felt deserved "full taxpayer support." Over the same time period the Committee worked steadily to improve Montague's fiscal health and to establish a firm foundation for the uncertainties that always seem to turn up.

By the time the budgets for FY'22 were proposed to Town Meeting, in June 2021, the Finance Committee had achieved many of our goals. We had adopted a set of policies to measure our financial health on an annual basis; we had adopted a policy that cushions the annual

budget from swings in assessments from the Montague's needs. Franklin County Tech School; the establishment of the town's share of the Gill-Montague assessment followed a reliable guide; our bond rating had been raised to "AA"; and we had begun a systematic effort to inventory the longterm needs of our town-owned buildings.

The next step, part of the approved FY'22 budgets, was to tax at less than the maximum limit, by reserving \$500,000 of our capacity for "a future year." We can, at our choice, use that "excess capacity" when we see fit, but in the meantime, the amount raised from taxation is \$500,000 less than our prior-year practices. Due to the efforts of town departments we continue to provide requested services within their approved budgets, and we have not changed our regular attention to meeting the annual operating needs in FY'23 and beyond.

The immediate effect was a choice to spend less on ongoing annual needs, and to issue lower tax bills as a result. The tax rate dropped from \$17.44 per \$1,000 of home value to \$16.86. This budgeting of \$500,000 of Excess Capacity is being considered for the FY'23 budget now in preparation, in the expectation that the recommended budget will continue to meet

Funds left over after year-end - the town's "Free Cash," which is confirmed each August - have also helped us meet our non-operating demands at Special Town Meetings. This Free Cash is a combination of our revenue coming in higher than expected, and of our departments under-spending their budgets. This means that we should not need to rely on our "excess capacity" in the near future.

Another contributor to our fiscal health has been the receipt of America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for longer-term needs, which enables us to address emerging needs promptly without borrowing. We expect continuing ARPA funding to augment town funding of necessary functions in the next year or two.

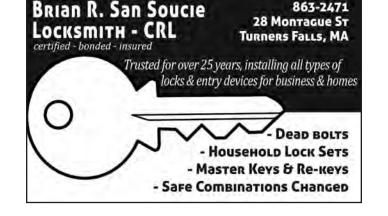
The bottom line is that we continue to meet our budgetary needs, annual and long-term, even while keeping tax-rate increases under control. We also continue to evaluate the effect of Excess Capacity on our financial policies, which I will talk about in a future article.

> John Hanold is a member of Montague's finance committee. The views expressed here are his own.

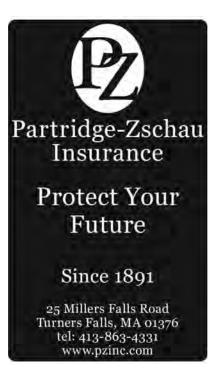














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Year-End Reflections on 2021

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD - Every year a word or phrase enters the vernacular that despite its overuse is here to stay. Two such examples are "going forward" and "surreal." Last year's overworked expression was "double down," as in Joe Biden doubled down on vaccine mandates, and Donald Trump doubled down on stolen election claims.

Last year's calendar abbreviations, BC and AD, stood for "Before Covid" and "After Delta," and Omicron's emergence had us wanting to stop the world and jump off. Extraterrestrial: The First Sign of Intelligent Life Beyond Earth was a bestseller by Harvard professor Avi Loeb, who claimed that a UFO that was confirmed to be whizzing through our solar system was on its way from Vega to Pegasus, or in other words, from one constellation to the next.

Two of the world's richest men, Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos, were launched into space. Branson was aboard the VSS Unity and Bezos buckled up in his spacecraft New Shepard. The New Yorker's Amy Davidson Sorkin wrote their lift-offs had ushered in "an era of billionaire rocketeers."

Not everyone was convinced that Branson and Bezos and their respective companions on board had become bona fide spacemen. "They did not go into outer space, they merely went up high," wrote Robert Henry of Palm City, Florida, to the New York Post. "For them to have gone into space, they would have had to pass through re-entry and their aircrafts would have needed to be at the perfect angle to avoid burning up."

Four weeks later Glen de Vries, who was on board the Bezos flight, died when his Cessna crashed into the woods in New Jersey.

Earthling Pete Davidson decided to have his tattoos removed last year. Gone are Willy Wonka and Hillary Clinton, the Playboy bunny, a shamrock, a ghost emoji, boxing gloves, and a guy in a hoodie. According to bodyartguru. com, Davidson's tatt-count was up to 104 when he decided to downsize.

A Staten Island native and star of Saturday Night Live, Davidson told the Post that before

asked for permission. "I'd just be sitting there high off the nitrous oxide, then all of a sudden I'd hear, 'Are you keeping [Family Guy] Stewie Griffin smoking a blunt?"

Davidson reportedly kept the "8418" tattoo that was his father's badge number the day he went inside the World Trade Center and never came out.

Shakespearean actor Christopher Plummer died last year at age 91. He won one Oscar, two Tony, and two Emmy awards, but was best known for a role he detested in The Sound of Music. Film critic Michael Riedel wrote that Plummer told him playing Captain von Trapp was "like being beaten to death by a Hallmark card."

Somebody thought it would be a good idea to have Kamala Harris be the keynote speaker at the 2021 US Naval Academy commencement ceremony. The vice president's attempts to humor the graduating class were met with stone cold silence. "Picture the scene," wrote the Wall Street Journal's Gerard Baker, "a roomful of the vice president's finest young staffers all wielding their critical-theory degrees from Sarah Lawrence and Amherst, brainstorming lines for an unfamiliar audience of brave young fighters..."

Ken Burns told the New York Times that Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg is "an enemy of the state, and I mean the United States of America. He doesn't give a shit about us, the United States. He knows he can transcend it. He can get away to any place. And so it's just about filthy lucre, that's it."

Director Quentin Tarantino told podcaster Brian Koppelman that his grade school teacher dimed him out for writing screenplays in class. "Oh and by the way, this little writing career that you're doing? That shit is over!" Tarantino recalled his mother telling him. He vowed never to give his mother a penny of his screenplay money. "No Elvis Cadillac for you," said Tarantino.

Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts passed away in August at age 80. Quiet and strait-laced, former WNEW-FM disc jockey Richard Neer told the story of when Watts was awoken in his hotel room by Stones frontman Mick Jagger. "Charlie, where's my fucking drummer?" teased Jagger, who was downstairs partying. Watts got

each tattoo was about to be removed, the doctor out of bed, dressed properly, went to the party, and punched Jagger in the face. "Don't ever call me your fucking drummer," said Watts. "You are my fucking singer!"

> LEFTOVERS: A 28-year-old Columbia University student whose family had defected from North Korea spoke against cancel culture. "Even North Korea isn't this nuts," said 28-year-old Yeonmi Park. ... After seeing a photo of Jill Biden in the Rose Garden wearing a denim miniskirt, New York Post columnist Cindy Adams cracked, "The great glorious Godblessus United States of America has the Clampetts in the White House." .. Eric Adams handily beat a field of progressives to win New York City's mayoral primary. The former NYC cop proclaimed: "Social media does not pick a candidate, people on Social Security pick a candidate." ... While visiting a Mack Truck plant in Pennsylvania, Joe Biden is overheard telling a worker, "I used to drive an 18-wheeler." ... Breaking Bad co-stars Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul hopscotched across Long Island making drinks from their Dos Hombres mezcal. Price per bottle: \$349... Sarah Jessica Parker told Vogue she's chosen to "age naturally" and not have plastic surgery: "It's like those flowing flowers that wilt in time lapse films," said the 56-year-old actress. "But what can I possibly do? Look like a lunatic?" ... In September, showboating network weatherman Willard Scott died at his home in Virginia. The New York Times obituary regaled him as "a garrulous, gaptoothed, boutonnière-wearing, funny-hatted, sometimes toupee-clad, larger-than-life American Everyman." ... Kamala Harris saluted the military on Memorial Day: "Enjoy your long weekend," she tweeted... Joe Biden sang "Con-

voy." No wait, saving that for April Fool's Day... What will the new year bring? Prince Harry and Meghan Markle will break up, a flying saucer will land in Times Square, and the Red Sox will win the World Series.

The psychics are doubling down on it.

Chip Ainsworth writes sports for the Greenfield Recorder, and news and opinion for the Montague Reporter. He lives in Northfield.

NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Town Approves Money for Test Kits as Prices Climb

By GEORGE BRACE

Leverett's selectboard approved the purchase of rapid COVID-19 tests for town employees at their Tuesday meeting, following a recommendation of the board of health. The move came in response to the recent rise in cases, and an announcement by the state of Massachusetts of a program making such tests available to municipalities.

No questions were raised about the desirability of providing rapid COVID-19 tests to employees or the town's ability to fund the purchase, with discussion focusing instead on the issues of pricing and availability, the number of tests needed, and which type of test to purchase.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis informed the board that the minimum order through the state program was 232 tests, at a cost of approximately \$19 each.

Chair Julie Shively commented that the cost seemed high when the tests could be bought off the shelf at Walmart for \$15, though she acknowledged there were questions of availability in the retail market.

(According to national news sources, Walmart and Kroger stores raised the prices of BinaxNOW tests this week to \$19.88 and \$23.99 after an agreement with the federal government to keep them at \$14 ended.)

Both Shively and board member Tom Hankinson commented that

while each town department would have different needs depending on how much interaction employees have with the public and fellow employees, 232 seemed like too many. Hankinson said he thought a purchase of 50 tests would be a good start.

Board member Melissa Colbert suggested that research should be done on the type of test to purchase in order to determine the quality of the results, and their efficacy in detecting the Omicron variant.

The board approved an expenditure of up to \$5,000 for the purchase.

Bus Service?

Hankinson initiated a discussion of the possibility of bringing a bus route to Leverett in light of news he had seen that later this year Massachusetts will be receiving approximately \$2.8 billion in federal money for infrastructure improvement, targeted at public transportation.

Hankinson said he "thought of seniors" when he saw the article, and commented that a change in state law brought about by state representative Stephen Kulik would allow the town to explore the option of doing something through the Franklin Regional Transit Authority, which was not possible in the past.

Some Leverett residents are eligible for certain on-demand services from the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, and the law had previously prohibited towns from being served by two agencies.

Shively commented that a senior ride-share service already being explored might be a better fit for Leverett, as it could be targeted directly at seniors, and therefore more efficient than a general bus route.

All three board members commented that research was needed on the subject, and noted that relevant data will become available through a senior-needs assessment study currently underway, among other sources.

Slick Roads

Highway superintendent Matthew Boucher addressed an email the board received asking if excessive clay content in the sanding mix was responsible for recent slick conditions on Long Hill Road.

Boucher said there is "no clay content" in anything his department uses for sanding, and the difference in the road surface noticed by the resident was probably due to the department using a salt-and-sand mix on the gravel road over the Christmas holiday, for increased safety, instead of the usual all-sand mix.

He added that unusually warm weather following a cold spell may also have played a part.

Boucher informed the board that due to a delay in receiving the town's new dump truck, he would be using up to \$8,000 of his budget to repair

the truck it was intended to replace, as it was needed for plowing.

Colbert suggested trying to negotiate a discount with the vendor supplying the new truck, the delivery of which has been reportedly delayed due to supply-chain issues.

Rounding out the agenda of road issues, the board hired Raymond Mitchell as a substitute plow driver at \$30 per hour.

Other Business

The board accepted \$6,338 in grant money set aside by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to offset the cost of state-required part-time police officer training at the state's "Bridge Academy." Three part-time officers in Leverett are required to attend, and the money works out to a subsidy of \$2,113 per officer. The total cost of the training was estimated at \$5,000 and \$6,000 per officer.

Shively commented that the remainder of the cost would have to be borne by the officers, as the town could not justify the expense for officers who only worked a few shifts per month.

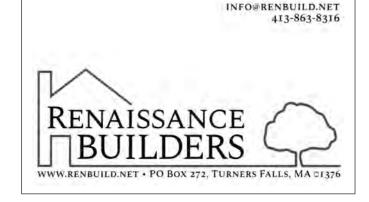
The board announced that resident Cheryl Howland had volunteered to conduct a workshop later in January for town employees on "Working with people with disabilities as a town employee." Howland had previously worked in disability services at UMass Amherst.

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ERVING from page A1

board hearing on the issue. Participants asked what kind of development Erving needs, whether the town should maintain the four-unit cap, and when the public vote should be held.

Planning board chair Michael Shaffer, Smith said, had sent an email with his personal opinion that caps should be kept on the number of units and the size of a residential development, and that the bylaws should be presented at the annual town meeting.

Jacob Smith noted that the planning board had not made any official recommendations for changes to the proposed bylaws after the hearing. Bryan Smith said the planning board would discuss them in late January.

Selectboard member Scott Bastarache said that although the town's practice has been to vote on zoning

at special town meetings, he favored presenting the laws at the annual town meeting, as it would allow more time to work on changes to their language.

Selectboard member William Bembury said he was in favor of presenting the bylaws at a special town meeting, because they "are too long and complicated for an annual meeting." "People come out when they want to come out," he argued.

Finance committee member Debra
Smith said she thought a special town
meeting would be better because "people get burned out"

after going through the town budget at the annual.

Mark Burnett, a member of the board of assessors, remarked that people turn out at the annual town meeting in greater numbers. He said that while commercial and industrial development brings money to the town, residential development costs the town money. Referring to one proposal for reuse at the former International Paper

Mill, Burnett said that 60 residential units there might translate to 30 more students at Erving Elementary School.

Bastarache said the IP Mill redevelopment would occur over time, and that providing education and other town services for 60 more residents would be "sustainable."

The proposed bylaws would also change the name of the French King commercial district, modify the classi-

fication of one side of Gunn Street, and create "planned unit development" overlay districts. Planned unit development is defined as a unified mixture of land uses and buildings developed as a single entity.

Under state law, zoning bylaw changes must be presented to the selectboard, which then passes the changes back to the planning board.

