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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

**Commissioners' Deadlocked Vote** 

\$1.50 **DECEMBER** 8, 2022

## **Neighbors Will** Help Cover as **Public Health Director Search Starts Over**

#### **By JEFF SINGLETON**

**MONTAGUE** – The committee charged with recommending a new public health director for the town of Montague has decided to restart the process and begin the search anew, town administrator Steve Ellis told the selectboard Monday night.

The announcement came as an introduction to a proposed intermunicipal agreement with the city of Greenfield that would allows its health director, Jennifer Hoffman, to provide some services to Montague on a temporary basis.

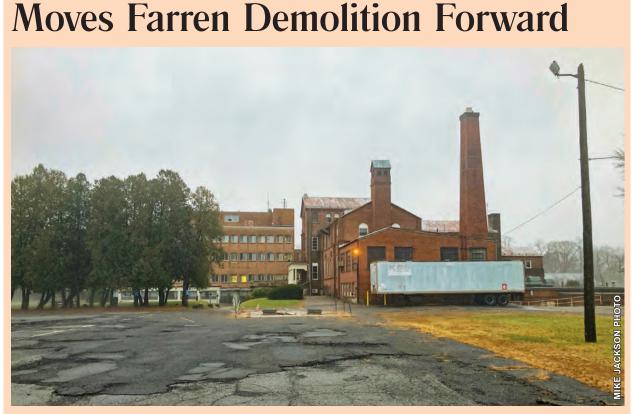
Details on the search process were sparse. The committee, formed in early October and chaired by board of health member Michael Nelson, has been meeting in non-public executive sessions, which is allowed under the state open meeting law to narrow down the list of candidates to a few finalists. The original goal was to have a new director in place by the first of the year.

In an email to the selectboard Monday morning, Ellis said that of three "potentially viable" candidates for the position, "one took another position prior to the interviews, one was screened out, and the other withdrew their application."

The previous day, Nelson had see PUBLIC HEALTH page A6

#### MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Power Lines, **Housing Prices** 



The historical commission did not rule the hospital to be a "preferably preserved significant building."

#### **By SARAH ROBERTSON**

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

**Home Values** 

Spike By 25%,

Bring Leverett's

Tax Rate Down

**By GEORGE BRACE** 

TURNERS FALLS – The Montague historical commission was split on their vote to delay demolition of the former Farren Care Center Tuesday night, with three votes in favor and three against. Failing to garner a majority, the motion did not pass, and Trinity Health of New England can proceed with its plan to demolish the former hospital and long-term care facility.

Trinity announced its intention to decommission the care center in 2020, and moved the majority of its patients to a Holyoke nursing home in early 2021. Last fall, the Catholic non-profit shared plans to demolish the complex, remediate the land, and grant it to the town of Montague.

This proposal garnered mixed reaction, and Trinity came under criticism for backing out of an early offer see **FARREN** page A6

## **GILL SELECTBOARD Gill Property Assessments Must Catch Up With Sales**

#### **BV KATE SAVAGE**

At Monday's meeting, a busy Gill selectboard set a new property tax rate, offered hourly pay for the fire chief on service calls, considered an ambulance contract, and discussed funding priorities. The selectboard adopted all recommendations from the board of assessors for the upcoming year's property tax rate. The rate for 2023 will be \$16.91 per \$1,000 in value, with no exemptions. That's up from the \$16.66 per thousand that residents paid this year, but down from the previous year's rate of \$17.29 per thousand. The assessors estimate that this will allow Gill to levy just shy of \$3.15 million for

#### the year's budget.

The board of assessors also estimated that the average value for a single family home in Gill has risen by 4.2% since last year, and compared to the current year the average homeowner will pay \$238.65 more next year in property tax.

## **G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE** Schools Eye **Entirely New** Lot for Fresh Construction

#### By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE - Up until this week, the regional school district's long-term plan to build a new combined elementary school in Turners Falls has been focused on the area already occupied by the Sheffield and Hillcrest elementary schools - for example, envisioning the project as an addition to Sheffield to make that school include pre-K through 5th grade.

At Tuesday's school committee meeting, however, business manager Joanne Blier announced that the administration is exploring a different option: building an entirely new school on district-owned land adjoining the Turners Falls High School athletic fields, with frontage on Turners Falls Road.

Superintendent Brian Beck said the administrators "haven't scrapped" the original plan to expand Sheffield, but want to give the school committee another option to consider before starting an application in January to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), which partially reimburses towns and districts for building and improving schools.

The area in question includes two lots - Map 21, Lot 11 on the assessors' map, a mostly wooded parcel on Turners Falls Road that abuts Our Lady of Czestochowa cemetery on two sides, and Map 22, Lot 43, comprised partly of high school athletic fields and bordered by Hillside Road.

The lots were part of a large plot of land taken by eminent domain

## **Buoy Montague Property Value; Old Boilers Fail**

#### **By JEFF SINGLETON**

At the beginning of Monday's Montague selectboard meeting, a group of downtown Turners Falls residents complained about the amount of trash accumulating on the streets and sidewalks.

Edite Cunha displayed "a little bag of trash that I picked up between my house and here." "It's not much," she said, "but I pick it up all the time." Cunha expressed concern that the problem "gets worse in the winter, because the trash barrels are taken away," and requested that public trash barrels remain on downtown streets during the winter, and perhaps be increased.

This request was supported by several other downtown residents.

Public works superintendent Tom Bergeron said his department generally takes the barrels away so they do not get damaged by winter plowing, but offered to try. "We can leave them out, and if a lot of household trash gets put in, we can have another discussion," he said.

Town administrator Steve Ellis said that the time set aside for public participation at the beginning of selectboard meetings was not designed for proposals to be discussed and approved by the board,

see MONTAGUE page A7

classification hearing and followed past practice in determining that residential and commercial property would be taxed at the same rate, rather than two different rates, in FY'23. Members of the board of assessors explained the process of establishing property tax rates, and highlighted changes in property evaluations.

At their meeting Tuesday night,

Leverett's selectboard held a tax

The board also heard positive reviews of a change at the intersection of Shutesbury and Cushman roads, among other business.

Interim principal assessor David Burgess explained that due to residential property accounting for over 90% of the taxable property in Leverett, charging commercial properties a higher rate would produce little change to residential taxes.

Burgess went on to estimate that the tax rate can be reduced from \$18.84 per \$1,000 in property value in FY'22 to an estimated \$16.13 per \$1,000 in FY'23, thanks to a "dramatic" rise in property values. In the same year, he said, the average single-family home in Leverett rose in value from \$345,800 to \$430,900.

Burgess said the tax on that average home would be expected to increase by \$435 to \$6,950 in FY'23.

Burgess also noted that another factor contributing to the lower tax rate was revenue from the town's new growth, such as from new construction and additions, which was tabulated at \$226,882.

#### **Shutesbury Road**

Resident Stuart Olson said the highway department had done an "amazing" job in improving safety

see LEVERETT page A5

Bill Tomb, the representative from the board of assessors, noted the challenge of rapidly changing real estate values. He pointed to Springfield, where property values have risen by 16%. In Gill, a local property recently assessed at \$603,000 was sold for \$710,000, 18% over what was assessed, while another assessed at \$318,000 sold for \$420,000, which is 32% over.

see GILL page A4

in May 1970 by the Gill-Montague Regional School District from four private owners, in exchange for a total of \$56,750 in damages.

The wooded parcel also includes high-tension lines, a right-of-way established by electric and phone companies in 1972, the year the high school was built. Blier said the building would not be built under the wires.

see GMRSD page A8

## Belmonte Obviously Not Retiring-Retiring

#### **By MIKE JACKSON**

TURNERS FALLS – This is a weekly paper, so we're not exactly breaking the news: Monte "Christopher 'Monte'" Belmonte, Turners Falls resident, food bank advocate, and president of the Shea Theater Arts Center board, announced to the world this week that he is quitting his day job of 17 years as a morning-show DJ on the Northampton station WRSI-The River....

MR: How's it going? You're in the news!

MB: It's an emotional roller coaster to be sure – a hard decision to make, to step away from something you love. But I think I think I made the right decision. We'll find out!

MR: Sleep cycles will be different. MB: Yeah, I wonder if I can get back into the normal sleep cycle. I try to do it every weekend and I'm pretty successful with it, so I have high hopes. Nobody should wake up at two o'clock in the morning. It's insane to think about it.

MR: How many more shows do you have?

**MB:** As of speaking to you, two. Friday's my last show.

MR: What do you have planned? **MB:** I'm not going to do anything way out of the ordinary. I'll still be fielding calls from listeners... You know, I wanted to do the Irish goodbye, where I was just going to on

see **BELMONTE** page A2



The DJ, on his way to work at 4 a.m.

.B4

.B7

#### **Oh Yeah? Then Set Your Own Damn Tax Rate**

Illustration: Water Wizard	A2
Local Briefs	A3
Incredible Photo	A4
Erving Selectboard Notes	A5
10 & 20 Years Ago	A7
Valley View: Ghost Town	B1
Common Hall Comes Alive Again	B1
Apple Corps: Well, Well, Well.	B1

Out of the Park
Aontague Police Log
An Acting Armageddon?
Excavating Mastodon
Our Monthly Kids' Page
Arts & Entertainment Calendar
Three Comics and a Puzzle
Dur Very Own Zelig



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#### **BELMONTE** from page A1

Friday and be like "Hey, today was my last show. It's been crazy, these last 17 years. See you!" I was talked out of that by Joan Holliday and other folks at the station.

So I'm just trying to keep it light and normal, but give the listeners an opportunity to weigh in if they want to... And then Friday, the only thing that will be sort of out of the ordinary is many of the regular guests who have joined me over the years I've invited to come into the studio live at the same time.

With a lot of them I'd go out in the field and record them, and then edit it at 3:30 in the morning and get it on the air for later that day. Emily Brewster the Word Nerd doesn't often get to hang out with Salman Hameed, Mr. Universe, my astronomer.

*MR:* I've been seeing that you are retiring from the morning show, and that you will still be on the airwaves – this is the word?

**MB:** This is the word, yeah – that I'm trying to make the better life decision, to change the pace of what I've been doing and not be full-time in the morning, but not *retire-retire*. A lot of people think I'm actually retiring, which is hilarious....

I've been really lucky that, first of all, they didn't want me to leave and they tried to keep me, but I decided that I still wanted to do this for myself. And, they want me to continue to play.

So it'll be an as-of-yet undetermined kind of thing. The March for the Food Bank will continue with the River next year. I've likened it to Johnny Memphis emeritus status – Johnny Memphis was a DJ for 20 years here, Dar Williams **MR:** Are you planning to continue in your role there? You've had this kind of vertically integrated thing were you can do events and also publicize the events, an all-in-one kind of bundle...

**MB:** Yes, I am. And given that it's a volunteer role, I feel I don't feel conflicted about promoting the nonprofit community theater owned by the town of Montague. That's part of why I got involved in the first place, to try to be able to lend my platform to what I think is a great space in the town I live in.

In my future endeavors I hope to continue to do that as well, ethically – meaning that I'm not doing it for personal gain, I'm doing it because I believe in the cause of the Shea, and I believe in the cause of the village, I believe in the cause of the artists. All that stuff will continue, maybe slightly altered. But I think it'll still be an important part of what I do.

*MR: What's changed in 20 years?* **MB:** Everything. When I first came here, there was one computer for everybody that worked in the whole building. If you wanted to check your email, you'd have to wait until somebody else wasn't on that computer.

Something like the Food Bank march, where I've got this piece of equipment I put in a shopping cart and broadcast from, and it sounds pretty great despite the fact that it's in a rattling shopping cart and going over bumps and getting knocked off the air -20 years ago, they would have had to buy a satellite truck or something crazy like that.

So the technology has changed.



Lab manager Noah Diamond checks on the "good bugs" under his microscope at the Clean Water Facility in Montague. These "coworkers" digest unwanted materials in the wastewater coming into the plant, which also happens to have several parakeets and a lab cat in residence.

**MR:** When a big name in local or regional media retires or, you know – well, preferably retires – it's a bigger story, because we're in media, so you have peers and colleagues writing their reactions. How has that been for you?

**MB:** I feel so compelled to respond to everybody who's responded to me. I was up way later than I should have been last night trying to respond to every comment, even if it's just a like or a heart on social media, to let people know that I've seen their comment and appreciate it. So from a listenership perspective, it's been overwhelming in filling my heart with butterflies and love – and also, it's hard to keep up with everybody who's trying to communicate with me.

And then, when it comes to colleagues and other people in the media reaching out or saying nice things about me – that's great too, because I know that they get how hard it is to do these things and to make it work. They're seeing me from a different perspective. And it's also extremely flattering. Hum-



## Claus Expected to Hit All Five Villages Next Saturday

The Montague Center Firefighters Association will sponsor a Santa Parade on Saturday, December 17 at 2 p.m.

The route will begin in Montague Center, with stops at the Common, and proceed to the park on Broadway Street in Lake Pleasant by way of Federal Street.

It will then take Green Pond Road to Millers Falls, and after circling through Millers it will head up Millers Falls Road to Turnpike Road. The route continues to Montague City, and then turns right onto Montague City Road to Avenue A.

The parade should be in Turners by 3 p.m., and will travel the length of Avenue A to First Street. It includes a stop at Unity Park.

The parade will then head back to Montague Center by way of Unity Street to Turners Falls Road.

We hope the citizens of Montague will come out to welcome Santa!

> Thanks, Ann Fisk Montague Center

wrote a song about him – and Jim Olson's still here and on the air every Sunday. So I'm hoping to be a regular presence on the River, just not a full-time morning presence.

And there are other adventures, yet to be announced, in 2023.

*MR:* You've got a thing coming up at the Shea next week?

**MB:** Yeah, the John Hodgman-Monte Belmonte Holiday Spectacular, which will be really fun. It's got Jonathan Coulton, who is an incredibly fun and funny musician, and apart from other things wrote a lot of the Broadway music for *Spongebob [Squarepants]*.

And the incredible comedian Jean Grae, and our local favorite from formerly across the street Heather Maloney, with High Tea. Fenway's organist Josh Kantor is going to come and play music between the different acts. Smartphones, social media, none of that stuff existed from when I started doing it.

But radio is 100 years old, and some of the things that made radio great then still make radio great now. It's like a warm – it's not technically analog, we broadcast in digital, but it feels more of like an analog thing. I've been likening it to a campfire, where listeners can call in and have their voices heard and have a conversation with a real human being, who they have to have empathy towards in a way that doesn't happen enough on social media.

And on my show, songs are played around that campfire, too. So despite the fact that I hate camping, I like radio camping. I like being there and taking those phone calls, and responding to things that are happening in real time. That's been the best part of it, I think. bling. Makes me want to crawl under a desk and hide.

My favorite comment... Once I made the announcement and put it on The River's social media page, some guy wrote, "Good..."

Growing up in the Boston area, maybe that's made me a little bit sassier and harder to – I've never been good at accepting praise. Or criticism, frankly. I want to fight you on both ends.

*MR:* What are you going to do with your free time?

**MB:** I'm gonna roam the Earth and get into adventures.

No. I'm working on what we'll find out about for my next adventure in 2023. And trying to have a more normal sleep schedule, and spending more time with my family, and that kind of thing. But I'm not old enough or rich enough to retire-retire!



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## CORRECTION

In last week's Erving selectboard coverage (Page A1, *Study to Explore Feasibility of Public Water for Erving Center*), we mistakenly identified the author of a memorandum stating that "the future of Erving Center as a commercial and residential hub of the Town will be tied to the Town's interest and ability to secure a public water supply" as town planner Mariah Kurtz.

Kurtz let us know town administrator Bryan Smith authored that memo. "I spoke at the meeting on the subject, but I don't want to take credit for Bryan's words," she says. Our apologies to all for the error!

