

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 20 – NO. 24

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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 28, 2022

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Spring Election Will Use New Precinct Boundaries

By JEFF SINGLETON

At its Monday meeting the Montague selectboard “executed” the warrant for the May 17 town elections, which will feature four candidates running for one seat on the board of health, no contest for the selectboard seat held by incumbent Chris Boutwell, and numerous “open” seats for Montague’s representative town meeting. The town meeting contests coincide with a precinct map that has been adjusted in response to the 2020 US Census.

The warrant, read by selectboard member Matt Lord, lists the following locations for voting: the Montague Center fire station on Old Sunderland Road for Precinct 1; Franklin County Technical School for Precincts 2, 3, 4 and

6; and the senior center on Fifth Street in downtown Turners Falls for Precinct 5.

Bourbeau told the selectboard that the precincts have been reconfigured to account for the last Census. The changes, she said, have been minimal, with the exception of in downtown Turners. “Precinct 5 has grown enormously,” she said. “A lot of people that used to vote in Precinct 5 no longer vote there, and have been moved to Precinct 4 or 6.”

Bourbeau said there are “just under 200 address changes,” and that she is sending a mailing out to all the “affected addresses.” Registered voters can also check their status by clicking the “Where Do I Vote” banner on the front page of the Montague town website.

see MONTAGUE page A8

Landlord in Bed Bug Case Faces Further Challenges



The building first came to the Reporter’s attention as the site of eight eviction notices.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

ORANGE – The owner of an East Main Street apartment building with a severe bed bug infestation did not appear in housing court last Friday, April 22, after a judge ordered him to eradicate the insect problem by that date. Instead, 34-year-old Brendan Kuntz was being held at the Franklin County jail after allegedly threatening an insurance agent, in an altercation that may have been related to a fire that destroyed his New Salem home earlier this month.

Tenants living in a bed-bug-infested apartment in the building re-

turned to the Greenfield courthouse to discuss the ongoing civil case brought by the town of Orange.

“This is ridiculous,” Raymond Abrams told the Reporter. “This has been going on for a year.” He described his mattress and bedroom as being so filled with bugs that he and his partner, Brenda Abrams, have started sleeping on the couch and even at the kitchen table.

“You can’t even use that [bedroom] now,” said Elizabeth Cardona, a personal care assistant for the Abramses, “and now they’re coming in the kitchen.”

Kuntz’s mother and stepfather, see LANDLORD page A6

Farren Hopes Spring Anew?

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE CITY – The Farren Care Center is still slated for demolition, though Trinity Health of New England’s original June goal seems less plausible now, and Montague is seeking clarification about the company’s offers to turn over the land to the public and allow the local historical commission to salvage artifacts from the storied hospital. An exchange of letters between the town and Trinity also brought into public view this week rumors that developers are interested in the buildings, though little has been clarified on that topic as of press time.

Gina Govoni, head of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA), attended Monday’s selectboard

meeting and confirmed she had been in contact with Bob Stevens of the Brattleboro-based Stevens & Associates, who has overseen the renovation of a number of historic properties including for affordable housing.

“He’s not completely familiar with the town, but thinks there might be some interest in pursuing a study for the space that might potentially include saving the building – if that were in the interest of the town,” Govoni said. “That being said, both Bob and I are interested in maintaining a good working relationship with the town... we’re also very interested in trying to work with the town on planning for this property.”

Since Trinity first offered last fall to donate the cleared lot to Montague, town officials including the see HOPES page A2

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Shively Steps Down After Four Terms On Selectboard

By GEORGE BRACE

Leverett’s selectboard used its Tuesday meeting to make final preparations for annual town meeting, set to take place this Saturday, April 30. The brief meeting also included a forum for candidates running for town offices to introduce themselves, and a testimonial and round of applause for selectboard chair Julie Shively, who is not running for re-election.

Town meeting will begin at 9 a.m. on the grounds of the Leverett Elementary School. The board decided to hold the meeting outdoors again this year, as recommended by the board of health. Masks will not be required, though selectboard member Melissa Colbert said seating accommodations can be made for those feeling they need more space. In case of rain, the meeting will be moved inside the school.

Leverett uses an unusual election procedure in which residents officially announce their candidacy for town positions on the day of

see LEVERETT page A7

Cinema Staff Union Wins Voluntary Recognition

By NATHAN FRONTIERO

AMHERST — Box office workers at Amherst Cinema have formed an independent union, Amherst Cinema Workers United (ACWU). They are seeking to address conditions including pay, scheduling, and transparency around policies such as COVID-19 safety protocols.

Last Friday, all 11 non-managerial front of house workers filed a petition to the National Labor Relations Board, and delivered a letter to Amherst Cinema executive director Yasmin Chin Eisenhauer and board of trustees president Salman Hameed asking for voluntary recognition. Eisenhauer emailed the union Monday morning expressing her intent to recommend voluntary recognition to the board.

That afternoon, workers received an emailed statement from the board confirming its members had met and voted to voluntarily recognize Amherst Cinema Workers United.

With voluntary recognition, ACWU members do not need to hold an election. Once the NLRB receives notice of the recognition, ACWU will officially represent the workers as they proceed to contract bargaining.

“For me, it doesn’t really matter which avenue it took us to become recognized, because we were going to win either way,” said Kiah Raymond, a member of ACWU who see UNION page A6

SCENE REPORT

Youth Baseball Season Kicks Off on the Hill



Majors division players John Martino, John Hannab, Camden Cogswell, and Jameson Better (left to right) were on hand for Sunday’s Newt Guilbault opening day ceremonies, and provided comment on the season ahead.

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

TURNERS FALLS – On Sunday, the Newt Guilbault Community Baseball League held their opening day celebration. The league consists of five- to twelve-year olds and helps prepare players for middle and high school baseball, and it is a super fun experience!

Opening day was established with a parade that started at 11 a.m., and left from Turners Falls High School. The parade was a super exciting way to begin baseball season. It included a police cruiser, a fire truck, an honor guard, all the baseball teams, and even Mr. George Bush, who was part of the 1942 Turners Falls High School baseball state champions, and is one of the founders of the Newt Guilbault League.

When the parade made its grand entrance through the field gates, it was welcomed by the TFHS pep band, directed by Alyssa Comeau. Comeau and one of her students, Snail Deramo, then performed the National Anthem, which was amazing!

Newt Guilbault president Kyle Cogswell presented a speech to welcome and recognize everyone who was in attendance. Mr. Cogswell mentioned that the league’s board of directors and coaches had been preparing for opening day for around a month, and are especially grateful and proud of all the players and their parents for the dedication they have shown so far.

Mr. Cogswell announced that the league has expanded compared to the previous year. Last see SEASON page A5

High School Sports Week

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – The Franklin Tech Softball Eagles extended their winning streak this week, beating Hopkins, Frontier, Mahar and Mohawk to give them a mid-season record of 8-1. Their lone loss came against their cross-road rivals, the Turners Falls Thunder. The Thunder

Ladies, for their part, lost two games this week before bouncing back and stealing a win against one of the best teams in the state.

Meanwhile, the Turners Falls baseball team has quietly built a 6-1 record, and on Monday they defeated the Mahar Senators 6-2. Also this week, the undermanned see SPORTS page A4



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Turners Falls’ Lincoln Coleman makes solid contact during the fifth inning against the Mahar Senators on Monday. The Thunder prevailed, 6-2, in the home game.

Not Owned By Any Billionaire Narcissists

Letters to the Editors.....A2	Madhouse/Incubator.....B1
Op/Ed: A Toxic Legacy.....A2	May Libraries Listing.....B2
Great Falls Apple Column Reemerges.....A3	Montague Police Log.....B3
Erving Selectboard Notes.....A4	Cuber Breaks it Down.....B3
Arbor Day Schedule.....A5	Device/Advice: Battery Strategy.....B4
Gill Selectboard Notes.....A7	Our Monthly Poetry Page.....B6
Valley View: On Death Again.....B1	Four Comics and a Music Calendar.....B7
Max Travels: The Action in Jackson.....B1	Complicated Admissions.....B8



The Montague Reporter

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HOPES from page A1

selectboard, town administrator Steve Ellis, and town planner Walter Ramsey have indicated they support the plan as a way to avoid placing another large, deteriorating building under public ownership. Trinity says it would cost \$25 million to bring the structures up to code, based on an assessment it considers "proprietary."

"[I'm] not opposed, if we have a qualified builder – with funding and an established reputation – that could develop that building into something that could benefit the community," selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said at Monday's meeting. "I'd be all for that."

Govoni told the *Reporter* that FCRHRA's development arm, Rural Development Inc., is "very interested in trying to fill the gap for affordable housing in Franklin County, and we are working with a number of towns to try to develop that housing... Over 1,000 units are needed to fill the existing gap that was there before the pandemic."

RDI has been in discussions with Erving about three town-owned parcels, and with Montague on two sites identified by the planning board as appropriate for new housing, the former Railroad Salvage lot and an empty block of First Street.

Asked to comment on the Farren, Govoni replied carefully: "We are very interested in working with the town on affordable housing, on the sites that they've identified as being the best potential for both affordable and mixed-use housing."

Govoni said she had spoken with Stevens to "dispel some of the myths that had been shared with

[him] that really led him to have different conclusions than I think are merited by the situation."

Attempts to reach Stevens for comment were unsuccessful as of press time. As of Wednesday, Ellis said no meeting was scheduled between him and the town. Ellis also said he had heard, but could not confirm, that Stevens may have been under the impression that Trinity would provide "starter capital" for a redevelopment project.

"[W]e can assure you," wrote Trinity president Janice Hamilton-Crawford in her April 19 letter to Ellis and two politicians, "[w]e are planning to demolish the buildings which served as the former hospital and skilled nursing facility."

Trinity's letter came in response to two sent in February. One, from Ellis, sought "clarification" and "assurances" on matters ranging from the removal of underground tanks to the clearing of the property's title, which may be complicated by clauses in old deeds granting rights to Farren founder Bernard Farren's heirs. The second, from representative Natalie Blais and senator Jo Comerford, admonished the company for reneging on a written promise to partner with the town on a redevelopment study.

Ellis pointed out that neither tanks nor title were addressed in Hamilton-Crawford's response. "It didn't look to me like that letter was drafted by a lawyer, I will say that," he said after the meeting.

Ellis's own letter made no mention of the town's support for reuse of the buildings if a developer steps forward with the funding.



Marge Anderson holds a picture from a recent exhibition at the Deerfield Valley Art Association's Fiddleheads Gallery in Northfield. The gallery shows the work of 280 member artists from New England in non-juried, thematic exhibits that change every six to eight weeks. Anderson is the association president this year, and has been a member for five years.

Letters to the Editors

Armen Backs Burek for Health Board

I am writing in support of Kathy Burek for the Montague Board of Health.

I'm voting for my friend Kathy because I have known her for many years, and I know what a ball of fire she is. Kathy is a long-time Montague resident who has done many things, including serving as a town meeting representative and animal inspector. It seems as though Kathy knows everyone in Franklin County. She's a hard worker, a great networker, gregarious and she truly cares about her community.

Kathy is an unstoppable force who will serve Montague well as a Board of Health member. Vote Kathy Burek on May 17th!

Alice Armen
Montague Center

So Does Campbell

Kathleen Burek is an excellent choice for our votes for a position on the Montague Board of Health. She appreciates that the commitment of our Board of Health includes both human health and environmental health, understanding they are tightly entwined. She also recognizes the extensive catalog of responsibilities this position carries – from safe housing to food sanitation to environmental protection.

Kathy is and has been an active part of the Montague community for many years, and her ongoing involvement and dedication to our community are invaluable. She has demonstrated recognition of the links between human, animal, and environmental health.

She listens to concerns and new ideas, and she is an effective recruiter for community involvement. Please vote! Thank you,

Yolanda Campbell
Turners Falls

OP ED

Help Undo the Toxic Legacy Of Housing Discrimination

By NURI SHERIF

SPRINGFIELD – It's easy to look at redlining – refusing a housing loan to someone because they live in an area deemed to be a financial risk – as a distant relic of the 20th century. With legislation like the Fair Housing Act passed in 1968, we'd like to think that surely we have solved racially and socioeconomically motivated problems with housing.

On a recent research trip to the National Archives, I stood with a 1930s hand-drawn redline map of neighborhoods of Fall River, Massachusetts in my hands. Neat blocks of contrasting color – green for "advancing" areas, blue for "stable" areas, orange for "declining" areas, pink for "bad" areas – were still visible, and it struck me how deeply embedded housing segregation was and is.

In an addendum, marked "confidential," to the official 1937 Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) report for Chicopee and Holyoke, W.C. McClelland and Owen Thompson,

two HOLC field agents, dissected the "desirability" of each community through interviews with area banks and carpenters, neighborhood tours, and assessments of local industry. McClelland and Thompson did all of this to "graphically reflect the trend of desirability in neighborhoods from a residential view-point."

The so-called value ascribed to various neighborhoods would serve as a roadmap for federal mortgage lenders to decide which communities were worth investing in, and which aspiring homeowners would be approved for a loan.

In Holyoke, only the northernmost Highlands and a two-block residential area off Northampton Street were deemed "desirable." According to HOLC, there were no "desirable" neighborhoods in Chicopee. Based on swaths of yellow on the map, most of Chicopee and measurable parts of Holyoke represented areas "lacking homogeneity" due in part to the "infiltration of a lower grade population."

Because these designations guided banks and housing lenders in their assignments of mortgages, "native-born whites" got to accumulate property wealth in the wake of the Great Depression while others, the "undesirable population," remained in poverty.

Eighty-five years after this report, racial and socioeconomic segregation in housing is still prevalent in the Pioneer Valley. For example, overlaying Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) 2020 Low Poverty Index with the redline maps for Holyoke and Chicopee, the HOLC "grades" generally track the contemporary prevalence of poverty in the two communities.

The Holyoke Highlands, for example, show the least exposure to poverty, whereas neighborhoods designated in 1937 as "declining" and "bad" exhibit the two highest poverty rates by HUD.

Such a bleak assessment does not need to be a death knell, however, because what was built by humans can be deconstructed and rebuilt by

humans. Such is the goal of fair housing programs like the HUD-funded Springfield Fair Housing Project at Community Legal Aid. In my capacity as Fair Housing Testing Coordinator, I work alongside fair housing attorneys, clients, and community members to gather information about alleged and potential housing discrimination in Hampden County.

That hand-drawn map with its careful color-coding does not represent who we must be. Individuals interested in advancing change can help me – help us – undo housing segregation's toxic legacy.

Nuri Sherif is the Fair Housing Testing Coordinator based in Community Legal Aid's Springfield office.

If you would like to join the effort and become a Fair Housing Investigator with the Springfield Fair Housing Project, visit www.communitylegal.org/get-involved/work-with-us/fair-housing-testing/ or email nsherif@cla-ma.org to learn more.

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The latest round of COVID boosters and vaccinations at mobile sites in Franklin County have been announced. First boosters are available for those over age 12, five months since their Pfizer or Moderna dose or two months after their Johnson and Johnson. Second boosters are available to those with certain medical conditions, and people over 50 who received their first booster more than four months ago. You can learn more and sign up at frcog.org.

Invasive Plants: Asked and Answered! is the title of a talk tonight at the Great Falls Discovery Center, Thursday April 28, at 7 p.m. Will Pfadenhauer is a PhD student at UMass Amherst, where he studies global patterns in invasive plant species. Join him in the Great Hall as he answers your questions about invasive plants by drawing on recent research and using local examples of problems and solutions.

The Montague Congregational Church at 4 North Street is holding a **tag sale and breakfast sandwich**

sale from 8:30 to noon this Saturday, April 30. Lots of books, puzzles, and household treasures priced to sell, they say, with items in the driveway and the sandwiches indoors.

The **Erving Townwide Tag Sale**, sponsored by the Friends of the Erving Library, is returning this Saturday with a large variety of treasures and "must-haves." With over 35 tag sale sites encompassing Erving Center, Farley, and Erving, you are sure to find something that you have been looking to own.

Maps are available at the Erving Library, local businesses, on the Library Facebook page, and the town website. The event runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the rain date is Sunday.