The selectboard said they would review a response from the planning board at their January 24 meeting, and agreed that proposals for the redevelopment of the Pleasant Street School property would not be reviewed until the zoning bylaws were voted on.

Road Layouts & STM Warrant

The selectboard also held a public hearing concerning newly surveyed layouts for Care Drive, Public Works Boulevard, Pleasant Street, and Highland Avenue. Several residents asked about the surveys, and questioned some of the results for Highland Avenue.

The board decided to close the hearing for the first three roadways, but continue the hearing for Highland Avenue on January 24. The layouts will be presented at a town meeting where residents can vote on whether to accept them.

The board reviewed a draft warrant for the special town meeting. Articles included the four road layouts, joining a regional mosquito control district, disposing of the town-owned property at 17 Moore Street property, an easement on Pratt Street, paying bills from previous fiscal years, and adding money to the stabilization fund.

The draft zoning bylaw changes, including a revised zoning map, are included in the warrant.

Department Budgets

Police chief Robert Holst has requested a \$512,450 police department budget for FY '23, up 9.9% from the current year. The increases are mainly due to wages and training costs.

Holst said that one officer completed training at the state's police academy this year, and two more will attend next year.

Fire chief Philip Wonkka said the cost of hardware and fire gear was increasing by 15% to 30%. The \$441,373 budget request is an increase of \$23,303 over the current year. The main drivers are wages and the cost of ambulance service.

Bastarache praised Wonkka for taking on the majority of responsibility for the town's COVID response, as

the board of health was not able to do that.

The highway department requested \$374,425, an increase of \$12,246, mainly due to wage and overtime increases. Highway superintendent Glenn McCrory said materials and contractor costs were also increasing.

"Previously, the Town had appropriated into a general special article to provide for needs throughout the year," McCrory wrote. "Is it possible to put money away in that line and start building it up?" The board asked McCrory to bring up the idea with the capital planning committee.

The solid waste disposal request was for \$208,107, up by \$12,554 due to contractual increases in hauling costs and the increased expense of Anything Goes. Bryan Smith noted that once town stickers were required on garbage bags, Erving's trash tonnage decreased by 30%.

Bastarache said that providing three free stickers

per week per household worked well in controlling the amount of trash collected, and that extra stickers should be available for free.

The wastewater enterprise fund request of \$859,917 is an increase of \$24,721, with wages and maintenance cited as the drivers.

The water enterprise fund request of \$97,711 is a decrease of \$5,742, because debt on the town's water tank was fully paid off this year.

The animal control officer (\$12,445) and tree warden (\$34,537) requests were level-funded with FY '22.

Sewer Financing

Burnett said that

while commercial

development brings

and industrial

money to the

town, residential

the town money.

Bastarache said

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be "sustainable."

that providing

development costs

Treasurer Jennifer Eichorn and consultant David Eisenthal presented several ways to finance the \$1.57 million Arch Street sewer main project. The town can borrow the entire amount by issuing 20-year bonds, or

spend \$1 million from cash reserves and borrow the remaining \$570,000.

According to Eisenthal, if the town uses its cash reserve to pay for much of the cost, it will lose investment income from its reserve.

Bastarache said he was concerned about drawing from stabilization for major projects, especially since the town is also facing the repair of Poplar Mountain Road and two bridges.

Bryan Smith reminded the board that when the library was built using stabilization funds, the board set a policy of restoring the funds to stabilization. Jacob Smith added that only two more repayments will be needed to cover the library's construction.

Eisenthal said his calculations didn't include the assumption that the town would restore the money to stabilization. He told the board that a decision on financing the sewer project should be made before the end of the fiscal year, because bonds are issued in March.

"We won't come to a conclusion tonight," said Jacob. The board agreed to review the calculations and revisit the topic at a future meeting.

Other Business

The board commended planning assistant Mariah Kurtz on obtaining two grants: \$10,000 for a sculpture at Riverfront Park, and \$13,000 for evaluating of the town's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

FirstLight Power awarded the town \$10,000 for a public sculpture incorporating repurposed, reclaimed, or found materials that evokes reflection on the impacts of climate change, ecological resilience, reducing waste, and appreciation of natural resources. A five-member committee, with Kurtz as the supervisor, will seek proposals from artists and decide on the art work to be installed.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments will work with Kurtz and town departments to evaluate ADA compliance in all town facilities, activities, and services, including parks, sidewalks, cemeteries, and recreational programs offered by the town.

The town revoked the liquor license for the Crooked Tap Pub after the business withdrew its application. The Crooked Tap has not filed with the town as an operating business for 2022, and the selectboard indicated it could not issue a license for a business that was not operating.

The board approved hiring retired highway department employee Jim Paulin as a part-time plow operator for the 2022 season, if the department is short-staffed during a snow emergency.

After reviewing statistics provided by town administrator Bryan Smith showing an increase in COVID-positive people in Erving, the board approved a mask mandate for the interior of any town buildings and town vehicles where more

buildings and town vehicles where more than one person is present.

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WENDELL from page A1

building maintenance and repair.

The town now owns ozone generators, and selectboard member Laurie DiDonato suggested they might be rented to others who need to remove mold. The idea was rejected because of liability – ozone can be harmful to humans – but Keller said the generators may be used in the library cellar or the senior center, (under controlled conditions).

Tax Rate Down, Taxes Up

At the end of every year, the assessors meet the selectboard for a tax classification hearing. They recommend a single tax rate for commercial, residential, and personal properties, the selectboard concurs, and the estimated tax rate is set.

In 2021 the town hired Regional Resource Group (RRG) of Leominster, and RRG president Harald Scheid Zoomed into the December 22 meeting for the hearing.

The town's total valuation has increased, in keeping with nationwide increases in home prices, bringing the levy limit imposed by Proposition 2½ up by 3% to \$2,613,902. The average Wendell house value increased from \$175,000 to \$187,000, and this allowed the fin com to lower the estimated tax rate from \$24.54 per thousand dollars in valuation to \$23.24 per thousand.

While this is may be good news for the fin com, which has been coping with the tax cap of \$25 per thousand, the average taxpayer will see an annual increase of \$52 due to the increased home value.

Scheid said the new valuations are based on 2020 sales and prices, which only began to rise late in the year, and warned that 2021 sales will most likely bring a larger increase in the town's total valuation next year. 80% of the town's tax income is from residential taxes, and 5% is from personal property, which is mainly owned by utilities.

The selectboard voted to keep the single rate.

Highway and Police

Highway commission chair Phil Delorey spoke to the board about several issues. He asked that new qualified and licensed town employees receive flexible pay during their probation period depending on their qualifications, and not \$2.50 less, as has been the policy.

Delorey also asked that one road worker be promoted to assistant superintendent with a pay raise so Rich Wilder, the regular superintendent, can take earned vacation time. A road crew worker had that position, but when he left a year ago, the position disappeared along with the raise. Delorey wanted it re-established, and the fin com has advocated for the position.

The selectboard voted to approve both requests

Delorey is also overseeing renovation of Wendell's police station into a usable substation for the Leverett police department. Part of that renovation requires moving the equipment for the Hilltown Network connection to the Massachusetts middle-mile network, which provides through-the-air internet connection to some houses around the town center. Leverett police have no problem with the equipment staying in the building out of the way in the attic. The electricity that Hilltown uses is low enough that they can pay yearly, not monthly.

Place for Pile Sought

Tree warden Cliff Dornbush said he had three or four loads of wood put at 97 Wendell Depot Road before learning the property no longer belongs to the town. He still has a list of dangerous trees he would have cut, but was advised to hold off until a new site for a wood bank can be established.

Keller got the the list of townowned properties from selectboard member Gillian Budine and said he was willing to drive around town to find an appropriate place. The new location will need road access, and Dornbush said the new lot will need a 40-foot diameter clearing for the log truck boom.

So far two households have reached out for firewood.

Other Business

Following a recommendation from the board of health, the board voted to again mandate using masks indoors in town-owned buildings. "We have a highest rate [of COVID-19 infections in town] ever," Budine said. Her programs with young children are not meeting in person.

Tanner said he has been pleased to see an attitude shift in the approach to correcting Swift River School's water, in which levels of PFAS above MassDEP standards have been detected. New Salem is hiring engineer Chris Stoddard to look at look at the situation and recommend the best option.

Tanner was concerned by the cost of the first option offered, a filtration system costing \$40,000 to install and \$5,000 to replace each barrel of collected contaminant. Keller, with the advice of town engineer Jim Slavas, has said a new well is likely to be a better long-term option.

Budine said she would act as liaison for the IT grant aimed at increasing efficiency and cooperation among surrounding towns. Union 28 superintendent Jen Culkeen agreed to work with the "rural efficiencies" grant aimed at reducing costs by sharing services and regionalization.

Tanner said the fin com wants to sponsor a town hall rental for member Al MacIntyre's music group so that MacIntyre does not have to pay the rental fee. The board approved that request, but the date is postponed until pandemic conditions improve.

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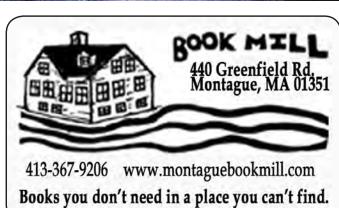
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GARAGE from page A1

sits next to the canalside bike path, also includes another small garage, a small shed, and a large salt shed.

The price for the sale was set in advance at \$75,000, and the capital improvement committee (CIC) was appointed to review responses to the RFP based solely on the quality of the proposals received. These were to be evaluated according to six criteria: the qualifications of the applicant; the plan for reuse; the financing and investment strategy; evidence of financial viability; economic benefit to the town; and benefit to the immediate neighborhood.

The CIC is expected to make a

recommendation to the selectboard, who will make a final decision on the building's sale. Town administrator Steve Ellis, a member of the committee, noted that all the proposals were submitted by property owners with experience in the town.

The first was submitted by **Chris** Couture, a third-generation business owner in Montague. Couture owns numerous properties, several of which are along the northwest side of Avenue A, including the lot abutting 500 Avenue A. He proposed to improve the building and lease out parts of it in a similar fashion to his other operations, though he identified no specific tenants.

As far as an investment strategy was concerned, Couture said it would depend on the interest of the tenants. He offered the town \$80,000 for the property, \$5,000 above the bid price.

Ellis said that he thought Couture was a "very good business owner" and that he "trust[ed] his assessments," but found the proposal difficult to rate because "so much was left unstated."

CIC chair Greg Garrison agreed: "It's kind of like 'I'll take it, I'll do something with it – trust me, I'll get it done.'.... The RFP was looking for stuff a little bit deeper."

Town planner Walter Ramsey called Couture a "great business owner" with "some pretty prominent tenants," listing Simon's Stamps, Replay, Brick & Feather Brewery, and Freedom Credit Union.

The second proposal was from Dr. Sohail Waein, who owns a medical business called New England Wound Care (a.k.a. NEWCare), and is in the process of developing the property at 38 Avenue A, the ancient "Cumberland Farms" building across from the town hall. Waein has recently been forced to downsize that project from four mixed-used stories to two commercial floors due to limited bank financing.

Waein proposes a two-phase upgrade. He would first renovate the building to house staff of two of his businesses – NEWCare and a medical distribution company, Zosma LLC – pending the completion of his other project. After those operations move to 38 Avenue A the second phase, or "new project," would focus on "the development of an indoor farming venture" that would grow microgreens and saffron using solar power.

Garrison, noting that Waien specified that cannabis would not be grown on the site, said he had rated this proposal as "highly advantageous" in five of the six criteria.

Ellis and town planner Walter Ramsey said the project may be viable but expressed concern that it could draw attention and energy away from Waien's other Avenue A project. Ramsey said the COVID pandemic had "slowed things down" during the financing phase, but that Waien has now hired a project manager and hopes to break ground this construction season.

The third proposal came from Nova Real Estate, a business affiliated with Nova Motorcycles on Second Street. Peter Chilton, a co-owner of the vintage motorcycle repair shop and manager of its real estate arm, attended Wednesday's Zoom meeting as an observer.

Nova's property next to Unity Park not only houses the motorcycle shop but a number of smaller spaces leased to "gear heads, creators, woodworkers and tinkerers," in the words of the RFP. The proposal would extend this incubator model to 500 Avenue A, "with a slant toward more industrial processes."

CIC members, including Ellis, seemed impressed by this proposal in part because Nova had included letters of interest from a number of potential tenants - manufacturers Khameleon Koatings and Beowulf Media Blasting, Happy Valley Tree Service, welder Jon Bander, and photographer Anja Schutz – as well as a favorable letters from Greenfield Savings Bank, two investors, and the state agency MassDevelopment.

"This is the best-presented proposal the town has received," said Garrison, who said he had also rated it as "highly advantageous" by five of the six criteria. Garrison added that his wife had been an investor in the Strathmore complex when it was in use as an artists' cooperative, and he cautioned that such incubator spaces sometimes have "minimal" impact on overall employment.

Ramsey reported that Nova is currently in the "conceptual planning" stages for another project, a new light-industrial building on the vacant lot across Second Street from the motorcycle shop. "It's another unknown as to how the two projects

Ellis noted that while Nova's pro-

the CIC came from Powertown Properties LLC, owned by David LaRue. Larue also owns the former Chick's Garage building at 151 Third Street, which currently houses the Pioneer Valley Brewery.

Garrison called this proposal "very detailed" and "advantageous, but not highly advantageous." Ellis said he considered LaRue highly qualified as a developer, but questioned whether the proposed uses would produce year-round business. "I respect what he's accomplished in town," he said, "but I don't see

The committee did not take a final vote on the RFP response on Wednesday, as not all of its members had completed their "scorecards" evaluating all four proposals. Members suggested a number of additional questions to be directed to the developers, including how the two companies already working on buildings downtown would plan to "sequence" multiple projects.

"I see it heading for a tie," said member Jason Burbank.