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#### Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Giving thanks where thanks is due: the holiday season provides a time to reflect on our service to others and on those who provide services to us – newspaper carriers. trash collectors, teachers, mail delivery persons, and the many many others who help us all go about our business. Take a few minutes to give a thank you in person or surprise them with a card, tip, or other token of appreciation.

And thank you, dear readers and supporters of this paper, for helping to keep this project going! We love getting your letters, emails, photos, comments, calls, and other responses, and of course, we thank you for the donations that help keep us afloat.

The Montague Libraries are offering a grab and go gift bag that includes a letter to Santa coloring sheet, envelope, and "postage." Mail your letter at the special North Pole mailbox in Spinner Park on the corner of Avenue A and Fourth Street in Turners Falls. The kit also includes a tree ornament craft to make. Pick one up at any Montague library branch while they last.

Looking for an excuse to stretch your legs and get some fresh air? Take a "Nice and Easy Walk" on Fridays in December with a guide from the Discovery Center along the Canalside Rail Trail.

The one- to two-mile stroll is geared for seniors, but open to all ages. You may hear about local history and sights along the way. Just wear appropriate clothing, bring water, and meet at the Discovery Center entrance at 1 p.m. for an hour long walk.

We just received a notice from the DCR that there will be intermittent closures on the Canalside Rail Trail from now through Thursday, December 15 (not including some landscape maintenance work. People are advised not to get in the way of the equipment.

This Friday, December 9 is the annual It's a Wonderful Night in Turners Falls holiday event. The fun begins at the Great Falls Discovery Center, where kids can make a winter bird feeder from 2 to 5 p.m. Downtown shops are open late until 8 p.m.

Don't miss the Hired Hand Open Studio at 34 Third Street, or the Brick House Pop-Up Shop with crafts from 11 vendors at 24 Third Street, both from 4 to 8 p.m.

Santa will arrive at Spinner Park to collect the letters from the magic mailbox at 6:30 p.m. Welcome Yule completes the evening at the Shea Theater at 7:30 p.m. with their blend of English, Scottish, and Celtic winter solstice songs and traditions.

The Wendell Holiday Craft Fair at the Wendell Town Hall, 6 Center Street, runs between 4 and 8 p.m on Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. The fair will feature 20 local artisan vendors. Diemand Farm will be selling their delicious chili, pulled turkey BBQ sandwiches, desserts, and more. There will also be music from Wendell youth, face painting, raffles, and other things to enjoy.

You may buy our Special Wrapping Paper Edition at the Brick House Pop Up shop on Friday, 4 to 8 p.m., and also on Saturday, December 10 at the same place from noon to 6 p.m. You can also find us at the Wendell Holiday Craft Fair this weekend.

The edition is for sale at Food City, the Montague Village Store, Buckingham Rabbits, Great Falls Harvest, Upinngil Farm Store, Federal Street Books, Green Fields Market, the Leverett Village Coop, the Wendell Country Store, the LAVA Center, Looky Here, Eldritch Goods, our office, and online at

In case you can't make it on Friday, you can also craft bird feeders with your young ones at the Discovery Center on Saturday, December 10 as well. Which birds show up at your feeder? What do they eat? Bird feeder making continues between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. for all ages. Materials are free.

Sage Green Botanicals is hosting a Yule Bazaar this Saturday, December 10 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This collaborative event will feature a wide array of botanical vendors including Foxtrot Herb Farm, Violet Hill Botanicals, artists Carly Raber, Caroline Mannaerts, Kaitlyn Cronin, and more.

Enjoy an elixir by Great Falls Harvest, and live music from James Bird. Sage Green Botanicals is located at 50 Third Street in downtown Turners Falls, inside the Great Falls Harvest building. See www.sagegreenbotanicals.me for more information.

Join **Great Falls Books** Through Bars for another volunteer day at their new 104 Fourth Street, Turners Falls location this Saturday, December 10 between 1 and 5 p.m. Come for the whole time, or just drop in to say hi. Help pack up books and respond to letters from incarcerated persons.

If it is your first time coming to a volunteer day, they will show you around the new space they share with the Pioneer Valley Workers Center and the Finders Collective. Masks are required while indoors, and the first floor is wheelchair-accessible.

"We Are Not Alone: A Common Memorial" is an event put on by the Interfaith Council of Franklin County and Faithwaze this Sunday, December 11 at 2 p.m. on the Greenfield town common. This is a memorial celebration of those who have died this year, especially those without a home or community, and those who died on the streets.

Bring a chair, a candle, a prayer, and the name of one who has died. All are welcome. There will be cookies and hot cider from Stone Soup Café. Email interfaithcfc@ gmail.com for information.

Poet Amy Gordon of Gill will read from her newly-published book The Yellow Room on December 15 at 4:30 p.m. at the Slate Memorial Library in Gill as part of the Poets at the Slate series hosted by Patricia Crosby. Gordon is also the author of numerous books for young readers, including Paint the Rainbow, which won the 2015 Paterson Prize for Young People.

Guest poets on Thursday also include internationally-acclaimed poet and children's author Jane Yolen and educator and poet Peter Tacy. Masks are required; seating is limited.

On Friday, December 16 the Recover Project hosts a Winter Celebration, a seasonal craft, meal, and gift exchange, from 1 to 4 p.m. The event is free and all are welcome. It is a drug- and alcohol-free celebration. Bring a gift under \$15 in value to exchange, or they will provide one for you if you can't afford one, and there will be a free meal to enjoy.

The Carnegie Library bravely presents an opportunity to make Gingerbread Houses on December 17. Stop in between 10:30 a.m. and noon and decorate a deliciously festive graham cracker house using frosting and various candies. Designed for children and their caregivers – free!

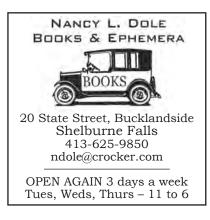
You can help unhoused individuals make it through the cold season by giving to the Give the Gift of Living in the Season of Giving Gear and Goods Drive. Donations will go to help those who cannot utilize the emergency shelter services in the 30 rural townships served by the Franklin County Justice Center and North Quabbin Community Coalition. The collection runs through December 21.

Find the list of needed items at *ti*nyurl.com/houselessdrive. You can drop items at the Franklin County Justice Center, at 43 Hope Street in Greenfield, or the North Quabbin Community Coalition, at 251 Exchange Street in Athol.

While you are shopping, there are also items needed to stock school resource closets at schools in Franklin County and the North Quabbin. Donations are needed for personal care items such as tampons, deodorant, t-shirts, spare underwear, wash clothes, soap, cologne, shorts, sweats, and wipes.

These can be dropped off at the

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# Fresh Findings: Science Page Update!

On our November 3 science cognitive decline compared to plapage we wrote about Alzhiemer's therapeutics that aim to lower amyloid-beta (AB) levels in the brain in the hopes of alleviating cognitive decline (Page B6, Clinical Trials Leave Questions Unanswered).

The article discussed the contentious results of EMERGE and ENGAGE, two clinical trials of the anti-Aß antibody aducanumab, known commercially as Aduhelm, along with the overall state of this "amyloid hypothesis."

On November 29 the results were published from CLARITY, the phase III trial of another anti-Aß antibody known as lecanemab. They seem to have yielded a small, but convincing, result.

This study showed a clear, statistically significant reduction in

cebo, 0.45 on the CDR-SB scale of 0 to 18, amounting to a 27% difference over the 18-month trial.

While the clinical meaningfulness of these results is up for debate among scientists, given the unambiguous results of the trial, lecanemab seems likely to receive regulatory approval. (It is worth noting that rather serious side effects including brain swelling occurred in some patients in the trials of both lecanemab and Aduhelm.)

Other trials to watch out for, combining lecanemab with an anti-MTBR-Tau antibody, are currently underway. More details can be found at Science Page editor Spencer Shorkey's website, www. pencer.substack.com/p/amyloidhypothesis-tested-in-alzheimers.



While Aduhelm's Phase III trials showed little to no impact on cognitive dementia measurement after 18 months...

3)	5		×	×
DR-SB (0-18)	4			
B	3	~		
R-S	2			
8	1			CLARITY
	0-		-	LANIT
		Trial start		Treatment (10 mg/kg)

.... the new Phase III data on lecanemab are less ambiguous, appearing to show an effect of the treatment, albeit a small one. Franklin County Regional Council of Governments offices, 12 Olive Street, Greenfield. The notice says these items can "Help improve hygiene, reduce bullying, and improve the overall school experience."

Now is the time to apply for the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read. Arts organizations, museums, historical societies, and other cultural groups are encouraged to apply for grants to support their own Big Read projects between September 2023 and June 2024. The "intent to apply" deadline is coming up on January 18.

There is a list of 15 books to pick from at www.arts.gov/initiatives/nea-big-read. The Big Read brings people together to read one of these books, have conversations, respond artistically, and make new community connections. Many of the libraries in our readership area participate in the Big Read.

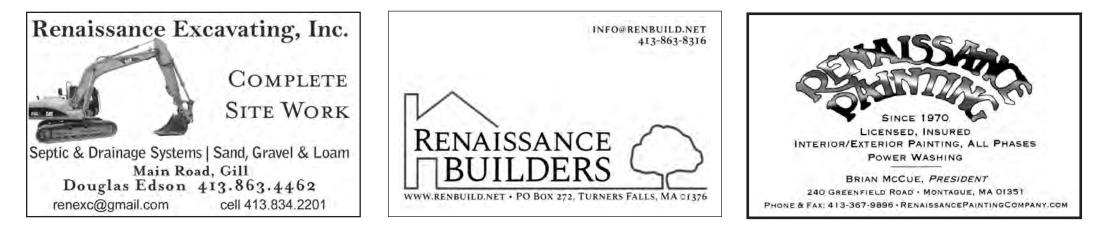
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#### GILL from page A1

Tomb said this level of disparity was "unacceptable to the state," which expects the town's assessments to fall within 10% of sale prices. "Things are going to prices. "Things are going to have to adjust up," he concluded.

Tomb noted that the board of assessors' assistant was currently taking courses to become a certified assessor, which would potentially "put the whole board on a more level footing with our consultants, as well as the state Department of Revenue."

#### **Hourly Pay for Fire Chief**

The selectboard voted to pay the fire chief an hourly rate of \$37.03 for time spent on service calls, in addition to the position's current stipend of \$17,496.70 annually. The payments will be in effect retroactively for the previous two weeks, and continue through June 2024. At that point, the board will evaluate whether to alter or extend the measure.

"When a person works, they probably ought to be paid for working," summarized selectboard member Randy Crochier.

The measure, which follows the unanimous recommendation of the personnel board, is temporary to allow the selectboard and finance committee to review its effect on the town budget. "What we will see with our existing fire chief is the worst case scenario," said Crochier, "because we are blessed with a fire chief who shows up to 98% of the calls."

"It's actually around 80%," corrected fire chief Gene Beaubien.

Historically, Crochier explained, the position's stipend was loosely tied to nine hours of weekly administrative work, and the chief also received wages for service calls. At some point in the past, the hourly pay disappeared. "I don't know when," Crochier said. "It's been this way as long as I know."

Deputy fire chief William Kimball added that the current chief, Gene Beaubien, spends "well in excess of nine hours" on administrative work for the department.

Firefighter Seeks to Rejoin Department

After High-Profile Bus Incident

#### **Ambulance Service Offer**

Northfield EMS submitted a business plan to provide primary ambulance service to Gill at a cost of \$15,000 a year. Northfield would replace the private company American Medical Response as the primary ambulance provider.

This follows concerns raised in May by the Franklin County Emergency Medical Services Committee (FCEMS) that towns without ambulance contracts are placing a "significant strain" on the services in nearby towns and cities, particularly when 911 dispatches an ambulance but the patient refuses the ride and no one can be billed. FCEMS suggested towns without contracts could start receiving a bill of \$350 for each service call.

Northfield EMS has billed Gill for services "three or four" times, according to town administrator Ray Purington. Crochier said the director of Northfield EMS agreed to drop those bills, but Crochier noted that Gill should expect to pay for ambulance services in the future.

In the meantime, Gill remains part of a study sponsored by Northfield to explore regionalizing ambulance services.

Selectboard members raised concerns about vague language in the proposal that could potentially allow cost increases, and also expressed interest in exploring contracts with other towns and cities. Purington agreed to edit Northfield's proposal and send it to the town's attorney.

#### **Federal Funds on the Horizon**

"Governor Baker is issuing some money across the state to help towns prepare for the federal funds that are becoming available," Franklin Regional Council of Governments regional services director Bob Dean told the board. "There's going to be a lot of federal funding that towns can tap into."

This includes funding from the American Rescue Plan, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and the Inflation Reduction Act. The funds from the Baker administration could pay for grant writers or other experts, so

#### local towns are "in a good position to hit the ground running" when federal funds become available, said Dean.

The board pointed to two priorities on their wish list. One is a culvert on West Gill Road which might need repairs. "If lining and sleeving is a possibility, then it's a modest project," said Purington, but if the town has to replace the culvert, "that would be well beyond what we could do."

The other top priority is updating the sewer pump station in Riverside. The current control panel, from 1980, requires a highway department worker to visit every day to take a reading, while newer models report the numbers electronically. The pumps also regularly struggle with clogs.

Other projects discussed include road paving and maintenance, replacing the roof at the Riverside municipal building and adding solar panels, fixing the moisture problem in the town hall basement, updating the town's wage scale, expanding broadband to unserved houses, and creating a town planner position to be shared with other nearby towns or cities.

Selectboard members also mentioned the need to develop better pedestrian pathways, pointing to a recent letter they received from a resident who walks to Turners Falls every day and has to walk in the road for part of the journey.

#### **Other Business**

A special town meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 21 at 7 p.m. with the sole purpose of voting whether the town should accept the gift of 10.5 acres of land on Mountain Road from Richard French and Emily Samuels.

The selectboard voted to apply for a Volunteer Firefighter Assistance grant. The competitive grant of up to \$2,500, with a cost-sharing rate of 50%, would be used for wildfire

gear, such as battery-operated chainsaws, special gloves, and pump-action "bladder bags" for hauling water remotely.

The brush truck which the town ordered in October remains in limbo. "They pushed back the order twice," said Kimball. "They placed the order as approved - however, it is not confirmed that it's accepted at this time, and there is also rumor of a potential [cost] increase prior to the order being accepted." Kimball said he would update the board as soon as he hears more.

Gill resident Steven Connell spoke up at the end of the meeting to express frustration that he hasn't been able to return to work as a firefighter for Gill. (See sidebar.)

The selectboard renewed car dealer licenses for A-J Cycle Shop, Atlantic Wholesale, Doug's Auto Body, LSA Auto, and TEK Cycle. They renewed liquor licenses for Turners Falls Schuetzen Verein, 23 French King Highway LLC (also known as The Mill), the Gill Tavern, and the Spirit Shoppe.

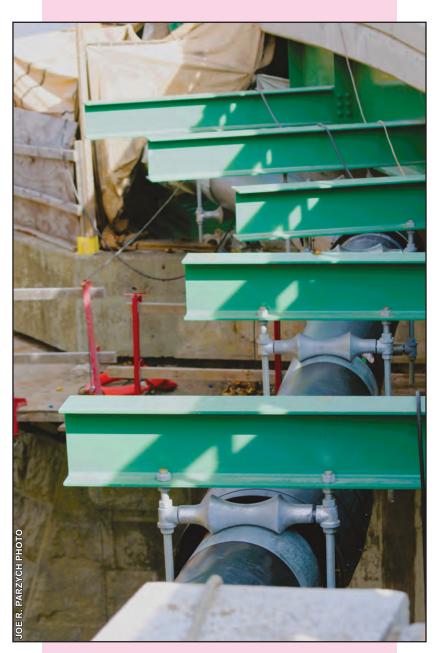
As energy rates increase across the region, Eversource is sending an information letter to roughly 250 Gill residents who aren't part of the town electricity aggregation plan, suggesting ways to reduce electricity bills. It includes a link to the website energyswitchma.gov, which shows various energy supplier prices.