The Erving Library Friends are holding their annual **book and plant sale** at the same time, at the Erving Library at 2 Care Drive. Browse for reads in the main area of the library, then purchase plants on the front patio to brighten your garden. Take a chance on a raffle basket – a purchase totaling \$20 or more will get you a free ticket towards a basket.

The plant and book sale will con-

tinue during the library's open hours through May 12. Proceeds support the summer reading program.

Federal Street Books is celebrating **Independent Bookstore Day** this Saturday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. There will be a prize wheel for exclusive giveaways with any purchase. Find out more @[federalstreetbooks](https://www.facebook.com/federalstreetbooks) on Facebook and Instagram.

The first **Greenfield Farmers Market** of 2022 is also this Saturday, offering fresh plants, veggies, meats, live music, knitted goods, baked goods, and more all morning long. This year there are over 25 vendors. If you would like to volunteer, contact market manager Victoria McGarril at info@greenfieldfarmersmarket.com.

The Nolumbeka Project says that **spring cleanup help is wanted at Wissitinnewag** this Saturday, April 30. The Greenfield acreage has sweet grass to be fertilized, trails to mark and clear, sage and tobacco beds to be made, and other chores of the season. Contact Brent at brentp100@protonmail.com for directions and other information.

The National Spiritual Alliance announces its monthly **Medium-Psychic Fair** this Saturday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. "Our readers are at the top of their field and use a variety of modalities, primarily by Certified Spiritualist Mediums, but also include card readers and intu-

itive spiritual readings," says the notice. A 25-minute reading is \$30.

The Fair is held at the Thompson Temple at 2 Montague Ave in Lake Pleasant. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are recommended; they can be booked at spiritualallianceusa.org.

Tai Chi for Health Institute senior trainer Deborah Yaffee is hosting a virtual event, including door prizes and party favors, to celebrate **World Tai Chi and Qigong Day** on April 30 via Zoom. For those who want to join the fun and play Tai Chi in cyberspace, register at www.tinyurl.com/TaiChiPlayshop. For more information about Tai Chi for health or for this event, contact Yaffee at (413) 625-2800 or etaichiforhealth@gmail.com.

Northfield's Slate Roof Press will be at the **Florence Poetry Carnival** at the Florence Civic Center, with a book table and portable printing press on Saturday, April 30 from 1 to 5 p.m. This community art event at various locations in Florence features games and poetry, including a 7 p.m. reading by Martín Espada, Karen Skolfield, and Rio Santos at the Bombyx Center for Arts and Equity. Get the details at www.bombyx.live.

As if all that wasn't enough, Saturday April 30 is also the annual **Drug Take Back Day**. Bring your unwanted prescriptions to the police stations at Turners Falls, Greenfield, Leverett, Sunderland, and Deerfield between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. for safe disposal. Leave the medicine in original containers; vitamins, veterinary, and over-the-counter medicines will be accepted, but no liquids, syringes, chemotherapy drugs, or IV equipment allowed.

Terry Janoure offers "Write Now! The Spring Gathering," a **five-week online writing workshop** starting on Sunday, May 1. The workshops are open to both beginning and experienced writers and meet from 10 a.m. to noon Sundays. There is a fee, but scholarships are also available; apply by contacting Linda McInerney at lmciner@gmail.com.

A **pop-up picnic** welcoming Montague's new library director Caitlin Kelly and Montague Center librarian Kate Martineau is planned for Monday, May 2, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on the Montague Center Common. Bring finger food readied for sharing in a COVID-safe way, a blanket or chairs, and your singing voice if you are so inclined. The board of trustees and Friends group will be represented at the event. If it rains, the event will be held May 9.

The annual meeting of the **Montague Center Water District** will also be held Monday, May 2, at 7 p.m. at the Montague Center Fire Station, 28 Old Sunderland Road. We are told the committee is lacking one member, and folks in the district are urged to attend.

Directly following that meeting is the annual meeting of the **Montague Center Lighting District**. This committee, which handles the street lights in the Center, is also in need of folks to step up – several members are stepping down this year, so it's time for residents to become involved in order continue this district!

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By ANNABEL LEVINE

TURNERS FALLS – After a winter's rest from the written word, we are thrilled to be back in the pages of our favorite hometown rag to once again fill you with tales of garden inspiration and seasonal urgings to try one of our many local wild weeds and fruits.

The trees are starting to bloom, which means that it's time for our fifth annual spring cleanup at the **Unity Park Community Garden**, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. this Sunday, May 1. Come help us get our garden ready for the season, including our public U-Pick beds!

I wear a few hats when not contributing to this column, and one of them is as market manager at our **Great Falls Farmers Market** – not to be confused with the market in Great Falls, Montana, which seems quite lovely every time we're erroneously tagged on social media. I thought I would use the inches given today to talk about the upcoming season, as our opening day is next Wednesday, May 4.

Our small but mighty market is an essential part of our town's food economy, and I find that my work with the Apple Corps and my work with the market complement each other. For example, both the Apple Corps and the market are actively working to get free food into the hands of our neighbors!

Those who have followed this column might know where this is going. Massachusetts has an add-on program to SNAP called the **Healthy Incentives Program** (HIP), which puts the money right back onto folks' cards when they purchase local produce, and food-producing seeds and plants. Depending on household size, every SNAP recipient in Massachusetts gets between \$40 and \$80 of free food each month. The catch is that it has to be local items from registered vendors, and the only place HIP can currently be accessed in all of Montague is at our market on Wednesday afternoons.

The state has recently opened a new application period, for only the third time since the program's beginnings in 2017, for food producers to join the program, so hopefully in a few months our market will not be the town's only HIP vendor!

In case anyone needs a refresher, here's an great local illustration: A neighbor is walking to Food City to do some grocery shopping on a Wednesday afternoon. If they stop at the farmer's market first, they can buy \$40 to \$80 worth of fresh vegetables, fruit, no-sugar

added jam, food-bearing seeds or plant starts, and then have that money immediately refunded to their card. When they arrive at Food City, their SNAP balance will be the same as when they first started their journey.

The farmer's market can process SNAP and HIP for any of our vendors, meaning that we can help even the smallest-scale gardener get paid by the state for supplying fresh, local produce to their neighbors. To all gardeners reading this column, please keep us in mind as you plan your season's gardens, and when you start to harvest your crops. You do not need to be a farmer with acres to sign up for the market, nor do you need to be able to fill a table with produce – we'll help you sell whatever you've got, whenever you've got it. We allow one-day sign-ups for \$10 per day, and as long as the request is in by Monday, you can set up on Wednesday.

We also invite local artists and crafters to come sell, and community groups can set up a table for free.

One last invitation to vendors is necessary, which will put into action a plan we originally had in the early months of 2020 which had to be put aside due to COVID. We want to expand the market into a kind of "Farm & Flea," where folks can set up **tag sale tables** alongside our other vendors.

Last season we dipped our toes in the water with our first tag sale vendor. It was a welcome change, and we'd like to expand on the idea for the upcoming season. If you are local and have some gently-used items in good condition, get in touch! Each spot is \$10 per day, and you can sign up for any dates you like. For more information reach out to us on social media, or send an email to greatfallsfarmersmarketturners@gmail.com.

If you are a fan of the market, and are interested in helping it grow, please consider joining the new "Friends of the Great Falls Farmers Market" group. If you're interested, reach out via email and we'll get you connected. A vibrant market requires a community's worth of support, and I look forward to seeing what we'll be able to do together.

See you Wednesday!

The Great Falls Farmers Market's opening day is next Wednesday, May 4, from 2 to 6 p.m. It will run every Wednesday through October 26. You can get in touch with the market manager at greatfallsfarmersmarketturners@gmail.com, or reach out via Facebook or Instagram.

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

School Redevelopment Must Be Rebid

By KATIE NOLAN

On Monday night, the Erving selectboard and finance committee finalized the town's \$12.98 million budget for fiscal year 2023. This budget represents a 6% increase over FY'22. Voters will decide whether to approve the budget items at the annual town meeting on Wednesday, May 11.

Major expenditures proposed include \$5.34 million for elementary and secondary education, \$1.86 million for health insurance and employee benefits, \$538,050 for policing, and \$446,139 for fire and emergency medical services.

More about the proposed budget and other town meeting warrant articles are provided below.

Town administrator Bryan Smith informed the board that the process for the Pleasant Street Graded School request for proposals was faulty, because it was advertised in a newspaper only once, rather than twice, as required by Massachusetts law.

At their March 28 meeting, the board had reviewed responses from Obear Construction of Millers Falls and Lee Properties of Haverhill, and had awarded the project to Obear. The board rescinded the award and voted to re-publish the RFP, hoping that both developers, and perhaps other companies, would submit proposals.

The board voted to contract with F&G Waste Disposal of Springfield to accept the town's

solid waste until the end of FY'22 on June 30.

The town needed to find a new solid waste disposal facility because Community Eco Power, which formerly received residential waste from Erving and other local towns, declared bankruptcy and its assets were sold.

Smith told the board that Franklin County Solid Waste District executive director Jan Ameen was negotiating with disposal contractors, and would likely recommend a FY'23 contract with Republic Services, a national waste disposal company with a facility in Springfield.

Town Meeting and FY'23 Budget

At the annual town meeting to be held May 11 at 7 p.m. at Erving Elementary School, Erving voters will decide on \$12.98 million in FY'23 budget requests, whether to borrow for re-building the Church Street bridge, whether to change the process for sending real estate tax bills, and whether to approve revisions to the zoning bylaw.

Education is the major expense in the \$12.98 million budget. The selectboard and finance committee approved requests for \$3.33 million for Erving Elementary School, \$1.48 million for secondary education, and \$530,875 for Franklin County Technical School.

Other major expenses include \$1.84 million for employee benefits, such as health and life insurance, the Franklin County Retirement

Fund, and Medicare benefits; \$538,000 for the police department; and \$446,139 for the fire department and emergency medical services.

Proposed capital improvement projects – at a cost of \$637,000 – include Bridge Street and Maple Avenue reconstruction, purchasing a new police cruiser, and purchasing a Ford F550 truck with a plow for the highway department.

The town meeting will decide whether to authorize borrowing \$1.6 million for replacing the Church Street bridge. At the April 28 selectboard meeting, Bryan Smith said federal funds might be available to help pay for the reconstruction.

One article proposes to amend the zoning bylaw by changing the terms “single-family,” “two-family,” and “multi-family” homes to “single unit,” “two unit,” and “multi-unit.”

The residential use table would also change to allow two-unit development by right in Central Village and Village Residential districts, and allow multi-unit development by special permit in Village Residential and French King districts.

Voters will be asked to approve preliminary semi-annual real estate tax billing. Under this system, property taxpayers would receive preliminary property tax bills each July that include estimates based on the previous year's tax rate and assessment. The preliminary bill would be due in October, and then a second bill with the balance of the real tax would be sent in December and due April 1.

SPORTS from page A1

Turners Falls co-op boys' tennis team dropped two road matches, but were able to win some games along the way.

Softball

FCTS 9 – Hopkins 5

FCTS 5 – Frontier 3

FCTS 15 – Mahar 1

FCTS 12 – Mohawk 2

Last Thursday the Eagles went down to Hadley, where they defeated the Hopkins Golden Hawks. Tech jumped out to an 8-1 lead in the fifth, and held on to win 9-5. Although the Hawks held Franklin to just eight hits, with only two players hitting for extra bases – Lillian Ross a triple, Kendra Campbell a double – Tech stole 12 bases on 12 attempts. Lauren Ross and Hannah Gilbert shared pitching duties in the win.

The next day, the Lady Birds edged out the Frontier Red Hawks 5-3. Tech again built an early lead, and these Hawks could only muster single runs in the sixth and seventh innings.

The Eagles had just four hits in the entire game, and only Lillian Ross hit for extra bases, but they managed to get runners on base when it counted as their hits were supplemented by eight walks. Lillian Ross, Kylee Gamache, Gilbert, and Keira Stevens accounted for the hits, with Gamache, Gilbert, and Stevens batting in the runs. Lauren Ross pitched the complete victory.

The Birds' bats finally came alive on Tuesday as they traveled to Orange and dismantled the Mahar Senators, 15-1. Tech shot out to a 13-0 lead in the first inning, winning with the long ball as Gilbert, Kaitlin Trudeau, and Keira Stevens all cracked triples and Cordelia Guerin hit a double.

And on Wednesday, Tech hosted the Mohawk Trail Warriors, completing the quad-fecta with a 12-2 win. Mohawk actually scored first, but then it was all Eagles; after three innings they were on top 9-1. Tech would paste on two more runs in the fifth and another in the sixth before

Mohawk scored their second run in the seventh inning.

Tech pounded out 12 hits in six innings, with Kendra Campbell cracking a double and Gilbert blasting a home run. Lauren Ross gave up three hits in the circle, and K'd 16 batters.

Greenfield 8 – TFHS 4

Mt. Greylock 7 – TFHS 6

TFHS 2 – Wachusett 1

The Green Wave of Greenfield defeated Turners Falls last Thursday off a grand slam in the bottom of the fifth. Greenfield drew first blood off a bases-loaded walk in the second inning, and scored two more off a walk and a home run in the third to go up 3-0.

Turners got one run back in the fourth as Emily Young led off with a double, advanced on a Madison Liimatainen infield grounder, and scored on a wild pitch.

Liimatainen led the next inning off with a double. Morgan Dobias advanced her to third on a base hit, and she scored on the throw to second. Blue then tied it 3-3 on a Sky- lei LaPan sacrifice.

Undeterred, the Wave broke the tie in the fifth, then hit a grand slam in the sixth to go ahead 8-3. Turners scored once more, but it wasn't enough as Greenfield won 8-4.

On Friday Turners traveled to Mount Greylock, and dropped the game 7-6 to the Mounties. Power-town managed to start a late game rally, scoring four runs in the seventh, but the Mounties edged them out.

On Monday, though, Turners beat one of the best softball programs in the state, the Wachusett Green Mountaineers.

Wachusett Regional has an enrollment of almost 2,000 students. They were the D-I state champions in 2020, and lost 1-0 to Taunton in the state finals last year. Pitcher Riley Quirk is slated to pitch for Providence College next year. Quirk was certainly on point on Monday,



Turners Falls High School's Morgan Dobias underhands the ball to pitcher Madi Liimatainen to make the out at first. The Thunder roared with a 2-1 walk-off home win against Central Mass powerhouse Wachusett Regional.

striking out 17 Thunder batters. In the other dugout, the Turners Falls Thunder came in to the game riding a two-game skid.

Neither team would score until the bottom of the third, when Morgan Dobias scored on a Paige Sulda sacrifice. Wachusett tied it in up the fifth, but neither team was able to score again and the game went into extra innings tied at 1.

Blue kept the Mountaineers from scoring in the top of the eighth with some terrific fielding. Emily Young scored the winning run in the bottom of the inning when Green bobbled the ball and made an ill-advised throw to second base.

Although Turners had no earned runs, Young, Dobias, and Paige Sulda all had hits, with Young and Sulda clocking doubles. In the circle, Liimatainen threw a one-hitter, gave up four walks, and struck out 12 in eight innings.

Baseball

TFHS 6 – Mahar 2

Across the field on Monday, the Turners Falls Boys Thunder defeated the Mahar Senators to improve their record to 6 – 1 and to extend their winning streak to three games.

Alex Quezzad scored the first

run in the bottom of the first. He reached second base on an error, stole third, and was batted in by Derek Wiseman.

The Senators scored two runs in the fifth to go up 2-1, but Quezzad, Levin Prondecki, Wiseman, Joey Mosca, and Lincoln Coleman all crossed the plate in the bottom of the inning and gave the Thunder the 6-2 victory.

Tennis

SICS 4 – TFHS 1

PVCI 5 – TFHS 0

The Turners Falls boys' tennis team traveled south last Friday and lost to the Springfield International Charter School, 4-1. Mike Boyle was the lone point scorer for Turners as he swept first singles 6-2, 6-0.

On the second singles court, Alex Sabin lost 6-4, 6-1. Jacob Reich and John Carmichael won one game in first doubles, and Blue, lacking players, forfeited second doubles and third singles.

On Monday, the Blue Boys played a road match against the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion School. In this one, Boyle was shut out in the first set, but forced a tie breaker in the second, dropping it 7-5.