Ellis suggested Ramsey could reach out to the developers with the follow-up questions. The final motion, approved unanimously, left it up to Ellis and Garrison to decide whether to invite them to the next CIC meeting for interviews, or have them submit answers in writ-

meeting has not been



According to the proposal, Nova is discussing financing options with MassDevelopment including a program to fund conversion of the garage to run on an air-source heat pump. The packet was rounded out with concept drawings of the building's exterior.

would work together," he said.

posal suggested an automotive repair business would be an "ideal anchor tenant," they did not indicate they were working with one. "It's hard not to be excited about a proposal from that group," he said. "They've shown they can make it happen."

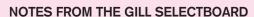
The final proposal discussed by

LaRue wrote he would serve refreshments from the "outbuilding" on the property to customers using the bike path, and use part of the main structure to run the coffee-roasting business he currently operates on Third Street. The rest of the former DPW garage would be used for storage, but also to house vintage cars and other vehicles in an "auto museum." LaRue also suggested organizing a yearly "bicycle parade" from the site, as well as regular car shows and musical events.

the same strength of proposal."

ing. The date of the next

posted as of press time.



Evolving Safety Standards

By JERRI HIGGINS

The Gill selectboard met Monday evening to discuss the safety status of the fire department's Engine 1, grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and several windows in need of replacement at the Elementary School, among other business.

Selectboard member Randy Crochier asked fire chief Gene Beaubien for clarification on Engine 1 after Beaubien had called it "unsafe" at the December 20 selectboard meeting.

"By NFPA standards, it is unsafe," Beaubien said. Of concern are the firetruck's open back seats and lap seat belts now deemed dangerous by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

"Engine 1 does not meet today's standards of highway safety," added deputy fire chief William Kimball. "It does meet the requirements of when it was purchased with the lap belts, and it does meet the Massachusetts inspection standards as far as safety and emissions."

Kimball said that regardless of these issues, he thought the firetruck should stay in service, because the department relies upon it. "It is our primary water supply engine to basically draft from any source, whether it is the river or a static source of water," he said, adding that not having it in service would also make Gill reliant on other towns for a water supply truck in the event of a fire.

Crochier expressed concern about exposing the town to liability by operating unsafe equipment.

"It is safe to use," said Beaubien. "The brakes work, the steering wheel works, the tires work, the engine works."

"And operating it as you operate it is not unsafe for any member of the fire department, providing that you do not put people in the open back seats?" Crochier asked.

"Yes," responded both Beaubien and Kimball.

Kimball discussed replacing Engine 1 with a mini-pumper engine as the department's "first piece of equipment out [on a call]," as it is able to get to areas the large firetrucks cannot.

Crochier also asked about the tendency for mini pumpers to roll over, and if that made purchasing one a bad investment. Both Beaubien and Kimball said they thought it would still be worth the \$500,000 investment.

"When we do have fires, it is of utmost importance to have the proper equipment to do that. Without a water supply engine, you have two and a half minutes of firefighting activities," Kimball said, emphasizing the need for a minimum of two engines. "I do not know if you are familiar with firefighting, but there has never been a two-and-a-half-minute fire that I have been to. At that point, if you do not have something supplying that engine, you are going to be in trouble.'

Asked about the department's confidence on receiving the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters grant, which is now double the amount available in past years, Kimball said the department is "fairly confident" that they meet the qualifications to replace the 27-year-old Engine 1. He said loosened restrictions on fire call volumes and truck age work in Gill's favor.

"Regardless, we would like to see capital [improvements] purchase the mini-pumper," he told the selectboard. "If we get awarded a grant for \$33,000, we can replace Engine 2, and then we would have a full fleet that we would not need to replace for another 25 to 30 years."

"How are you buying a truck for \$33,000?" asked

Kimball said that Gill's share of the cost would be "5% per population, which is about \$33,000." If the department is awarded the grant, Kimball said they would purchase "a \$700,000 rescue pumper – which Engine 2 essentially is now, but we are looking to replace Engine 1 with a rescue pumper that would carry our extrication tools. It would [have] a full-sized, 1,000-gallon tank."

The selectboard unanimously approved applying for a state grant to purchase two automated external defibrillators (AED) for the fire and police departments. The program awards up to \$2,500 per municipality for the devices.

Town administrator Ray Purington said that any portion of the AED cost not covered by grant funds would come out of the Northfield Mount Hermon's annual emergency service account, up to \$2,500 for a second unit.

School Windows

Purington told the board that Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds covered the retrofitting of 30 windows at Gill Elementary School last year, but that it has since been discovered that 14 more need replacing.

"When they were going around figuring out which windows were hard to open, the person making the judgment call was a bit burlier than the average window-opener at the school," Purington explained. "We got a request to do 14 additional units, at a cost of \$219 per window."

Crochier asked if the 14 windows cannot open, or are hard to open compared to the newly replaced windows. "Is this the last time, or should we expect the next 14 to get on the next group of monies that are available?" he asked.

"It looks like everything is okay except for the 14," said Purington.

"But 'okay' does not tell me what 'okay' means," said Crochier. "I am gun-shy with the school, so I am just asking."

Purington recommended using the town's building maintenance account, saying that although the project could qualify for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, "everything that I have been hearing is that you do not do little dollar amounts with ARPA – the paperwork will kill you." He also noted that the ARPA bill "included a \$75,000 earmark for work at Gill Elementary," but would still recommend using town funds.

"There was a big earmark a few years back for the fire station," said Crochier, "but they have not seen any of that money yet. I am sure we could find places for \$75,000 at the school if it does actually materialize."

The approval was passed 2 to 1 by selectboard chair Greg Snedeker and board member Charles Garbiel, with Crochier voting no.

New Owner

Gill received an abutter's notice from Swampbass, Inc., owned by Lucas Aldrich of Greenfield. The new business would occupy the former site of Riverside Radiator, which abuts the Riverside municipal building. Swampbass is seeking special permits from the zoning board of appeals for a propane filling station, automotive sales, and automotive repair detailing, as well as an operations base for CAD Transportation.

Snedeker asked for assurance that there would not be "runoff or chemicals spillover onto the town property."

"I also want to know what they have for floor drains, and if they are hooked up to the sewer system," said Crochier. "They may need to ensure they meet all the requirements of the sewer district. Other than that - welcome to Gill, and thank you for choosing us."

Other Business

Purington reported that the town received \$2,487 in FY'21 from the Quintus Allen Trust Fund.

An original trustee of Greenfield Savings Bank, Allen bequeathed an educational expenses trust fund to the towns of Colrain, Gill, Leyden, and Shelburne. The fund began interest disbursements upon his death in 1884. Gill's balance sits at \$12,321 and can be used for educational enrichment projects, supplies, and other uses that fit the Trust's mission.

Twelve outstanding sewer bill accounts will be liened onto FY'22 real estate tax bills, Purington told the selectboard, "where they are a heck of a lot more collectable."

At the end of the meeting, the selectboard went into executive session to discuss settlement talks over First-Light Power's relicensing, pertaining to recreation.

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MONTAGUE from page A1

Center in Greenfield, but that in general, "the symptoms right now are mainly constitutional cold symptoms - runny nose, fatigue, and sore throats..."

This led to a discussion of test kits. With regard to the 2,700 kits recently supplied to the town by the state, Wasiuk said that said that "the demand has outpaced the supply."

This point was supported by Council on Aging director Roberta Potter, who said that the Gill-Montague senior center had distributed three allotments over the past week. "I'm still getting a lot of calls," she said.

The conversation then turned to the pros and cons of obtaining more kits. "This thing is constantly changing," said emergency management director John Zellmann. "I wouldn't overload on them, but I think it's the right thing to do to get some testing."

"Let's say we buy 5,000, and can get those to people," said Kuklewicz, "Is that enough? I don't know."

This set the tone for the next 15 minutes of discussion. Town administrator Steve Ellis described a frustrating and uncertain process attempting to obtain information about test kits from a state list of vendors. The vendors on the list, he said, "order different products... It is unclear, if you order 500, if you get a giant kit with a single unit for dispensing, or whether you're getting 500 individual kits."

Ellis said he had called one of the suppliers on the state's list, and "it was a conversation that made everything feel less than certain."

After more discussion of the uncertainties involved, selectboard member Matt Lord proposed a motion to approve a budget of \$10,000 from federal COVID relief funds to

purchase "at least 100 test kits" to be used for "continuity of services in town government." After more discussion, the motion was changed to purchasing 1,000 kits, for a price not to exceed \$25,000.

The board unanimously approved the motion, after changing its wording several more times.

Streamlining

Finance committee chair Jen Audley, with a quorum of her committee in attendance, presented a proposal to change an important element of the town's budget process for the upcoming fiscal year. Instead of the finance and selectboard meeting jointly during the winter and early spring to review and recommend the town's operating budget, the selectboard would first review department requests in January, and then make recommendations to the fin com.

"A preliminary budget already exists, which was presented to the selectboard and finance committee members in the middle of December," Audley explained. "To get from there to the selectboard saying, 'yep, this is sort of in the ballpark for our budget for next year, and now we'd like you to take a closer look at it, finance committee' is not a big ask."

Audley said her committee should not need to hear, for example, details as to why a given department might wish to expand its personnel, but should instead evaluate that request in the context of the broader budget, available revenue. and "the needs of the town."

Ellis noted that most of the proposed FY'23 budget did not reflect major changes from the current year. "It's largely several personnel requests that are driving changes in the budget," he said. Those requests were already been made to the selectboard "in an advisory

capacity" in November, he said.

Members of both committees spoke in support of the proposed process change, and there was no strong opposition, although neither board took a formal vote.

The new process will presumably eliminate joint meetings between the two boards on Wednesdays in January but increase the selectboard's workload at its regular Monday night meetings. "This is going to put a sense of urgency on the selectboard for the first month," said finance committee member John Hanold.

The processes for reviewing capital requests, school assessments, and other "money articles" which are also part of the town budget approved at the annual town meeting were not discussed.

Less Overflow

Water pollution control facility (WPCF) superintendent Chelsey Little appeared to update the board on her department's operations.

She began with a review of the town's "Long Term Control Plan" for continuing to reduce stormwater overflows into the Connecticut River. These flows have been significantly reduced by a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) project in Turners Falls in 2005, and storm drain separation and sewer lining since that time.

Little reviewed an update prepared by the engineering firm Wright-Pierce which found that volume of overflows at the town's three CSO outlets near Greenfield Road, Avenue A, and Seventh and L streets had decreased by 78%, 85%, and 95% respectively since 2005.

As for "next steps," Little said the facility and its consultants will monitor the town's sewer system to identify areas of continued inflow and infiltration, including in Millers Falls, which sends its waste-

water to Erving.

Little also announced the installation of a new sludge press at the plant, which will go on line this week, and upgrades to its chlorination system. She gave a "shout out" to her staff, who did much of the work on these projects, and Ellis said the staff may have saved the town "six figures."

She also described an upcoming project to replace old aeration blowers with new high-efficiency models, and the board approved increasing the engineering contract for that project from \$24,700 to \$31,700.

Finally, the board approved a change in the title and description of the plant's chief operator job to make it possible to hire for that position without a Grade 6 wastewater license in hand.

Other Business

Under "town administrator business," Ellis announced that Kearsarge Energy had nearly completed its solar array on town's former burn dump on Sandy Lane. He said Kearsarge was still waiting for approval of the state SMART incentive for the array, and that the agreement between the town and the company may have to be amended to coincide with the dates the incentive is available.

Kuklewicz said he had noticed "a lot of wood" at the wood bank nearby the new array, and urged

this newspaper to publicize it. The firewood can be obtained for free by eligible seniors through the Council on Aging.

The board voted to execute a \$169,000 grant from the state to replace the pump station at the airport industrial park.

At the beginning of the meeting, during public participation time, three residents urged the selectboard to call in Trinity Senior Communities, which owns the former Farren hospital in Montague City, and request more transparency about the nonprofit's decision to demolish the complex.

Montague City resident Lilith Wolinsky suggested that the board should invite state senator Jo Comerford and state representative Natalie Blais to a public meeting with Trinity. Janel Nockleby of Turners Falls supported these comments, and said she had been having difficulty researching the history of the Farren decision-making process from documents on the town website.

"Concerned residents need to hear all the missing information about redevelopment versus demolition, and to discuss with the board how best to proceed," said Montague Center's Ariel Elan. "I truly believe that if the Selectboard does not invite the public into a thorough discussion of the Farren... you will

lose the trust of many of our townspeople."



LOOKING BACK:

10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on January 5, 2012: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Up on Brushy Mountain

With the stroke of a pen, more than a fifth of the total land area in the town of Leverett was permanently conserved from development, announced Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Secretary Richard Sullivan on Friday, December 23.

In the largest land conservation deal in Massachusetts since the 1920s, the Department of Fish and Game purchased a conservation restriction on 5.4 square miles of land owned by the W. D. Cowls company of North Amherst, covering most of Brushy Mountain and adjoining parcels in Shutesbury, for the price of \$8.8 million.

The money for the conservation purchase comes from a mix of federal, foundation, and state funds; the sale was assisted by the Amherst-based Kestrel Trust and Shelburne-based Franklin Land Trust.

Community Action Heats Up With Higgins at the Helm

Until the power goes out and the furnace stops working, most of us do not think about what it means to be cold at home, how debilitating it is to dress in layers and still need to huddle under blankets to stay warm.

Clare Higgins, the executive director of Community Action, thinks





about this all the time, and she worries, because this year the federal government has made drastic cuts in LIHEAP, the fuel assistance program, administered through her agency. That will translate into a \$50 million shortfall for fuel assistance in Massachusetts from last year, and reduced staffing, and that will mean there's less of everything in a year when the cost of fuel is high and rising.

"I worry about the elderly," Higgins said, "about babies, about children trying to do their homework in cold rooms, and people having to choose between heat, food or necessary medications."

Throughout our region more than 9.000 families of low income receive fuel assistance because they cannot afford to heat their homes. Last year that meant a maximum benefit of \$1,050 for a household that heats with oil. This year, federal cuts have reduced that maximum benefit to \$675. Higgins said that's barely enough to fill most tanks once. The maximum natural gas benefit is \$285, down from \$750 last year.