"Just for some numbers to talk about," said Purington, "the Eversource rate right now per kilowatt-hour is 15.3 cents. In January, it's going up to 21.8 cents."

In contrast, Purington said the "middle price" in the town's aggregation plan is 10.3 cents per kWh, and the fully renewable price is slightly over 13 cents, numbers that are locked in until January 2024. "Even if you went 100% green," he concluded, "you're still

saving 50% over the Eversource default price."





By KATE SAVAGE

because I was dehydrated severe- [town administrator] Ray [Purington] privately, and he can look into it. I don't want to say anything negative in an open meeting."

GILL - Toward the end of Monday's Gill selectboard meeting, resident Steven Connell spoke up to publicly express frustration that he has been unable to return to work for the town as a firefighter.

Connell was driving a FRTA bus in Greenfield in June 2020 when he veered off the road toward a family who had been his passengers. After crashing into a building, Connell, who is white, chased after and attacked the Black father, Turners Falls resident Erik Rudder.

Connell was charged with three counts of assault with intent to murder while armed, four counts of assault with a dangerous weapon, single counts of negligent operation of a motor vehicle, assault and battery, assault on ambulance personnel, a civil rights violation, and a marked lanes violation.

Connell was found not guilty.

"After four months of being locked up and wrung through the wringers, they decided I had PTSD, depression, and anxiety, and that the reason I had the accident was ly and I had started hallucinating, Connell said at Monday's meeting. He said he is now receiving treatment for these conditions.

"When I came home, I had received a number of death threats," he added. "Luckily my mom knew my password to my social media. I had threats through social media as well, which were reported to the police and immediately deleted."

Prior to the incident, Connell had worked in the Gill fire department for 19 years, and was a member of the board of engineers. He said that fire chief Gene Beaubien claimed that he resigned. "I did not," he said. "The town has no documentation from me saying that I resigned."

Connell said he is working to get his driver's license back, but that it has been a slow process. When the board noted that a driver's license is a requirement for being on the fire department, Connell claimed that a member of the board of engineers lost his license for six months and was able to stay on the department.

"Don't say the name in public," cautioned Crochier. "Share it with

Connell said he wanted to attend fire department drills as an observer, but that "Gene said I could not." He also said he had attempted to attend meetings of the board of engineers, but they were being held behind locked doors.

"The engineers' meeting is an open meeting," said Crochier, "and if it's not, then it's a violation of open meeting law and should be dealt with in the proper ways... As far as drill goes, we have no authority to say that somebody needs to be able to be there. That's really up to the fire chief."

While noting that many of Connell's concerns were outside of the selectboard's jurisdiction, member Greg Snedeker encouraged him to keep making positive steps.

"It may never come to the kind of satisfaction that you want," Snedeker told him, "but try not to get too frustrated. Understand that you're trying to repair some bridges right now, and that can be really difficult."

Photojournalist Joe R. Parzych took this photo back in October, showing detail work on the General Pierce bridge rehabilitation project.

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#### A5

#### NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

## With Tax Burden Pushed to Big Businesses, Assessment Challenges Take on High Stakes

#### **By KEITH WATERS**

The Erving selectboard's meeting on Monday included two joint meetings, one with the board of assessors and one with the finance committee.

The joint assessors meeting happened first, and went quickly. Principal assessor Jacquelyn Boyden introduced Erik Eichorn, the board of assessors' newest member, and in about five minutes explained the assessors' taxation recommendations for FY'23: namely, to keep the town's "minimum residential factor" (MRF) at 65%, pushing as much of the tax burden onto commercial property as possible, and to authorize a small commercial exemption.

The selectboard approved the assessors' recommendations. The result is that tax rates for both residential and commercial properties are going up a small amount: from \$7.90 to \$8.00 per thousand dollars in value for residential, and from \$12.92 to \$13.14 per thousand for commercial and industrial.

The assessors' report noted that the value of single-family homes also went up by an average of 11%, "due to the increase in demand for housing in Erving," during 2021.

Though 89.59% of the town's tax burden will fall on commercial, industrial, and personal property in FY'23, the small commercial exemption reduces some taxes for businesses with less than 10 employees and less than \$1 million in revenue.

The joint meeting with the fin com was nominally to review FY'24 budget requests from departments, but included looking over their FY'22 year-end reports as well.

One highlight was the assessors themselves, who related that Northfield Mountain, LLC has withdrawn its appellate tax court cases from 2016 and 2017. It does have outstanding appeals of its 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 property assessments. Renovators Supply and Eversource are also each appealing several years' worth of assessments.

To give an idea of the scope of money involved in these challenges, Erving had spent about \$57,000 preparing for the legal case with Northfield Mountain, LLC that was just withdrawn. The assessors consider this a win despite the sunk cost. The town lost a similar case with Renovators Supply a few years ago. In cases where the town loses, the taxpayer gets the difference of the assessed tax value back, plus 8% interest on it from the date filed. For cases like these, the town keeps about \$2 million in an account called "overlay." Boyden seemed to think there is a good chance the town will win its outstanding cases with Eversource, as the company just lost cases related to the same statewide issue in Boston and Springfield.

tarache reminded the board that a number of other new buildings – such as a highway department building and a dry storage facility– are possibly in the pipeline, and that it may make sense to combine their feasibility studies and include them all at once.

Chair Jacob Smith and town planner Mariah Kurtz both recalled that idea having been discussed before, and the discussion will continue in the future.

#### Time On the Clock

A significant amount of the meeting was taken up with discussion related to the town's personnel policy and procedures manual. Issues left unresolved by the end of the meeting related to call-back time, longevity, and comp time.

Call-back time is when the boss calls you in to do something after hours or on your day off. The new policy calls for a four-hour minimum pay in such cases, but only for full-time, non-salaried workers. The question of whether that should apply to part-time non-salaried workers was asked but not answered, as was clarification as to whether the policy applies to remote work.

Longevity refers to awards given to town employees after every five years. The amount starts at \$500 at Year 5, and increases by \$250 at each five-year increment.

Unresolved was whether to prorate this amount for part-time employees. William Bembury thought it should be prorated, while Bastarache thought it should not be.

Comp time is overtime work that an employee and their supervisor agree can be left unbilled at the time, and used as time off in the future. Bembury and Jacob Smith both thought it should be gotten rid of altogether as it is too complicated, while Bastarache said he thought it was a very valuable tool, offering schedule flexibility for both employees and supervisors.

Bembury cited the police department as an example of a place where comp time can be very problematic.

Bastarache countered that the chief of police was one of the super-

sion until a board of health member could help them understand it. Town administrator Bryan Smith, who drafted the position description, also was not present at the meeting.

The town awarded Weston & Sampson \$14,000 to assist it with the bidding and administration of the Wheelock Street culverts project, and awarded Scanlon &Associates \$16,000 for the year-end audit of the town's finances for FY'22.

The board approved a \$500 per year non-uniform clothing allowance for employees of the highway, maintenance, water, and wastewater departments.

The next meeting should be held December 19.

Mike Jackson provided additional reporting.

#### LEVERETT from page A1

at the intersection of Shutesbury and Cushman roads by paving over an island and creating a three-way "T" intersection with stop signs, replacing a former layout involving yield signs. The change was prompted by residents near the intersection reporting that the long-standing safety concern had become more pronounced over the last several years due to changes in traffic flow.

"Every person I've spoken to in the neighborhood said it's great," Olson reported. Selectboard chair Tom Hankinson said he had heard from bicyclists who also appreciate the change.

The only negative commentary came from a resident reporting they had heard Shutesbury residents complaining that "Leverett's trying to keep us from coming down the road," and Leverett resident Isaiah Robison, who commented he didn't like it because "I don't like stopping."

#### Switch's Glitches

The board reviewed the status of a change in internet service providers for the town-owned LeverettNet broadband network, from GoToNetSpeed to the South Hadley Electric Light Department (SHELD), on December 1. Residents had reported numerous glitches over the past week as a result of the change.

Selectboard member Patricia Duffy commented that progress had been made in addressing glitches. "It seems like it's going to work itself out," she said.

Hankinson commented that there were "going to be growing pains," but said that if bugs with the system continued, it would be appropriate to hold a public meeting to address questions.

#### **Unpopular Track**

#### The selectboard briefly discussed a \$4.7 million pro-

## TOWN OF ERVING ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR POSITION

The Town of Erving is seeking to fill the position of **Activities Coordinator** for the Erving Senior & Community Center. Reporting directly to the Senior Center Director, this position oversees event scheduling and organizes various programs, coordinates, and supervises all aspects of the Senior Center's volunteer program, including the screening and training of all volunteers, plans and coordinates activities, coordinates the senior van transportation program, attends special events and monitors programs, and actively engages with senior population. This is a part-time (approximately 20 hours per week) and benefited position, working year-round. The anticipated starting rate of pay is \$23.28/hr. to \$24.22/hr., commensurate with qualifications.

The successful candidate will excel as a member of a team by establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with diverse interest groups and work cooperatively with supervisor, staff, and elected or appointed officials and the general public. This position requires a high level of organization and self-motivation. The successful candidate will have an associate degree in a discipline related to human services, hospitality services or business; minimum of two to three (2 to 3) years in a human service-related field, or experience in volunteer recruitment and coordination. An equivalent combination of education and experience may be considered. A CORI check will be performed for the successful candidate.

Applications and the position description are available at Town Hall, 12 East Main Street, Erving, MA and online at *www.erving-ma.gov/ employment*. The deadline to apply is Thursday, January 5, 2023, at 3:00 PM. All completed applications, cover letters, and résumés should be submitted to Bryan Smith, Town Administrator, at the address indicated above, or by email as a single PDF document to *careers@erving-ma.gov* with "Activities Coordinator Search" in the subject line.

The Town is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. The Town is a drug-free workplace.

#### **Police Ranks Swell**

The board approved the appointment of two parttime police officers: Officer Sean Conner, currently a patrolman in Pelham, and Cristian Santiago, currently a police officer at Springfield Technical Community College. The officers will not have regular shifts, but can be called in on an as-needed basis.

Police chief Scott Minckler said the move would increase the department's part-time staff from four to six officers. He touted Conner's experience, and said Santiago being bilingual in Spanish and English would fill a need in the department.

#### **Other Business**

The board voted to go forward with a proposal from MedZu Labs to test 40 Leverett mosquitoes captured in a pilot program earlier in the year. Board member Melissa Colbert said MedZu had informed her the catch was low due to rainy weather and the timing of the project, but matched low yields from other locations in the state.

The board was presented with two options and chose the more expensive and precise option, using the remaining \$1,500 budgeted for the purpose, plus \$85 from the selectboard budget.

The board appointed a screening committee to review applicants for a vacant highway department position.

The board approved a reserve fund transfer of \$1,049 to go toward a \$4,200 bill it received related to the Teawaddle Hill Road water project that was not budgeted for. The remainder will come from budgeted accounts.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) has asked Leverett to create working groups to review the needs identified by seniors through the Mass in Motion project. The board decided to wait to respond until Leverett sees the results of similar work already underway through a Community Compact grant, in order to avoid a duplication of effort.

#### **New Buildings?**

The town is issuing a request for qualified firms to study the feasibility of a new town hall building. Discussion at Monday's meeting came to focus on the sizes of various lots that could be used for the purpose.

Selectboard member Scott Bas-

visors who especially likes to use comp time, and is asking to relax a stipulation that it be used within 30 days to a perhaps more normal deadline of the end of the fiscal year.

#### **Other Business**

The conservation committee is doing its budget in a different way this year, and the selectboard wondered a little about a \$10,000 line item for trail maintenance. No one from the con com was present to explain so it will be addressed in the future.

The Golden Cane Committee, which finds and awards the oldest resident each year, is back in action. It needs three members to operate, and had only had one. John Rice and Kelly Loynd have both volunteered, and both were appointed on Monday.

On the ongoing issue of creating a multi-town shared health agent, the selectboard agreed that what the materials they were reviewing at the meeting were rather confusing. They decided to postpone further discusposal to rebuild the athletic track at Amherst Regional High School. Town clerk Lisa Stratford said she had received "about a dozen" letters opposing the move. "They want \$250,000" from Leverett for the project, Duffy said. "We don't have to approve." She noted that only 62 Leverett students attend the school, and the number using the track would be even lower.

A question from Robison on maintenance costs prompted an additional airing of concerns over the potential presence of PFAS chemicals in artificial turf, and whether that option was to be chosen over natural grass. Colbert noted that attention should be paid to deadlines so as not to miss the opportunity with FRCOG.

The board provisionally approved a request from Roberta Bryant to waive the town hall use fee for twice-monthly 4-H Club meetings. It had recently agreed to treat requests for waiver of the fee on a caseby-case basis.

A question was raised as to whether Bryant was charging for the classes. The board agreed to review the decision at its next meeting.



# Shop Local and Support Your Co-op

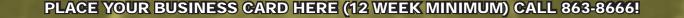
**LEVERETT** – The Leverett Village Co-op's Second Annual Holiday Baskets Silent Auction is open for bidding, through December 18. Baskets make fantastic gifts, and this year's themes include *Bird Watching*, *Gardening*, *Happy Dog*, *Holiday Morning*, *Wellness*, and a basket filled with original works by local artists. There are 11 baskets and a beautiful hand-turned wooden bowl.

You can bid as often as you like,

through 7 p.m. on December 18. Winners will be contacted on December 19 to arrange pickup of their baskets. All items were donated by generous supporters, and sales from the auction benefit the Co-op.

Also this week, the Co-op opened its Rattlesnake Gutter Gallery with hand-crafted items by more than two dozen local artisans! The gallery, within the store, is a cheerful nook where visitors can do all their holiday shopping in one location – and discover something for themselves. Items for sale include original paintings, jewelry, quilted hangings, purses, pottery, stuffed animals, wooden bowls and spoons, ornaments, carved wooden blocks, microgreen kits, cards, pillows, salves, and books and cookbooks by local authors.

Gallery sales help support local artisans and the Co-op! The Gallery is open every day during regular store hours. The Co-op is located at 180 Rattlesnake Gutter Road.





#### FARREN from page A1

to join the town in an assessment of the building. Last May, inspired by the Farren discussion, town meeting passed a bylaw allowing the historical commission to delay demolition of "historically significant" buildings for up to one year.

Trinity applied in early October for a permit to demolish the hospital complex, triggering the new bylaw. The debate over the Farren's future was revisited at a public hearing three weeks ago. Some members of the public shared their desire to see the building purchased by a developer, while others – including the selectboard – urged the commission to let Trinity proceed with the demolition. The hearing continued on Tuesday.

#### **Three On Three**

Historical commission members Christopher Clawson, Ed Gregory, and Suzanne LoManto, the town's assistant planner, all voted not to implement the demolition delay option. Chair David Brule and members Chris Sawyer-Lauçanno and Janel Nockleby voted to delay demolition, and indicated that they were not satisfied with Trinity's assessment of the property or its efforts to find a developer interested in purchasing it.

"It is a significant building in terms of its architecture, certainly in terms of its history," said Sawyer-Lauçanno, a professional architect, addressing Trinity representatives. "I understand your desire to just get rid of it, but I do feel there has to be some consideration given to other possibilities for rehabilitation, as well as how we could obtain another buyer or obtain tax credits to do this work."

As Brule reminded commission members, according to the bylaw the group's decision to delay demolition may only take into account a building's historical significance, and not its condition, nor the expected cost of renovation.

"We never anticipated we would be facing a demolition delay bylaw about the Farren," Brule said. "I figured by the time all the ducks were in a row and it was all confirmed, and the attorney general had accepted it and vetted it, that the Farren would be history."