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SEASON from page A1

year there were three teams in the “majors” division, and only one in the “rookies” division. This year, the “majors” division consists of five teams, each named for their sponsor: Greenfield Savings Bank (GSB), Turners Falls Athletic Club (TFAC), Booska’s Flooring, Pipione’s Sport Shop, and St. Stan’s. The “rookie” division is made up of two teams: the Montague Elks and Travel Kuz.

All the coaches, assistant coaches, and players were then introduced, which was super exciting!

Mr. George Bush was then formally introduced. He reminisced about his baseball experience, and explained why it is so important for players to participate in little leagues such as Newt Guilbault, especially for those who hope to one day pursue a career in baseball.

Mr. Cogswell then recited the schedule for the rest of opening day, which includes three games. In the majors division, GSB and TFAC played at 1 p.m., and for the rookies, Travel Kuz played the Montague Elks. The majors division also had a second game, which was played at 3 p.m., and featured Booska’s Flooring playing St. Stan’s.

Post Mr. Cogswell’s introduction, all the players took individual pictures and team pictures from noon to 1 p.m., which gave me a chance to interview some of the players on the GSB team.

Jameson Betters, a sixth grader, said that this is his first year playing in the Newt Guilbault baseball league. He said he was kind of nervous for his first game, but also that he was going to hit a “homer” today!

“I’m excited to play in middle school, but I think I’ll miss [little league], because this is so much easier,” Jameson said. “But middle school will also be better because it’s more of a challenge.” Jameson also mentioned that his cousin, Cam Burnett, who is on the varsity baseball team at TFHS, helps him practice baseball a lot.

Camden Cogswell, a fifth grader, expressed how excited he was about opening day, and for the new season. “I’m feeling really good about today, because it’s opening day,” he said. “I’ve been really waiting for this day for the last two months, since my dad became the president [of Newt Guilbault.] I’m really excited, and I just hope we win.”

Camden also said that his older brother, Jackson Cogswell, who used to play for little league, helps him practice, and gives him information on the other play-

ers in the league. “Like the people who are still playing that were younger when Jackson played, are now better, and are still in the league,” Camden explained. “He tells me, like, ‘He’s most likely to hit the ball to shortstop,’ and I like the tips he gives me, too.”

John Martino, a third grader and an outfielder for GSB, said he was very excited for opening day and that he really wanted to win. Josh said he wants to pursue baseball as his career when he’s older, so I’m sure little league will be a super helpful experience for him.

Lastly, I interviewed John Hannah, a fifth grader, who said he usually plays second base or shortstop. “I have a feeling that today’s going to go pretty well, and we’re going to really beat them, but I think they are going to put up a really good fight,” he said.

John told me that he’s super excited to be in his third year of Newt Guilbault, especially after COVID-19. He also mentioned that he is hoping to play baseball for TFHS in a couple years, because he’s really passionate about it.

I asked him whether he wants to continue playing baseball when he’s older, like for a career, and he explained: “I want to be an NFL player, too, and also a baseball player. Also when I grow up, when I’m 18, I want to go into the Air Force and be an ROTC officer – it’s an officer that gives orders to plane pilots. My dad and my grandfather were both in the Air Force for 20 years, and I want to do it for 20 years, too. After I get out [of the Air Force], I’m probably going to try to get in the NFL.”

The first majors division game, between GSB and TFAC, ended with a score of 18-3, with TFAC winning. The second majors game, between Booska’s Flooring and St. Stan’s, ended with the score being 25-1, with Booska’s Flooring winning.

The rookies division game between Travel Kuz and the Montague Elks ended at 16-14, with Travel Kuz winning.

The 2022 Newt Guilbault Opening Day was so exciting, and was an amazing way to start off the little league season! I had so much fun watching the games, and especially talking to all the GSB players. If you have a chance, I would definitely recommend going to a couple games this season to support all the players.

Izzy Vachula-Curtis is a student at Turners Falls High School. Her longtime column, “The Authors’ Corner,” will return soon!



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UNION from page A1

has worked at the cinema since 2018. “I’m looking forward to the actual negotiation process to see what comes of this.”

“My impression after working with them for several weeks is that it’s been a long time coming,” said Andrea Schmid, lead organizer at Pioneer Valley Workers Center, a Northampton-based organization which has supported the union throughout the organizing process. The Workers Center will train ACWU members on “how to effectively function as a bargaining unit moving forward,” according to the union.

Hameed did not respond to the Reporter’s request for comment. Eisenhauer did not directly comment, but communicated that she had forwarded the Reporter’s request for comment to the board. Shortly before 5 p.m. Monday the Reporter received

the same statement, credited to the board as a whole, expressing voluntary recognition of ACWU that was sent to the union.

“The safety and well-being of our employees and patrons has been, is, and always will be one of our topmost priorities at Amherst Cinema. We have gone through some extremely challenging times together during the past two years to keep the Cinema open to the public and support our employees. We value the work of our employees in making the Cinema successful,” the board statement reads. “Amherst Cinema respects the voices of our workers and their right to unionize... the Board looks forward to a fair and transparent collective bargaining relationship.”

Ongoing Concerns

In November 2021, the 11 front of house workers drafted a letter asking management to address scheduling improvements, wages, and

transparency issues. Workers had not received raises since before the pandemic, and were not privy to shifts in policies such as COVID-19 safety measures that directly affected their daily work interacting with cinema customers.

This outreach precipitated a meeting with the entire front of house staff, Eisenhauer, general manager George Myers, business manager Brian Duffey, and technology manager Dan Biegner. Some progress occurred thereafter, according to Raymond and other workers, but

as certain concerns remained unaddressed, workers began to discuss unionizing.

“We felt from the interactions we’ve had with [management] over the last few months that this was going to be our best option to actually be taken seriously in asking for and receiving the things we have been asking for,” said Brian Zayatz, an ACWU member.

“There were changes made to COVID policy, capacity increases, without the floor staff’s explicit knowledge,” ACWU member Margaret Gyorgy told the Reporter. “We found out about some of these things on the same day the public did. That was one of our huge asks back in November, just being kept aware of things that directly affected us. I don’t think we saw a substantial change to how or when we were informed.”

Masks are currently “appreciated but no longer required,” according to notices posted at the cinema and on its website, and workers expressed concern about this transition.

“COVID is still alive and well in our communities, even if the CDC has changed their definitions, and it’s difficult to know where to look for information and guidance about these things,” said Zayatz. “We have not seen eye to eye with the board about how to make those kinds of decisions, and I think we would all prefer to continue to be masking and have our

patrons mask, at the very least in the lobby.”

Reflecting on the relationship between front of house workers and the board of directors in particular, Gyorgy added, “As a whole, we as hourly staff don’t have much communication with the board at all.”

Responsibilities for front of house workers at Amherst Cinema, whose pay starts at \$15 per hour, include ticket sales, concessions, cleaning and sanitizing the cinema, selling memberships, and taking donations to the nonprofit. Raymond, Gyorgy, and Zayatz are non-managerial “supervisors,” paid at a rate of \$17 per hour. In addition to standard front of house duties, they receive basic projector training and are responsible for opening and closing the cinema building and handling box office cash at the beginning and end of the day.

Workers can qualify for healthcare benefits if they work over 30 hours per week, but Zayatz said “it can be difficult to meet that threshold.”

“I don’t think any of us work regularly over 30 hours a week,” said Gyorgy. “Even when I was working five shifts a week regularly, I wasn’t hitting that 30-hour threshold.”

One “contentious issue” Zayatz mentioned concerned hazard pay during the pandemic. After several adjustments increasing and decreasing capacity as state health protocols evolved, Amherst Cinema reopened to full capacity last October, with proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test within the last 72 hours required upon entering the building. A “greeter position was created temporarily,” he said, and was paid at a rate of \$15.50 per hour, 50 cents higher than the starting front of house rate.

“When we asked why, we were told it was ‘hazard pay,’” Zayatz said. “And that was kind of a rallying point for us – asking to at least have that same amount of hazard pay, which was never granted.”

“And now, that position is no longer there,” said Raymond. “And we’re still not getting that hazard pay.”

Assessing Options

As an independent union, ACWU is not affiliated with any larger parent union. After deciding that unionization was the best path forward to address their concerns, the workers investigated options available, reaching out “to a few different larger unions,” according to Raymond.

“We also talked to [Alfonso Neal, executive co-director] at the Workers Center, and we were just trying to see the differences between doing an independent union or working with one that was already established,” Raymond continued. “Once we had a few options to lay out we met as a full floor staff and talked about which route we wanted to go and decided from there.”

Zayatz said ACWU appreciated Neal’s “bigger union background,” referring to his experience at Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and felt the independent union structure would allow the workers “a lot of ownership and autonomy over what the union ultimately ended up looking like,” including, as ACWU’s release notes, “dues structure and internal policy.”

Both Amherst Cinema Workers United and the Workers Center express a positive attitude as the union looks ahead to contract bargaining.

“We intend to have good-faith negotiations, and a good-faith relationship moving forward,” said Schmid.

“After feeling kind of unheard or un-listened to, I’m excited to actually have a seat at the table,” Gyorgy said.

“I’ve worked with the cinema for a little while now, and I feel like one of its strengths is the people that work there,” said Raymond. “I hope that this can make the workplace better and more stable, which I think is something that we all want to see, because we all do really care about having a little art house cinema in Amherst.”



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LANDLORD from page A1

Patricia and Michael Pancione of the property management company Pancione Associates, appeared in court on Friday in his place. Michael Pancione said he is seeking power of attorney over Kuntz's corporation, 199 E Main Street Inc., and will assume responsibility for fixing the bed bug problem.

"We've had places that have had bed bugs, and we've remediated them," Patricia Pancione told the Abramses last Friday in the courthouse hallway. "We manage a lot of properties, and we understand."

During the hearing, Judge Robert Fields issued an order for the owners to remedy the problem and have the apartment's condition inspected and approved by the Orange board of health by the next court date on May 13.

The Panciones have hired attorney Lawrence Farber to represent 199 E Main Street Inc. in the case.

"Right now we're just assuming some property management duties for Brendan and the corporation that owns it, and trying to get everything tidied up and shipshape," Michael Pancione told the *Reporter*.

New Challenges

Kuntz and the Abramses last appeared in court on March 18. By all accounts, Kuntz purchased the multi-unit building last November with a pre-existing bed bug infestation, though he told the *Reporter* then that he suspected the Abramses were exaggerating the problem, and also suspected the building's previous owner was colluding with the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority to cheat him out of a low-income housing tax credit.

Kuntz said he worked for the housing non-profit Way Finders, and that the Orange building was his first "test run in rehabbing" a property for affordable housing. In December, he filed pre-eviction orders for eight

tenants in the building, though he later told this newspaper he was no longer pursuing any evictions.

"Mr. Kuntz was employed briefly at Way Finders as an Asset Manager; he is no longer employed by our organization," Way Finders chief development officer Megan Talbert clarified this week.

The same day Kuntz purchased the Orange apartment building, November 9, the state Department of Environmental Protection issued a final decision in a case related to a string of open-burning violations at his own home in New Salem, culminating in two incidents last spring in which Kuntz allegedly burned trees on his property without a permit. The department upheld a \$2,000 fine Kuntz had attempted to appeal, writing that he had "failed to provide any basis or stated reason for his appeal."

While that appeal was pending, the New Salem fire department and local and state police responded to three similar incidents of Kuntz burning brush and logs last August and September, and he was fined an additional \$3,000 in October.

Just after 5 a.m. on Sunday, April 3, a neighbor reported seeing smoke coming from the Whitaker Road property. By the time firefighters arrived at the scene, Kuntz's home had burned to the ground.

"Investigators have not reached a determination as to the origin and cause of that fire at this point," Jake Wark, a spokesperson for the state Department of Fire Services, told the *Reporter*. "The joint investigation by the New Salem fire department and state police fire investigators assigned to the state fire marshal's office is still ongoing."

The house was unoccupied at the time of the fire, Wark said. Kuntz said that he had gone on an overnight trip the night of the fire, the *Greenfield Recorder* reported, and that he was at a store activating a new cell phone that morning when his stepfather called to tell him about the fire.

Five days later, on April 8, Kuntz appeared at the Abramses' apartment. According to Cardona, after a brief, agitated exchange, Kuntz informed his tenants that he had canceled the bed bug treatment scheduled for the following day.

"He said the apartment is oxygen-rich, and nobody will go in there to treat it," Cardona said, referencing the oxygen tanks the Abramses use to breathe. "When we called the company, they stated that he canceled it."

Patricia Pancione offered a different explanation for the canceled treatment on Friday. She said the company hired to do the extermination, Braman Pest Control, had the catalytic converters stolen from its fleet of vehicles the day prior.

"That's not what he told us," Cardona said.

Strong Reactions

According to Orange police reports, Kuntz arrived at the office of the Hadsel Insurance Agency just after noon on Monday, April 11, wielding a "brand new" baseball bat still in its plastic sleeve. Witnesses claim that Kuntz entered the office building with the bat, demanded to see owner Wayne Tolley, and threatened employees inside the building "to the point where all employees were in fear for their life."

Tolley stated in the report that he locked Kuntz out of the building and instructed an employee to call 911. "I'm going to get to you! This isn't the end!" Kuntz allegedly yelled before repeatedly smashing an external air conditioning unit with the new bat, then driving his truck aggressively around the agency's small parking lot.

Police arrested Kuntz soon after he left the premises and charged him with disorderly conduct, malicious destruction of property, assault with a dangerous weapon, and operating a motor vehicle to endanger.

According to Officer Timothy

Powling, Kuntz related that he "was extremely upset in regard to getting compensation from his insurance company as his home had recently burned down.... He then told me that the owner informed him that he had no coverage on his home." Elsewhere in the report, Powling added that Kuntz's policy had been canceled in January due to non-payment.

Kuntz was arraigned on April 12, with the assault charge apparently dropped, and was released on the condition that he stay away from the insurance agency.

Two days later, Kuntz allegedly called the office and threatened Tolley again. "He will have to watch his back a whole lot more than before," Kuntz said, according to an employee's written statement to police.

"Due to Brendan's residence having burned down and he is now living out of his vehicle, a warrant is being requested for the arrest of Brendan Kuntz," read the Orange Police Department report. This time he was arraigned on the additional charge of intimidation of a witness.

Next Steps

Last Friday, the day of his scheduled housing court hearing for the bed bug case, Kuntz appeared instead before a different judge and pleaded guilty on the property destruction and witness intimidation charges. He admitted to "sufficient facts" on the negligent operation charge, and the disorderly conduct charge was waived by the state.

Under the deal, Kuntz agreed to an 18-month probation period on condition he receive mental health evaluation and avoid further contact with his former insurance agent, which sits one block away from his rental apartment building.

Michael Pancione told the *Reporter* he knows nothing about the Delaware-registered, New York City-based private equity firm

RD W SPV LLC, which financed Kuntz's purchase of that building last November.

"I truly don't know anything about that," Pancione said. "I don't know anything about any of the bills, because I don't have power of attorney yet."



The Abramses shared additional visual evidence of the insects' ravages.

Meanwhile, a heat treatment of the apartment unit is scheduled for this Thursday, April 28, and the Abramses will stay in a motel for the duration of the extermination.

"We'll do everything we can to remedy these bed bugs," Patricia Pancione told them. "I don't want to put you in any more stress.... Let's take today as a new page. We're going to take care of you."

Based in Easthampton, Pancione Associates manage at least 20 properties in western Massachusetts, including the Green River Condominiums and Myers Farm Condominiums in Greenfield.

"I really do sincerely wish your son good health and a speedy recovery," Judge Fields told the couple at last Friday's hearing. "His behavior in our court was really erratic and illustrative of a person who's having a lot of battles emotionally."

Kuntz declined a request to comment on the bed bug case. The next hearing is scheduled for Friday, May 13 at the district court in Greenfield.



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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Gill May Expand Property Tax Exemption for Low-Income Seniors

By JERRI HIGGINS

The Gill selectboard met with the board of assessors and the financial committee Monday evening to discuss warrant articles and budget proposals for the annual town meeting, which has not yet been scheduled. Residents' concerns about a police co-responder program were also discussed, among other business.