People who use gas or electric heat cannot be automatically shut off if they can't pay their bills, but people using oil or propane can. And so they ration fuel, keeping thermostats low. Often too low for health and productivity. In response to this urgent need, Community Action is activating the Heat Up Program, a fundraising drive that "relies on the kindness of people."





TRAIN from page A1

the meeting, and presentations were made by Paul Nelson and Anna Barry of HNTB.

The study's initial goal was to review at least six options for rail service along the northern tier, but Nelson proposed dividing it into two phases. The first would look at two alternatives: a "minimum build" that would provide passenger service under "existing rail conditions," and a "maximum build" for "the best level of passenger rail service though major investments in the rail infrastructure."

Phase two, according to Nelson, would then involve public input "to develop the final four service plan alternatives" between the minimum and maximum options.

Although the materials and discussion at the December meeting did not specify any precise route for the train service, the "minimum build" under "existing conditions" would appear to be using the east-west freight line that runs through Franklin County, currently owned by Pan Am Southern, for passenger service.

That line runs from Fitchburg, where it would presumably link to the Boston commuter rail, west through Gardner, Athol, and Orange to Millers Falls, loops south by Lake Pleasant and Montague Center, and crosses the Connecticut River to Greenfield. There it would connect to the north-south rail already in place; the current freight line travels south through Deerfield, northwest to Shelburne Falls, and on to Charlemont and North Adams.

'We have an existing system west of Wachusett," Nelson said, referring to the Boston-to-Fitchburg commuter rail line, "that doesn't serve passenger rail right now, only freight. The rail is in a condition that would only provide service at a certain speed.... Once we understand the minimum service that could be provided. then we will take a look at physical infrastructure and find a way to increase speeds, and understand how successful investments would be in driving up ridership."

Orange selectboard member Andrew Smith asked if his town was being considered as a stop on the east-west line. Barry said the enabling legislation referenced a few stops, including Greenfield and North Adams, but "the study will assess all other stops... The town of Orange is in the running for potential stations and will be part of the evaluation process.

Joshua Ostroff, director of the Transportation for Massachusetts coalition suggested that the group should consider aligning its recommendations with future federal funding opportunities. Niles pointed to the recently-passed federal infrastructure bill, saying that "were all kind of excited in terms of transportation options that can lead to."

Several speakers emphasized the importance of considering electric power over diesel for the rail system, emphasizing reducing greenhouse gas emissions as a key goal. Barry said that the researchers and working group will look at "a variety of alternatives that deliver travel times in a continuum... There could be electrical service or diesel, depending on what the community wants, how quickly, and what the benefits are. Electrification could happen down the line."

Other speakers questioned what they perceived to be the long time frame for completing the study. State representative John Barrett of North Adams, who said he had been working on the east-west rail issue "for nearly 50 years," said the time frame should be reduced. "We're the only state in the union that takes so long to do these studies," he said.

Megan Randall of North Pownal, Vermont asked whether extending the line to Albany is under consideration. "Local, state and regional officials should be working with officials from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to put this type of service on the agenda," she said.

Barry told the working group that CSX Transportation, "one of the nation's largest freight railroads," has asked the federal Surface Transportation Board to allow it to acquire Pan Am. The board will hold a hearing on that purchase on January 13, and Barry said it is expected to issue a decision in mid-April, effective in May.

"So clearly, we have some shifting circumstances surrounding the northern-tier-right of way that we will keep an eye on," she said. "But the study can proceed effectively while that is going on."

The next working group meeting will held be in the spring, according to Niles.

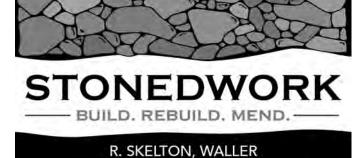


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CONTRACT from page A1

the NewsGuild's unit council chair, said in a statement.

According to the union, the contract includes "strong protections against any union member losing their job to outsourcing," and pay raises of 3% this year and 2% next year. Employees will be guaranteed "just cause" protection, severance pay, and three months of healthcare if they are laid off. The contract also includes a "more generous compensation plan" for advertising representatives and additional vacation time for longtime employees.

The agreement comes after years of consolidation and outsourcing at NNE's four daily newspapers, the Gazette, the Greenfield Recorder, the Athol Daily News and the Concord Monitor, mirroring national trends. According to the Pew Research Center, traditional print newsrooms lost 57% of their staff between 2008 and 2020, a loss of about 40,000 jobs.

When the Pioneer Valley News-Guild went public with its organizing effort in 2018, around 75 non-managerial employees were eligible for membership. It was formalized by a 40-29 vote overseen by the National Labor Relations Board.

After a series of layoffs before and during the pandemic, 23 employees remain members of the bargaining unit today.

During the final months of bargaining, NewsGuild members picketed the newspaper and staged several workplace actions. In October the union announced a "work-to-rule," calling on members to cease work after hours or not explicitly outlined in their job descriptions. In November reporters announced a byline strike, though the newspaper's editors apparently continued to add bylines to their stories against their wishes.

Last month, a group of 12 Gazette columnists who receive no compensation for their writing announced that they would withhold their columns until NNE met the union's demands. State senator Jo



"I just get so frustrated with rules and regulations instead of good old common sense," Reenie Grybko Clancy told the crowd of about 90 gathered at a Christmas Eve vigil for emergency housing in front of the Farren Care Center. "Why do we have to bring everything up to exact codes? I'm sure the homeless don't care if there's lead paint... They're not going to chew on windowsills. Freezing your a-s-s off on the outside is pretty rotten. Just let them come in for the night."

Comerford and state representative

Lindsay Sabadosa were among sev-

eral columnists who attended a press

conference outside the Gazette's

it has been a great honor, and in fact

something I look forward to every

month," Comerford said. "It's an

opportunity to get closer to the peo-

ple I work for... I want the Gazette

to thrive, and the way I believe the

Gazette thrives is by me standing in

solidarity with the fellow columnists

Thirteen NNE staff members

were laid off at the beginning of the

pandemic, and in July 2020 the Ga-

zette closed its onsite printing press,

laying off 29 workers and outsourc-

ing the work to a printing facility in

Auburn owned by the Gannett Com-

pany, the nation's largest publisher of

daily newspapers. Eight more were

let go in December 2020, includ-

ing Gazette editor-in-chief Brooke

Hauser, whose position was replaced

"I love this paper, and writing for

Northampton office.

and the workers."

by a regional executive editor role filled by Greenfield Recorder editor Joan Livingston.

Livingston is retiring this month, and this week the company announced Gazette managing editor Dan Crowley as her successor.

A request to NNE publisher Shawn Palmer for comment received no response as of press time. Palmer told the Gazette last week that he was "very happy" the agreement had been reached. Additional requests for comment from NewsGuild members were unanswered.

"We could not have achieved this historic victory without the unwavering support of community members across the Connecticut River Valley, including the amazing group of columnists who went on strike," reporter and union activist Dusty Christensen said in a statement. "We look forward to continuing to work with the community to strengthen the Fourth Estate here in western Massachusetts."



next game is at home this Thursday against Smith Academy.

The Turners Falls girls' basketball team, meanwhile, is riding a two-game winning streak after starting the season 0 and 3. Most notable is the victory over the Green Wave.

The Thunder have a balanced attack this year with Emily Young, Lily Spera, Taylor Greene, Madison Liimatainen, and Steph Peterson all contributing.

They travel to Athol this Friday to take on the Red Bears.

After a month-long hiatus, the Turners Falls swim teams will have their first meet of the new year when Amherst comes to town on Friday, January 17. The ladies are currently 1 and 2 with Leah Gump, Ella Guidaboni, and Sophia McComb all earning points, while in the boys' lanes, Desmond Wallace has been scoring points for the 0 and 3 Thunder.

Across the road, over at Franklin Tech, the boys' basketball team is 2 and 4, with Ty Sadoski leading the way. Noah Ausikaitis and Robert Belval have also hit double digits for the Eagles. Their next game is this Thursday in Greenfield.

Have you noticed the bicycle repair station at Unity Park?

It has Allen wrenches and a tire pump. New bike rack, too.

Town planner Walter Ramsey told us it was part of a recent

park gateway project funded by a MassDOT Shared Streets

and Spaces grant. Two picnic tables are on back order...

As for Tech's girls basketball, the Big Three in scoring are Kendra Campbell, Kaitlin Trudeau, and Hannah Gilbert. The Eagles are 3 and 1 so far, with a date coming up on Friday up in Sheffield against Mount Everett.

And finally, their multi-school blowout held on December 11, the Tech wrestling team has had two head-to-head matchups with Cameron May, Camryn Laster, Jordan Lamarche, Brody Williams, Josh Brunelleand, and Joshua Lynde all earning points.

Tech gets back on the mats on Saturday when they host Tri-County.

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Above: Shelter advocates gather outside the Farren Care Center in Montague City on December 24.

INTERVIEW

Local Artist's Clouds Earn Spot in City

By NINA ROSSI

MONTAGUE – Last fall, the city of Northampton decided to beautify their downtown by decorating newspaper boxes in eight locations. Artists were invited to submit images via an open call for the Newspaper Box Public Art Program, and the project was paid for by the Northampton planning and sustainability department. Each winner received a \$350 stipend.

The chosen artwork was printed on vinyl and wrapped around the boxes by Sunraise Printing of Hadley. One of the eight artists chosen was Mason Wicks-Lim of Montague!

I asked Mason a series of questions about the project, and here are his answers.

MR: How old are you, and what school do you go to?
MWL: I am just shy of 17, and I'm homeschooled.
Although I've been homeschooled since third grade,
I've also been taking community college classes at
GCC since I was 14.

MR: What medium did you use to create the artwork for the contest?

MWL: The artwork is a digitally manipulated photograph. I took a photograph of some clouds in Maine which I overlaid with a rainbow color scheme. The resulting image was printed on vinyl.

MR: What inspired the rainbow cloud imagery?

MWL: Ever since I was little, social justice has been incredibly important to me. I've grown up going to protests and I'm proud that my whole family advocates for what's right. For me, art has proved to be another avenue through which to carry out social justice



Mason Wicks-Lim on the street in Northampton next to the newspaper box art that he designed.

work. Whether it be through documentary film, photography, or digital art, my work often reflects themes of social justice.

For me, this piece reflects the long-term resilience of the LGBTQ+ community. Despite not identifying as LGBTQ+ myself, my two moms and the many other

see **CLOUDS** page B8



January in NYC: Three Hotels

SOUTH DEERFIELD – New York City is still an exciting city. In fact, there is almost nothing as exciting to me as walking down a crowded NYC avenue with the wind blowing on the way to a fabu-

lous party or to an event in January. I've become a regular visitor to the Big Apple every winter to speak at a travel show, and every time I've stayed in a different hotel.

Though I bet few of my read-



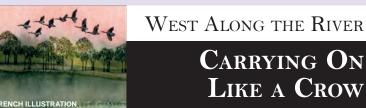
The view from the Vermonter train from Greenfield to New York City.

ers have taken this train, you do know you can pretend it's 1950 and board a comfortable Amtrak train in Greenfield that will whisk you away to the absolutely stunning new Moynihan Train Hall in Manhattan. This transportation temple opened in 2019, and it's remarkably beautiful and efficient.

Train travel is coming back in 2022, so I encourage you to take to the rails, whether it's the whole way to the Big Apple, or to Ikea in New Haven, or to downtown Hartford.

One hotel manager told me that there is no time during the year better than late January to find an inexpensive NYC hotel room. The combination of the holiday season being over and spring not really getting started yet makes it the deadon best time to get a room in the Apple. Here are three interesting

see TRAVELS page B5



By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE -

These first days of the New Year have dawned bleak and damp. And what is a January outdoor writer to write about when winter is such a non-event?

The Poet poses the questions:

Are you authorized to speak For these trees without leaves? ...

December was a complete bust: no snow, no sun, no birds. The landscape has been drab, and at times even ice-covered when the rains turned to sleet and worse. The street leading up and away from our front door to the village has been a skating rink. The dog's claws click on the sidewalk during our morning rounds. Nick skates on all four paws while pursuing his daily investigations down here on the Flat.

Out in the yard, at least there is the cardinal to write about: crimson and vermillion in the bare dogwood, he interrogates this watcher, then the feeder, to decide whether there is any risk involved in going for the feeder full of sunflower seeds hanging from the pole, with hooks intended for summer flower pots. At least he's actually there, accent aigu presence of red in the forlorn landscape. He'll be joined by another five or six of his kind in a confab of cardinals when the dank dusk decides to settle over the back yard

Even indoors the mood is somber too. Not much to cheer about, although the Patriots, after letting us down, have at least turned things around for the playoffs. The Red Sox are not in the news, and even if they were, spring training is more than a month away.

The swing set in the neighbor's yard drips icicles; no matter, hasn't been a child swinging there for years. The fire pit could use a fire. We did actually light up a bonfire there on the Solstice to encourage the sun to come back and get on with its job. Maybe it helped, maybe it didn't, but we can't tell: we haven't seen the sun for more than a week.

The Farmer's Almanac says we'll soon be gaining a minute a day by next weekend, but how will we know?

More questions:

Are you able to explain
What the wind intends to do? ...

Another day of skies staying low in spite of my entreaties. I'd love to look at the waning moon through the bare branches of my maples, but no luck. We can't tell if Orion is rising up there at all. Is his belt still studded with three stars of silver, as in past winter nights?

Our River Street glistens in the mist at midnight. During the day-light hours, the only color out there besides the cardinal is the flash of see **WEST ALONG** page B3



Deborah DeWit, Instruments of Truth. See more at deborahdevit.com.

Pet of Week



"ROVER"

If you are an experienced dog owner who lives out in the country and want an extremely active dog who can keep up with you while you run, hike for miles, ride your ATV around your extensive property, and still have energy left over for a rousing game of fetch, Rover is your dog! He has flunked out of apartment and city living and needs the country life – a busy, structured, active life.