Selectboard chair Richard Kuklewicz stood up at the meeting to speak in favor of demolition. He said he was initially relieved to "For us, to risk losing this could cost us millions," Kuklewicz said. "I didn't think it was the historical commission, in our community, that would be the group I would be fearing would be making a decision like this, quite frankly."

#### Adding Up

At last month's hearing, former physical plant employee David Galbraith shared details about the significant extent of the water damage to the Farren's foundation and interior. The original hospital was built around the turn of the last century, and a number of additional wings were built throughout subsequent decades.

Another former employee, Peter Hudyma, said the building's heating system was so inefficient that it would be a "crime to run a building like that, in this age of climate problems."

"We're willing to invest millions into the demolition of the building so that you, as a town, may repurpose this property free from environmental concerns."

> Eric Dana, Trinity Health

Afterward, Sawyer-Lauçanno wrote to Trinity representatives requesting more information about the building's condition. The company has so far refused to release its complete commissioned assessments of the property.

Trinity responded on November 29 with photographs of the basement and a list of necessary renovations, which included replacing the building's roof, foundation, heating system, plumbing, and electric system. The total estimated cost of the renovations is \$27 million, according to Trinity, whereas demolition is estimated to cost \$7 million.

"We're confident demolition is the right course of action, given all we have heard from our on-site experts and independent studies," Trinity vice president of operations Eric Dana said on Tuesday night. "We're willing to invest millions into the demolition of the building so that you, as a town, may repurpose this property free from environmental concerns to whatever your community determines is best." tration with Trinity for not sharing the full architectural, environmental, and market assessments of the Farren property.

"It is not Trinity Health's policy to share assessments of this nature," Dana said. "We have made every effort to provide highlights from these assessments, including cost estimates."

Kuklewicz said that based on his own work in the construction business, he thought Trinity's cost estimate of \$27 million to restore the building to legal standards was likely on the lower end.

"No, they didn't give us all the reports, and we respected their reasoning," he added. "I've seen far, far too many buildings in our community abandoned and walked away from."

Nockleby asked that Trinity share a breakdown of the \$27 million estimate to renovate the building, or share the name of the architecture firm hired to do the work. "It just doesn't add up."

Dana declined, reiterating that the Farren was not viable and no developer would be interested.

"But you can't prove it," Nockleby said.

"It's been proven to me," Dana replied.

"You could be right, but there could be all sorts of alternatives to some of the things you've come up with," Nockleby said. "We don't even get a chance to critique your analysis."

"I just don't think you worked very hard to find someone to take this building on," said Sawyer-Lauçanno.

#### The Balance of Reality

Other commission members were less skeptical of Trinity's assessment. Clawson said that invoking the demolition delay bylaw was unfair to Trinity because the process of seeking demolition had already started before the law was in place.

"I assume Trinity Health is not being nefarious in its intentions," Clawson said. "It's being realistic about appraisal, and I don't think that they made this evaluation themselves. I presume they hired a third-party contractor to do the evaluation. And it doesn't seem this property is viable in its present condition for its desirability in terms of historic preservation."

Clawson added that he believed

#### PUBLIC HEALTH from pg A1

emailed the hiring committee that since the "preferred candidate" had withdrawn, "Steve, [health clerk] Anne [Stuart], and I will proceed with reposting the position." Nelson said the hiring committee had previously approved this process.

"While we were hopeful that our first wave of recruitment would yield results," Ellis explained at Monday's meeting, "at this point in time we plan to reopen the search, which makes this agreement [with Greenfield] all the more important to us."

The intermunicipal agreement, approved by the board, formalizes a partnership with Greenfield which began in mid-October, soon after health director Daniel Wasiuk left for greener pastures in Southbridge, Massachusetts. It covers the period from October 10, 2022 to February 1, 2023 and agrees to pay Hoffman, referred to as the "health agent" in the document, for a limited number of services - including responding to health emergencies and Title 5 septic inspections - at a "fee for service" rate of \$36.99 per hour.

Hoffman would not be responsible for "routine restaurant inspections," or emergencies occurring between the hours of 5 p.m. and 9 a.m.

Selectboard member Chris Boutwell pointed out that the agreement did not provide that a complaint about an inspection in

cluded in the operating trust Farren granted to the hospital in 1909, though in 1995, amid the dissolution of the county government, the Franklin County commissioners voted to reassign this right to the Farren Care Center, Inc.)

"The desire for historic preservation is a noble thing, but always needs to be put into balance as to what the benefit of the preservation is compared to the other consequences," Clawson said. "The balance of reality always has to be a consideration, and just on historic principles alone, I don't see delaying demolition justified for historic reasons."

In the end, Brule made a motion to delay Trinity's demolition permit, but the vote was tied three to three. "If the commission does not pass a motion to invoke the demolition delay bylaw," he said, Montague would go before that town's health board, not Greenfield's. "By statute it has to go back to our board of health," said Ellis. "Town counsel KP Law helped develop this agreement because of the intersecting statutes."

In a related development, the board formally appointed Maureen Pollock as Montague's new planner and conservation agent, at a level of Grade G Step 8, which produces an annual salary of \$75,009. Her employment begins January 3. Pollock said she was "really excited" to work for Montague and its five villages.

Ellis said he had been contacted by municipal officials in other towns "congratulating us on our good fortune in attracting Maureen as our new town planner."

Ellis also floated a proposal to establish a "hearing officer" for situations in which building and fire code violations are disputed. He said many towns have such a hearing officer, and that the current process often leads to lengthy and "very expensive" court challenges. Under the state statute, the maximum stipend would be \$2,500 per year.

Ellis said that the position would need to be approved by town meeting, and that building inspector William Ketchen and a representative of the Turners Falls

fire department plan to attend a future board meeting on the topic.



religious artifacts, but will not make efforts to preserve the historic portion of the building or the chapel.

"While we will not be able to preserve the Chapel, our Catholic tradition is very important to us, and so we did work with the Sisters of Providence, a local parish, and with Father Greg Markey, Chaplain at Thomas Aquinas College to bestow religious icons to people, places, and programs that would have use for them in worship or for archival purposes," Looby wrote in an email. "We also donated books and documents and provided access to the building to the Historical Commission for photography and filming.

"We realize that given Farren Care Center's long history in town, there is strong sentiment toward preserving artifacts and we have been sensitive to and respectful of that."

hear Trinity would demolish the Farren because he did not want Montague saddled with another expensive, deteriorating structure like the Strathmore or Railroad Salvage mill buildings.

Both Nockleby and Sawyer-Lauçanno expressed their frusthat the hospital's founder, Bernard Farren, wrote in his will that if the building were to cease serving as a hospital, it would be demolished and the land gifted to the county.

(A clause to this effect was in-



The historical commission held the hearing in "hybrid" format, combining an in-person gathering at town hall (above) with Zoom.

"which we have not, the nays carry. Therefore, the commissioner of inspectional services is notified to issue a demolition permit."

#### **Strong Sentiments**

Montague town administrator Steve Ellis praised Brule's facilitation of the two contentious public hearings and the final vote.

"In the first application of Montague's recently adopted demolition bylaw, I think we saw members of the historical commission thoughtfully consider the facts that were available to them and come to what was clearly a difficult and important decision," Ellis told the *Reporter*. "David Brule did an outstanding job managing what might have been a contentious hearing process, and the commission members and public commenters were notably engaged and respectful."

According to Trinity Health national communications manager Christine Looby, the company has taken steps to preserve historic and Now the town will begin a process of determining a future use for the land.

"While it will be difficult to see a dramatic change in the landscape of the Farren property in the short term, Trinity Health New England's clearing and subsequent gifting of the land will create an extraordinary opportunity in the long term," Ellis told the *Reporter*. "We look forward to a robust, citizen-engaged visioning of what this critical space in Montague City should look like and provide to the community in the future, and to achieving that vision in the years to come."

"A lot of us in town have a deep connection to [the Farren], and I was not satisfied that they had provided us with the documentation that we wanted," Brule said after the hearing. "In a sense I was literally personally affected by it, because that's where I was born,

and where my parents passed away."



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#### MONTAGUE from page A1

but that the issue could be placed on the agenda for next week's meeting.

#### **Bad Boilers**

Bergeron requested \$40,000 from the town's capital reserve account to replace two boilers that produce heat for town hall. He said that when the water in the primary furnace and boiler reaches a temperature of 120 degrees, it should tell the second unit to "kick in."

"They're not talking to each other as they are supposed to," he explained, and as a result, town hall staff are "walking around in sweaters.'

Bergeron said parts for the current boilers, which were purchased in 2010, were "hard to come by" as they are manufactured in Germany and need to be delivered to the United States through Canada. He recommended that new boilers be purchased at Gettens Electric Supply in Greenfield and installed by a contractor after a quick bidding process. "The ease of taking care of these boilers will be significantly greater," he argued.

Assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey said a bidding process for a contractor had already commenced, and bids would be due this Wednesday, allowing the town to make an award next week.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz asked energy committee member Jason Burbank to evaluate the proposed new furnaces, saying that he "has a good history with all things heating and cooling."

Burbank said he had spoken with a local heating contractor about the proposed furnaces, which will be floor- rather than wall-mounted, and that it "seems like not a dangerous route to try this fancy new condensing boiler."

Selectboard member Matt Lord said the board had also received an email from energy committee member Ariel Elan showing "some distaste for putting new [gas-powered] boilers in." He suggested that he was sympathetic to Elan's concern, but "I don't think doing a feasibility study for geothermal right now is the way to go."

"In a perfect world we would do a study and determine some other methods, but we are in a kind of a bind," said Kuklewicz.

The board voted to use \$40,000 from the reserve fund to pay for the boilers. On Wednesday, according to finance committee member John Hanold, the fin com approved the use of the account, which is held by the town for emergencies. Hanold said the transfer leaves only \$20,000 in the reserve fund, and that the account may be replenished with an appropriation at a special town meeting in the late winter.

public works department will plow the road during the winter, but "if we do any damage to the manhole covers, it is on them," Bergeron told the *Reporter*.

At Ramsey's request, the board agreed to extend the timeline for the Montague City Road flood relief project until March 2024. Permitting by state and federal agencies still needs to be completed before a "notice to proceed" may be issued for construction, Ramsey told the board. The extension, approved by the state emergency management agency, will allow the project to be completed next spring and summer.

#### **Tax Split Set**

The board held a lengthy discussion of the potential "split" between taxation on residential property and commercial, industrial, and personal (CIP) property, which are taxed at different rates in Montague.

The discussion, billed as a preparation for the formal tax hearing with the assessing department on Wednesday, was mainly a presentation by Ellis, who said the goal was to avoid having the board digest complex data the same evening it was required to vote on it.

Tonelli said a 20.7% increase in 'personal' property value was due entirely to the modernization of Eversource's power lines.

The board seemed inclined to impose a "split" of 1.3, which impacts the percentage of the town's total tax revenue funded by the categories, as it has in the past. This would reduce the tax rates from \$16.76 to \$15.57 for residential property and from \$25.83 to \$23.66 for CIP, according to assessing director Karen Tonelli, and increase the "average single family tax bill" by \$88 to \$4,029.

According to the meeting materials, the average single-family residency in Montague increased in value by 10% this year.

At Wednesday's hearing, Tonelli reviewed virtually the same data. An estimated \$1.33 million decline in commercial valuation in 2023, she said, was due to the assumption that the former Farren Care Center will not be sold to a new owner. Tonelli also noted a significant increase in total residential valuation -9.7 % over 2022 – and said a 20.7% increase in "personal" property value was due entirely to the modernization of Eversource's power lines. Kuklewicz asked how long the high Eversource valuations would remain at their current level, given depreciation. Tonelli said the courts had recently imposed a new method for calculating depreciation that no longer relies on the estimates of the power companies alone. "You can thank Boston and some other cities for that," she said. When it came time to vote on the tax split, several members seemed to consider increasing the amount that would fall on CIP, but Lord said he was "comfortable" with the 1.3 split unless he had more information on the impact of a change on residential taxpayers. This seemed to win over the other members, who voted unanimously to maintain the 1.3 split.

As in recent years, the board voted unanimously against an open space discount (a category Tonelli said was not used in Montague), a 10% discount for small businesses (which Tonelli said often benefits the property owner, not the business), and an exemption for owner-occupied property that shifts taxes onto second vacation homes (an exemption Tonelli said was only used in areas like Cape Cod and the Berkshires).

The hearing adjourned after just over thirty minutes.

#### **Block Grant Gap**

Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Regional Development Authority reviewed the status of projects funded by the most recent federal community development block grant, known as FY'21 grant after its federal appropriation, and receive "public input" on the town's grant application for FY'22 and '23.

The grants are directed through the state Department of Housing and Community Development, which has combined the two fiscal years, and can be used to fund qualified infrastructure and housing assistance projects, as well as programs sponsored by social service agencies.

McHugh explained that there would be a gap in funding between the block grants, perhaps of half a year, and the selectboard discussed the idea of filling in funding for the social service programs using American Rescue Plan Act funds.

The board approved payments to the firm Berkshire Design for planning services for the neighborhood playground at Hillcrest Elementary School and construction administration of the Avenue A streetscape project.

#### **Age-Friendly Champs**

Rachel Stoler, community health program manager at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), and Carole Foote, director of development at the elder services agency LifePath, came before the board to discuss an "age-friendly" program called Mass in Motion.

Foote reviewed data about Franklin County and Montague, some of which was the result of a survey conducted by FRCOG and LifePath. By 2030, she said, 34% of the population of Franklin County will be 65 or older, and there will be more people over 65 than under 18 located up to \$4,230 for a variety of purposes. Spending for "first class transportation" and alcohol are prohibited under the MOU.

#### **Other Business**

The board approved a request by RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto for the use of the corner of Avenue A and Third Street, as well as an assembly at Spinner Park, between 6:15 and 7:15 p.m. this Friday. The annual event, "It's a Wonderful Night," features a visit by Santa.

A request from Mark Wisniewski, co-owner of the Rendezvous in Turners Falls, for the restaurant to be allowed to stay open until 2 a.m. on New Years Eve was also approved. As in past years, the motion also allowed owners of similar alcohol-serving establishments to stay open late if they apply to the town by noon on December 28.

The board also approved a oneday beer and wine license for a "Sip and Shop" event at Rustic Romance, a vintage home furnishing store on East Main Street in Millers Falls, on February 10. Owner Cindy Bayer said that a similar event in November had been a "huge success."

Executive assistant Wendy Bogusz presented the board with a "holiday schedule" for meetings over the next two months. The board will meet virtually over Zoom on December 12 and 19, will hold a "hybrid" in-person and virtual meeting on January 9, and virtual meetings on January 23 and 30. The board approved the schedule without a formal vote.

## LOOKING BACK: 20 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on December 5, 2002: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

into a residential/business space.

#### **Couture Bros. on the Move**

#### **Building a Future**

A local woman and a man from the Boston area have submitted proposals to renovate a building slated for demolition in the Second Street alley in Turners Falls.

Montague town administrator Frank Abbondanzio said two proposals were submitted to the town by the November 4 deadline to restore a brick structure located behind the Cutlery Block. Denise DiPaolo's plan is to convert the building into a multi-use commercial space. Richard Becker's plan seeks to convert the building

There have been a lot of rumors about all the activity in the vicinity of the offices of the Franklin County Housing Authority, across from Esleeck Paper Company in Turners Falls. One of those rumors is true: Couture Bros., Inc is moving out.

They were the owners and landlord of the upper offices, using the lower part of the former Montague Paper Mill for the paint contracting business. The landlord is Rural Development Corporation, with the Franklin County Housing Authority remaining a tenant.