The board of assessors requested six changes to Gill's property tax exemptions for low-income seniors, for inclusion on the annual town meeting warrant.

"Currently, the town of Gill has accepted asset limits that are at the bottom," board of assessors member Bill Tomb told the selectboard, referring to the state law governing tax exemptions for seniors. "We want to raise them to be more current, and reduce the age of eligibility for seniors that qualify to receive these benefits, and increase the benefit amount."

The first four changes would decrease the eligibility age for the exemption from 70 to 65 years old, increase the exemption amount from \$500 to \$1,000; and increase the levels of income and assets under which residents would be eligible.

"I think we have two individuals who claim this exemption," said assessor board member Tim Storrow. "There were three, but one was denied last year. If we raise the income eligibility requirements and asset limits, maybe there would be a few more people who would be eligible."

The state reimburses Gill \$500 for each exemption, and this would not increase if the town votes to increase the exemption benefit to \$1,000.

"2014 was the last time Gill raised the income limits," said town administrator Ray Purington. At that time, the limits rose from \$12,000 per year for single filers and \$15,000 for joint filers, levels adopted in 1987, to \$15,000 and \$20,000. "That really helped me put it in perspective," Purington said. "To increase [the exemption] to \$1,000 is a good gesture."

"That is a small gesture, a smaller gesture than what we were giving when we started this in 1987," said selectboard chair Greg Snedeker. "Back then a \$500 deduction on your property taxes could be 75% of your tax bill. Now \$1,000, on average, is going to be 25%."

If approved by voters, Gill would increase the income limit to \$20,000 for single filers and \$30,000 for joint filers. The limits for assets would rise from \$28,000 to \$40,000 for single filers, and from \$30,000 to \$55,000 for joint filers.

"Another way to look at it, even with these," added selectboard member Randy Crochier, "is if we had a half a dozen people, that is \$6,000. We will get \$3,000 of that back. The rest of our taxes are going up four cents."

The assessors' fifth request would set automatic annual increases in the asset and income limits, pegged to the federal Consumer Price Index (CPI).

The final request pertains to a related property tax exemption of \$175 for Massachusetts seniors who do not qualify for the full exemp-

tions. This currently has an asset limit of \$40,000, and voters would agree to increase that limit automatically using the CPI.

Purington will consolidate the articles presented by the board of assessors into fewer items for inclusion on the town meeting warrant.

Road Acceptance

An article to accept Cove View Lane as a town-maintained road might also be included on the annual town meeting warrant.

Purington said that when the road was added to the highway department's Chapter 90 road resurfacing project, it was rejected by the state Department of Transportation as it was not on the town's official roads list. "We are trying to figure out why not," he said.

Purington and town clerk Doreen Stevens are researching the issue to "make a case to the MassDOT that it has always been a road, and they should accept and allow the project," he said. "If they agree, then the need for a warrant article goes away."

Department Budgets

The board of assessors is requesting a \$52,635 budget for FY'23, a \$4,252 increase over the current year. The increase is for the assistant to the assessor's salary, training costs, and dues and subscriptions.

Tomb told the selectboard that while his board had initially chosen 25 hours per week for the assistant position, assistant Diane Sumrall has worked closer to 31 hours per week since she started last year. The board of assessors will recommend the personnel committee increase her weekly hours to 30.

A requested \$350 budget increase for the tax collector reflects line items for contracted services, tax taking, and postage costs.

One wrote that a group is currently working with state senator Jo Comerford to seek other models, which would remove initial police response from mental health emergency calls altogether.

An election budget increase from \$9,456 to \$13,085 is driven by election worker salaries. According to Stevens, over two-thirds of the increase would go toward election worker salaries, and the remainder for voting machine programming and maintenance.

The election budget includes a separate savings account to purchase a new voting machine to replace the town's old AccuVote in time for the 2024 primaries and presidential election. Stevens said this line item would be zeroed out for FY'23, "in order to offset some of this increase to this budget." "However," she added, "the 2024 presidential election is inching closer day by day, and to continue saving for that voting machine is the responsible thing to do."

A requested \$41 increase in the town clerk budget would offset an

expected 6.5% increase in postage stamps this July. The library requested a \$116 increase, to ensure the custodian's salary stays on the state minimum wage scale, as well as other increases in materials and services. The historical commission requested a \$40 increase to help cover office supplies and a computer hard drive.

The police department budget, presented at the April 7 selectboard meeting, included an increase from \$215,319 in FY'22 to \$232,508.

This included a \$17,071 increase in salaries and benefits, \$381 more for dues and subscriptions, \$1,000 more for fuel, and a \$437 increase for new equipment. The repair and maintenance line decreased by \$1,500, and the town would save \$200 due to a less expensive contract for cell phone and cruiser Mobile Data Terminals.

Co-Responder Concerns

The selectboard received emails from two residents concerned with a grant-funded Co-Responder Jail/Arrest Diversion program, due to begin on May 1, which pairs police departments with social workers.

"It is certainly unusual to get two emails on the same topic, and especially two emails with concern," Purington told the selectboard. He said there is not enough time to address the issue this month or next, due to elections and town meeting, but that he would place the issue on a June meeting agenda and invite those concerned to share their concerns.

Under the state-funded program, several local towns have contracted with the Northampton-based Clinical and Support Options for clinicians to respond alongside police to mental health crises, and to follow up as needed.

Police chief Christopher Redmond said that the model has been operating in Montague, Greenfield, and Deerfield for the last year, and that he had heard only positive feedback about their collaboration so far.

The two residents urged Gill to not sign onto the program, which will serve the towns of Gill, Erving, Bernardston, Northfield, Warwick, Leverett, and Wendell in conjunction with Erving's police department. One wrote that a group is currently working with state senator Jo Comerford to seek other models, which would remove initial police response from mental health emergency calls altogether.

Other Business

The selectboard unanimously approved the ballot for the May 16 town election warrant. The ballot includes the following positions: one 3-year selectboard member and sewer commissioner; one 3-year member of the board of assessors; one 3-year treasurer; 2-year and 3-year board of health members; a 3-year cemetery commissioner, and a 3-year library trustee.

Montague selectboard member Matt Lord was unanimously approved to represent the Gill-Montague Regional School District in collective bargaining negotiations.

Thomas Chabot was unanimously approved as a firefighter, through June 30.

LIBRARY DIRECTOR



New Salem Public Library is looking for a Library Director who enjoys creating engaging programs for all ages; has strong managerial, people and technical skills; and would like a rewarding 19-hour a week position in a small rural town with a supportive community. For more info about the position and a complete job description, go to www.newsalempubliclibrary.org

To apply by May 16 deadline: Submit a cover letter and resume to mackay.selectman@gmail.com or New Salem Public Library, Attn: Sue Dunbar, 23 South Main Street, New Salem, MA 01355.



Montague Planning Department Request for Community Feedback

Two surveys open to anyone who lives, works, or visits Turners Falls. (Under 10 minutes)

Downtown Turners Falls

Parking Survey

Your input will be used to improve the current parking system in Turners Falls.



<https://tinyurl.com/TurnersFallsParking>

Canal District Master Plan Survey

Your input will be used to develop a vision for 16+ acres of former industrial land along the river in downtown Turners Falls.



<https://qrco.de/bcxjs7>

LEVERETT from page A1

the election, which takes place during town meeting. According to the town newsletter, there are 12 positions up for election, with eight residents having announced their intention to run for various seats.

The four positions with vacancies are one seat on the board of health, one of two available seats on the finance committee, one of two library trustee positions, and one of two seats on the school committee.

Three of the candidates who had announced their intention to run in the newsletter introduced themselves Tuesday during the board's "candidates' forum."

Patricia Duffy, current chair of the sustainable economy committee, announced her candidacy for the selectboard seat being vacated by Shively.

Duffy said she has "immersed" herself in volunteering for town groups and committees since 2004, and has been involved in activities concerned with aging, climate change, schools, town amenities, housing, roads, and more. Duffy said she hopes to use her experience in collaborating with dignity and respect in town government to meet challenges in Leverett's future.

Finance committee member Philip Carter announced he is seeking re-election. Carter said he was a 20-year town resident and has served on the fin com for the past seven of those years. He described the fin com's work as attempting to keep property taxes low while maintaining services.

Selectboard member Tom Hankinson asked how successful Carter feels they have been, to which Carter replied, "Moderately."

Resident Jya Plavin announced her candidacy for school committee, saying she had a second grader at Leverett Elementary school, grew up in neighboring Shutes-

bury, and has been involved with the Council on Aging, anti-racism efforts, and school-related groups among other experience.

Resident Shannon Gamble asked the board whether Tuesday's meeting was the last for chair Julie Shively, to which Shively replied "Yes," but that the subject was "not on the agenda."

Gamble continued anyway, thanking Shively for her time on the board, and said she appreciated Shively's "knowledge, groundedness, and honesty" and had learned a lot from her. Gamble's statement was followed by a loud round of applause.

Other Business

The board appointed Seth Heminway to the conservation commission. Hankinson noted that he came highly recommended by the commission.

Heminway said he had retired from a 30-year career at the federal Environmental Protection Agency, and had extensive experience in water issues, but needed to bone up on wetlands. Heminway added that he was a lifelong lover of the outdoors and that he and his wife were excited about their future in Leverett.

The board approved a weed cleanup expense on Leverett Pond, not to exceed \$600. Hankinson, as a member of the Friends of Leverett Pond, recused himself from the vote, but commented that a team of 15 volunteers had recently assessed the situation and found the area around the boat launch to be "100% infested" with weeds.

Hankinson and others recommended that the traditional authorization of funds be increased from \$400 to \$600 to allow for weed removal in the channel leading from the boat launch area to the rest of the pond. Shively and Colbert approved the motion.



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MONTAGUE from page A1

The only competitive race on the ballot – unless candidates unexpectedly mount write-in campaigns – is for a seat on the Montague board of health, for which Kathleen Burek, Catherine Dodds, Maureen McNamara, and Rachel Stoler have turned in papers to appear on the ballot. There are numerous town meeting seats which are “open,” in the sense that precincts do not currently have candidates to fill all openings on the ballot. These may be filled by candidates written in on the day of the election.

Precinct 1 resident Ariel Elan asked what would happen if an elected town meeting member had to change precincts. Bourbeau replied that the member could still represent their former precinct at the annual town meeting on May 7, which is prior to the election, but would then need to be elected in their new precinct.

Turnout at spring elections is notoriously low, often averaging less than 10% of eligible voters. The highest turnout in recent years, nearly 32%, occurred in 2017 when an advisory referendum on the Turners Falls High School Indian mascot was on the ballot. Turnout in the 2020 November presidential election, by contrast, exceeded 75%.

Public Health

In other news, public health director Daniel Wasiuk appeared at the selectboard meeting for the first time in over a month to present the latest COVID case counts and discuss a “sanitary sewer overflow notification plan” with public works superintendent Tom Bergeron.

Wasiuk said that the weekly count of “positive tests” has declined from 24 to 14 but the two-week “rolling case count” had plateaued at 38. This precipitated a discussion of the selectboard’s recent decision for the upcoming annual town meeting to be held indoors in the high school auditorium.

Town meeting member Lilith Wolinsky noted a large spike in COVID cases statewide, which she said was probably an undercount due to the popularity of unrecorded rapid COVID tests. She said that many town meeting members, especially those at risk with underlying conditions, are considering not attending the meeting.

Wasiuk said that the state has lifted “all restrictions,” and that policy decisions are made not just

in response to case increases but in response to hospitalization rates.

Lord said he felt masks should be required for attendance at the meeting, and that the town should provide high-end KN95 masks for attendees.

Town administrator Steve Ellis said that the town has masks of “uncertain origin” that it can provide, and that he had looked at “ventilation data” for the auditorium, which he said holds 422 people.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz advocated allocating “a bit more space” within the auditorium for town meeting members. The board took no votes on the issue.

With regard to the sanitary sewer overflow public notification plan, Wasiuk said there is now a requirement by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to alert residents when “untreated water” is released into a “body of water,” in Montague’s case namely the Connecticut River.

Bergeron said Advanced Drainage Systems of Ludlow has been monitoring the flow from the Montague combined sewer overflow

system, and “has a means of being able to notify us, but none of this is available yet through the DEP.”

Ellis said the goal of the new policy was the implementation of public notification through an “automated process,” because “when storms happen at three o’clock in the morning,” there is not sufficient staff in small towns to check the data and get the word out.

The board approved an overflow public notification plan, which must be submitted to the state by this weekend.

Conservation & Development

Ellis announced that the town-owned parcel between 507 and 517 Federal Street has recently been auctioned to Raymond Lashier, who owns an adjacent parcel along the Sawmill River.

The property had been appraised at \$77,000 and the board had set a base bid of \$55,000 but Lashier, who hails from Tennessee, got into bidding war with another prospective buyer at \$1,000 increments and ended up offering \$113,000. “It was very interesting,” said Ellis.

Ellis told the board that the town has applied through its representatives in Congress for \$975,000 in federal earmarks for the Avenue A Streetscape Project in Turners Falls. He called the request a “long shot,” but “the start of a process.”

He then reviewed the “timelines” for implementation of the town’s requests for recreational improvements along the Connecticut River to be funded by the FirstLight Power company under the federal license it is currently negotiating. He said the implementation timing appears to be more “near term” than expected. “We are being heard,” he said.

Janel Nockleby of the historical commission noted that her commission had expressed particular interest in FirstLight’s commitment to fund a reuse study and find a developer for Cabot Camp, on the junction of the Connecticut and Millers Rivers.

Other Business

A request from the Watershed Restaurant in the Bookmill complex in Montague Center to allow outdoor “patio seating” was approved

by the board, as was a request by NOVA Motorcycles and other businesses at the end of Second Street in Turners Falls to close that portion of the street for a “makers market” festival between 2 and 11 p.m. on Saturday, June 11.

The board executed a \$1,500 grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council for a “Shea Away” music event at Peskeompskut Park “sometime in July,” according to RiverCulture director Suzanne Lomanto, and approved the use of a portion of that same park for the annual Great Falls Farmers Market, which runs on Wednesdays from May through October.

Under “topics not anticipated,” Kuklewicz reported that he had received a number of emails about an “invasive species of worms that has got a lot of people concerned” and asked for “an update” on the problem at a future meeting.

The board then retired into two executive sessions to deliberate on real estate negotiations and collective bargaining strategy. The next scheduled board meeting will be held May 2.



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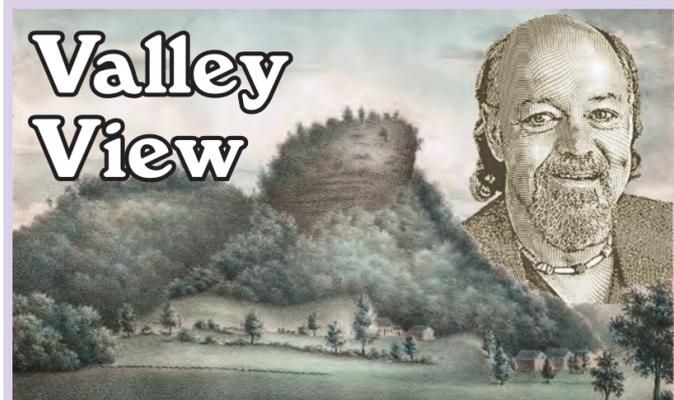


MICHAEL MAR COFRIGIANO PHOTO

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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

APRIL 28, 2022



Valley View

ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – My daily morning walk covers more than a mile, less than two. It begins by exiting the inset porch and crossing the front yard, passing a tall pink weigela and splitting a pair of tall Japanese maples to the triangular common on the crotch of Colrain and Green River roads that forms the southern tip of my property.

The neighborhood is, overwhelmingly, sleeping as I walk toward Meadow Lane, where I take a left toward a looming sunrise and walk a couple hundred yards to a farm right-of-way between two nice, circa-1970, Colonial-revival homes. There, I follow a nearly invisible double-rutted trail between tall, tidy residential fences and ornamental trees. The access allows manuring and harvesting of vast hayfields. Folks unfamiliar with the place probably pass the lane without notice.