Rover came to us from Louisiana as shelters there were prepping for a hurricane. Things we know about this funny dog: loves tennis balls and fetch! He is a very young man and has fun puppy energy. He's very treat-motivated and already knows sit. He's happy to settle down after some fetch and chew on a bone. And did we mention he is crazy in love with tennis balls?

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

Senior Center Activities JANUARY 10 THROUGH 14

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

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 1/10

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

Tuesday 1/11

12 p.m. Tuesday Morning Knitters 3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 1/12

9 a.m. Foot Clinic (by appointment) 4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 1/13

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

Friday 1/14

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.

JANUARY LIBRARY LISTING

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

MULTIPLE LIBRARIES

Tuesday, January 11: A Conversation about Racism: Staying Curious, Moving Forward, and Being Part of the Solution. This online program will focus on the experiences of three local Black people - Jeanne Hall, Gloria Matlock, and Dick Hall who have generously offered to share what it means to be Black in Franklin County and the United States. Their experiences will be a starting point for an open and thoughtful conversation about racism: how we, as individuals and as a community, can learn to appreciate and understand perspectives different from our own. The discussion will be moderated by educator and racial justice advocate Allen Davis. Co-sponsored by Erving, Leverett, and Northfield libraries. To register, dmemlib@gmail.com. email 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Tuesday, January 25: Introduction to Genealogy. In this Zoom workshop Carol Ansel, director at the Godfrey Memorial Library in Middletown, will present the ABCs of beginning genealogy, emphasizing the eight basic types of records where you can find them and how best to use them. Co-sponsored by Leverett, Montague, and Pelham libraries. Call (413) 863-3214 or email librarydirector@montague-ma.gov to sign up. 6:30 p.m.

MONTAGUE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

First week of January: Snowperson Magnet Take-and-Make. Free kits for children and teens, available all week at all branch locations. While supplies last.

Every Wednesday: Story Time Online. Meet Meghan Doyle for stories, songs and a Take-and-Make craft. Craft bags available in the children's room at the Carnegie Library. Find the link at montaquepubliclibraries. org/calendar. 10 a.m.

1st Thursday: Music & Movement Online. Bilingual English-Spanish series for children with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson. Find the link at montaguepubliclibraries.org/ calendar. 9 a.m.

Every Friday: Baby Lapsit Online. Join Meghan for 20 minutes of age-appropriate books. songs, rhymes, and movement. Bilingual English-Spanish series for children with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson. Find the link at montaguepubliclibraries.org/calendar. 10 a.m.

2nd Tuesday: Montague Center Book Club. New group will meet at the Montague Center

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

Library. Book for January 8: How to Do Both, by Ali Smith. Book for February 8: 10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World, by Elif Shafa. For more info, call (413) 367-2852. 7 p.m.

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

Tuesday, January 25: Introduction to Genealogy. (See "Multiple Libraries.")

ERVING FREE LIBRARY

All January: Spice of the Month Club. January's spice is star anise and the kits go fast. Get a sample of the spice and some recipes to try with it.

Every Thursday: Ukelele Sing-Along. Bring your uke and/or singing voice and join fellow musicians for a very informal sing-along! Inside in the spacious community room; masks required. 1 p.m.

Monday, January 10: PAWS to Read. (Delayed from our usual 1st Monday.) Kids can come to the Erving Library and read to one of our volunteer dogs. Grab a book and sit down to enjoy a nice session of petting and reading. Call (413) 423-3348 to reserve a spot.

Tuesday, January 11: A Conversation about Racism. (See "Multiple Libraries.")

LEVERETT LIBRARY

All January: Monthly Spice Tasting: Allspice. Stop in for a sample and suggested recipes. While supplies last.

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

Tuesday, January 11: A Conversation about Racism. (See "Multiple Libraries.")

Tuesday, January 25: Intro-

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

Erving Public Library (413) 423-3348

duction to Genealogy. (See "Multiple Libraries.")

NORTHFIELD: DICKINSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Every Tuesday: Story Hour, 10 a.m. Music and stories for toddlers, preschoolers, older siblings, and caregivers. Online; pre-registration required. Contact Deb Wood for more info: woodd@pvrsdk12.org. Tuesday Evening Knitting Group, 6 to 8 p.m. Join fellow knitters and crocheters for an afternoon of chatting, sharing projects, and (maybe) getting some work done on your current projects. We meet at the community table on the main floor of the library. All are welcome!

Every Friday: Kids' Friday activities canceled for January, but stop by to pick up fun takehome activities and books.

2nd Sunday: Authors & Artists Festival Book Group. Online discussions about books by authors at the upcoming festival in February. Book for January 9: Systematic Land Theft: The History of U.S. Tactics Keeping Tribal Nations From Reclaiming Their Land & Blacks Landless, by Jillian Hishaw. For info and to register, nature-culture.net/ authors-artists-festival. 11 a.m.

Tuesday, January 11: A Conversation about Racism. (See "Multiple Libraries.")

2nd Wednesday: Readings: Nonfiction, Fiction, and Poetry. Book for January 12: Good Poems, collected by Garrison Keillor. For more info, email dmemlib@gmail.com. 3 p.m.

2nd Thursday: Environmental Awareness Group. Book for January 13: Horizon, by Barry Lopez. Email dmemlib@gmail. com for info. 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, January 13: Photos from Civil Rights History Trip. Northfielder Cate Woolner will share a photo essay from her recent week-long Road Scholar trip to Georgia and Alabama. 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

3rd Tuesday: Friends of the Library, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.; Genealogy Group, Meeting January 18 in the Community Room. 6:30 p.m.

WENDELL FREE LIBRARY

Every Tuesday: Art Group. In the Herrick Room. Space limited; masks required. 5 to 6 p.m.

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

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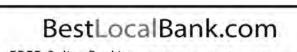
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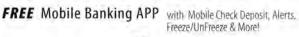
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GREENFIELD







WEST ALONG from page B1

blue jay horde. They liven things up, for sure, with their brash calls and jaunty optimistic attitude.

The diesel stench of the fuel oil spill upriver in Athol is slowly dissipating after the accident on Christmas Eve. The river encircles our neighborhood as it flows west, running up against the basalt ledge of Mineral Mountain and then veering northward to the French King. Down here on the Flat then, with the river on three sides of us on our peninsula-shaped neighborhood, the diesel odor persists, entrapped by the topography.

It could've been worse. There are fewer creatures in the water in this season, most ducks have flown except for the occasional merganser, the beavers and muskrats experienced worse during the days of pollution by the Erving Paper Mills. The fish are quiet in the deeper parts of the river. The fuel oil stayed on the surface, or at least that's what the experts tell us.

As usual, the negligent trucking company will get off with a slap on the wrist, their insurance company will reimburse the cost of the cleanup, and those of us human and non-human river communities will deal with the aftermath.

A few sullen sudden birds peck politely at the store-bought seed. The fog has settled in, muffling sound. An occasional drip resounds in the quiet of the woodshed, slowly escaping the sloping wet roof over our heads. One of them manages to fall on this page, blurring ink.

What do you know about dark clouds?

Who gave you permission To look at ponds full of fallen leaves? ...

We winter creatures are disoriented in this mild dampness. Not the winters we seem to remember, but then again all those magical Decembers and New Year's Days of the past blend into one wonderful, perhaps false memory. A collected string of days that likely never really happened the way we think.

I'll content myself with remembering the way the snow piled up to the windowsills so that I could actually look down into the house from the snowbank, standing in my snowshoes, and peer into the living

room from above. There was the time when our river froze and I could cross over to the Montague side to visit the oxbow marsh, hearing the rushing river two feet down under my boots. I'll think of our grandfather's stories of the blizzard of 1888, and how the barn was lost from sight of the house for two days.

I'll think about these scenes from before, and give the snowglobe another shake, so much winter in my head, and hand.

A crow away in the fog calls from somewhere over in the marsh. The sound of the distant furnace in the cellar rumbles and roars to life to hold the year end's dampness at bay.

With the ground thawed, the pesky squirrels have dug up our crocus bulbs, our local possum and wakeful skunk have rummaged around in the compost pile. Ah well, this non-winter is good for some creatures I have to think.

Nick our husky is waiting for his walk, and will not let me linger in this moody state of mind. Dog's mind focused on right now! Let's get up and go!

I do hear during these early days in January that there will be a period of freezing, as the temperatures do their roller coaster thing. I watch longingly the snow flying in Green Bay, winter cold at least up there, and the game grinds on, Packers fans exhilarated in the deep freeze, maintaining their reputation for northern endurance.

Maybe we'll get some of that soon. Monty on WRSI is calling for snow by Friday. Best news yet for solitary figures like myself, wishing for a true blizzard! Not likely, but a little of the white stuff would do us no harm.

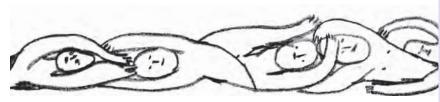
In the meantime, I'll sit and daydream out here in the growing chill, or look up from time to time from my writing desk high in the north bedroom to see the red-tailed hawk riding up and over Mineral Mountain into the low clouds. Indeed, am I authorized to speak about these trees without leaves? Can I explain what the weather intends to do? Are writing these words enough?

Or would I be better off Flapping my wings from tree to tree

And carrying on like a crow? (Excerpted from the

poem by Charles Simic.)





Montague Community Television News

Recent Nostalgia

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Keep the holidays coming with new videos from old footage! You can now finally view the MCTV coverage of the 2021 Great Falls Festival on the MCTV Vimeo page. And if you're feeling nostalgic, try typing "Pumpkin Fest" into the small search bar below the title bar to view the our archive of the festival as far back as 2012.

All MCTV videos are available on the MCTV Vimeo page, which can be found linked to the MCTV website, montaguetv.org, under

the tab "Videos."

All community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 17, as well as featured on the MCTV Vimeo page.

MCTV is always available to assist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for 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.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Icy Hill Involves Cruiser; New Guy Brought Home; 911 Calls From Empty Farren; New Year's Scuffle

Monday, 12/20/21

3:47 p.m. Caller reporting seeing a fancy white car and a black SUV on Avenue A; suspects drug activity. Referred to an officer. 6:21 p.m. Caller stated that she works with the landlord, and they are working with the Board of Health, regarding a property on Eleventh Street being condemned. A sticker and some papers on the door have been ripped off. Caller is requesting an officer to clear the building. Services rendered.

Wednesday, 12/22

2:01 a.m. Officer advising of icy and slick road conditions in town. DPW contacted and advised. Truck driver reporting hill on Millers Falls Road into Turners very icy; will be standing by until it is sanded. Officer advised.

2:57 a.m. Caller reporting six or seven vehicles involved in a minor accident on the hill near Scotty's due to the icy roadway. No injuries reported.

3:16 a.m. Officer advises his cruiser struck another vehicle while attempting to stop on the hill.

2:08 p.m. Caller states she was just touched inappropriately by a male party driving a power wheelchair on Avenue A. No answer at caller's door. Unable to locate.

4:22 p.m. Caller reporting suspicious activity behind a Fourth Street address, possibly drug-related, involving a fancy white vehicle. The vehicle had left while caller was on the phone with dispatch. Referred to an officer.

Thursday, 12/23

1:04 p.m. Report of large truck that cannot turn around without another gate being opened at the Water Pollution Control Facility. Driver cannot find an employee on scene, and stated there usually is one if the gate is open. Employee assisted.

2:50 p.m. Loose pitbull on South Prospect Street; appears to be half shaved. Animal control officer notified.

4:13 p.m. Caller reporting a woman who was acting strangely and made a comment about someone trying to abduct her. Caller asked if she needed emergency responders; she said no, then left. Second call received regarding the same woman, who stated that she was involved in sex trafficking but refused to have anyone call the PD or ambulance, then left. The woman also stated that she was looking for a crisis center. Greenfield and Shelburne Control advised to be on lookout.

Friday, 12/24

4:37 a.m. Agent from AAA calling to see if MPD can tral Street; states party comes back for it. has been waiting for a Tuesday, 12/28 cle. AAA advised he still and advised. needs assistance.

damaged the rear end of did not notice any damage until today. Damage is minor.

Saturday, 12/25

4:01 a.m. Caller from Third Street reports stomping noises and loud talking/yelling for several hours. Caller called back and stated there may be some type of altercation occurring now. Officer advises no issues upon arrival; spoke to parties and advised of complaint.

5:38 a.m. Anonymous caller reports someone in a dark-looking truck, possibly a Ram, was doing donuts in the intersection of West Main and Bridge Streets. Caller states vehicle is no longer in area and was last seen headed "towards the bridge." Of- that a turkey was hit on ficer advised.

5:55 a.m. Caller reports bridge near the paper mill is entirely icy. DPW contacted and advised.

that the entirety of Norman Circle is frozen over with ice. DPW will be responding.

12:32 p.m. Officer located a one-car accident near Millers Falls and Turnpike Roads; requesting and believes that might Rau's for tow.

Second officer requesting the night. fire department response.

Report taken. Sunday, 12/26

Fifth Street states that somebody came into his apartment while no one was there and stole his medication. Report taken.

Monday, 12/27

10:31 a.m. Report that a male party with a green hooded jacket keeps asking people for money outside of Connecticut River Liquor and Wine on Avenue A every day around 10 a.m. Male party is not there at the moment. Referred to an officer.