#### 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on December 6, 2012: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

#### Shop to Pop Until Summer

The Powertown Pop Up Shop, originally intended as a temporary holiday marketplace for local artists and artisans, will now stay in place until the end of June. Lisa Davol, director of Turners Falls RiverCulture, which had spearheaded the venture in the former Hallmark gallery on Avenue A, made the case for extending the market into summer before the Montague selectboard on Monday. Board members enthusiastically endorsed the idea. The creation of the Pop Up Shop aims to create opportunities for local artists to sell their work, to animate a vacant space in the center of town, and to act as a pilot store for a longer term local arts store. Davol arrived well-prepared, with what she called her "posse" in tow. They included Lynn Nichols and Don Kruger of Western Mass Arts; Christa Snyder, artist and co-founder of 2nd Street Baking Co. on Fourth Street; and Erin MacLean, co-owner of LOOT.

Nichols and Kruger stressed the site's retail viability, and Snyder argued that artists need an outlet for their work that would allow them time to create rather than constantly focusing on promotion. MacLean said that while her store has become a destination for many out-of-town customers, more shopping and browsing spaces

#### **Not Quite Done**

Bergeron also reported on the paving of Sandy Lane, which leads to the town transfer station. The road is being paved by contractors constructing a new maintenance facility for the Franklin Regional Transit Authority which will use the road for access.

Bergeron said the "base coat" had been paved, but that the tops of the manholes and catch basins remain elevated, waiting for a final coat which will not be put on until the spring. He said he had asked the contractor that one cover be lowered so water can drain from the road.

Sandy Lane is now open, and the

for the first time in history.

Comparing Montague residents' responses to those in the county as a whole, Foote said the town has a higher percentage of respondents who live alone and receive home health services, and fewer who drive themselves as a means of transportation. Fewer live with partners and spouses, but slightly more live with family and friends.

Stoler then described Mass in Motion, a statewide program to encourage "healthy eating and active living" which has been in existence for ten years. The program has received a grant to work with 11 towns on addressing the "root causes" of current conditions, including of health inequities.

The board voted to endorse a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with FRCOG to participate in the project. The project will involve hiring an "age-friendly champion" from the town, and creating a small "working group" to plan a local strategy.

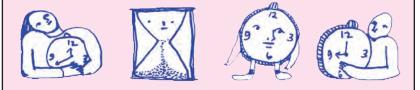
Stoler said the group could be al-

would help build traffic.

The building is owned by the town of Montague, and the Pop Up Shop isn't paying rent, only utilities and insurance. Under the agreement, the artisans' store would be retained rent-free, but in subsequent discussions with town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, Davol said that after January and February they would make a "good faith" effort to pay rent.

Abbondanzio said at the meeting that it might be possible to rent the building, but that likely would not be "the best possible use." The continued use of the space for artists and crafts people, he said, would help to "create critical mass" for the arts and retail downtown.

"This is what we've been working toward," said selectboard member Patricia Allen.



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#### GMRSD from page A1

"Is there room on that site to build?" Montague member Nick Licata asked.

Blier said she and facilities manager Heath Cummings had looked into it, and that if a disused football practice field is included, there is enough room for a "sprawling building" with separate sections for the lower and higher elementary grades, as is also the plan for a Sheffield addition.

Montague member Jennifer Waryas asked what would happen to the Hillcrest and Sheffield school buildings.

"Those schools are owned by the town, so they would revert to the town," Blier told her, but added that as MSBA does not allow district central offices to be located in new buildings, one idea is to move the central office into the main part of Sheffield.

Blier said that she had discussed the idea with Montague officials, including assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey, and that another possibility is for the facility, with its gymnasium and auditorium, to be granted to the parks and rec department, or used for Head Start or similar programs.

Beck said regional superintendents are interested in setting up a new alternative therapeutic school in the area.

One advantage of the new location, Blier said, is that many of the district's "neediest" students live in downtown Turners Falls, where they are currently ineligible for bus transportation as they live within a mile of the current elementary schools; these students could ride the bus if the elementary school were further away.

"All that land is district land it's not town of Montague," said Gill member Bill Tomb. "Therefore you're dealing with the town of Gill, in terms of who's going to pay for this school building.... When so many kids from one town are attending a school in the other town, in this case only Gill Elementary, there can be some questions about who should be contributing to capital expenses."

Tomb also cited "the anxiety that we will have to deal with, as to 'when are you going to close the Gill school?"

"Those are kind of just emotional issues, but they are things that you should consider." he warned. "It's

has to be a monetary exchange."

The towns are currently engaged in a process with Leyden, Bernardston, Warwick, and Northfield to investigate the feasibility of a new six-town district. Under the study proposal, elementary schools would be unchanged from the current Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley districts, but the six towns would share a single middle school and a single high school.

Beck said the investigation of the new site "at least falls into the category of 'it can't hurt to ask,' given that we have this other resource, and there are some potential benefits."

The discussion is expected to continue at the December 19 school committee meeting. The district plans to submit an application to the MSBA this winter or spring, as well as an application to replace the roof of Gill Elementary School, which has been rejected several years running.

#### Fewer Kids

Blier gave an update on the FY'24 budget process. While the actual enrollment in the schools is stable, she said, there are fewer school-aged children in the district's territory, so the foundation enrollment number used to calculate state Chapter 70 aid will be lower than initially expected, as will the fee for students choicing out.

Instead of about a \$722,000 increase in Chapter 70 next year, she said, she is now expecting about \$200,000. She recommended pulling more money from the school choice revolving fund and excess & deficiency accounts to offset that reduction.

Chair Jane Oakes noted that the ultimate Chapter 70 awards will likely be announced about a week before the district is expected to pass a final budget, and that the turn-around is tighter when there is a turnover in the governor's office, as there will be this winter.

Blier reported that the district had been awarded a \$50,000 Innovation Pathways grant, as well as a new \$125,000 grant to support the work of the six-town planning board. "It has been a difficult task managing the many additional grants received in the past couple of years," she said.

#### **Big Brother**

Technology director Tina Ma- data, as case counts based haney presented her department's on PCR tests are not risall paid for, at some point so [there] annual technology plan. The main ing in local towns.

project this year, she said, is the replacement of the schools' 10-yearold network servers.

She also said she was working on a plan to allow graduating seniors to keep their school-issued Chromebook computers permanently, a gift given to seniors last year.

Mahaney also discussed the district's acceptable-use policy for the internet. "We do see everything that's happening through our internet," she said. "I am the certifying person.... That's a part of my job I really do not like."

In response to a question, Mahaney said the district cannot remotely monitor student devices' microphones or web cameras, and that students' cell phones cannot be plugged into Chromebooks.

Gill-Montague requires vendors to sign contracts agreeing that student data will not be used for any commercial purposes. "Believe it or not, it took us a long time to get Google itself to sign a data privacy agreement." she said.

The school committee unanimously approved the updated policy.

#### **Other Business**

At the beginning of the meeting, Beck announced merit-based awards for two seniors.

Cloe Fulk, recipient of the National School Development Council Award for Academic Growth and Student Leadership, and Brayden McCord, winner of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents Award for Academic Excellence, both Zoomed into the meeting to receive praise and accolades.

The committee voted to rescind a policy banning peanuts and tree nuts from the schools, and approved a new policy and set of procedures focusing on awareness and education of community members' allergies. Beck said this move was "strongly recommended" by the district's nurses and food service department.

A flu and COVID-19 vaccine clinic, open to the public, will be held at Hillcrest Elementary next Tuesday, December 13 from 3:45 to 6:45 p.m.

Beck reported that the district's COVID-19 risk has risen from "low" to "medium," and speculated that this was due to wastewater



## **DINOSAUR-THEMED FESTIVALS** History, Dinosaurs, Art: The Great Greenfield DinoFest

**GREENFIELD** – Dinosaurs for the holidays! Piti Theatre Company and the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association are bringing DinoFest back to town - and to much of the rest of the world online - this Saturday and Sunday, December 10 and 11.

Blending science, arts, and community-building, DinoFest 2022 will feature Piti's film exploring African-American history in Franklin County at the time of the dinosaur discoveries in the mid-1800s, a new exhibit about citizen scientist Dexter Marsh, Jurassic Jeopardy, a dino-themed improv workshop and performance, and a Zoom presentation by a ten-yearold budding paleontologist.

The Festival is particularly indebted to the extraordinary lives of Greenfield's Dexter Marsh, a day laborer who noticed what looked like bird footprints in the flagstone from Montague he was using to lay sidewalk near Town Hall in 1835 – seven events, visit www.ptco.org/dino.

years before the word *dinosaur* was invented - and James Deane, the first person to treat the strange impressions as objects of scientific interest.

The festival starts at 11 a.m. Saturday at the Garden Cinema with a sneak preview of Night at the Deerfield Museum, an original movie for all ages with most roles played by Piti Theatre's Youth Troupe that looks at the lives of Greenfield's John Putnam, Colrain's Charles Green, and Amherst's Angeline Palmer in the mid-1800s.

At 12:30 p.m. the Jurassic Roadshow will present a new exhibit at the Historical Society of Greenfield, including real fossils on loan to the Society. And from 2:30 to 4:45 p.m. there will be a Q&A, trivia, and improv games at the LAVA Center, 324 Main Street.

Sunday's afternoon and evening events will be held virtually.

For free tickets, information, and registration for Sunday's online



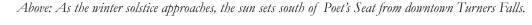


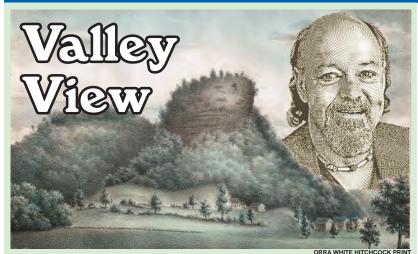


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#### **OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER**

**DECEMBER 8, 2022** 





#### **By GARY SANDERSON**

**GREENFIELD** – An empty, sun-splashed Veterans Memorial Field unleashed a flood of holiday memories in passing on Thanksgiving morning as I took a spin around Greenfield hunting for a bottle of cognac.

No, no, no, I didn't need a snooty holiday eye-opener. I'm way past that. The impetus was a YouTube turkey-gravy recipe my wife wanted to try. It called for corn starch instead of flour, with a final splash of the flavorful French brandy into the steaming mix of roasting-pan drippings and boiled-potato water.

She showed me the video on her phone, knew we had no coon Turkey Day.

My brief Vet's Field sighting during the fruitless journey through ghostly quiet Greenfield triggered a string of thought that wouldn't quit. It brought me back to the sidelines, the newsroom, my 40 years on the Greenfield Recorder's sports staff - the last 32 as sports editor. The sports-editor job called for hiring and supervising staff, coordinating coverage and photo assignments, choosing content, editing copy, and packaging it all in a daily three- to five-page sports section. My focus was always the local sports scene - especially the high school teams composed of local kids whose parents and grandparents, aunts, uncles, and neighbors subscribed to the

## Limelight Alert: Open Mic Series Returns

#### **By GRANGER SMITH-MASSA**

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – The Montague Common Hall has recently reopened its doors for public events, including an Open Mic series. Fostering community among those in the Montague area, the Open Mic was a touchstone of culture until the COVID-19 pandemic put all events on hiatus. But since this past October, the historic Hall has seen success in holding a number of events, and more are on the way. After long years of isolation, safely held public events offer a renewed sense of community and togetherness.

The Open Mic series had been a staple event in Montague Center before the pandemic, and it provides a great example of some of what the Hall has to offer for events. Originally held monthly, the Open Mic was created in the 2014-15 season as a way for people with all levels of experience and talent to perform onstage.

The audience got the chance to listen to family and friends, and performers could practice being in front of an audience while sharing their own work in a smaller space. Any- in crowds numbered in the for- Powsner. Then in 2020, COVID



The Montague Common Hall was refurbished during the dormant performance months of the pandemic.

been heard at the Open Mic, and the series would also frequently feature a well-known local performer.

People were welcome to bring food and drink to share with others around the tables set up in the hall, and occasionally Red Fire Farm was invited to sell food.

The Open Mic would often draw

brave, perform in front of people," says Gene Stammel, one of the organizers of the series, "and it's a great place for experienced players and singers to practice and enjoy what they're doing."

Stammel took over organizing the event in 2019 along with Mitch Mulholland, Walt Burnham, and Gary swept the nation and swiftly put all see LIMELIGHT page B5

gnac, but didn't seem concerned. To her, it was optional. We could live without it. But, with the turkey in the oven and nothing better to do at the moment, I was game for a quick search.

"I think package stores are open on Thanksgiving," I offered, lifting my keychain from its hook on an overloaded panel of old keys attached to the side of a kitchen cabinet.

Not so.

My first stop was Ryan & Casey. Closed. Not a good sign.

Undaunted, I continued east on Main Street and took a left up Federal Street to check a hole-inthe-wall "packie" I thought may be open for holiday business. Nope.

That's when I circled back to my Meadows neighborhood via Silver Street and Nash's Mill Road and, not yet willing to throw up the white flag upon returning to Colrain Road, doubled back to Big Y. Uh-uh. Closed.

Oh well. We would have to settle for lesser gravy. Can't say I didn't try.

When I returned home empty-handed, my wife, curious, went to her phone for online clarification. Maybe package stores opened in the afternoon. That's when we learned Thanksgiving is one of two Massachusetts holidays when "packies" are closed. The other is Christmas.

Oh well. Like they say in Chicopee Falls, nothing ventured, nothing gained. It goes to show how out of touch I am these days regarding matters of, uhm... imbibement. I must have been thinking of bars – I know they're open

paper. But the mundane community stuff was worth chasing, too.

My belief from the beginning was that local news sells. Wire stuff not so much, particularly after 24/7 cable news, Google, and cell phones joined the dynamic.

Thanksgiving week was one of our busiest times; that, and production of the spring and fall sports supplements - special 12-page sections which, truth be told, were nothing more than clever, revenue-building advertising schemes.

On Turkey Day the focus was placed squarely upon traditional holiday high school football rivalries between a pair of cross-river rivals - Greenfield vs. Turners Falls and Athol vs. Orange (now Mahar Regional School). Then, late in my tenure, two other "rivalries" were added to the holiday mix, which only complicated the coverage strategy and, in my opinion, cluttered the pre-game layout packages with superfluous baggage.

Who, sitting in my seat back then, would have in their wildest imagination predicted that one of those much-anticipated holiday games, the annual Greenfield-Turners Turkey Day clash, would fizzle and die? It seemed inconceivable. But that's exactly where we sit today, and that's why the sight of that vacant green gridiron in a silent town stirred my introspective juices.

As far back as I can remember, Thanksgiving began with the morning Greenfield-Turners game - first as a young boy with my see VALLEY VIEW page B2 thing from folk music to poetry, bas- ties or more. "It's a great place for soon quartets to book readings, have new people to try out things, to get

# GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

#### **By ANNABEL LEVINE**

TURNERS FALLS - The sun is going down at an ungodly hour, and we find ourselves once again facing the end of another calendar year. The Great Falls Apple Corps turned five last month, and to celebrate we continued taking the year off from pickle parties and herb talks to rest.

Although we gave our programming arm a break, the Unity garden was still able to provide the public with strawberries and herbs and vegetables and cut flowers. The edible hedge between the garden and skate park continues to fill in, and we're looking forward to another year full of fruit. I happened to find a photo of the hedge from last year's fall clean-up, and the plants then were just little babies. They grow up so fast!

While we tended the garden, across the parking lot in the field house the Montague Parks and Recreation department was quietly working on helping us achieve one of the goals we've had on the books for years. Nestled in the folds of the Parks and Recreation department proposed budget for next year is money for a well.

While we try to accentuate the positive here in this column, the lack of easy access to running water

has proven to be a huge obstacle to a thriving community garden. We've come up with all sorts of creative solutions to the water situation, like setting up a rainwater catchment system on our shed and then, when there's no rain in the forecast, filling the tank with town water run through multiple hoses across the busy parking lot. I still cringe at the memory of the hot summer's day where one of the hoses leaked a spray of water directly into the open window of a nearby car!