Past the fences, I go left off the trail and follow the backyard perimeter of a couple of homes toward a small wood line, where it's not unusual to see a deer, especially this time of year when fresh, sweet, salubrious clover and rye stubble are sprouting. Never is it richer in nutrients than during that first spring growth, thus the higher price for "first-cut" hay.

On a recent morning, recrossing the common on my way home, I stopped to chat with a local farmer slowing for the stop sign in his white pickup. In the course of our brief, neighborly conversation, he told me about the deer he had just spotted grazing the field behind his barn. Spotting them in dim dawn light, he first feared his cattle were loose, then realized it was deer. Many of them. So many, in fact, that he took a count: 15, coming off an easy winter.

In this season of budding and mating, nesting and birthing, growth, renewal and blissful morning birdsong, thoughts of a solo, sentient walking man can romp and ramble to peculiar places. It's difficult to predict where such ponderings will lead. I guess it depends on the elements – wind, rain, fog, that first pink twinkle peeking through budding trees low on the eastern horizon, illuminating spring pastels to a soft glow.

Turkey gobblers from the ridge

recently entered the mix as lustful mating toms assemble their spring-time harems. This week marked the opening of the annual, four-week spring hunt, when hunters use an assortment of mouth and friction calls to mimic the sounds of eager hens and entice dominant gobblers to tightly choked shotguns. I've been there, done that. Enjoyed it while it lasted. Loved it, in fact. But how many turkeys must a man kill to be considered a good hunter?

If I am ever hungry and destitute, I know I can call in a turkey. That's good enough for me. Hunting in my world is not competitive. It's leisure activity. Though killing is a necessary component, to me it's the most uncomfortable element of the game. One way around it, of course, is photography, with its benign type of shooting. That alternative satisfied my late Uncle Bob later in life. But it's not for me. I don't need it.

On a recent, clear morning, as light crept in, a tom sounded off from the ridge just before I hit Meadow Lane. By the time I reached the open meadow, I had heard two additional gobblers, then another as I circled back on the homestretch toward Meadow Lane.

I can't say why, but that garrulous gobbler spun my wheels into death and dying in the season of life and living. The die cast, I let it ramble as I put one foot in front of the other.

The chain of thought started with my late son Rynie, who had died eight years ago to the day, a day shy of his 29th birthday. Less than three years earlier, his 28-year-old brother had died a similar death, both confined to hospital beds and losing a battle against dreaded post-operative infections. I didn't dwell long on Rynie and Gary. There has been other, more recent death in my life. Isn't it inevitable as we age? So, I am by now hardened to death and dying.

Just in the past year my wife lost a brother and sister, both younger, as well as a slightly older brother-in-law. All of them died far too young, at home – one of a hideous cancer fought with dreadful hospital poisons, the other two related to lives lived in the fast lane. Although it's true that all three made choices that contributed to their demise, I guess that's life. Get over

see **VALLEY VIEW** page B3

Above: Montague tree warden Mark Stevens stands among recently delivered shade trees, which will be planted at various locations in town this spring. Many species are represented to enhance biodiversity. See Page A5 for special Arbor Day plantings in each village!

New Venture Hopes to Foster Arts Collaboration, Connection

By DONNA PETERSEN

GREENFIELD – It's easy these days to become cynical about so many things and as one gets older it seems to sneak up on you – *Politicians! Corporations! The Media! Young People!* – I plead guilty to some of that. But then you come face to face with positivity and energy and there it is, challenging you. I met this past week with the two co-founders of Madhouse Multi-Arts, a new art enterprise in Greenfield. Jackson Williams and Charlotte Treiber are the principals and are already offering space, workshops, and creating an incubator for aspiring artists and musicians.

Williams and Treiber both attended Hampshire College, and after graduating in 2020 they immediately began working toward fulfillment of their idea. Williams' final project at Hampshire was to develop a concept and business plan for an arts enterprise. He interviewed musicians, as his focus was on music and songwriting.

Treiber was studying painting, and when COVID closed the studio where she worked on her project, she had to finish it using Williams' garage as a studio. They said they saw a need for structure for artists, since there seemed to be almost an assumption that art would often end up as a hobby. They both believe that there isn't the career orientation that exists in the sciences or math to produce the similar career opportunities for artists, such as internships.

After the two graduated, they started to put Williams' plan into motion. Speaking to them, I saw that they have definite goals in mind, and ideas for how to implement those goals.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Madhouse Multi-Arts is developing 11 rental studios within this large Victorian building in downtown Greenfield.

They have gotten off to a good start by buying a handsome, large Victorian house at 479 Main Street to use as their base. Previously used as office spaces, the new studio rooms required a great deal of work to bring them back to their Victorian roots, including ripping up carpeting to reveal hardwood floors. It is here that artists can rent studio space; the basement will be

see **MULTI-ARTS** page B4



Jackson, MS: Blues, History, and a Good Time

SOUTH DEERFIELD – It's the city of soul: self-proclaimed, yet earned. The blues live on in Jackson, Mississippi. This capital city teems with authentic pockets of old-time blues clubs. And most of them are huge, set up in former warehouses and packing plants where there is

always plenty of room for dancing.

It all adds up to a destination that will surprise and delight you, and you'll learn something, too.

After spending four April days in Jackson, meeting so many people who make music, cook incredible food, and are innovating and mak-

ing art, I came away with a new appreciation for this least-visited Deep South state.

The population is just 152,000 in the city of Jackson, but 500,000 in the outskirts of the suburbs. It's been losing residents over the years, for a variety of reasons. This problem is statewide, and one that Mississippi desperately wants to solve. They call it the "brain drain."

A Safe Visit

I never felt afraid in Jackson, though the murder rate is the highest per capita in the US. There are many more reasons to visit than to stay away. Jackson does have significant problems, with a high crime rate and a persistent issue with the clay soil that cracks pipes and has caused sewage to pour into the Pearl River.

But like many US cities with high crime rates, for most people

see **TRAVEL** page B5



HARTSHORNE PHOTO

The Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center depicts the lives of enslaved people, and other aspects of African American history, in Jackson.

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

“Coco”

Coco is a sweet, sensitive girl who came to Dakin as a stray. We don't know anything about her life before she arrived here, but she has shown us what a cute dog she is.

She enjoys going for walks and is working on her house training. She can be a little nervous when faced with new people or situations, but once she is comfortable she likes hanging out and being petted.

Coco needs a home with no

small kids - teens and up for her - and she would like to meet any dogs in the home.

Interested in adopting? Coco's adoption fee is \$550. 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 MAY 2 THROUGH 6

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.

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held on Zoom on Wednesdays. Foot Care Clinic is held monthly. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 2, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

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. Coffee and tea is available during open hours.

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 5/2

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

Tuesday 5/3

No Scheduled Activities

Wednesday 5/4

9 a.m. Veterans' Agent Hours
10:15 a.m. Aerobics

11 a.m. Chair Exercise
4 p.m. Mat Yoga
Thursday 5/5
10:30 a.m. Brown Bag
1 p.m. Cards & Games
Friday 5/6
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 snacks daily. Exercise classes will be limited to 15 people per class.

We will continue with Brown Bag lunch the first Thursday of each month. Foot Clinic is on the second Monday of each month and the first Wednesday of each month we will hold Veterans Services. For any questions or concerns, please call Paula Betters at (413) 423-3649.

Monday 5/2

9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge
10 a.m. New class coming soon

Tuesday 5/3

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

Wednesday 5/4

9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10 a.m. New Chair Yoga
12:30 p.m. Bingo

Thursday 5/5

9 a.m. Re-Store & Re-Emerge

10 a.m. Stretch & Balance

Friday 5/6

9 a.m. Open Sew Quilting

MAY LIBRARY LISTING

Montague Public Libraries

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

Erving Public Library (413) 423-3348

Gill: Slate Library (413) 863-2591

Leverett Public Library (413) 548-9220

Northfield: Dickinson Library (413) 498-2455

Wendell Free Library (978) 544-3559

MONTAGUE LIBRARIES

Multiple days: *Paws to Read.* Read to trained therapy dogs Rio, J-Lo, or Emmy to improve literacy. Carnegie 1st Tuesday, 3rd Monday, 3rd Thursday. Montague Center, 1st Wednesday. Call (413) 863-3214 to reserve a 15-minute spot for your child or teen. 4 to 5 p.m.

Every Wednesday: *Story Time Outside.* Meet Meghan Doyle for stories, songs, and a Take-and-Make craft under the tent on the Carnegie lawn. 10 a.m.

Wednesday, May 4: *Lessons from the Trail.* Hiker and photographer Jeffrey Stylos shares photos and lessons from thousands of miles of hiking. Carnegie Library, 6 p.m.

Every Friday: *Baby Lapsit Outside.* Join Meghan for 20 minutes of age-appropriate books, songs, rhymes, and movement under the tent on the Carnegie lawn. 10 a.m.

1st Saturday: *Used book sale.* Fiction, paperbacks, kids' books, DVDs/CDs, audiobooks. Hundreds of recent donations. Sponsored by the Friends of the Libraries. Carnegie Library, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Saturday, May 7: *Free Comic Book Day.* Stop by the Carnegie Library tent to pick up a free comic book and do a craft. Costumes encouraged but not required. Sponsored by Comics 'N' More. 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

2nd and 4th Fridays: *Grab & Go STEAM Bags.* Hands-on Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math activities for grades K to 4. Free kits at all branches while supplies last.

Wednesday, May 18: *Mosaic.* A multifaceted evening: film screening, conversations on racism and community health, discussion of how libraries support public health. Registration and info at wmhenfilm.org. At the Shea Theater, 7 to 9 p.m.

Sunday, May 21: *Seed Paper for Children.* Join us on the Carnegie lawn to make a special paper from post-consumer materials embedded with wildflower seeds. 11 a.m.

Tuesday, May 24: *Burnout and Self-Care Workshop.* On Zoom with co-facilitators Stephanie Baird, LMHC, and Melinda Barsales. Call (413) 863-3214 or email librarydirector@montague-ma.gov to register. 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

ERVING FREE LIBRARY

1st Monday: *Paws to Read.* A great opportunity for reluctant readers to read with a therapy dog. Call (413) 423-3348 to reserve a spot. 4 to 6 p.m.

Weather, etc. can cause changes; you may want to call ahead to confirm events.

Through May 12: *Plant/Book Sales.* Locally raised plants, perennials, veggie starts, flowers, books, DVDs.

May 15: *Book Discussion and Film:* Dorothy B. Hughes, *In a Lonely Place.* Check out the book, then come see the film starring Humphrey Bogart and discuss its themes of community, peace, and safety. Popcorn and beverages served. 1 p.m.

LEVERETT LIBRARY

All May: *Monthly Spice Tasting: Sage.* Stop in for a sample and suggested recipes. While supplies last.

All May: *Story Walks.* Find a new Story on the trail behind the library every Thursday.

Every Monday and Wednesday: *Online Qigong.* Free class, everyone welcome. More info on the leverettlibrary.org calendar, or email Dvora: CommunityQigong@gmail.com. 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Every Saturday: *Tai Chi.* Free classes, everyone welcome. Space limited, masks required. Call Dennis for more info: (413) 367-9760. Intermediate to advanced 10 to 11 a.m., beginners 11 a.m. to noon.

2nd Monday: *Ukulele Strum-Along Online.* All instruments welcome, chords and lyrics included. For more details: julie@musicjulie.com. 7 to 8 p.m.

Wednesdays, May 11, 18, and 25: *Connecting with Nature* with Rema Boscov. For more info, email leverett@cwmmars.org. 10 a.m. to noon.

Thursday, May 19: *The Buzz about Bees and Flowers.* UMA's professor Lynn Adler will talk about how bees and flowers interact for mutual benefit. Bring your kids, learn all about buzzing bees, and get some sunflower seeds to plant at home. Sponsored by the Friends of the Leverett Library. 4 p.m.

Tuesday, May 24: *Ice Cream Social Reading.* Join author Richie Davis for ice cream and excerpts from his books. Outside, 6:30 p.m.

NORTHFIELD: DICKINSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Every Tuesday: *Drop-in Knitting.* Join fellow knitters and crocheters for an afternoon of chatting and sharing projects. All are welcome! 6 to 8 p.m.

1st Wednesday: *Readers' Choice.* Book for May 4: *Italian Shoes* by Henning Men-

kell.* 10 a.m.

Fridays: *Kids' Fridays.* May 6: LEGOs. May 13: Scavenger hunt. May 20: Build fairy houses. May 27: Movie, *The Mitchells Vs. The Machines.* 2 to 3 p.m., movie lasts until 4 p.m.

1st Saturday: *Puzzle Swap.* Dozens of new-to-you puzzles. For more info: friendsofdml01360@gmail.com. 10 to 11:30 a.m.

2nd Wednesday: *Readings: Nonfiction, Fiction, and Poetry.* Book for May 11: *The Country of Pointed Firs* by Sarah Orne Jewett, and poems.* 3 p.m.

2nd Thursday: *Environmental Awareness Group.* Discussion for May 12: *Electrify: An Optimist's Playbook for Our Clean Energy Future*, by Saul Grif-fith.* 6:30 p.m.

Friday, May 13: *Library Trivia Night* at the Northfield Golf Club.* 6:30 to 8 p.m.

3rd Tuesday: *Friends of the Library.* 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Friday, May 20: *Book discussion* for the community read *The Dirty Life: On Farming, Food, and Love*, by Kristin Kimball. Outside if weather permits.* 7 to 8 p.m.

Tuesday, May 24: *Foraging Walk* with Russ Cohen, author of *Wild Things I Have Known and Eaten*.* Meet at the library at 5:30 pm.

Thursday, May 26: *Online Q&A* with Kristin Kimball, author of *The Dirty Life: On Farming, Food, and Love*.* 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

* For more info, email dmemlib@gmail.com.

WENDELL FREE LIBRARY

Every Tuesday: *Art Group* in the Herrick Room. Space limited, masks recommended. 5 p.m.

Every Wednesday: *Mother Goose on the Loose.* Registration required at (413) 422-0170. 10 a.m.

Wednesday, May 4: *Book discussion* for the community read *The Dirty Life: On Farming, Food, and Love*, by Kristin Kimball. 6:30 p.m.

Every Thursday: *Playgroup.* 9:30 a.m.

Every Saturday: *Storytime.* Stories aimed at ages 2 to 6, but all ages are welcome. Masks highly recommended. 10:30 a.m.

Saturday, May 7: *Intro to Backyard Chickens for Families.* 10 a.m.

Sunday, May 15: *Grow Your Own Sunflower.* 10 a.m.

Saturday, May 28: *Outdoor Concert with Carrie Ferguson.* 10 a.m.

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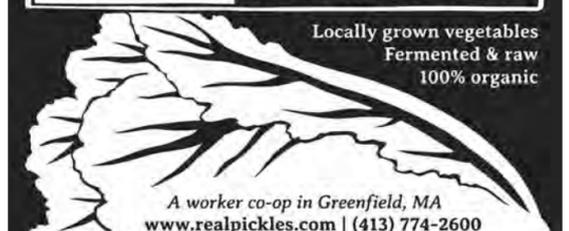


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VALLEY VIEW from page B1
it. We're all going to die someday.

Which reminds me, since the death of my sons, I have read the obits of at least four or five of their friends, all of them good kids who enjoyed many happy hours under my roof – blowing out my woofers with high-volume hip-hop and rap, and tearing my tweeters with loud newgrass and bluegrass selections from my large collection. If you haven't noticed, young overdose death before the age of 40 is now a national epidemic. Very sad. Heroin, fentanyl, and crack cocaine are the primary villains. Up and down they go to tragic young demise.

All those thoughts were bouncing and whirling through my inner consciousness on that robust day-break ramble through short, frosty grass and crisp air, as I touched on this topic and that like a hummingbird feeding through morning glories. No, not *mourning* glories.

Although my inner ramblings began with my dead sons, their aunt and uncles, thoughts of them didn't linger. I quickly moved on to my late boyhood friend, Big Stosh, with whom in younger days I played ball, hunted, fished and caroused regularly. He was here one day, gone the next – discovered dead at home, likely a heart attack victim. Big Stosh and I had many good days on the Deerfield River and its surrounding hardwood ridges; that, and taking in the sights and sounds while riding on a lark around secondary hilltown roads, preferably dirt.