4:59 p.m. 911 caller rethe middle of Avenue A Officer advised that as he area. Unable to locate. of Bob's Auto were mov- sault in Millers Falls. Ining it, and they were going volved parties found to

help with a jump on Cen- to wait and see if someone

long time and they don't 3:11 a.m. Officer requesthave any drivers available ing DPW be called in to help at this time. Offi- for icy road conditions cer unable to jump vehi- in town. DPW contacted

4:02 p.m. 911 call from 2:59 p.m. Caller would like Farren Care Center; all it on record that someone static, and then the phone hung up; static on callback his vehicle while it was as well. Officer advised; parked outside of Wal- stated it's an ongoing isgreens yesterday. Caller sue. Officer advises that building is secure and no one is on site. 6:08 p.m. Caller from

Third Street reporting people yelling and slamming doors at his neighbor's apartment. Officer advises there is no issue. 11:37 p.m. Caller states he has a lease with his ex and she showed up with her new boyfriend. Caller has mentioned multiple times that he does not want the

ficer advised; will call back. Wednesday, 12/29

new guy there and is won-

dering what he can do. Of-

11:43 a.m. Loose German Shepherd with a green scarf reported near Cumberland Farms. ACO en route.

4:42 p.m. Officer advises Turnpike Road and is in the roadway. Will attempt to move it.

5:33 p.m. Caller from Greenfield Road report-12:26 p.m. Caller states ing hearing loud explosion noises in the area of her residence; not sure where it is coming from or what it is. Caller called back stating she observed fireworks being set off in the Kingsley Avenue area be what she is hearing. 2:33 p.m. 911 caller re- Officer advises that there porting she slid off the is fireworks debris on road and her vehicle is Kingsley Avenue but no damaged. No injuries re- one is around. Officer ported. Officer advises a spoke to male party who fire hydrant has been dis-stated that he had a few lodged; requesting Water leftover fireworks that he Department be notified. set off but he is done for

Thursday, 12/30

Rau's requested for tow. 6:56 p.m. 911 caller states he heard what sounded like gunshots, then a 11:16 a.m. Caller from motorcycle speeding off, in the area of Greenfield Road. Caller calling from Randall Wood Drive area; did not see anything, just heard it. Officers checked area and spoke with other residents. Nobody heard anything; nothing appears out of the ordinary. No further calls.

7:15 p.m. Caller states that there is a male acting suspicious near Franklin and Newton Streets; reportedly staring off into space up at the street lights, possibly looking into windows. porting a mattress in Caller states he doesn't appear to be acting right across from Bob's Auto. and is not known to the was pulling up, employees 7:50 p.m. Report of as-

have active warrants. Unable to locate; officers will continue to be on lookout.

Friday, 12/31 9:31 a.m. Caller states that he is involved in a two-car

accident at Turners Falls

and Hillside Roads; no injuries. Tow requested. 3:56 p.m. Following a vehicle stop on Millers Falls Road, a party was arrested for operating a vehicle with a suspended license. 5:04 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road states that her neighbor is using some equipment in the driveway and shaking her entire house. Officer sat in area for a while and didn't see or hear any dis-

turbance. Saturday, 1/1/22

12:02 a.m. Caller from Vladish Avenue reports hearing two "cannon" noises being set off. Caller states he has heard this before, and the noise worried him because it shook his house. Officer advised. 12:15 a.m. Caller from Eleventh Street reports an odd smell in the area; unsure if it may be natural gas. Officer checked area; no odors other than skunk observed.

1:26 p.m. Caller from L Street states that there was just a big fight outside involving people on the first and third floors of the building. All parties gone on arrival; involved male was reported to have punched someone, but no one was there; no injuries reported.

5:32 p.m. Caller reporting a tree in the road on Turners Falls Road near Hatchery Road. Second call regarding tree in road; caller stated that it looked like a Christmas tree. Officer advised that there was no tree in the road, but there was a pine tree/ Christmas-type tree on the side of the road, not near Hatchery.

8:10 p.m. Caller reporting that there is a vehicle parked on Davis Street that has been playing loud music for an hour. All units currently tied up at another call. Officer advised that he has not observed any loud music in the area.

Sunday, 1/2

10:10 a.m. Anonymous caller reporting that a red PT Cruiser was speeding down the Third Street alley; she yelled at them to slow down, but it seemed like they sped up. Officers will be on lookout for vehicle and try to speak to its operator if located driving around.

Monday, 1/3

5:57 a.m. Caller reports that he is on Paper Mill Road in Erving near the hairpin turn and his vehicle has two popped tires. Shelburne Control advised.

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TV REVIEW

Christmas on Fantasy Island



By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – Since Fantasy Island was first on TV, there has been a remake of the series on ABC, a movie version of it in 2020, and now the Fox network has made an attempt at a TV series remake that was successful enough to get a second season. The show is about an island where people go to live out their fantasies.

Fox's version involves a Mrs. Roarke, played by Roselyn Sanchez, who's a relative of Mr. Roarke from the original one. For the first time ever in the history of this concept, there was also a Christmas episode – a two-hour episode called "Welcome to the Snow Globe."

The summary of this episode is that the "businesswoman's 'fantasy of a perfect Christmas and meeting Mr. Right' tests Roarke in unexpected ways. Meanwhile, Mr. Jones faces his past, while a new Secret Santa tradition has Ruby and Javier looking to the future." These are new characters in Fox's version.

The businesswoman who comes to the island leads Elena Roarke to see someone from her past. There was also another surprise, in connection with the episode's second

storyline in the episode. It turns out that an animal that has been seen around in the show isn't what he seems, and I believe Elena Roarke didn't know that.

"This time of year, we get a lot of surprises," she says at the start of the episode. That line is incredibly true when it comes to these storylines, and especially for Mrs. Roarke.

I believe another line also gives us a hint that someone from Mrs. Roarke's past will show up. The line mentions that a certain holiday thing is what this person likes. When she finds out the person is on the island, Elena reacts with "I did not see that coming," even though she is reasonably aware of how the island can be - many twists and turns go on with this island. Another such turn is that Elena decides to do something about this individual from her past showing up.

On this show, the island seems to have a mind of its own. There are a couple of moments where the island seems to help out with Mr. Jones's storyline, and make the Secret Santa thing stay a certain way. The island also does some more of those moments I mentioned. One seems to include a fantasy that suddenly starts to go wrong. But it seems like the island wants the Secret Santa thing to go a certain way.

The island also seems to give Ruby a warning connected to Mr. Jones's storyline, which also has a twist to it as to why Mr. Jones came to the island. I would describe the island as helping the businesswoman create her own version of a perfect Christmas, which consists of being in a Christmas movie. She ends up being quite happy with it. For this being the first time a holiday episode was ever done using the Fantasy Island concept, I thought it was a good one.



Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

Happy new year! Wishing all the readers of this fine newspaper sexual health and pleasure in 2022 and beyond.

A spate of recent clients disclosing they are experiencing pain with sex has pushed that topic to the top of the queue. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, nearly 75% of people with vulvas will experience genital pain at least once during sexual activity. Up to 5% of people with penises experience genital pain at some point during sex. It's a wonder that anyone gets busy regularly with odds like that.

First, let's acknowledge that our erotophobic culture does not make disclosing sex-related pain easy. I know this from firsthand experience. Additionally, many clients that I have helped with their therapy agenda, from family of origin dysfunction to horrific trauma, leave sexual pain off their complaint list until everything else has been resolved, or unless I directly ask about pain much earlier.

Therefore, for our new year's resolution, let's all understand that many of us will experience unhelpful and unwanted pain during sex at some point in our lives, and that we all deserve help and treatment to prevent it.

Pain for vulvas and related genitals is generally called dyspareunia. Common causes of pain during vaginal intercourse include lack of lubrication and/or lack of arousing outercourse or "foreplay" activities, such as stimulating the clitoris, nipples, etc. Increased communication about what feels good, and/or adding water-based

lubricants, can go a long way to reducing or minimizing such pain.

Other common issues that can cause pain include infections like yeast, bacteria, UTIs, STIs, warts, herpes, fibroids on the uterus, cysts on the ovaries, endometriosis, and pelvic inflammatory disease, as well as the drying and thinning of vulvar tissues due to menopause. Injuries to the vulva or vagina, whether from childbirth, episiotomy, random sports – or being accidently hit on the crotch with a flung vibrator, as in an episode of Awkwafina is Nora from Queens – can also result in pain.

Vaginismus, affecting up to 17% of vaginas worldwide, entails involuntary spasms in the vaginal muscles. Folks with vaginismus may have a history of sexual abuse, may harbor sexually oppressive thinking, or may report fears of hurtful sex, which can then feed vaginismus symptoms. Pelvic floor physical therapy and the use of dilators, combined with relaxation exercises over time, can help folks overcome this condition. A character in the Netflix series Sex Education mentioned her vaginismus and showed her dilators. Having compassionate and patient partners, and removing the pressure of intercourse by including other activities such as deep kissing, manual outercourse, and oral sex, can also help.

Penile pain can come from untreated STIs, a too-tight foreskin, scar tissue from Peyronie's Disease, abnormal curvature of the penis, cysts or lesions, allergies to some contraception or vaginal fluids, hypersensitivity post-coitus, and/or skin disorders such as lichen sclerosus (which can also occur to vulvas). Some folks may also experience priapism, where a non-sexual, sustained, and painful erection can occur.

Pain can also occur in the testicles. While "blue ball" is usually something giggled about in middle school, epididymal hypertension (EH, or pain in the testicles) can occur with a sustained erection not accompanied by an orgasm. If a partner experiences this, you are under no obligation at all to help them relieve their EH. If you no longer want to continue sexual activity, provide them with privacy to orgasm if they wish.

If a bit of bluish or purplish color develops in the testicles, then the EH might be heading towards testicular torsion, which is serious and likely necessitates an immediate visit to the ER for possible emergency surgery. Also, if you notice ongoing testicular pain, when not sexually aroused, please visit a doctor to rule out potential causes like cancer, kidney stones, prostatitis, etc. (And loosen tight pants, for god's sake!)

Primary sex headaches are even less talked about. They are another type of pain that can occur in any gender, but more typically in people with penises, with onset generally between ages 40 and 50. The two main types are "orgasm headache," an intense sharp pain that suddenly occurs as one approaches or experiences orgasm, and "sexual benign headache," which is more of an dull background headache that slowly builds and then fades.

I have experienced intense orgasm headaches throughout my life, beginning around age 21 in the early '90s. I recall landing in a Texas emergency room after experiencing my first few orgasm headaches, and feeling intensely embarrassed as I explained my symptoms and situation to the doctor. I had never heard of this, and harbored a secret fear that I was being punished by a Christian god for having pleasure despite being a sex-positive, feminist, devout agnostic.

The cismale-appearing doctor did nothing to alleviate my embarrassment, but rather nastily and curtly asked me questions, further aggravating erotophobia and worries. I somehow ended up with a diagnosis of vertigo and a related prescription; the headaches died down, and I resumed my lust for life.

These orgasm headaches popped up again in my 30s and 40s. Yes, it's great to get laid, but it sucks immensely to experience a splitting headache right before and during orgasm. Luckily, my medical practitioners in Massachusetts have, on average, been feminist, sex-positive, and compassionate. I was eventually prescribed Sumatriptan, a migraine prevention medicine, to take about 30 minutes prior to sex – kind of like planning to take a Viagra pill.

A whip-smart PCP in Springfield speculated about a connection between the headaches and my terrible seasonal allergies, taking this issue very seriously. I then summoned the courage to mention said headaches to my allergist, who responded in his usual unflappable manner with "well, get your allergy shot more often during the spring and fall" - my worst allergy and headache times. Lo and behold, this solved the problem.

A recent PCP also recommended the helpful preventative supplement regime of taking Riboflavin, Magnesium, and Coenzyme O10 regularly during high allergy season.

In summary, pain during sex, although fairly common, does not need to be. Please resolve to find the courage to get help immediately if this is occurring to you or your partners. Pain-free sexual pleasure is a human right!

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

RiverCulture Receives Grant for Audio Tour

MONTAGUE - RiverCulture has received a \$20,000 grant to create a Peskeompskut Audio Tour, which will explore the nuanced history of the Turners Falls riverfront. The self-guided tours will use smart phone technology to connect listeners to personal, historic, and interpretive narratives by Indigenous and Industrial Era storytelling partners. The stories will be accessed along the bike path, beginning at Unity Park and continuing through the 19th-century canal district.

Eight stories will initially be housed on the STORY app platform, but there is hope that the number of stories will grow over time.

The Peskeompskut Audio Tour project partners first began working together five years ago on the National Park Service Battlefield Grant, a consortium of historic commissions, tribal preservation offices, and municipal government partnering to conduct a comprehensive study of the 1676 battle that was a turning point in the King Philip's War.

David Brule, Nolumbeka Project president and Peskeompskut Audio Tour co-chair, said he "see[s] the storytelling project as the natural outcome of the

collaboration of Tribal and non-Tribal communities joined in the process of reconciliation and healing."

Narratives ranging from ancient maritime fishing traditions to the impact of the lumber industry in the development of Montague will be available to the public at the end of June 2022. RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto said she "hopes that this resource will both expand our current knowledge of local history and attract new visitors to the village of Turners Falls."

Founded in 2006, RiverCulture is a municipal program working to foster the creative economy in the five villages of Montague.

The grant came from the Expand Mass Stories initiative of Mass Humanities, with funding from the Mass Cultural Council. Mass Humanities is a non-profit based in Northampton which conducts and supports programs that use the humanities to enhance and improve civic life. Twenty-two other cultural non-profits also received Expand Mass Stories Grants, including audio tours, documentary films, oral histories, and public events. Totaling more than \$360,000, these grants are an effort to reexamine and reimagine the story of Massachusetts.

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2021 in Review: The Movies

By SEAMUS TURNER-GLENNON

CHARLEMONT - Montague Reporter movie reviewer Seamus Turner-Glennon lists his top five favorite movies of 2021:

5. Zeros and Ones (Abel Ferrara)

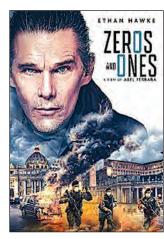
Even at 70 years old, Abel Ferrara continues his almost relentless, lifelong quest to push the cinematic form as far as he possibly can. In his newest offering, Zeros and Ones, Ferrara brings now-veteran Ethan Hawke along for the ride, continuing the pattern started by Hawke in 2017's First Reformed of showing himself to be maybe the definitive actor of the current moment of end-times cinema.