Even without any unfortunate hose malfunctions, the garden struggles to achieve its potential with hand-watering as the only option. Too many seasons have passed with memories of standing in a dry and dying garden with a view of the Connecticut River across the street. Too many gardeners have given up on their beds at the height of summer because they can't keep them alive with just a watering can.

As the town discovered when it built the skate park, there is water only eight feet below where the garden sits, so a shallow well is all we'll need. In addition to making the watering process easier, a well will also change up the quality of the water we've been using. After years of being mainly watered with tap water, I'm looking forward to



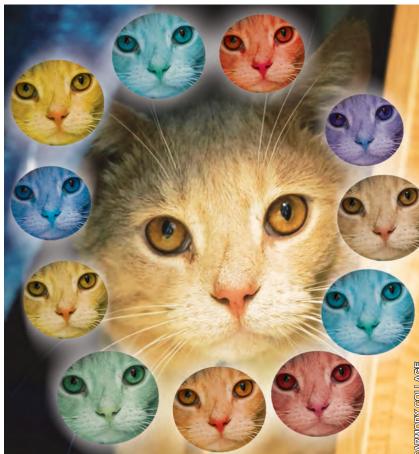
Beautiful purple kale in the author's garden.

seeing the difference in plant vitality when we are able to provide nutrient-rich, river-adjacent groundwater to the mix.

The budget process for the next fiscal year is only beginning, and the proposal won't be finalized for a few months. If passed, money for the well will become available in July of 2023. We'll keep you updated once we know more.

see APPLE CORPS page B8

**B2** 



# **"GINGER"**

Meet Ginger! He is a very special cat who has been in our care a few months now, and we have gotten to know him very well. His office mate says he is social, friendly, smart, and playful and has the most chill personality she has ever seen in a cat. He has spent time working with our volunteers via our Cat Pawsitive Pro Program and has learned to high five with both paws!

Due to his easygoing nature, Ginger is likely to thrive in any type of home. Since he is FeLV+, he must be indoor-only and needs to be an only pet, or live with other FeLV+ cats. He would likely do fine with dogs given a slow introduction.

Interested in adopting? Animals at Dakin are currently available only in Springfield. 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** DECEMBER 12 THROUGH 16

#### WENDELL

A foot care clinic is held the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Senior Health Rides are available. Contact Jonathan von Ranson (978) 544-3758.

4 p.m. Mat Yoga Thursday 12/15 1 p.m. Cards & Games Friday 12/16 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Aerobics

#### ERVING

#### VALLEY VIEW from page B1

father, who once played for Greenfield, then as a high school student from a neighboring school, and finally as a sportswriter working the sidelines before scrambling to write a story and get home for the holiday feast we always hosted.

At the Recorder, the week leading up to the game was always hectic, with coverage to coordinate, stories to write, copy to read, and graphics packages to build and/or update. The best thing about it was that I could see light at the end of the tunnel, with my annual vacation for deer season staring me in the face. I'd cover the game, write the story, and put the newsroom in my rearview: first for a couple of weeks, then three, and then, once I reached 20 years of employment, for a solid month of rest and relaxation.

I'd speed home and walk into a festive, aromatic holiday atmosphere - turkey and casseroles in the oven, pies and pastries on the counters, hot coffee in the carafe, and the Detroit Lions losing on the TV.

The Turkey Day football games were also festive affairs, an annual gathering place for townspeople, including former players and classmates home for the holiday from faraway places. The parking lot would be stuffed as fans streamed toward the crowded gate, creating a gameday buzz with evidence of whiskeybreath (and -voice) detectable in the cool fall air.

The roar of the fired-up teams exiting their locker rooms would signal that the game was near. Then came the playing of the bands, the sounds of the tuba and bass drum, the cheerleaders, the PA announcer, the players grunting and groaning in cadence through warm-ups leading up to the National Anthem and kickoff crescendo. Even when the game was boring and one-sided, as they often were, the pregame buzz, the atmosphere, and the conversations were worth the price of admission.

Greenfield was dead this year on my Turkey Day spin around town, and it was palpable. Remarkably so. Perhaps that's what first jostled my wheels of reminiscence into motion, before the empty football field revved them up to a shrill scream.

So, who was the best player I ever watched play in the Greenfield-Turners games? That's easy. Peter Bergeron, hands down. In fact, I'd rate him a better, more impactful high school football player than even Mark Chmura, the Frontier Regional School standout who starred at Boston College and won an NFL Super Bowl as a Green Bay Packers tight end.

Bergeron was a speedy, elusive quarterback who was, frankly, unstoppable. Even when he appeared to be hopelessly trapped behind the line of scrimmage, he had the uncanny ability to wiggle free for big gains. He was one incredible high-school football player and probably would have been a good college player as well if he had chosen that path.

Instead, Bergeron chose baseball and was, a few short years after high school graduation, patrolling center field and batting leadoff for the Montreal Expos. Five years and 308 games later, his run was over, proving once again the fleeting nature of extraordinary athletic accomplishments.

I recently spoke to Bergeron for the first time in some 25 years. He and his dad, who I knew before he was born, delivered a load of seasoned cordwood to the sliding woodshed door in my backyard barn alcove. It was good, dry cordwood that had been stacked for nearly a year, difficult to find these days unless you split and stack it yourself.

The kid, now a big-league scout, looked great. Fit and sharp. Now 45 years old, he lives in Greenfield, is married, has three children. It's hard to imagine. Time flies. Seems like yesterday he was lurking around the bench and chatting with the guys during his dad's Mohawk Men's League softball games at Cricket Field.

It's also hard to imagine that a simple holiday spin around town and past an empty football field stained by lost tradition could trigger such a rich string of retrospection. It got me thinking, probing, lamenting; allowing my wheels to scream.

No cognac, no game, no problem. Memories propelled me through it.



# Surviving Breast Cancer By Julie Cunningham

# Part 30: Achieving Balance

AMHERST – I've reached a treatment milestone. I was initially given a four-month course of chemo, starting with the most severe chemo, called "Red Devil." That lasted for eight weeks, with a treatment every other week; I had four total. Next I was put on the second-strongest chemo, which made my eyelashes and eyebrows fall out but allowed the hair on my head to

day or so. It gave me horrible stomach aches and dry, visibly red eyes. About three months into the treatment I talked to my oncologist and we discontinued one of the medications. I continued with the medication that was easier to tolerate. I still had stomach pains, but they were manageable with vinegar. Strangely, nothing else worked. No over

believe the key to managing these side effects is balance, but I feel like I'm balancing on a thin wire a thousand feet above ground.

True balance is a commitment. It's easy to skip a workout when I'm sleep-deprived, but skipping a workout means I may experience these severe and debilitating muscle aches that so many women the counter medication worked for get with the medication I am on. It's easy to lose sleep, but if I'm sleep-deprived my dry eyes, which are already suffering, may deteriorate severely. Cancer treatment balance is different from normal balance. Normal healthy people can lose a little more sleep than I can. They can skip a workout here and there. They don't have to remember to take medication every night, or remember an appointment once a month to get a shot. I'm still on life-saving medication, but things have improved. These hormone blockers starve my cancer, so anything remaining in my body dies. I will be on them for five years, and every day isn't a battle anymore, but it is important to finish the five years of this medication. I've had to adjust the time I take the medication, and that's okay. It's okay to lose a little sleep and work hard, and to skip a workout here and there. But I can't go too far. I have to snap myself back to balance quickly. I don't miss the days when I didn't know I had cancer, but I wish I had used them better.

#### 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. COVID test kits are available. For more information please call 863-9357.

#### **Monday 12/12**

10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. Pot Luck Lunch 1:15 p.m. Movie of the Month: "Calendar Girls" Tuesday 12/13

#### 9:30 a.m. Tuesday Knitters 1 p.m. Chair Yoga 3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 12/14

9 a.m. Foot Clinic (by appointment)

Erving Senior Center is open 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Open for cards, coffee, and snacks daily.

Brown Bag lunch is the first Thursday of each month. Veterans Services the first Wednesday of each month. Erving van services available: Must call 24 hours in advance for a ride to any scheduled appointment. For more information, please call (413) 423-3649.

#### Monday 12/12

#### 9 a.m. Interval 10:15 a.m. Seated Workout Tuesday 12/13 9 a.m. Good For U 10 a.m. Line Dancing Wednesday 12/14 9 a.m. Cardio Low Impact 10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics 11:30 a.m. Bingo Thursday 12/15 9 a.m. Core & Balance 10 a.m. Barre Fusion Friday 12/16

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

grow back in tiny white strands.

In early September 2021, I finished that course of chemo, and went into surgery thinking that was the end of it.

In the practice of medicine, there are surprises. I wasn't expecting the surprise that came next. After a biopsy of the tumor that was removed, the pathologist found a gene mutation called HR2. This HR2 gene makes the cancer that I had aggressive and hard to treat. Ten years ago I would probably have a high chance of recurrence, and a poor outlook. Thanks to something called immunotherapy my oncologist now was able to target that gene.

Unfortunately, that meant an entire year of additional treatment every three weeks. At the same time, I was put on hormone blockers which meant a shot every month and a pill every day.

This has been my life for a year. A small pill every day that puts me in menopause, a shot once a month, and chemo every three weeks.

The chemo left me in a haze for a

my stomach pains. I found a natural eye care droplet that helped my eyes stay hydrated, and I buckled down.

When my schedule changed, my side effects changed. That's not something they prepare you for when you're starting chemo, because most people going through cancer treatment are older, and either have the ability to take time off of work or are retired already. My oncologist talked in absolutes: work or don't work, rest or don't rest. I believe that patients who work through their cancer have better survival rates, so I chose to work through my treatment.

What I needed, however, was balance, not absolutes.

I finally finished my immunotherapy treatment last week. My side effects won't ease for some time, and it isn't clear when my dry eye will improve, or when my stomach cramps will subside. I am still on hormone blockers, and they have side effects of their own. They are manageable with a balanced lifestyle of rest, exercise, and work. I





## OUT OF THE PARK DECEMBER 2022

**By JON DOBOSZ** 

UNITY PARK - Hello everyone! It's hard to believe that the holidays are already upon us. It is that wonderful time of year to spend with family and friends, and to reflect on what is most important in our lives.

Our winter season has started and seems to be bouncing along quite well with our Youth Basketball Program and Bluefish Swim Team underway.

We are happy to announce that after a three-year hiatus, the annual Sawmill River 10k has returned! Our next race will be held on Saturday, December 31 at 10 a.m. in Montague Center. We typically host around 150 runners in this event, which is one of the more popular races in the county. The sleepy back roads of this beautifully picturesque village are a major draw for many runners. If you are a runner, or know of one, what better way to end the year!

The Sawmill Run is a digitally timed race, and is sanctioned by the USA Track and Field Association. Pre-registration is available online at RunReg.com/sawmill-river-10k-run, or you can download a registration form on our webpage at montagueparksrec.com.

Another great way to stay active during the winter months is to take advantage of our **Open Swim Program.** Open Swim is held at the Turners Falls High School pool and will be starting up soon after the New Year. It will be held on Tuesday and Friday evenings starting January 3 and will go to March 10.

Family Swim is held from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., with Adult Lap Swim from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. For additional information and admission rates, please visit our website or



give us a call.

We will also be offering an **American Red Cross Babysitting** Course on Tuesday, February 7 and Wednesday, February 8. Those participating will obtain the knowledge and resources to become a great babysitter! This is a fun and interactive course we provide every year that teaches students first aid and safety skills, as well as helpful tips on how to prevent and respond to emergencies.

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

That's about it from here. Be sure to get outside, breathe in the crisp air, and get some exercise. It is critical to embrace winter with a healthy attitude, and not to hibernate!

If you wish to get additional information on any of our programs and services, check out our webpage, montagueparksrec.com. All of us here at MPRD wish you the brightest of holidays and a healthy New Year. We appreciate your continued support, and we will talk to you in 2023!

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

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG Tony; Business Burgled; Ankle Monitored; Windstorm; Ten Dogs, No Gas; Saturday Log Gap; Plenty of Swears

Monday, 11/28 6:40 a.m. Caller from Farren Avenue reports that he advised. Gill PD respond.

ployee states that a male vestigated. ferred to an officer.

shouldn't have been there. Referred to an officer. Gone upon arrival. No 2:28 p.m. Two-car accident

emergency at this time. 7:54 p.m. 911 caller from Caller declines medical at-Prospect Street states tention. Citation issued. she was attacked in her 3:24 p.m. Caller from J home around five minutes Street called in stating the property. No police re- K Street. Unable to locate. ago. Declines ambulance; they believe a box truck states she is not injured. was also stolen in the bur-Officers advised. Spoke to glary reported Monday. residents at house, who Officer made aware. state there are no issues 6:32 p.m. 911 caller states and the caller was going he was going to visit his can get in to assist with a 6:33 p.m. Caller from Avsage left for caller. Tuesday, 11/29

alley and possibly urinate Wednesday, 11/30

12:49 p.m. Food City em- sters; nothing found. In- strap and advise male to opened.

just in the store and cre- Woods Road reporting vices rendered. ("I already called"; "You having work done on the Control. in building by people who in the evenings after dark.

on North Leverett Road.

on the side of the house punching the house and blocked roadway.

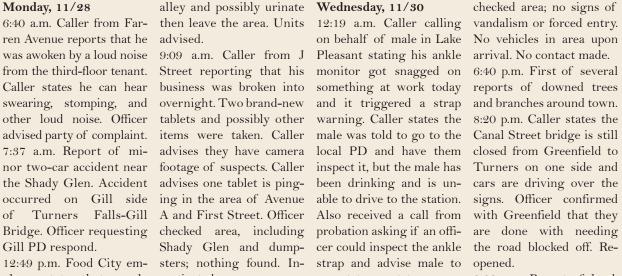
was awoken by a loud noise 9:09 a.m. Caller from J Pleasant stating his ankle arrival. No contact made. party named Tony was 12:54 p.m. Caller from to have it re-strapped. Ser- violent screaming and

hear yelling in background is usually locked, but she is Transferred to Shelburne reported any loud noises.

need to leave"). Phone property before winter. 11:12 a.m. Caller from 12:50 p.m. 911 caller from hung up after 4:21. Officers Caller believes they are J Street states that two disabled vehicle on East responding. Disturbance going down after school or vehicles pulled up to the Main Street states that she to report that she found one is bringing her gas. sponse needed.

> porarily close the Canal an officer. Street bridge so crews Friday, 12/2

seeing a male party go ments. Officer advises no son/activity report on use care while backing up. behind the Third Street one in area. Home is secure. Millers Falls Road. Officer



report to court tomorrow 9:23 p.m. Report of loud, noises coming from an ated a disturbance for the that Tech School students 10:48 a.m. 911 caller upstairs apartment on second time today. Re- have been trespassing at states that there is smoke Montague City Road. Both her family camp; states inside the Scalpers Lodge; officers spoke to multiple 7:25 p.m. 911 call; could there is a private road that possibly a chimney fire. residents, none of whom

Thursday, 12/1

dumpster on their prop- may be out of gas and that erty and began dumping she has ten dogs with her. stuff from their vehicles Vehicle not in way of trafinto it. Caller called back fic. Caller states that someout they were hired to 1:57 p.m. Probation warclean out an apartment on rant received for a male on 5:01 p.m. Report of 5:25 p.m. Greenfield PD threatening/harassment requesting officers to tem- on N Street. Referred to

to bed then went outside aunt and uncle on Millers tree down on wires. Called enue A states that her car for a walk instead. Area Falls Road and when he DPW for signs to close was hit while parked; states checked; unable to locate arrived, their house was off bridge; asked GPD to the person left a note, but caller at this time. Mes- dark but the neighbor was call us when the bridge she now sees the damage is can be reopened. DPW has pretty severe and wanted it reported. Male party is-7:11 a.m. Caller reports making threatening com- 6:26 p.m. Suspicious per- sued warning for failure to

> [The department reports no calls on Saturday 12/3 in the dispatch logs released to the Reporter.7

#### Sunday, 12/4

2:53 p.m. Walk-in party reporting the transfer station gate is open and somebody is dumping trash. Gate closed; no one in area. 3:22 p.m. Caller requesting officer to Avenue A and Third Street as there are four males ages 20 to 30 swearing. Caller came down to read and sit on the bench; males are screaming at her partner and herself. Caller states males are walking up the road now but still screaming and swearing. Advised of options.