I missed the Big Boy's funeral, and would have offered my services as a pallbearer had I not been away at a national outdoor-writers convention. I regret that I couldn't pay my last respects by lugging him to his grave.

I also thought of friends Fast Eddie and Blue Sky, two men cut from similar, independent cloth. I loved both of them like brothers, warts and all, but have held off mentioning them in print. I suppose enough time has now elapsed to admit they

both took their own lives. Their choice by different methods.

I hope no one will now object to such an acknowledgment in print. So, there it is, my salute to friends who decided they had had enough. One suffered from multiple health problems that finally wore him out. The other had run afoul of the tax man. They chose not to stick around for the consequences. Churchgoers would call them cowards. I don't go there. I'm not wired that way. Genuflecting to crucifixions, dropping to my knees to pray, and feeding the log-handled basket for salvation is for others.

Looking back, that train of thought that briefly brought the dead to life in my imagination lasted maybe three or four minutes. It was all triggered by that rambunctious tom turkey establishing territory with throaty gobbles. As can happen to receptive beings when the conditions are right, my consciousness welcomed in wafting spirits riding soft, undetectable currents through still morning air. I enjoyed the brief visitations. Then, like the darkness, they were gone.

I was back at home before the tall clock's 6:30 gong sounded. I poured a hot cup of coffee, passed the dining-room woodstove into the parlor, maneuvered my power recliner to a comfortable position, propped up the headrest and opened a book about ancient Eurasian/Siberian rock art. Written by art-historian/anthropologist Esther Jacobson-Tepfer, it's titled *The Hunter, the Stag, and the Mother of Animals: Image, Monument, and Landscape in Ancient North Asia*.

Now there's a long-handled basket into which I willfully throw spare change – supporting beliefs grounded in the ancient hunter-gatherer realm condemned by "civilized" religions as pagan and ultimately reduced to ashes, some tied to wooden stakes surrounded by dry, brittle fagots. Robed Inquisition monsters called it progress – now a hot mess.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Wheelchair Vandals, Private Investigator; Grass Fire; Husband-Wife Collision; Water Bottle Dumper; Kids

Monday, 4/18

12:18 p.m. Caller from Third Street states that other tenants in her apartment building have been vandalizing her motorized wheelchairs. They have broken two of them. Caller and other tenants advised of options.

1 p.m. Caller from Avenue A states that she had a shopping cart with food in it just outside of the entrance to the apartment building. One of the other tenants got mad it was there and threw the items all over the place. Officer made contact with caller, but caller did not appear to want to discuss the incident and walked away from the officer. No groceries were seen on the ground or anywhere else.

6:17 p.m. Caller from West Street states that two intoxicated females are outside her house; she asked them to leave, and they are refusing. While on phone, caller states they are trying to kick in the sliding door. Females have left the residence.

8:13 p.m. Caller states that about an hour ago a vehicle was traveling at a high rate of speed on South Street/Route 63 and took out his sign. Caller states he did not witness this, but people at Hunting Hills did. Referred to an officer.

8:14 p.m. Caller states that a male is in the area of Wentworth Congregate Housing on J Street asking old people for money. Caller called back stating the male has left the property.

Tuesday, 4/19

7:54 a.m. Greenfield PD requesting an officer respond to the General Pierce Bridge for a motor vehicle accident. Officers clear but will check for other damage in the downtown area.

7:56 a.m. Report of loose pitbull running around in G Street area. Animal control officer notified and responding. Area checked; no loose dogs found.

10:36 a.m. Caller states that toxic black smoke is coming from the garage across Station Street due to someone burning something inside the garage. MCFD toned out by Shelburne Control.

7:37 p.m. Caller from Sherman Drive reporting a wild turkey has been hanging around her house for approximately one week and it appears to have a bum leg. Caller just wanted to let someone know. Copy of call left in ACO's box.

Wednesday, 4/20

2:01 p.m. Caller from Third Street states that someone cut the chain that was used to lock up his mini bikes and they stole one of them. Report taken.

3:44 p.m. Caller reporting a male party in a wheelchair asking people for money at Family Dollar. Second call reporting same. Officer advises he spoke with the involved party, who stated he is going to work on not asking for money anymore.

4:57 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street reporting that approximately ten kids are loitering in the alleyway. They do not live in the area. Officer advises

he checked the area; there were five kids playing.

5:21 p.m. Caller reporting a water main cover popped out a little bit on South Prospect Street; it is sticking up into the roadway. Officer advises that the cover has been put back in place.

7 p.m. Following a traffic stop, a 44-year-old Lake Pleasant man was arrested on two default warrants.

Thursday, 4/21

8:02 a.m. 911 caller reports that his wife backed into another vehicle. Both vehicles belong to the husband and wife. Investigated.

2:54 p.m. Caller reports a "fancy" white vehicle pulled up and may have "exchanged stuff" with someone in another vehicle. Referred to an officer.

Friday, 4/22

7:12 a.m. Caller from Eleventh Street reports that a male in an electric chair tried to leave a cart full of furniture pieces in front of her house yesterday. She now thinks he left it between the dumpsters at the Brewery. Referred to an officer.

7:28 a.m. Report from Coolidge Avenue of a van with blackout curtains parked on the street. PI in the area until 8 p.m.

9:13 a.m. Party into station to report that a kid named [redacted] showed him a [redacted] in his waistband last night. Party did not have any further information.

1:24 p.m. Caller from N Street reports his mini Schnauzer was bitten by the black/white pitbull mix who lives next door. Message left for ACO. ACO en route.

1:39 p.m. Caller from Grand Avenue reports she was cornered by two pitbulls (white with brown spots) while out walking her dogs. She has seen these dogs loose in the area before. She left a message for Animal Control.

3:59 p.m. Caller reporting that she was rear-ended at the stop sign near the bridge on Canal Street. No known damage to her vehicle; other party did not leave any information with her, but she got the plate number. Just looking to have this on record.

4:09 p.m. Caller reporting fire in the woods on Dry Hill Road. Call transferred to Shelburne Control.

4:32 p.m. DCF requesting assistance with an emergency removal and interview. Services rendered.

6:55 p.m. TFFD requesting an officer to stand by as they work on a grass fire on Green Pond Road. Officer advises that TFFD found the cause of the fire, which was a firework.

8:31 p.m. A 38-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on two straight

warrants.

Saturday, 4/23
10:15 a.m. Caller states that a black SUV parked in the lot at Highland School Apartments and people got out and are putting together bicycles. Caller stated that one of the men urinated next to a shed. Parties were moved along. Male party stated he dumped out a water bottle and was not urinating by the shed.

1:19 p.m. Report of two guys messing with a manhole cover on Third Street. Men were trying to secure the cover better because it is loose and makes a loud noise when cars drive over it. Officer requesting DPW be notified; non-urgent.

4:12 p.m. Caller states that while out on a bike ride near the sewage plant, they saw what looks like at least two large gas tanks just thrown over the embankment. Area checked; unable to locate any trash.

8:26 p.m. Caller reports large group of kids yelling and chasing each other from Unity Street to Second Street. Officer advises it sounds like some sort of altercation occurred and everyone scattered. Officer will check area.

10:21 p.m. Caller states there are shopping carts lined up across the road in the Fourth Street-Avenue A area blocking the street; concerned this could cause an accident. Two carts were in a parking spot. Officer moved them onto the sidewalk.

Sunday, 4/24
1:20 p.m. Caller from N Street has serious concerns about an ongoing issue with the next door neighbor's dog. The dog continues to destroy the fence that separates their properties; caller fears the dog will attack his children. Advised of options; complaint forwarded to ACO.

7:23 p.m. Caller states that they have a problem with two pitbulls that are known to run around the area on Federal Street. Caller states they were in his yard this evening and he has a young child. Caller states he chased them back to their property, and the owner came out of the house yelling at him. Caller states there was a small verbal confrontation; would like someone to talk to the owner about keeping dogs in their own yard. Copy of call left for ACO.

9:17 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that the window into the basement has been knocked out and it looks like someone tried to gain access to the building. Caller concerned about kids playing and falling in or getting hurt; was going to call housing, but figures it will be weeks before they respond. Officers advised.

FROM A KID'S POINT OF VIEW

Solving the Rubik's Cube

By FINTAN ANDREW JONES

MONTAGUE – Hello, I am back with another column. Today, I will be writing about the Rubik's Cube. If you don't know what that is, it is basically a cube, and the sides twist. I think it is a popular toy. Since it was invented, over 450 million cubes have been sold worldwide, including 20 million in 2021.

I actually own a couple of cubes myself. Did you know that there are "Rubik's Cubes" that aren't even cubes? This may seem odd, but it sort of makes sense – there is something called a Pyraminx, which is a pyramid version of the Rubik's Cube.

The Rubik's Cube was originally created in 1974 by a guy named Ernő Rubik. He was an architect in Hungary who had become obsessed with three-dimensional movement. It all started one day when he was fiddling around with wooden blocks and rubber bands. Now, in 2022, there are many different brands of Rubik's Cubes out there.

The main point of a Rubik's Cube is to solve it, but over the decades it has become something people challenge each other to solve in the fastest time. Today's world record for the fastest time to solve it is 3.47 seconds, by a Chinese cuber named Yusheng Du! My current record is 39.52 seconds. I am sure in time that will get faster, but I think it is pretty good considering I am just a kid.

Also, for Easter, I got a "How to Solve The Rubik's Cube Fastest" book. I have been using it non-stop, and it is really helpful.

This may be surprising, but did you know that many celebrities can solve the cube too? Will Smith, Chris Pratt, Stephen Curry, and Justin Beiber all know how to solve the Rubik's Cube. Probably the most impressive of them all is Stephen Curry, who along with learning the cube during quarantine, learned it *blindfolded*. Wow, that sounds so cool, and it is! I have tried to learn the blindfolded version, but first I want to focus on learning to get fast un-blindfolded.

Now, I want to go over the top five misconceptions about

the Rubik's Cube:

1. *You have to have a high IQ and be good at math to solve one.* This is not true at all; you just have to have muscle memory and learn the basic steps to solve the cube. To add on, I learned how to solve the entire cube in about 1.5 weeks. Of course after that it takes more practice to get faster, but that is a good place to start.

2. *A lot of people think that the more you mix it up, the harder it is to solve.* The truth is the minimum number of rotations to solve the cube is 20 moves, despite how much you scramble it. Now, that doesn't always mean professional cubers solve it in that few moves, but it is just a cool thing to know.

3. *I have been asked by people at school, how do you create a solution to solve it all in your head in like 10 seconds?* Well, guess what, we actually don't! When I try to solve it I plan the first 10 to 15 moves in my head, and the rest just comes to me while I am solving. Of course, because of that, my reaction time has to be really good.

4. *A huge misconception is that the bigger the cube is, the harder it is to solve.* Now, before I move on, I am not saying it takes less time, but just that it is no more of a mental challenge than any other cube. It certainly takes more time to solve an 11x11 cube than a 3x3, but after you learn the 5x5, the rest is pretty much the same.

5. *And finally, the last misconception of the Rubik's cube: A lot of people think that we solve one color at a time.* This is actually wrong. We solve layer by layer, which basically means that we solve one piece, then solve the piece above that, and go all around. I actually don't solve the last four colors until the last couple moves, when the whole cube gets solved.

I started to learn the Rubik's cube as a pastime during the summer and for something fun to do when I am done with my homework, and it has turned into something that I really care about.

I hope you enjoyed this column. Next time I will write about chess. I think this will be fun, because I happen to be participating in a chess tournament, and I will let you guys know how it goes.

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MULTI-HOUSE from page B1

a soundproofed area for use as rehearsal space for musicians.

Creating physical spaces for creativity is just one aspect of the plan for Madhouse. The two artist-entrepreneurs are guided by a very focused and definite philosophy.

"We want to connect creatives of all disciplines, whether they be painters, musicians, or writers, to cultivate a more collaborative and educational interpersonal experience," Williams said. "Madhouse Multi-Arts expands beyond the walls of our workspace, and into the broader arts community."

Williams and Treiber came back to this theme of collaboration and connection often during our conversation. The two asserted that Madhouse is dedicated to "providing aspiring creatives with the space, resources, and community they need to reach their professional goals," and to strengthening the connections of the western Massachusetts arts scene as a whole. They also stressed that they see creative hobbies as being just as valuable as creative careers, and they hope more hobby-oriented folks utilize Madhouse resources as well.

Madhouse has already been busy presenting events in town. Williams works nearby at Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center, and Madhouse has been collaborating with that venue to present a monthly concert series featuring local musicians including Moon Hollow, Olivia Nied, Death Spiral, and JJ Slater.

Williams' hope is that after some of these aspiring local artists have professional success and experience, they will return to the area and offer support to musicians just starting out. Maintaining and developing connections and a creative flow is part of the aim of Multi-Arts.

One event that has already been held at



Left: Jackson Williams and Charlotte Treiber are the faces behind Madhouse Multi-Arts. Right: One of the rooms at their downtown Greenfield building, with paintings by Treiber and Dawn Leahy on the walls.



Madhouse is the Bring Your Own Art Show. Artists brought their portfolios to share with each other, and discussions were held about the work, which ranged from student projects to the work of established artists with expansive portfolios.

I saw some photos of the 11 studios at the 479 Main Street location. Some are not available right now, but they all look quite nice. Some are quite spacious, and a couple look like classic artist's garrets, but without the damp and chill – no consumptive artists here.

"Every room in our building is unique," stated Williams, "and we give our artists artistic freedom even with their studio spaces. Paint the walls, hang knick knacks, do whatever you need to do to get in the zone."

"Madhouse is perfect for someone starting a business like myself, who needs a working studio in an affordable location" one present

studio occupant, Rosalie Silliman of Rosalie Wedding Alterations, told me. "My clients love the beautiful natural light and architecture of the building."

The studios, which can be viewed on the Madhouse website range from about 105 to 320 square feet, and the prices range from \$225 to \$430 per month. The basement rehearsal spaces will soon be soundproofed and available for bookings. If anyone wants to volunteer to help and do a work exchange they are very welcome, said the co-founders.

Madhouse has already started offering some workshops. "Experiential Painting" sessions with Treiber will begin Thursday, May 19 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. and run for five Thursdays. "Beginner's Astrology" classes with local artist Dawn Leahy start May 18 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. and run for four weeks.

The co-founders and Leahy are also putting

together a series of Greenfield Arts Walks from 5 to 8 p.m. on the last Friday of each month, from May 27 to October 28. The participants so far are Madhouse, Looky Here, Hawks & Reed, and the Pushkin Gallery.

Williams and Treiber said they have been pleased with Greenfield's response to Madhouse, and that the community has been very open and receptive. They participated in a meeting with local movers and shakers from town, and seemed pleased that lawyers, bankers, and businesspeople were happy to discuss their vision for the Greenfield arts community.

I asked if they got any comments about their youthful age for such an ambitious project. Treiber laughed. "No, but maybe they should!"

Where do they see Madhouse Multi-Arts in five years? The pair talked about possibly adding another venue and making the business more on-the-go, more mobile. They said they would like to work with artists in Hadley, for instance, because one of their goals is branching out a bit into other communities with other collaborators.

So, aspiring artists of all types: Madhouse Multi-Arts has resources on offer, and it may be worth your while to check it out. The Madhouse folks believe they have the "skill sets and networks right here in Greenfield to produce larger-scale events and draw people into this wonderful town. All we need to do is collaborate!"

Makes me lose a bit of my cynicism right there!

Check out Madhouse Multi-Arts on Facebook and at their website, www.madhouse-multiarts.com. Treiber and Williams can be reached at madhousemultiarts@gmail.com.



By RYNE HAGER

TURNERS FALLS – I get asked a lot of tech-related questions by friends. Chief among them is usually "Which phone should I buy?," but that's too nuanced to answer here. The second most common question is, "How can I make my phone last longer on a charge?"

That is a surprisingly easy one. Depending on what you're willing to do or give up, you might stretch your phone's battery to last twice as long as you're used to, but that does require some sacrifices – ultimately, it's a zero-sum situation, and to gain something you've got to take something else away.

The easiest way to stretch out your phone's battery without any major sacrifices is to turn your brightness down. A phone's screen is typically its biggest power-consuming part, and turning down the brightness reduces how much power it uses. That might mean squinting a little in daylight or having to shade your phone, but it's the simplest avenue to stretch out a dwindling battery.