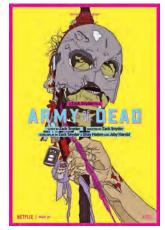
Zeroes and Ones follows soldier JJ as he races in an attempt to prevent the Vatican from being blown up by terrorists. In typical Ferrarian fashion, the real hook here is the tension which stems from JJ's internal struggles to contend with the death of the only mode of social organization he's known.

4. Army of the Dead (Zack Snyder)

Continuing in the end-times cinema vein of Zeroes and Ones, Zack Snyder's Army of the Dead - the second effort from the filmmaker this year after his recut version of his infamously studio-tampered Justice League – is perhaps the most vital the zombie genre has felt in years.

World War Z or Zombieland this is decidedly not. Snyder's bleak vision of post-apocalyp-











tic, zombie-populated carcasses of American capitalism has more in common with George A. Romero and Snyder's usually grandiose mythological influences. Likely the first ever Homeric post-apocalyptic heist film.

3. The Last Duel (Ridley Scott)

I've always found Rashomon to be by far the most overrated of Akira Kurosawa's works. Serviceable and sturdy as it may be, it pales for me in comparison to masterpieces like Throne of Blood, Ran, Seven Samurai, Stray Dogs, and so on. So I was surprised by how much I adored Ridley Scott's latest film The Last Duel, a marked homage to Kurosawa's classic.

Based on the real story of the last official judicially recognized duel in French history, Scott's film centers around the duel between Jacques Le Gris (Adam Driver) and Jean de Carrouges (Matt Damon) after Jacques is accused of rape by Jean's wife Marguerite (Jodie Comer). The story is told through the perspective of each of the three characters.

The Last Duel may not be the longest historical epic ever made, but it's without question among the most purely grueling. While Jacques is, on his face, a loathsome and repugnant figure, Scott spares no sympathy for Jean, who is less than truly concerned with the hideous sexual assault his wife has fallen victim to. Jean is more simply concerned about asserting power and dominance through the violence of the titular duel, which is in the running for the most relentlessly punishing and heavy action sequence since the now-infamous hallway fight in Park Chan-wook's Oldboy.

2. The Card Counter (Paul Schrader)

While his 2017 film First Reformed dealt with the impending dread that lies underneath so much of contemporary American life through an exploration of climate change, Paul Schrader's The Card Counter concerns itself with those more inconceivable unexplorable evils of modern America.

Through the story of professional gambler William Tell (Oscar Isaac, in perhaps his finest role to date) coming to terms with the evil he was exposed to and participated in during the War On Terror, Schrader manages to perfectly represent and explore the simultaneous horror and terror of living in an America where we are just as haunted by the past as we are terrified of our future: an America where John Yoo walks free to this day.

1. Can't Get You Out of My Head

(Adam Curtis)

His new six-part, eight-hour documentary Can't Get You Out of My Head: An Emotional History of the Modern World feels in a lot of ways like a swan song for English master documentarian Adam Curtis. Throughout his strange, disjointed, often hallucinatory recounting of 20th and 21st century history, Curtis weaves together narrative threads ranging from the life story of Chinese communist figure Jiang Qing to Trinidadin-born English pseudo-revolutionary Michael X to controversial Soviet defector-turned-Russian-political-figure and self-identified fascist-communist agitator Eduard Limonov.

Curtis creates a narrative of the struggle between individualism and collectivism, culturally haunted Western empires, and a world trapped in a "perpetual now, with no way of moving into the future."

TRAVELS from page B1

hotels to stay in if you want to visit New York City.

Sheraton Times Square

If you are going to the city with a crowd, the place I stayed the last time I visited the city might be a great choice. The New York Sheraton Times Square offers huge Club Suites that rival the size of a typical Manhattan apartment. My suite, 1407, had everything I needed to be ready for my business meetings and not stuck somewhere in the outer boroughs for crucial social mixers known as happy hours. The hallway alone made it feel like it was huge.

Staying in a place like this is like knowing an old friend who turns out to be rich and has a giant apartment. But this is better, because it's yours for the weekend! I had two bathrooms, a giant bedroom, and two other rooms with comfortable couches and a killer view from all sides of Times Square below.

Another benefit of the club suites are the Club Lounge, where you can get breakfast, hors d'oeuvres, and drinks for a \$50 daily fee.

Since opening its doors as the Hotel Americana in 1962, Sheraton New York Times Square has en-

joyed a rich New York City history, welcoming high-profile figures from the Beatles to a number of US presidents. Back in the 1960s, the hotel's most popular restaurant and jazz club - The Royal Box - was a hotspot for legendary performers like Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and Peggy Lee.

While the room rate might be high, when you add it up, staying in a big suite like this and using the couches as beds is cheaper than getting separate rooms. You can sleep four people here with comfort.

The Sheraton hotel features 1,780 renovated rooms, a Sheraton Club Lounge with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking Seventh Avenue, multiple dining options, and a 4,000-square-foot fitness center with cool things like a 10-bike Peloton room and an on-staff team of certified fitness trainers.

www.sheratonnewyork.com

Marriott Marquis

For another classic stay, visit the giant hotel right in Times Square with the big, wide open center court that yawns down for the 37-story atrium, the Marriott Marquis. It's old school cool: not the newest, and certainly not the most recently renovated, but what a location and what





Left: Hartshorne recommends a club suite at the Sheraton if you're traveling to NYC with friends willing to crash on couches. Right: For those looking for a more boutique experience, Thomas Mann will stare at you from the Renwick's wall.

views – the neon of Times Square leaks in from every angle.

Located at 1535 Broadway in Manhattan, in the heart of Times Square and Broadway's busy theater district, the 49-story New York Marriott Marquis is one of the largest Marriott hotels in the world.

This landmark hotel opened in 1985 and was designed by the iconic architect John Portman. It has great architectural interest, including that 37-story atrium with twelve glass-enclosed, state-of-the-art Miconic 10 elevators. (In recent years, ornate bars have been put up around the atrium so that nobody can jump down the long drop to the eighth floor.) All 1,966 guest rooms and suites are spacious and comfortably appointed. Many guest rooms offer a Times Square view.

The hotel also houses the 1,600seat Marquis Theater, a premiere Broadway musical house. Guests and visitors enjoy several restaurant choices, including The View, New York's only revolving rooftop restaurant. Across the street is one of the city's most famous restaurants, Carmine's, with its famous coal-fired ovens where they bake pizzas. Long lines, mediocre pizza.

Take a walk, there are only 4,000 different choices in every direction this is New York!

Only the NY Hilton is bigger

than the Marquis. Its fitness center, a bold, glass-enclosed 4,000-squarefoot space, appears as a "floating lightbox" midway over the hotel's dramatic atrium, and provides an exciting, spectacular setting for a full workout, as well as panoramic views of Times Square and midtown Manhattan.

This grand hotel has done pretty well over the years, despite the deluge of competition from smaller, 'hipper' hotels with more modern decor and dark, noisy lobbies. There are currently 12,452 reviews for The Marquis on TripAdvisor, and 46% are five stars, with 39% four stars.

www.marriott.com

The Renwick

For something more intimate, the Renwick might be fun. The Renwick is part of Hilton's upscale boutique brand, Curio by Hilton, and is a smaller and more intimate lodging experience with 173 rooms. The Renwick is located at 118 East 40th Street and also offers suites that combine a living room with a sumptuous bedroom.

The Renwick is four miles from Grand Central Station, and just a mile from the Museum of Modern Art. Three of the Renwick's rooms are dedicated to famous writers. My room was themed after Thomas Mann, the author of Doctor Faustus and a Nobel Prize winner from Germany.

Mann's stern visage is painted on the wall, and nearby, some of his books sit on a shelf. Two other suites are decorated with books and images of John Steinbeck and F. Scott Fitzgerald, who actually lived here when it was an apartment house in the 1920s.

When I checked into the Renwick, I was greeted by two friendly front desk staff, Jasmine and Myra, who wore matching leather jackets, which went well with the wooden rustic decor of the compact lobby.

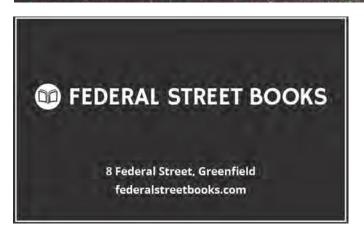
Downstairs the hotel's restaurant, Bedford & Co, run by chef John DeLucie, features "rustic American cuisine" for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Inspired by the wood grilled tastes he experienced on a vacation to Buenos Aires, DeLucie opened Bedford & Co in the historic hotel in midtown Manhattan. The restaurant features seasonal American cooking utilizing a hand-made wood-burning grill.

Travel editor Max Hartshorne writes about traveling around our region, and a little beyond. Max is the editor of GoNOMAD Travel, a website published since 2000 in South Deerfield. Find him online at

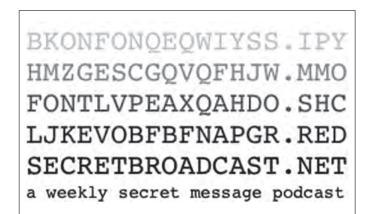
www.gonomad.com.



Manhattan's new Moynihan Train Hall, on opening day last January.







OUT SAIDLE SEEDE PAGE

We're excited to announce the relaunch of our monthly science page! (Please bear with us as we renovate...)
This month's page features commentary by Spencer Shorkey, our new science editor. If you are interested in writing about science and technology or have topics you'd like to see covered in this space, write to to him at science@montaguereporter.org. – Eds.

COMMENTARY

Time to Look Up

By SPENCER SHORKEY

MILLERS FALLS – I recently watched the movie *Don't Look Up* on Netflix. This movie included many renowned actors and was pretty entertaining overall, but its purpose was obviously more than entertainment – a thinly veiled introspection on how politics often fails to deliver what is in society's best interest.

Without revealing too many details, the gist is that a network of wealthy influencers and politicians use a pending worldwide catastrophe as a tool to maintain power for slightly longer. The system of corruption, media control, and zeal-ot-like belief in technology enables them to gamble civilization's future against the potential for greater power and profit.

Obvious parallels can be drawn between *Don't Look Up* and real life, where media and politics are often biased toward business agendas at the expense of scientifically supported policy, and governments fail to commit the resources necessary to prevent catastrophe. Most viewers see the movie as an indictment of the US federal government's inadequate response to climate change.

An Inhibited Truth

Climate science has a long history, involving many pioneering scientists and institutions. In the early 1800s Joseph Fourier proposed a role for atmospheric gases in trapping heat, comparing the warming effect to a greenhouse. In the mid-1800s coal gas (CO₂ and methane) was shown to be a strong absorber of light compared to other atmospheric gases, and by 1895 Svante Arrhenius calculated that doubling atmospheric CO₂ would lead to a 5° C global warming effect – which remains a good estimate to this day.

By the 1950s, Scripps Institution of Oceanography was continuously monitoring the increasing atmospheric CO₂ levels. In a 1988 testimony before the US Congress, NASA scientist James Hansen reported he was "99 percent sure" that global warming was already upon us.

The largest international effort to combat climate change to date is the 2016 Paris Agreement, which was ratified by nearly all countries worldwide, and aims to limit global warming to 2° C (or 3.6° F). The choice of a 2° C target, rather than a more conservative 1.5° C, was reportedly more influenced by pressure from high-emission countries than scientific reality.

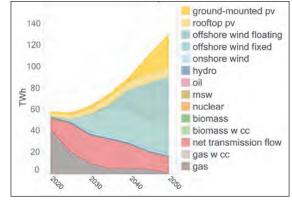
UMass Amherst researchers modeling Antarctic melting have shown 1.5°, 2°, and 3° C scenarios predict sea level rises of approximately 0.3 m, 0.4 m, and 1 m respectively by the year 2100. Even in the best-case scenario of 1.5° C warming,

long-term Antarctic melts will raise the sea by up to one meter by 2300. Hundreds of millions of people will be displaced by this factor alone.

In a worst-case scenario, where unabated CO₂ emissions result in up to 5° C of warming, 10 meters of sea level rise from Antarctic ice is predicted by 2300, which would put many US states largely underwater. Compared to pre-1900 measures, mankind has so far increased CO₂ levels by 50% (from 280 to 420 ppm), resulting in 1.2° C of warming, 0.2 m sea level rise, and increasingly dangerous weather patterns.

So we have established a pending worldwide catastrophe, which we have a meaningful ability to mitigate, at least theoretically. So what are governments doing to prevent catastrophe?

According to Climate Action Tracker's 2021 analysis of worldwide policy, governments have not enacted enough climate action policy to meet the 2° C target, on track instead for 2.7° C of warming. A December 2020 report from Princeton, *Net-Zero America*, calls for at least \$2.5 trillion of investments in "energy supply, industry, buildings, and vehicles" in the United States by 2030 in order to reach the Paris decarbonization targets. A similar report by the National Academies recommended investing \$300 bil-





Left: The "100% Renewable Primary" energy mix envisioned in the state's 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap leans heavily on solar (yellow) and offshore wind (green) generation. Right: Offshore wind leases, in a map included in the report.

tery in our backyard is that, though

concocted by the fossil fuel industry has led to a political economy of delaying action.

I probably cannot give adequate description to the maddening prevalence of anti-science propaganda used for political gain, or the corrupting influences of corporate money in politics that have led to our current situation. However, *Don't Look Up* does an entertaining job of tracing these nefarious forces with dark humor throughout.

State Leadership

While the federal government remains deadlocked by denialism, many states are taking the necessary steps to invest in our future. Massachusetts, notably, will soon be home to the USA's largest wind farm, sited offshore at the "Vineyard 1" site, and is one of 23 states with 2050 Net-Zero policies. Governor Baker's administration recently released the 2030 Clean Energy and Climate Plan (CECP) and the Massachusetts

many are concerned that the effects of its pumping water into and out of the Connecticut River are problematic, this battery – which can store up to 8.7 GWh of energy, and runs at up to 1.2 GW – is an energy storage asset worth \$2 to \$3 billion when measured in conventional lithium battery prices. The Vineyard 1 project itself, meanwhile, is expected to cost \$2 to \$3 billion.