## **MOVIE REVIEW** Armageddon Time (2022)

#### **By REBECCA TIPPENS**

**COLRAIN** – Seriously disappointing to me was the film Armageddon Time. I entered the theater full of anticipation and was turned off in the first few minutes, and that feeling stayed there through the film. I am not in the majority opinion about this feeling, yet I would not recommend it because I found the acting really poor, especially that of the young teen, Banks Repeta, who plays Paul Graff, the character who is on screen at least 90% of the time. His work feels like a high school performance. In general he is not believable, and lacks emotional breadth and depth, though there is *one* scene when he breaks down and I thought, "that scene – all 10 seconds – was good!" though in general, yuck. Some of the acting problems lie with the director and writer. Paul is shown as a troublemaker with no backstory, and Repeta hasn't the energy to convince me that he is one. Tropes like his big brother picking on him are clichéd and without context. The script is at least as much to blame as the amateurism of the acting.

counting to see that she has the place setting right for a table of eight regular guests. I mean, I might count settings if I had over 14, but *eight*? Dumb.



I felt that the young man who played Paul's friend Johnny Davis, Jaylin Webb, did a pretty good job. Although his acting was nothing to write home about, he was not annoying, just rather lacking in energy.

Anne Hathaway plays the mother (impeccably groomed – what's up with that? Give me some messed-up hair, or brownie batter on the apron), who chooses really dumb pieces of business, like

The father had a case of extreme overacting, from tyrannical to Mr. Sage. Unbelievable and without explanation - like, he should be on antipsychotics. I know we are talking about the early days, but still, I am a fan of backstory and explanation. The school teacher was presented as a racist tyrant. You would think some parents might have objected! The film is filled with good and bad person tropes.

The only person who saved the film in terms of acting was Anthony Hopkins, who plays the grandfather. Indeed, I thought he was great in this role; much better than he was in The Father, for which he won an Oscar (which I thought he won because judges were afraid he might die before being recognized again after winning for Silence of the Lambs in '91).

Only when Hopkins was on screen could I relax the annoyed voice in my brain. However, I could not help but wonder why so many of the leads in this story about a second- and third-generation Jewish immigrant family starred so many non-Jews. I thought it was strange. The director James Gray, who is Jewish and who wrote the story loosely based on a chapter in his life, has been questioned by others about this casting decision. He is very defensive in his answers: "It is my film; I can choose whom I want." Period. Clearly he was going for talent and name recognition.

I think he absolutely needed it, as the plot, which

Our reviewer did not enjoy actor Banks Repeta (left), but thought Anthony Hopkins (right) was great in his role.

is about racism and how it plays out in family and school systems, is told so tritely I was on the verge of gagging. It keeps revealing in one vignette after another all of the issues that are on a "woke" platform. Truly checklist material. Whereas - yes, justice for all - but not with this simplistic propaganda on an obligatory menu. Not my cuppa tea.

The capstone was showing that Fred Trump and family were big supporters of the private school that Paul was transferred to. Gray asserts that the Trumps were on the board of the private school he himself attended, but, whatever - it still reads to me like a politically correct checklist. All I could think of was that the film would have value for middle schoolers, who would be less critical of the craftspersonship, and perhaps grateful to be presented compelling issues for their age. The film would give teachers an opportunity for potentially good discussions – if they are not censored.

But beyond that, I am still flummoxed as to the positive reviews Armageddon Time is receiving. If you want to see a good film on racism and high schoolers, watch The Hate U Give (2018). It is now on YouTube. But if you want to see the film Armageddon Time, it is streaming on Prime Video, Vudu, Apple TV, or Redbox.

5:15 p.m. Officer conducting vehicle stop on Reservoir Road. Multiple marked lane violations prior to stop. Spoke with operator at length. Trouble seeing at night. No signs of impairment.

#### Monday, 12/5

12:14 a.m. Caller from Keith Apartments reports her neighbor is yelling and swearing. All quiet on arrival. Resident did not answer door. Caller advised to contact landlord.

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

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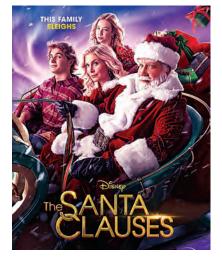
**DECEMBER 8, 2022** 

## TV GUIDANCE The Santa Clauses (2022, Disney+)

#### By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – There have been three movies involving an ordinary man played by Tim Allen, Scott Calvin, suddenly becoming Santa Claus one Christmas, after he puts on a coat and an accident causes the current Santa to fall off his roof.

I have seen the first one, called *The Santa Clause*, and then the second, which was about him trying to find a wife or else he's not Santa Claus anymore. That one was called *The Santa Clause 2*.



I also saw the third, which involved Jack Frost trying to get him to use an "escape clause" which gets him not to be Santa Claus anymore. In the movie the character ends up seeing what his life would be like if he wasn't Santa. That one was called *The Santa Clause 3: The Escape Clause.* 

I should add that his wife in these last two films is played by Elizabeth Mitchell, while Jack Frost is played by Martin Short. In *The Santa Clause 2*, the whole "find a wife" thing is a "Mrs. Clause." You

get the idea, like a part of a contract – the Escape Clause and Mrs. Clause are their names.

The new TV miniseries that Disney Plus has made with this idea, *The Santa Clauses*, is a continuation of the storyline. By this point in the story, Calvin has been with his wife for some time, and has kids who are teenagers. One is a boy and the other is a girl. (The girl turns out to be played by Tim Allen's real-life daughter.)

Calvin finds a loophole that allows him to retire and have a normal life with his wife and kids. But I should note that in the first episode, there is something going on with his magic, and it touches on how bad things can go if something like that happens. People don't exactly bother telling him about that.

On top of this unique occurrence, a TV crew seems to stumble onto the whole Santa deal, and starts to look into it.

I remember how well something like that worked with *The Santa Clause*. He was arrested in the first film, and elves have to break him out. At the end of that film, his exwife and her new husband are convinced he's Santa, along with Tim Allen's character himself.

I am not sure how the rest of this TV series is going to play out, but I know from a preview that his family is going to stick by his side. Elves start to disappear from the North Pole for some reason, and Bernard, the head elf from the first two films shows up for an episode. Someone called the Christmas Witch also shows up.

This could end up being a very nice closing act for this story!

IEVICE FIDVICE

## Mastodon Isn't the New Twitter, But it's Worth a Look

#### **By RYNE HAGER**

**TURNERS FALLS** – Following Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter, many people – myself included – have been reexamining their social media commitments. As someone who has long eschewed Facebook's various products, my self-imposed options have been a little limited, but there's a "new" Twitter-like network rising in popularity that I recommend. It's called Mastodon, and it's an open-source and decentralized system, ad-free and primarily maintained by volunteers.

There's a little to unpack if you don't know the terminology, but the short version is this is a non-commercial product. The common saying in tech goes that "if you aren't paying for the product, you are the product," and that's how most "free" services on the internet work. They gather data about you based on the content you look at, the things you search for, or the details you otherwise supply. From there, a profile is built, and you see ads that are programmatically meant to appeal to you. Advertisers pay the platform to appear on it, and targeted ads are more likely to get you to click or tap on them, making them more valuable.

Whether you think that sounds innocuous or not, the data can also be packaged up and given or sold to other third parties and even combined with other data from other services, all to ultimately be used for things other than just ads, as the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018 demonstrated – and it's why I don't use Facebook.

Although it has some other issues regarding customer privacy, Mastodon doesn't serve ads, so it collects less of your data to begin with. Mastodon is also a decentralized system in that anyone who wants to, including you, can spin up your own "instance" of Mastodon, and all the different instanced servers can communicate with one another as part of a federated system. Essentially, no one person controls Mastodon, which enhances user freedom.

It works a lot like Twitter in practice: You follow other users, and people follow you, while "microblogging" posts of short text or media to your followers. Content can be searched for inside a server and topically marked with a hashtag. There are multiple mobile apps, and you can access it from the web.

But there are a few notable gotchas.

First, because it's a decentralized system, you have to choose an instance to join or start your own. There's no single "primary" server that most people are on, though there are a few big ones. Because all the servers can talk to each other, where you make your home doesn't actually matter a whole lot, and you can follow people on other servers just as easily as those on your own. In fact, you can pack up and move your account between servers any time you'd like to.

Because of this, most people tend to choose a server that appeals to them topically. If you primarily post about a specific subject, finding a server that is filled with like-minded people makes it more likely you'll be able to engage in real discussion and find community. There are instances for retro computing, specific geographies, security research, environmental science, art, and all sorts of other things.

Because of this, you end up with a local/public kind of dichotomy in the community. There's a dedicated "local" feed that lets you see just what others on your server post, and this gives the whole arrangement a small-town vibe; you'll see the same names more frequently, and get to know your neighbors. I've noticed that interactions on Mastodon therefore tend to be more deliberate and positive rather than superficial and negative, but that could vary. At a minimum, you'll probably see less hateful content.

Each server sets its own rules regarding content and moderation. That might seem problematic if one server wants to allow content that another doesn't, but server admins can easily disconnect from instances that host content they don't want their users seeing in a process called "defederating."

It's still a little rough around the edges, and none of the apps are that great. It's also not a drop-in Twitter replacement, just a Twitter-like system with its own drawbacks, advantages, and quirks. But if you're tired of the same old doomscrolling and considering some change, give Mastodon a shot.

# **EXHIBITS**

**Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls:** *Junior Duck Stamps.* See the top Massachusetts youth entries for the 2022 Junior Duck Stamp competition. Through December.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: Holiday Store and Art Show. First two weekends in December, with open studios by resident artists.

GCC South Gallery, Greenfield:

Looky Here, Greenfield: Another Person, Another Place, gouache works by Danielle Chenette. Through December. Watch for the Looky Here Gala Art Auction Fundraiser on Saturday, December 17 at the Pushkin.

Geissler Gallery, Stoneleigh-Burnham School: Visual Cycles:empty. full.absence. presence, installation by Olivia Bernard and Karen Dolmanisth. Through December.

Goose Divine Energy, Green-

Gallery A3, Amherst: Small Wonders. Group show. Through December.

Anchor House, Northampton: It's a Kitschy World. Valerie Flex Gilbert creates three rooms full of brilliantly colorful assemblage making humorous visual stories. Through December. Reception this Friday, December 9, at 5 p.m.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: *Missing Department,* collaborative exhibit by artist Ligia Bouton and writer Matt Donovan. Through December 10. *Flat File Popup,* December 15 through 18.



Andrea Moreau. Drawings and paintings exploring political or personal propaganda. Through December 14.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: *A Figure Drawing Exhibition,* work from the figure drawing group at Artspace. Through December 29. Reception this Friday, December 9, from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Healing the Heart. Community art exhibit curated by K. Kemah Wilson. Through December. Also, a Holiday Art Salon on Saturdays in December, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. field: Donna Estabrooks, paintings. Through January 15.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: Season of Light. Member artists' holiday shop. Through January 15.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: Josh Simpson: 50 Years of Glass, retrospective exhibit by the local glass artist. Through December.

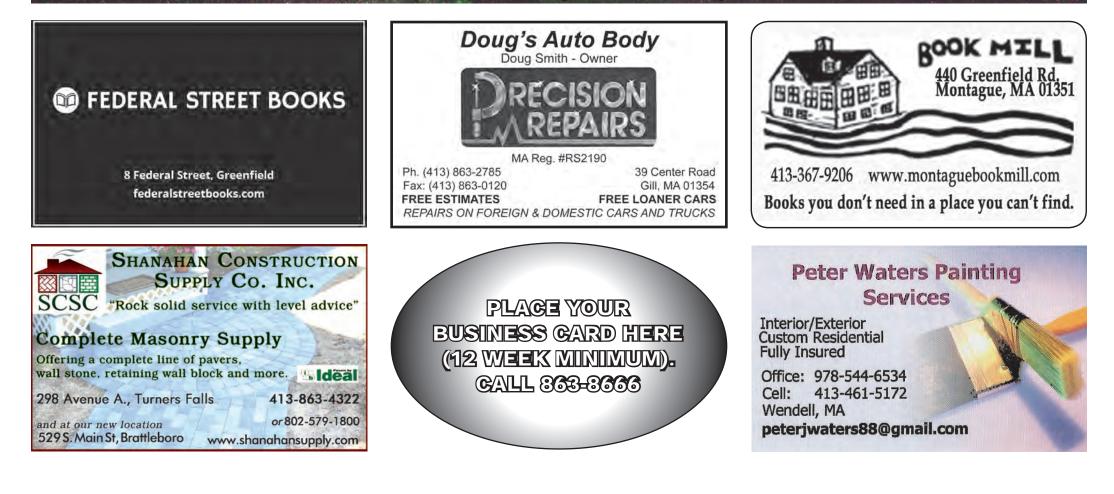
Shelburne Arts Coop Gallery, Shelburne Falls: Season of Wonder. Members' show. Through January. Brattleboro Museum & Art Center: The New Herbarium, fungus and plant images by Madge Evers; We Feel Our Way Through When We Don't Know, group show; The Space Between Memory and Expectation, large-format photographic installations by Renate Aller; Moons and Internment Stones, rock and moon paintings by Alison Moritsugu; and (de) composed, sculpture by Judith Klausner. All through February 12. www.brattleboromuseum.org. are now available!

Alontague H



Look for us on Apple/iTunes, Spotify, Stitcher, Anchor, Castbox, and elsewhere...

## The Montague Reporter Podcast



**LIMELIGHT** from page B1

public events on indefinite hold. As

word got around at the start of the

year, fewer people showed up to

events held at the Montague Com-

mon Hall before it closed altogether.

nity. Without worrying about sched-

uling around events, the Hall could get some needed maintenance and

repairs completed. These projects

were important for safety maintenance, including upgraded fire

safety and a new roof, as well as

work on parts of the building such

as refinishing the dance floor and

left over from before the pandemic,

though, and with the additional sur-

prise expense of repairing the sewage

system, money started to look tight.

Event organizers were also anxious

to bring a sense of community back.

With lower infection numbers and a

higher standard of safety held by ev-

eryone, it seemed that events could

mon Hall has been rented out for nu-

merous events, both public and pri-

vate. Examples include book read-

ings from local authors; meetings

of a homeschool group; a screening

of short films; several concerts and

rehearsals; the Marlboro Morris

dancers' practice - and of course, the

Since this past October, the Com-

begin to take place again.

This did put a drain on the funds

repainting the outside.

The Hall was empty of rentals, but this opened up a new opportu-

## Montague Community

**Television News** 

## Full Beaver Event Airs

#### **By HANNAH BROOKMAN**

**TURNERS FALLS** – Montague TV attended this year's Full Beaver Moon Gathering at the Discovery Center on November 11. The footage is now available to view on our Vimeo page along with the 2022 Rag Shag Parade and the most recent Montague selectboard and Gill selectboard meetings.

All community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 17 and featured on the MCTV Vimeo page. MCTV is always available to assist in local video production as well.

Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for checkout, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

And remember, MCTV is still looking for board members!

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

return of the Open Mic.

"It's exciting to see the Hall getting used by the community, for the community, again," says Common Hall board member Will Quale. With that has come impressive attendance numbers, as people show their excitement in their ability to come together and are enjoying a renewed feeling of community.