Phones also have multiple radios in them – a modem for connecting to 4G/LTE or 5G, a WiFi radio for

connecting to the internet at home, a Bluetooth radio for fitness trackers or headphones, and even an NFC radio for contactless payments – and turning some of them off can also have a small impact on your battery life.

If you go that route, keep in mind that disabling Wi-Fi might mean consuming your phone plan's potentially limited mobile data. And, if you're in an area with bad signal where your phone's modem has to effectively "shout" to be heard by the towers and Wi-Fi is available, being connected to Wi-Fi will actually help your battery life, not hurt it.

Some believe that aggressively killing/swiping apps away can help your battery life, but the real impact there is small. Both iOS and Android have their own means of managing apps in the background to ensure they work correctly, and can even intermittently wake them without telling you to sync things like messages or notifications – all without the apps being "running" at all.

Both platforms are also smart enough to eventually suspend apps that aren't needed or doing anything if they aren't actually open. In fact, many of the applications you see further back in the list have already been

Stretching Your Phone's Battery Life

suspended, hanging out in memory somewhere in case you need them later, but otherwise not running. That memory consumes power whether something is in it or not.

There are exceptions to this, like fitness-tracking apps that finagle their way into running longer than others so they can gather data, but ultimately, closing or swiping apps away won't stretch out your battery very much (if at all).

Your phone may also have a dedicated battery-saving mode (available in Settings or likely in your Android phone's quick settings menu, or your iPhone's Control Center), and this will apply many of the same tips I mentioned above, but it can still be supplemented by other maneuvers.

Remember how your screen consumes most of your phone's power? You can actually eke out just a little extra battery life with another change: if your phone has an OLED display, using a "Night" or "Dark" theme with gray or black backgrounds can significantly reduce its power consumption. The same goes for your home screen's background – darker colors consume less power.

Unfortunately, not all phones can make use of that benefit, and you may have to look up what sort of screen your phone has if you aren't aware. All iPhones since the X (excluding the SE and Xr) are OLED,

as are all Galaxy S phones, many recent Galaxy A phones, and Google Pixels.

Lastly, of course, there's the obvious solution that many of us forget about, and it's the one that's actually able to make the biggest dent of all: use your phone less.

If you're compulsively opening TikTok or Instagram a hundred times a day, that's going to use power. Consider setting a time limit on those apps if you know you won't be able to charge your phone, or you can even disable them entirely while you need to make every "mAh" count – both iPhones and Android phones have that feature built right in. Games, particularly games with 3D effects, can also be more demanding than other apps, and limiting the time you spend in them helps too.

If you do have a few minutes to plug in during the day, but it just isn't enough to make an impact, consider getting a more powerful charger or a phone that charges more quickly. Some devices in the US, like recent OnePlus phones, can charge at up to 65W. That gives you a full charge in around half an hour. iPhones, on the other hand, refill more sedately – the latest Pro Max model can hit 27W, but most iPhones are limited to around 20 to 24W.

If the charger you are using

doesn't hit that speed, though, you can't take advantage of it. Most older phone chargers are limited to 5 to 12W. If you're using one with an older-style USB Type-A port – the wide, flat, rectangular port that can't be used upside down – that's almost certainly the case.

Unless you know you need a specific and different charging standard to hit your best charging rate, consider picking up a USB Power Delivery-compliant charger with rated output that can meet or exceed your phone's maximum supported input. That should work with iPhones, Pixels, and recent Samsung phones. And don't worry, getting a "too-powerful" charger shouldn't hurt your phone or cause it to overcharge.

Depending on how extreme you are in your power-saving measures, you might be able to double your battery life or more. In my capacity as a phone reviewer, though, the biggest impact on battery life that I've measured is simply how it's used. If you need it to last longer in an emergency, don't use it unless you have to.

For more questions about consumer technology, how gadgets work, or which doodad to buy if you need X, Y, and Z, shoot me an email at deviceadvice@montaguereporter.org.

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TRAVEL from page B1

who visit, it's not something that affects them. If it did, southern tourist capitals like New Orleans and Baltimore would be ghost towns. They are certainly not. It's true. Most crime here consists of criminals shooting other criminals – it's not something that has an impact on most visitors.

You'll read below about this city's remarkable museums that explain the history of slavery, of civil rights taken away and restored, and about the blues music and food scene that's right up there with Nashville or Memphis.

Museums

Jackson's place in the pantheon of important places for the struggle for civil rights cannot be challenged. This is where so much of the terrible history was written, beginning way back with the city's namesake President Andrew Jackson, who in the 1820s forced the native Choctaw Indians to disperse so that American settlers could take their land. It was a planned capital; they chose the spot in the center of the state next to the Pearl River in 1821.

Jackson today has one of the most spectacular civil rights museums in the country, according to Larry Bleiberg, the editor of *Civil Rights Travel*. Bleiberg, who has visited many such museums around the US, shared with me that it is a must-see civil rights museum.

One of the city's civil rights epicenters is the Medgar Evers home on a quiet side street, where the black leader and organizer was murdered in June 1963. The tour of the home, now a National Historic monument called the Medgar Evers Home Museum, provides details on how this friend of Martin Luther King, Jr. and advocate for voting rights and better treatment of black people lived and tragically died by a racist's rifle shot. It took three trials over three decades to finally put his killer, Byron De La Beckwith, in jail.

The terrible history of the struggle of African Americans here is well documented at the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. This fine museum was paid for by the state, and is located next to the Mississippi Museum of History. The two museums are about the same size and are truly worth visiting for several hours, and I was glad we got enough time to let it all soak in. In the History museum, we toured the dioramas and read about the



Above: One of two capitol buildings in Jackson, Mississippi.
Below: Music at Hal and Mal's, one of the city's dozens of blues clubs.

development of cotton plantations, as well as the timber industry that almost wiped out the resource – it was so badly depleted that it took years to come back.

The Civil Rights Museum hits home by providing so much information about the complex path of progress, and the many stops and starts, and even provides a chilling soundtrack in one room of the voices of racists, and what it was like to live under segregation and the Jim Crow era.

Another interesting museum about African American life in Jackson is the Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center, where the origins of slavery are explained, along with what the lives of slaves in Mississippi were like.

You can step inside a replica of the cramped quarters of slave ships that the enslaved had to endure for two months on their way to America from Africa. Manager Gwendolyn Harmon told us that the young

African American school children who visit the museum often have no sense of where they are from. These chilling exhibits answer the question for them.

Neighborhoods

I stayed in a beautiful old hotel with a cute backyard garden patio, the Old Capitol Inn that was once a YMCA. It's got solid bones, and it's right downtown. But because Jackson is the state capital, the downtown is hard to describe. There are many blocks without any stores, so there's not really anything in the vicinity of the hotel like a little store or drugstore.

Some parts of the city are very run down; the poverty jumps out at you as you drive on potholed roads past derelict shacks and abandoned factory buildings. It was especially sad to see Furnish Street, which in the 1940s was a center for black businesses. Today all but a few are broken down and abandoned, with

the streetlights showing how nice this part of town once was. They're just empty now.

The distances between places in Jackson are long, cars are how you get around, and to get to one new neighborhood, Eastover, you have to jump on Interstate 55 for a few minutes.

Cultivation Food Hall

What we found in Eastover was a gathering of locals enjoying music in a pretty, circular park, outside a bustling big building called Cultivation Food Hall, where a dozen different restaurants offer Mexican, Japanese and BBQ fare, and the guests sit at long communal tables where you can get to know people. Of course, the bar offers everything from craft cocktails to local microbrews.

A young African American woman joined our group as soon as we arrived, sharing her story as a budding crypto entrepreneur in the city – they had a business social going on the back, and that's what brought her to the food hall that evening.

We filled our glasses with chardonnay and craft cocktails from The Gold Coast, and visited the stalls, enjoying fresh sushi from Ohashi Sushi, tacos from Yo Mama, and savory ramen from the next stall. A great scene!

Yolanda from the tourism bureau said that one of the things that really sets Jackson apart is the music. It's a home of the blues – The City with Soul – and there are blues clubs all over the city. The only catch? At one classic hole-in-the-wall joint on Furnish Street called F. Jones Corner, the music doesn't start until midnight. The quote written on the wall there says *there's not white, there's not black, there's just blues*. I remain too old to stay up that late.

We took in some good blues at a club called Hal and Mal's; like so many others, it's huge and there's plenty of room for dancing and a long bar.

Fondren

Another Jackson neighborhood that is upscale and happening is called Fondren. This area is filled with interesting low-slung buildings, and in one of the buildings is Brent's Drugs, a former drugstore that houses a speakeasy called The Apothecary. Only a little sign advises passersby of the fun that awaits inside. We combined our trip with bowling at Highball Lanes, always a good time even

with frequent gutterballs.

Brent's Drugs still looks like an old-fashioned 1950s drugstore, and in fact was used during the filming of the movie *The Help*, which was written by Jackson author Kathryn Stockett and filmed in the city.

We passed by the signs for Cadbury Cream Egg floats and reached the door at the back to go into The Apothecary, entering a cool windowless room with upturned lamps, a big bar, and friendly staff who make craft cocktails, including their own syrups, and no beer. This is a definite must-visit on any nighttime visit to Fondren.

Eudora Welty

One of the true treasures that makes Jackson proud is the legacy of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Eudora Welty, who lived in a cozy home crammed with 3,000 books in the Belhaven neighborhood. Watching the short film about her long life – 91 years! – and hearing how people felt about this prolific and talented writer, reader, and lover of bourbon made me wish I could have met her.

Welty's home and gardens are a must-stop for anyone who loves great writers. She just had a marvelous life, filled with book awards and travels all over the world, and despite all the acclaim she never let it go to her head... in fact, the only award you can spot when you tour her home, where books cover every surface, is a small statue awarded to her as a reader of suspense novels!

Max Hartshorne, local travel editor, 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 at www.gonomad.com.



WEBSITES

Old Capitol Inn
oldcapitolinn.com

Cultivation Food Hall
cultivationfoodhall.com

Eudora Welty Home
welty.mdah.ms.gov

Mississippi Civil Rights Museum
mcrm.mdah.ms.gov

Montague Community Television News

A Busy Springtime!

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Monday's holiday provided a break for the Montague selectboard this past week, though not the MCTV crew! We filmed the board of assessors meeting on April 19, the Earth Day scavenger hunt, the Easter Bunny, and Pink Floyd!

But first, we have to catch viewers up with productions from earlier this month, such as the final acts from the Mud Season festival, and the Four Rivers Variety show. Stay tuned, and don't forget to contact MCTV whenever there is something you would like to see filmed.

All community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 17, as well as featured on the Vimeo page, which is linked to montaguetv.org under the tab "Videos."

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'll show you how easy it is to use a camera to capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or infomontaguetv@gmail.com.

MUSIC REFLECTIONS

Harpist Piper Pichette at the Finch Gallery

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – Earlier this month I went to the opening in Greenfield of a gallery owned by Cara Finch, an artist I have previously done a profile on, to see a harpist named Piper Pichette. It felt like a cool idea to review. I had loved the looks of Finch's art; it was a perfect fit at the Mutton & Mead Festival where I first saw it.

The opening at the Finch Gallery turned out to have a nice crowd of people attending it. Come to think of it, having a harpist performing was a perfect fit with the opening of her gallery, and the look of her art.

The harp itself was this huge and beautiful-looking instrument. It sounded beautiful. I would be surprised if anyone there didn't feel the same.

From the sound of it, Pichette obviously played it well. But from what I observed at this event, I would say she plays it rather expertly based on how her hands worked its strings. Pichette's playing didn't ever sound off-key or unharmonious to me. The sound

of the harp just flowed together nicely.

My observations would not be a surprise to Cara Finch because she had heard this person before – Pichette was also at Mutton & Mead, which is where Finch heard her. As for other individuals at this opening, one told me they found her playing to be very nice and very soothing. Another said she loved having the harpist there – she thought it was perfect, too.

Our harpist, it turns out, has been doing this for about 18 years. I would say from the sound of her playing that it shows she has been doing it for so long – my observation that she plays that harp expertly was what supported by this thought.

The harp itself, besides being all the things I said, is also apparently, from what Pichette told me, an old-fashioned harp made of wood. I also learned that it has pedals to it. That further backs my thought of her playing it so expertly, because she was keeping everything harmonious with both her hands and her feet.

In general, the music just helped out nicely with making the atmosphere of the opening seem pleasant.

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the
poetry
page

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

- William Carlos Williams

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

April's Featured Poet: Stephanie Baird

Doors and Bowls

My internet connection was interrupted,
so I counted the bowls and doors.
This house has ten egresses
and seventeen serving bowls.
In case of emergency, take your pick of exits.
But, what if all doors were used at once
by lovers coming to serenade and woo?
Or talking animals seeking refuge,
like Lyra and I have always dreamed of?
Or even better, entrances
to the promise of tender universes.

And then there are those bowls.
Holding space, holding air,
sometimes holding apples
romaine, origami cranes
disappointments, reframes
stones from the Maine shores
lobster claws and barnacles
longings for large gatherings
questions of life and purpose
a placeholder a pause a hyphen
dots along the shelves –
circles between rectangles –
all gathering dust.
For now.

Merging Files: An Ode to the Hard Drive

Insert text box. Fill with wetness.
Thicken line to desired hardness.
Cover line with condom
to prevent dashes from entering.
Enter slowly and firmly.
Font size doesn't matter.
A Venn diagram may be useful
to decide when to take turns.
Finger the flow chart
using various digits.
Clip art, symbols, pie charts, or gifs
can help make your document graphic.
Don't forget to save the file often,
detachable hard drives are a godsend.
If your program crashes,
reboot, reboot, reboot.
A few fingers on the right keys
also does the trick.
But the pressure can be dicey.
Adjust "save as" titles with each new user.
Watch out for autocorrect.
In fact, turn off for increased arousal.
Transcend margins and borders
with the raspy breath of pleasure.
Put all your shared kisses in a table,
inserting row after row after row.
Copy and paste the best movements,
to recall like a synchronized water ballet.

Finally, pressing hips to hips,
merge files with a single penetrating gaze.
Mark footnotes with tangled bed sheets
leaving watermarks long after fluids have dried.

Our Featured Poet

We are pleased this month to feature poetry by *Montague Reporter* columnist Stephanie Baird, who writes the monthly sexual health column *Sex Matters*. Stephanie lives in Granby and is an EMDR and Sexual Health consultant and psychotherapist. Her writing has been published in many poetry journals, including multiple issues of *Meat for Tea* (along with her linocuts and photography) and two Honorable Mention poems in *The Orchard Street Press*. Her first poetry chapbook *Duets: Love Poems and Prayers* (2020) can be purchased at www.tinyurl.com/BairdDuets. Stephanie has most recently published the professional book *EMDR Therapy and Sexual Health: A Clinician's Guide* (Springer, 2023). When she isn't working, writing, or raising her spirited daughter with her spouse, she voluntarily teaches OWL sex education classes through the Northampton UU Society, socializes, travels, watches and reads sci-fi, and bicycles.

I've noticed you for weeks

shadows inside the honeycomb blinds,
unexpected black bulge on the faucet,
slinking spots on the wall.

Sometimes you straddle a leaf.
That makes sense,
you're a stink bug, after all.
I'd think you prefer greenery to drywall.

Once you tried to crawl in my bed.
I told you I needed space,
and sent you flying to the blinds.
You didn't seem to mind –
you stayed there for a week.

And I want to tell you,
you've been a real comfort to me.
To look around and find one or two,
it's brought me through
a rough patch with my brother.

I know I should evict you.
I think about it all the time,
handing out eviction notices,
picking you up, carrying you out
on paper. But I won't.

I guess I'm a landlady
that likes her creature comforts.