Between 2016 and 2020 the

Between 2016 and 2020, the state's Clean Energy Commission (MassCEC) spent \$30 to \$45 million on clean energy development and deployment annually, attracting on average \$410 million of private solar investments, according to a production tracking database.

Massachusetts utility companies also sponsor the MassSave initiative, which spends \$700 to \$800 million on energy efficiency efforts each year, expecting future savings of between \$3 to \$4 for every dollar spent. MassCEC and MassSave spending has been roughly evenly split between commercial and residential projects, annually supporting the installation of about 10,000 residential solar arrays and 5,000 residential heat pumps, and the weatherization of about 30,000 homes.

However, of the over 1 million single-family homes in the state, to date fewer than a quarter use non-fossil fuel heating, and fewer than one-tenth have had solar installed. There is a long way to go to meet the interim goals in the 2030 CECP, which calls for us to "pivot the market" in this decade in order to see heat pumps in the "vast majority of the Commonwealth's three million residential households" by 2050.

"Heat pumps and deep building envelope efficiency retrofits are likely to be the least-cost decarbonization solution," the report points out. "About one million residential gas, oil, and propane furnaces and boilers will likely reach their end-of-life between 2021 and 2030.... [W]idespread deployment of heat pump systems will translate to overall societal cost savings in the coming decades."

Close to Home

If you are looking to invest in clean energy technology for your house in Massachusetts, incentives are available for heat pumps, solar power, battery storage, and electric vehicles.

Though MassCEC has managed a number of clean energy incentive pilot programs, MassSave is the goto resource for homeowners seeking rebates and loans to support clean energy projects (see www.mass-save.com/en/saving/residential-rebates). Homeowners can receive a free energy assessment qualifying their home for insulation upgrades, renewable heating system rebates, and zero-interest loans.

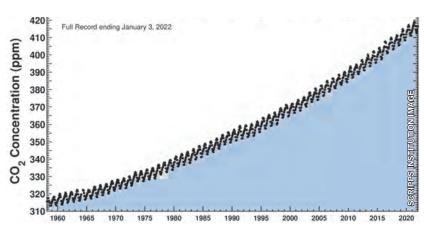
Replacing fossil fuel systems with renewable air-source or ground-source heat pumps is the most impactful action homeowners can take to lower their buildings' carbon footprints. MassSave rebates of \$10,000 to \$15,000, as well as a federal renewable tax credit, are available for such projects.

Though air-source heat pumps have lower up-front installation costs, ground-source pumps are more efficient, and thus have a lower cost of operation. The installation costs for ground-source pumps are also dropping quickly thanks to innovative new installers such as Dandelion Geothermal, making a ground-source the most economical option for replacing residential fossil fuel systems.

MassSave's 0% interest HEAT loan can also provide up to \$25,000 for home insulation, heat pumps, or solar-battery systems, and the state's MOR-EV program provides up to \$2,500 for new battery-electric vehicle purchases.

To reach "net zero" by 2050, it will be critical that more Massachusetts homeowners and landlords participate in these clean energy programs. Buildings with clean energy upgrades have significantly lower utility bills, and increased property value. (My own ground-source heat pump and rooftop solar array save me about \$1,500 and \$3,000, respectively, in annual utility costs.)

Thanks to the state's excellent policies supporting clean energy, it's possible for most homeowners here to afford clean energy upgrades, and it makes sense to act now to maximize utility savings and minimize carbon emissions. While there was not much that everyday people could do to prevent catastrophe in Don't Look Up, thanks to strong leadership at the state level, Massachusetts residents don't have to wait for our federal government to change its course in order to take meaningful action on carbon reduction.



Carbon dioxide measured in Hawaii by the Scripps Institution, the 'Keeling Curve.'

lion per year, amounting to \$3 trillion over the decade.

The largest federal clean energy expenditure to date is the \$90 billion included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. At present, the Biden administration's plans for \$555 billion in clean energy and climate spending, most recently incarnated as part of the \$2.2 trillion Build Back Better Act, is awaiting a vote in the US Senate, but seems unlikely to pass.

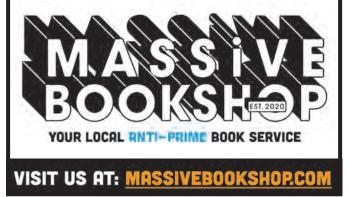
The science has long informed us that the consequences of continuing to burn fossil fuels are severe, and according to a recent Third Way poll, the majority of Americans in every state support government involvement in developing clean energy. So how does such scientifically and popularly supported policy fail to gain political traction? In short, climate change denialism

2050 Decarbonization Roadmap, setting targets of 40 to 70 GW of renewable power capacity by mid-century, which would generate over 100 TWh of renewable energy annually.

The 0.8 GW Vineyard 1 plans to produce power by 2023, and will be joined by at least three more projects at the same offshore hub, together yielding up to 3 GW of wind capacity by the end of this decade – enough to power 1.5 million households. Energy storage systems will be critical to balance intermittent wind supplies with fluctuating power demand. The 2050 Roadmap stipulates "1.8 GW of pumped hydro storage that is maintained in all pathways," likely expected to include the largest energy storage facility in the Northeast, the massive hydroelectric battery located atop nearby Northfield Mountain.

A side note on the Northfield bat-









ARTS & ENTERTAINME

FRIDAY, JANUARY 7

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Documentary screening, Keyboard Fantasies (2020), on Beverly Glenn-Copeland. \$. 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 8

The Palladium, Worcester: Method Man, Redman. \$. 7 p.m. Bombyx Center, Florence: House

of Waters. ("The Jimi Hendrix of hammered dulcimer.") \$. 8 p.m.

Tourists Welcome, North Adams: Sunburned Hand of the *Man.* \$. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: A Band of Killers (mems. Soul-Live, Rubblebucket), The Silks. \$. 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 9

Bishop's Lounge, Northampton: Owsley's Owls, Grateful Dead tribute. \$. 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 14

New City Brewery, Easthampton: Weege and the Wondertwins. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: The Gaslight Tinkers. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 15

Tree House Brewing, South Deerfield: Iron & Wine. \$. 6 p.m. Mount Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: Annie Patter-

son. \$. 7:30 p.m. Stone Church, Brattleboro: Jill Sobule. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Jahdan Blakkamoore (with members of Dub Apocalypse), DJ Iganic. \$. 8 p.m.

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. Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Eleanor Levine, Wallace Field, Naomi Westwater. \$. 8 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.

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

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

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23

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

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

SATURDAY. JANUARY 29

Stone Church, Brattleboro: High & Mighty Brass Band. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Academy of Music Theater, Northampton: Cowboy Junkies. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5

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

10 Forward, Greenfield: Godcaster, Editrix, Underwear. \$.

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

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8

The 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.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Storypalooza 3: Danger! \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24

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

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25

The Palladium, Worcester: Cannibal Corpse, Whitechapel, Revocation, more. \$. 6:30 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northampton: Jonathan Richman, Superwolves (feat. Bonnie "Prince" Billy and Matt Sweeney). \$. 8 p.m. Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Rubblebucket, Home Body. \$. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26

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

THRUSDAY, 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

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 Empyreans. \$. 8 p.m.

B7

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.

FRIDAY, MARCH 25

MASS MoCA, North Adams: Car Seat Headrest, Bartees Strange. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 1 Shea Theater, Turners Falls:

Amy Helm. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 7 Calvin Theater, Northampton:

The Magnetic Fields. \$. 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.

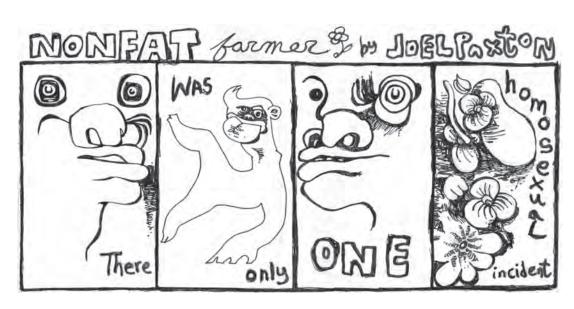
SUNDAY, APRIL 24

Iron Horse Music Hall, Northampton: John Gorka. \$. 7 p.m.

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







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THE MONTAGUE REPORTER **JANUARY 6, 2022**

REFLECTION

COVID Blues

By LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE CENTER - After our ninety-pound puppy tore the antique quilt I have lovingly hung in every place I've lived since 1981. and after I declined an invitation to have lunch in a restaurant with dear friends because I'm afraid of the latest COVID mutation, I had a little tantrum and said, "This is not the retirement I imagined."

"What did you imagine?" my husband asked, and I had no easy answer. I didn't retire with a plan like my sister-in-law and her husband, who want to visit every national park. They've been doing just that for years, until this year when COVID kept them home. I was simply looking forward to less stress and more time for writing and reading.

That was ten years ago, and a lot has changed. At sixty-five I was able to paint the bedroom. At seventy-five I can't get past the bottom step of a ladder. At eighty-five there will be more limitations. Twenty years of not working is a long stretch, and I don't feel prepared.

Until retirement, there was guidance all the way - from the advice I got before my first period (my mom handed me a brochure about "becoming a woman"), to navigating the college application process, to finding a job, to asking for a raise or a promotion. When my daughter was born, I turned to the many books on child rearing. Later on, articles on menopause slowly appeared. I thought the subject deserved a book. I worked with an editor who felt there was no market. He lived to regret that opinion.

The advice on retirement is thin by comparison. Most information on retirement planning is about investing so that your money lasts. An advertisement for a retirement community makes it look like retirees play golf all day. Some magazines have older celebrity profiles and words of wisdom from people who are not wise.

Where are the stories about how to fill the long quiet days, and how to feel useful and needed as the years pass and you need more help than you can offer?

Life gets smaller in retirement. Parents die, then siblings and friends. The Christmas card list gets shorter every year. Former colleagues who promised to stay in touch drift away. There's nothing to replace the chatter of the workplace. At retirement parties, people are jolly. Someone ought to raise a glass and say, "Time to reinvent yourself again. Better get right to it, or you'll end up scrolling through Facebook for much of the day."

Someone gave me a book of poems by a woman who promised she'd grow old and wear purple all the time, and never stop dancing. That was as useful as the book I bought on gardening back in 1971. On the cover, beneath a pencil drawing of a woman sleeping beside a garden, was this advice: "Plant a carrot, watch it grow, eat it." That's why so many communes failed.

A lot of people travel. A life can be built by traveling and planning trips so that you're always doing one or the other. But travel was never a priority for my husband and me. We are homebodies, and we don't like to be away from our dogs for too long.

Some people have never had enough time for their hobbies. For them, retirement means time **CLOUDS** from page B1

LGBTQ+ individuals in my life have raised me to be a lifelong advocate and ally.

MR: Were you surprised to be selected?

MWL: To be honest, I was pretty surprised to be accepted, as the contest was open to anyone. It's incredibly hard to evaluate my own work from an un-



Rainbow clouds designed by Mason Wicks-Lim.

to build a sailboat or some bookgym three or four afternoons a week cases, to sit at the sewing machine and make those dresses that don't really fit well and cost more than store bought, to practice the piano, to knit sweaters that will make your grandchildren itch. Fill hours with productive activity, unless arthritis

hobbies a challenge. Writers are pretty lucky. I can adjust my computer screen, make the font bigger - I can even dictate to it if I want to - but I can't fill a day with words both written and read. It's too much sitting.

has made it hard to use the tools and

failing vision makes these so-called

Until COVID, I found my own way into retirement. I figured out how to fit activities that felt meaningful and doable into each day. I volunteered at the survival center, wrote in the morning, went to the evaluated alongside adult artists, I am very surprised and happy about the outcome.

biased perspective, but seeing as my work was being

MR: Do your future plans include a focus on visual art, or is this an unusual side venture?

MWL: Digital art has been a hobby of mine for a while now. Ever since I received my first camera around age 8 or 9, I've been captivated by the world of digital art. Since then my skill, as well as my passion for art, have increased substantially and I'm quite proud of my current work.

While I'm not sure if my passion for digital art will lead to a professional career as an artist, I do foresee myself continuing to do art, even if only for a hobby.

MR: What does it feel like to see the artwork professionally produced in a public setting?

MWL: I'm very proud that my art is displayed in a public setting. I'm happy that many people will see the image, and hope that people find it interesting and worthwhile to see.

MR: Where exactly is the box with your design on it located?

MWL: The box is located on Main Street near the corner of Main and Pleasant streets between Florence Bank and Patisserie Lenox.

Thanks for taking interest in my art. I really appreciate you writing the story.

to swim laps, joined a writers' group, drove my grandchildren to activities, hung out with friends, lingered at the library, and read in the late afternoon. It was enough, and now most of it has been swallowed up by fear of COVID. Despite vaccinations and

I'm now out of the habit of going to the gym, the writers' group is getting expensive, my grandson has his driver's license and won't need me for rides - though he may want to borrow my car – and my friends and I have walked together for so many hours that we have nothing new to say. When and if life returns to normal, I will need to reinvent my retirement self all over again.

booster shots, it is spreading fast, and

already overwhelming hospitals.

Ziggy, the puppy that tore my quilt, was supposed to make up for the losses imposed by COVID, and keep us busy through another masked, isolating winter.

Busy we are. There's training and walks and constant cleaning, when he doesn't grab the broom and drag it away from me. He digs holes in the yard and gnaws on our woodwork. In the last five months he has made me scream and cry. Bringing him home feels like a mistake on some days. Then he rests his big head on my lap and grunts, and I'm happy he's here.

Ziggy is innocent of politics and policy. He is ignorant of time and space and falls off the sofa while rolling over for a belly rub. I wish I possessed his oblivion. Instead, I stamp my foot and complain that this is not the retirement I expected, as if anyone is having the life they expected, no matter how well they planned.

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