"It's a very safe and relaxing place to be," Stammel says of the Open Mic.

"It's a chance for musicians to get out and play," Mulholland adds. Performers put their names in by 6:30 p.m., and names are drawn at random. Each can expect to play or recite for about 10 minutes, or two to four songs, depending on the number of performers for the evening.

With a renewed income of rental funds and a \$10,000 matching donation for the end of the year, the Montague Common Hall is looking forward to future renovations to create an even better space for events.

The next Open Mic is this Saturday, December 10, at 6:45 p.m. People from the village of Montague and beyond are welcome to come join in.

View the calendar, and find out details about renting the Hall, at *montaguecommonhall.org*. Donations to keep the Hall running can also be sent through the website, or given during some events.



Top: Montague Common Hall Open Mic organizers Walt Burnham, Gene Stammel, and Mitch Mulholland do a little jam together. Bottom: The Common Hall stage awaits performers who want to try out their chops in front of a friendly live audience.



Right: Coach Gary Mullins reflects on his remarkable career during the 2022 Turners Falls High School Hall of Fame induction ceremony on November 17 at the high school.

Mullins was inducted into the Hall of Fame with fellow alumni George Bush, Norm Gerber, Brian Marsh, and Sharon Chisholm.



# The Wendell Holiday Craft Fair is Back!

#### **By SARA JENNEY**

**WENDELL** – After a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the Wendell Holiday Craft Fair has been resurrected and will be brimming with an array of local artists and craftspeople presenting their unique homemade items just in time for the holiday season. The Fair, organized by the Friends of the Wendell Free Library, will be held this Friday, December 9 from 4 to 8 p.m. and Saturday, December 10 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The first hour of each day will be designated for masked shoppers only.

Among the offerings from the many vendors, both longtime participants and many new faces, will be a wide variety of products including locally-harvested wood works such as bowls, cutting boards, utensils, boxes and children's toys; a local author presenting her new children's book; a wide variety of gems and jewelry of all styles; goat milk soaps; handmade candles; fermenting crocks, cups, bowls, platters, and other pottery goods; quilts; bead-

work; herbal products for health and skin care; woolen knitted clothing; dolls and doll clothing; cards, calendars, journals and wall hangings; maple products; local wildlife photography; and so much more!

Shoppers can expect to enjoy hot food and drinks, along with tasty treats served by the Wendell's own Diemand Farm from the hours of 5 to 6:30 p.m. on Friday and 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. There will be basket drawings donated by longtime vendors, face painting for children, and live music.

Be sure to stop into the senior center for a hot cup of coffee around the outdoor fire, and a visit to the Wendell Library to say hello to our new Director, Miriam, who will have a craft for children to participate in. There are samples of the vendors' work in the display case at the Wendell Library for your viewing, or find us on Facebook at "Friends of the Wendell Free Library" to get the latest updates on the event. You can also reach Sara at (413) 834-2878 for more information.

DAVID HOITT PHOTOS



Left: George F. Bush – former student athlete, teacher, and coach, and longtime booster of Turners athletics – acknowledges the audience during the 2022 Turners Falls High School Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.



Just some of the wares for sale this weekend at the Wendell Holiday Craft Fair.

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**DECEMBER 8, 2022** 



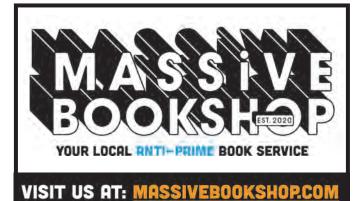
CHELLA HAD A LOOK ON HER FACE EVER CHANGING BETWEEN GRIMACES AND FROWNS, PUZZLEMENT, DEEP THOUGHT, AND A DREADFUL CURIOSITY ABOUT WHAT IN THE WORLD THEY WOULD DO.

VIOLA LOOKED AS THOUGH SMOKE MAY COME OUT OF HER EARS AS SHE MENTALLY RACED FROM ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO ANOTHER.





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ALL LURCHED TO CHASE THEIR DEAR PETS.





The Reporter is looking for volunteers to help us curate this listing. Interested? Contact us at editor@montaguereporter.org!

#### **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8**

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Vinyl Night, hosted by Breakdown Records. Free. 9 p.m.

#### **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9**

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Arny Spielberg. Free. 6 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Pamela Means. \$. 7 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: Dar Wiliams, Hayley Reardon. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Welcome Yule Presents: A Midwinter Celebration. \$. 7:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: Oneida, Sky Furrows, Luxor Rentals. \$. 8 p.m.

#### SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Matt Samolis, cymbal sound bath. By donation. 4 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: David Bromberg Quintet. \$. 6 p.m. Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: Open Mic Night. 6:30 p.m.

Race Street Live, Holyoke: Tap-Roots, The Gaslight Tinkers, DJ Studebaker Hawk. \$. 6:30 p.m. 10 Forward, Greenfield: Far Out!

Queer Comedy Night. \$. 7 p.m. Parlor Room, Northampton: Myrtle Street Klezmer. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Welcome Yule Presents: A Midwinter Celebration. \$. 7:30 p.m. Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: Lady *Pop.* Free. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Joanie Schwartz and Company, \$, 7 p.m.; Dead Man's Waltz. \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: Thus Love, *Gift, Robber Robber.* \$. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: The Bubs, Slut Magic, Tender Spot. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: The Dave Bulley Band. Free. 9:30 p.m.

#### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11**

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Welcome Yule Presents: A Midwinter Celebration. \$. 2 p.m. Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Kristen Ford, 2 Car Garage. \$. 3 p.m. 10 Forward, Greenfield: The B-52.0s, Big Destiny, Holy Basil, DJ Dutch. Benefit for PVRS trip to Puerto Rico. \$. 6 p.m.

#### **MONDAY, DECEMBER 12**

Bombyx Center, Florence: Jorma Kaukonen. \$. 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14

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

#### **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15**

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Vimana. Free. 8 p.m.

#### **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16**

10 Forward, Greenfield: Rave in Sagittarius feat. L.U.C.Y., Blix, DJs Mike and Bux Wild. \$. 8 p.m. Hutghi's At The Nook, Westfield: Chained to the Bottom of the Ocean. Come to Grief. Edict. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: The Mary Jane Jones. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: The Scrooges, Motorhawk,

Power Trousers. \$. 9 p.m. The O's Music Bar, Sunderland: Lush Honey. No cover. 9 p.m. SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17

Four Star Farms, Northfield: Rosie Porter Trio. Free. 6 p.m. Deia Brew Pub. Wendell: The Can Collectors. Free. 7 p.m.

Pushkin Gallery, Greenfield: Looky Here Gala featuring Blue Dish, Omeed Goodarzi, Stella Kola. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: John Hodgman and Monte Belmonte's Holiday Spectacular feat. Jean Grae, Jonathan Coulton, Heather Maloney, *High Tea*. \$. 8 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northampton: Suzanne Vega. \$. 8 p.m.

Divine Theater, Holyoke: Lou Barlow, Jeffrey Lewis. \$. 8 p.m. Stone Church, Brattleboro: Vapors of Morphine. Muddy Ruck*us.* \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: Jess Royer, Lexi Weege & JJ Slater Big Band. \$. 8 p.m. Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Olivia Nied. Free. 9:30 p.m.

#### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18**

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Sunset Mission, Cheap City, Back in '86, When The Deadbolt Breaks. \$. 7:30 p.m.

#### **MONDAY, DECEMBER 19**

Stone Church, Brattleboro: The Sweetback Sisters Country Christmas Singalong Spectacular. \$. 7 p.m.

#### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

Academy of Music, Northampton: The Sweetback Sisters Country Christmas Singalong Spectacular. \$. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Fel*ly*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

#### **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22**

10 Forward, Greenfield: Les Taiauts, The Honky Tonk Angels. Cajun dancehall, twostep, country karaoke with a live band. No cover. 8 p.m.

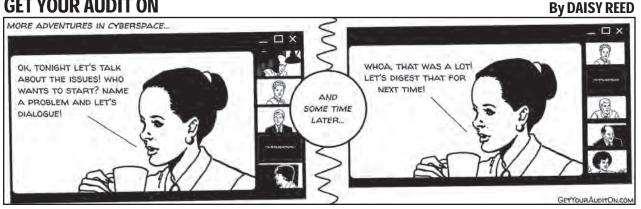
#### **FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23**

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Bev Ketch & J. Burkett, Jeff Gallagher Unfortunately, Michael Slyne. Free. 9:30 p.m.

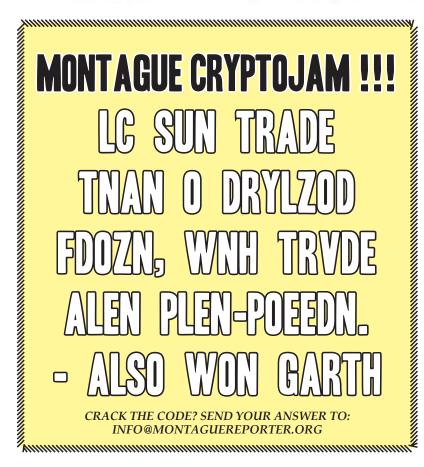








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#### **DECEMBER 8, 2022**

## **BOOK REVIEW Remembrances of Luminaries Past:** A New Memoir by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno

#### By RICHARD ANDERSEN

MONTAGUE - Anyone who knows Christopher Sawyer-Laucanno will tell you he's an extraordinary storyteller. He not only can take you to places you may have never been - France, Turkey, Japan - he introduces you to writers you've never imagined meeting - Philip Roth, Allen Ginsberg, Ray Bradbury.

And he doesn't just tell you what Paris and James Baldwin are like; he puts you right next to Jimmy as he writes and drinks from his cup of coffee served upstairs at the Café de Flore on Blvd. St.-Germain-des-Prés.

Christopher doesn't just "know" many famous writers; most of them became his friends. Lawrence Ferlinghetti once introduced him at a reading as "famous among the famous," and suggested that Christopher write a book about them. That book, The Continual Pilgrimage, about American writers living in Paris after World War II, would be published to widespread acclaim in 1992.

Now Christopher has published a brief memoir about some of the people he became lasting friends with before, during, and after working on The Continual Pilgrimage. These writers include Kenneth Rexroth, John Ashbery, and Seamus Heaney.

Longtime readers of The Montague Reporter may recognize some of his portraits, as several were originally published over many years in this newspaper. Putting his stories of famous authors into written words gave Christopher and us an opportunity to view photos of the writers' times and places and capture their essences in poems they wrote themselves and



Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno Remembrances of Luminaries Past Edited, with an Afterword, by Karl Orend



ones others wrote about them.

Start with George Whitman. Not a household name outside of literary circles, but for many decades, he owned the world's most famous bookstore, Shakespeare and Co. in Paris. The original owner, Sylvia Beach, used money from the store to print James Joyce's Ulysses when no publisher would dare to. Ulysses went on to become one of the great books of the 20th century, and George went on to name his daughter after the store's founder. Sylvia Beach Whitman now owns and manages the place.

But there's something else that made Whitman's Shakespeare and Co. stand out against all other bookstores: the place was littered with beds on which books were kept while waiting to be shelved. If you shelved the books, you could sleep in the bed for a night. More, if you were still willing to help out in the store.

Not surprisingly, Christopher was given his own room while conducting research for The Continual Pilgrimage. You might say he was Shakespeare and Co.'s first Writer-in-Residence. He repaid Whitman's compliment when he helped raise more than \$30,000 after a fire destroyed part of the store's interior in 1990.

This wasn't the first time Christopher stepped up to help a friend. In 1971, the poet Kenneth Rexroth was let go at the University of California in Santa Barbara because he erature at Shakespeare and Co. in ability to interact with and be close was considered too old. He was 66. 1990. It was Christopher who en- to a wide range of personality All Rexroth knew of Christopher couraged Karl to start his own pub- types. It also shows his determi-

was what he could glean from his memorable performance of singing "Railroad Bill" while accompanying himself on a typewriter.

But Christopher knew something about Rexroth that the college's higher-ups didn't: Rexroth was more than just a number. So he took time out from protesting against the Vietnam War and shoving dumpsters through the glass doors of Banks of America and got in touch with his friend Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a famous poet in his own right but also renowned as the founder and manager of the most famous bookstore in America, City Lights of San Francisco.

Christopher told Ferlinghetti he'd like to honor Rexroth with a reading. Ferlinghetti said he'd bring along a few friends and showed up with Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Diane DiPrima. The venue was packed, the college realized what a treasure they had in their Poet in Residence, and Rexroth kept his job.

Then there was the time that Christopher's 14-year-old daughter Jessica wanted to share with her dad and mom - the sorely missed late poet Patricia Pruitt - a "cool" poem that was read to her class in school. It was written by a fellow who had the same first name as a frequent dinner guest, Seamus. Jessica thought there was only one Seamus Heaney. And she was right! When Jessica asked Christopher if he would ask Seamus to read for her classmates, he replied, "You ask him." She did, and the future Nobel Prize winner did the reading.

Many other writers fill Christopher's Remembrances of Luminaries Past, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning John Ashbery. It was Ashbery who explained to Christopher why people write poetry: "It's all about what we can do with language since language can do so much for us." Perhaps this is the reason so many poems and parts of poems make up much of Christopher's memoir.

My favorite luminary in the book was Karl Orend, his publisher at Alyscamps Press in Paris. Christopher and Karl have been friends since they served the cause of lit-

#### APPLE CORPS from page B1

Before we look too far ahead, I've still got my feet firmly planted here in 2022. Life in the home garden has taken a real frosty hit in the last week or so, but a few friends are still holding on. My purple plant collection, this year consisting of sage and kale, are still alive and harvestable. A few other herbs remain verdant, like the aptly named winter savory, and hairy bittercress has returned en masse to carpet the ground with tiny, mustard-spicy leaves.

I've been ruminating on how the beauty of the garden does not end with the bringing of the killing frosts, and that I'm really looking forward to what I've come to appreciate as a bonus season: the winter garden.

I've taken to doing my yard "clean-ups" in the spring, so each winter I'm left with a sea of stems and sticks and seed pods. Once the snow comes, the plants are frozen upright, providing orange

and brown contrast in a sea of white. Fresh snow sits on stems and sticks like little conical hats and the yard becomes a sea of tiny ephemeral gnomes.

The bounty of seed heads attracts birds, and the cats and I can both enjoy watching them fly around from the warmth of our window. Even shoveling gets more interesting when you can pause to catch your breath and have the fractal geometry of a sunflower head to explore. Now if I can only find a way to make myself look forward to mornings of clearing frost off of my car, I'll be all set for the coming season!

The Great Falls Apple Corps is a community group that advocates for edible landscaping, mutual aid, and all kinds of community gardening. Check them out on social media (Facebook and Instagram), or get in touch via email

at greatfallsapplecorps @gmail.com.



"Ephemeral gnomes" populate the winter garden.

lishing company. It was Karl whose first publication in 1993 was Christopher's book, The World's Words. It was Christopher who came to Karl's rescue when a catastrophic event in his life brought him so low he thought of taking his own life.

It's Karl who brings this review toward its end: "Remembrances of Luminaries Past shows Chris's nation to seek out the positive and elevate others. He always offers encouragement and seems to have faith in others beyond that which they can muster for themselves." Sound familiar?

Writer, poet, scholar, translator, editor, artist, professor, architect, pianist, librettist, mentor, impresario, and raconteur par excellence,

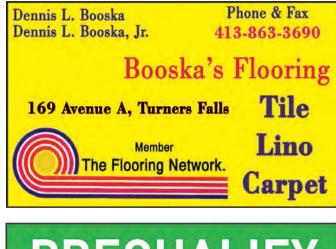
This stamp goes in the front page of all books purchased at Shakespeare and Co.

Christopher Sawyer Lauçanno also edits The Montague Reporter's monthly Poetry Page.

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