Just as I Finished

letter pressing my erotic poem I saw a
couple on the sidewalk entwined in a
long deep kiss (the kind you don't see
outdoors anymore, because people only
neck with their cellphones). I saw the ink
on my fingers fresh from the printing press
and felt in my bones all the energy that
had gathered there as I formed the words
clitoris, perineum and vulva – heated lead
sliding into a composting stick bursting
with Ludlow size 12 letter molds. Each
word birthed with a bang and a shake
from the machine before landing in the
printing press as a poem. The workers'
good boundaries did not keep me from
imagining a threesome or some kind of
crazy consensual free-for-all with them.
Because, well, you know – erotic energy in
the room is hard to ignore. Like a long deep
kiss on the streets reminding me of my own
first kiss under a dusty beach sunset (yes,
this happened), well before cell phones
were ever a thing.

Life Goes on Under the Kardashev Scale*

I. Physicists recently learn
that interstellar clouds
are turbulent and gassy,
much like human infants.
Orion Nebula's young stars
hold the memory of motion,
giving insight into birth,
life, supernova, and beyond.

II. In 1970 trancing farmers
believe that the Earth
will experience negative
cataclysmic changes
unless humanity intervenes.
A cult develops, of course.
Metelica gathers three hundred souls
to log trees, farm, build dorms,
violate codes, and rent out
touring buses to rock bands.
Power gradually corrupts him and
Renaissance pays him ten grand
to leave Turners Falls forever.
Cancer catches up to him as he
winds his life down working as an EMT.

III. Naked woman survives being trapped
for three weeks in a Florida storm drain.
Going for a quick swim in a canal,
a small detour whisks her into the sewers.
Like a culvert-dwelling troll
or camouflaged sasquatch,
she emerges matted with leaves and twigs
after her subterranean cries
float up to a passerby's ears.

IV. Black cat mysteriously missing
for thirteen years reunites with her owner.
It was like no time had passed for either.

V. Stars dance to their own cosmic tune
while a Malthusian** positive check catastrophe***
(Covid)
occurs on Planet Earth as we journey towards becoming
a Type I Kardashev* civilization.

* Achieving Type I Kardashev civilization status means that humanity will have developed the energy and means for interstellar travel.

** "The power of population is so superior to the power of the earth to produce subsistence for (hu)man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race. The vices of (hu) mankind are active and able ministers of depopulation. They are the precursors in the great army of destruction, and often finish the dreadful work themselves. But should they fail in this war of extermination, sickly seasons, epidemics, pestilence, and plague advance in terrific array, and sweep off their thousands and tens of thousands. Should success be still incomplete, gigantic inevitable famine stalks in the rear, and with one mighty blow levels the population with the food of the world."

- Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), Chapter VII, p. 61

*** Primary examples of "positive checks" [reduction in human population]: war, famine, and plague

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



THURSDAY, APRIL 28

The Drake, Amherst: *Regina Carter*. \$ 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Deer Scout, Elijah Liguz*. \$ 7 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Hot Tuna Acoustic*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *High Tea*, indie-folk. 9 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 29

The Drake, Amherst: *Gili Yalo & the Anbessa Orchestra*. \$ 7 p.m.

Latchis Theater, Brattleboro: *Livingston Taylor*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *John Jody, The Musical Chairs, Valley Gals*, special guest. \$ 8 p.m.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bluegrass & Beyond*. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 30

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Rock 201*. 6 p.m.

Mystery Train, Amherst: *Sunburned Hand of the Man, SOP, Federico Balducci*. Free. 6 p.m.

Majestic Saloon, Northampton: *The Third, Cloudbelly, Father Hotep*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Professor Louie and the Crowmatix*. The Band tribute. \$ 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Loudon Wainwright III*. \$ 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bel-*

la's Bartok, DiTrani Bros, Moon Hollow. \$ 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Future Friends*, feat. *DJ Tallgirl, Lucie R., Hedone, DJ Angelfish, DJ Pinky Promise*. \$ 8 p.m.

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

SUNDAY, MAY 1

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Quiet Houses, Sedagive, V as in Victor*. \$ 6:30 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Nova One, Home Body*. \$ 8 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Film screening, *The Wobblies* (1978). Free May Day event. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Half-Shaved Jazz*. 9:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, MAY 5

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Suzzy Roche, Lucy Wainwright Roche*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *GCC Spring Concert*. 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, MAY 6

Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Rosie Porter and the Neon Moons*. 6 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Drew Paton*. 7 p.m. *Power Trousers, Grammerhorn Wren, Drowning in Bones*. 9:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *PussyVision, Thus Love, Thighs, Izzy*

Hagerup. \$ 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Vapors of Morphine*. \$ 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Whalom Park, No Lens*. \$ 8:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 7

Space Ballroom, Hamden, CT: *Deerhoof, Editrix*. \$ 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Nickodemus, Gabrielle Poso Duo, DJ Bongohead*. \$ 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Wooly Bully*, feat. *DJ Snack Attack and DJ Cashman*. \$ 8 p.m.

MONDAY, MAY 9

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Eye-hategod, Come to Grief, BAT, Escuela Grind*. (Wow.) \$ 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Elka Bong, Foam / O'Hara / Kramer-White trio*, more. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MAY 13

Calvin Theater, Northampton: *Tom Rush, Leo Kottke*. \$ 7 p.m.

Palladium, Worcester: *Action Bronson, Earl Sweatshirt, Alchemist*. \$ 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Arthur Brooks Ensemble V, Liz Tonne, Jake Meginsky*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Eggtooth Presents: Dragspringa*. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sasha and the Valentines, Moxie*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRI-SUN, MAY 13-15

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *Peaks & Valleys Music and Arts Festival* feat. *Soul Keys, Carissa Angelo, Sylvia Pearl, Wild Weeds* and many more. \$ 8 p.m. See kotvibes.com for lineup and info.

SATURDAY, MAY 14

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Eggtooth Presents: Dragspringa*. 7:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, MAY 17

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Son Rompe Pera*, cumbia punk, with *DJ Bongohead*. \$ 8 p.m.

THURS-SUN, MAY 19-22

Nova Arts, Keene: *The Thing in the Spring* feat. *Sammus, Lee Ranaldo, Nat Baldwin & Stella Silbert, Jeff Parker, Myriam Gendron, Kimaya Diggs, Tashi Dorji, The Huntress* and the *Holder of Hands* and many more. \$ 8 p.m. See novaarts.org for lineup and information.

FRIDAY, MAY 20

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Laraaji: Celestial Sound Immersion*. \$ 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 21

Palladium, Worcester: *Turnstile, Citizen*, 3 more. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *April Cushman*. \$ 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Ali McGuirk, The Mary Jane*

Jones. \$ 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 22

Black Birch Vineyard, Hatfield: *Darlingside*. \$ 6:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Bob Mould*. \$ 7 p.m.

Race Street Live, Holyoke: *Vieux Farka Toure*. \$ 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Falltown String Band*. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, MAY 26

Palladium, Worcester: *Carcass, Creeping Death*. \$ 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, MAY 27

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Men in Motion*, male revue. \$ 9 p.m.

FRI-SUN, MAY 27-29

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Solid Sound Festival* feat. *Wilco, Bonnie "Prince" Billy, Terry Allen, Sylvan Esso, Iceage, Eleventh Dream Day, Sun Ra Arkestra, Nels Cline*, many more. \$ 8 p.m. See solidsoundfestival.com for info.

Camp Keewanee, Greenfield: *StrangeCreek Campout* feat. *Dumpstaphunk, Max Creek, Badfish, Consider the Source, Bella's Bartok, Adam Ezra Group, Pancreatic Wiggle* and many more. \$ 8 p.m. See strange-creekcampout.com for info.

FRIDAY, JUNE 3

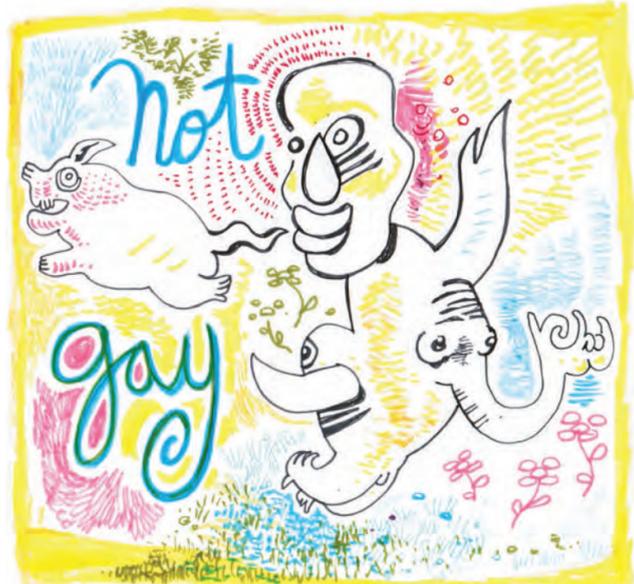
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Annie Brobst*. \$ 8 p.m.



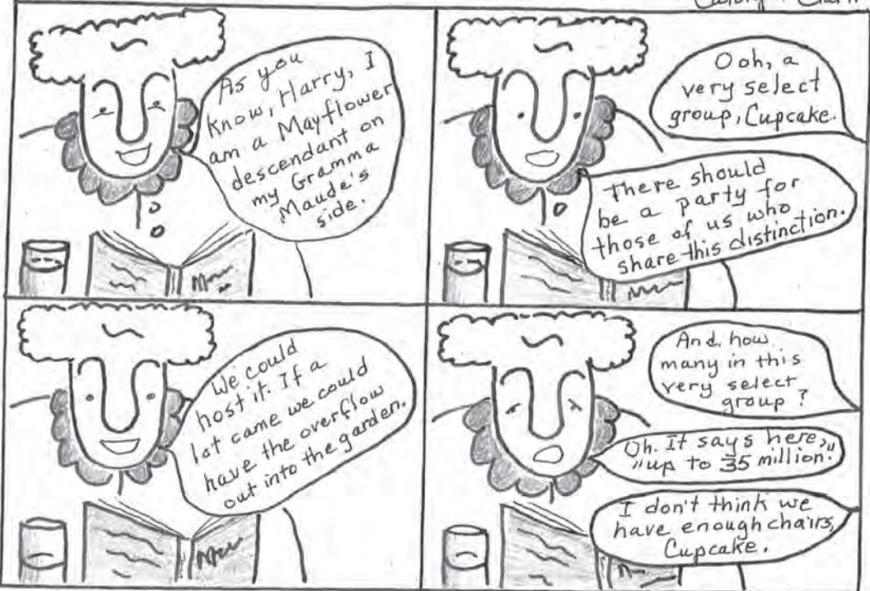
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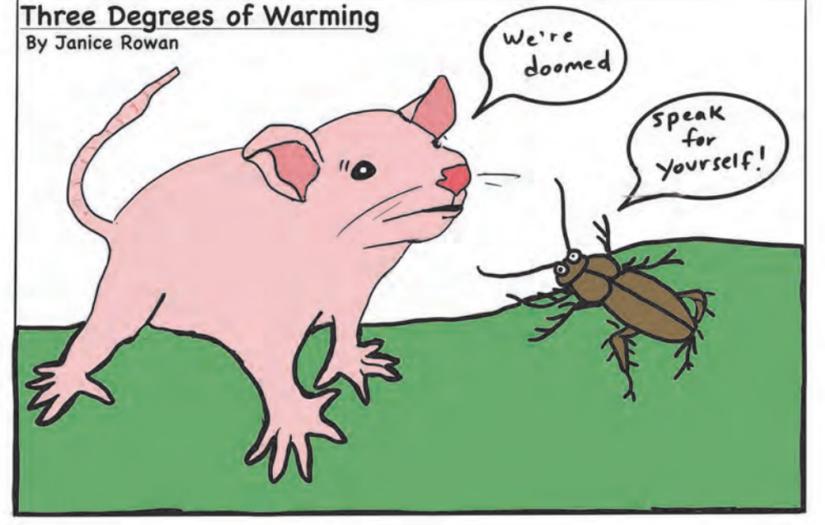
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THEATER REVIEW

Silverthorne Explores Balance, Fairness in *Admissions*

By ELLEN BLANCHETTE

GREENFIELD – Just how much does it matter which college a student attends? And how much pressure should parents put on their about-to-be high school graduates to achieve the highest grades and test scores so they can have a chance of getting into the universities people believe are not just the best places for education, but determine their precious children’s potential achievement and earnings?

Consider how racial justice and equity might figure into all this, and you have the foundation of a really interesting play.

These issues and more are folded into *Admissions*, written by Joshua Harmon, directed by Mark Dean, and produced by Lucinda Kidder for Silverthorne Theater Company’s final production of the 2021-22 season at Hawks & Reed in Greenfield. The play looks at these themes through the eyes of an admissions director at an exclusive boarding

school who works hard to balance admitting legacy students, preparing students for college, and ensuring the school has a diverse student body. While looking at the numbers of the school’s racial composition, we also get to consider the students – what do they want for themselves? Facing a confusing world, and trying to find a balance between fairness and the desire for success, how do students find their own way?

Margaret Streeter plays Sherri Rosen-Mason, the middle-aged admissions director who has worked over her career to improve the school’s diversity. To that end, she finds herself arguing repeatedly with Roberta, whose job is preparing the catalog meant to entice new students to the school.

Sherri wants a more diverse view of the student body reflected in the catalog. While she bites her tongue and searches for the polite way to say what she wants, Roberta does not feel so constrained. Her direct, often indelicate language some-

times makes Sherri cringe. Their struggle to find common ground offers a humorous look at how people struggle to discuss issues of race.

Sherri’s own son Charlie Luther Mason, played by Luke Bosco, has been best friends with Perry Peters all through school. Charlie and Perry, who is of mixed race, have a plan to go to Yale together. When the news comes out that Perry got in while Charlie’s application was “deferred,” Charlie reacts with a wild rant that draws on all the inequities that exist in our society, and even some issues that rarely get discussed.

While this long rant has a shocking quality to it, and Charlie’s parents are quite horrified – although for different reasons – it has to be said that Bosco carries this off powerfully, with intensity and passion, making it very real. We can see in Charlie’s anger and frustration how young people surely feel when they first confront failure, especially if their lives have been privileged.

In response, Charlie’s father, Bill Mason, played by Stephen Eldredge, is equally passionate, but not in the supportive way that Sherri would have preferred. The tension between the two parents creates yet another layer to the play’s dynamic.

Complicating it all even more is the relationship between Sherri and Ginnie Peters, Perry’s mother, played by Sarah Wilson. The scene where Ginnie gets the call that her son got into Yale, followed by the realization that Charlie did not, leads to yet another discussion that leaves Sherri more distressed.

Facing the conflict between her life’s work – to reach out and bring into the school a diverse group of students who she believes would benefit from the education and college preparation – and the reaction of her own son, who seems to have



Sherri Mason (Margaret Streeter, at left) struggles with Roberta (Jane Barish) over the appearance of the school catalog, during a rehearsal last week at Hawks & Reed.

misunderstood much of what she has worked to achieve, brings to the audience an opportunity to reflect on all those issues. This is a complex and heartwarming performance by Streeter.

Admissions is enjoyable and entertaining, while having the added bonus of making you think about it even after you’ve left the theater. The story moves with a good pace, scenes hold the audience’s attention well, and the play stays away from preaching by using humor and the surprising directness of several characters.

The cast is excellent. Jane Barish giving a wonderful performance as Roberta, providing strong contrast to Sherri’s devotion to fairness and diversity. Wilson as Ginnie Peters is the picture of a typical suburban housewife, cheery and light-hearted until distance grows between her and Sherri as their sons’ futures diverge amid the uncomfortable implication that racial advantage helped Perry get into Yale.

Streeter plays Sherri with sensitivity and strength. Alongside Stephen Eldredge, the pair provide a strong image of parents whose son has a mind of his own, while still depending on them for support – a portrayal that hits close to home for anyone who has raised a child in the modern world.

Supporting staff for this production are stage manager Amanda Bowman, technical director and set designer John Iverson, costume coordinator Reba-Jean Shaw-Pichette, COVID-19 safety manager Robby Moore, and volunteer coordinator Heather Tower.

Admissions offers a wonderful opportunity to watch excellent live theater. Performances continue this week, Thursday and Friday, April 28 and 29, at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, April 30, at 3 and 7:30 p.m. Silverthorne performs in The Perch at Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center, 289 Main Street, Greenfield. For tickets, go to www.silverthornetheater.org or call (413) 768-7514.

BLANCHETTE PHOTOS



The Mason family celebrates, in a high point of the play.

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