

The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 16, 2023

ONE LAST BLAST?



CHARLOTTE MURTISHAW PHOTO

The view from Route 63 of Roaring Mountain, the peak just south of Toby, as the sun set over Leverett Wednesday evening. A major snowstorm moved in Monday evening and continued all day Tuesday, blanketing upper terrain in particular with deep, heavy drifts. The first power outage was reported on the Wendell listserv a little after 8 a.m. Tuesday, and residents found wildly differing levels within the town – 3 inches in Mormon Hollow but 10 just up Montague Road, for example. Down in Turners Falls it warmed to slush by Tuesday afternoon, but continued to fall without sticking. When it was all over, the region's differences in snowfall were stark: WWLP reported 5.8" of accumulation in Greenfield and only 3" in Leverett, but 26" in Wendell and 28" in Shutesbury. Some West County hilltowns – Colrain, Hawley, and Rowe – got a full three feet.

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Erving Again Pushes School To Slash Its Budget Request

By KATIE NOLAN

"I want the children of Erving to have the best education," finance committee chair Debra Smith told the selectboard and fin com at Monday's joint meeting. "I do think there are limits, and I think we are reaching those limits."

At their previous meeting on February 27, the board and fin com had confronted budget requests for FY'24 that were greater than the town's expected revenue from state aid, taxation, and free cash. They asked department heads and the elementary school committee and administration to prepare level-funded budget requests for Monday's meeting.

The revised request submitted by the school committee reduced the school's budget request of \$3.9 million by \$22,400. The other town departments provided revised requests reducing a \$5.5 million budget by \$600,000.

Selectboard member Scott Bastarache observed that most of the elementary school increase was the result of out-of-district placements for special needs students, and associated transportation. He pointed out that all but a handful of line items in the school's budget were level-funded, and that the school committee had already cut \$65,000 from its initial request during earlier discussions.

Fin com member Linda see **ERVING** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Wish List: Officials Weighing Best Use of Federal Aid Funds

By JEFF SINGLETON

After over a month of delay, a busy Montague selectboard began the process at its March 13 meeting of allocating approximately \$1.58 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds not yet obligated to specific projects.

The issue had originally appeared time-sensitive because, though funds from the COVID-related stimulus program can be obligated up until the end of 2024 and spent until the end of 2026, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, US representative Jim McGovern's office had warned local officials that unspent

funds might be "clawed back" – in town administrator Steve Ellis's words – during the partisan debate in Washington over the debt ceiling.

Although the potential loss of federal money due to national partisanship was not mentioned in Monday's discussion, there was a sense of urgency on the board to sort out Montague's policies for ARPA, and begin prioritizing the proliferating number of proposed projects prior to the annual town meeting in May.

As a result, a very long meeting agenda addressing a variety of complex issues – including a discussion with state senator Jo see **MONTAGUE** page A7

GILL SELECTBOARD

Hydro Licenses: No Updates as Settlement Talk Deadline Nears

By GEORGE BRACE

At Gill's selectboard meeting on Monday, town administrator Ray Purington informed the board that he didn't have any "latest and greatest" news to share on negotiations between FirstLight Power and a group of stakeholders and agencies over the company's application to relicense its hydroelectric operations at Turners Falls and Northfield Mountain.

Roughly a year ago the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which will rule on FirstLight's application to relicense its hydro and pumped storage operations, set a deadline for the company to finalize multiple "agreements in principle" with a variety of groups concerned with the effects of its operations on issues including fish passage, streamflow levels, erosion, recreation, and cultural resources. These agreements are intended to serve as a framework for a comprehensive settlement, which if reached could streamline the approval of FirstLight's application.

Gill is a party to the agreement focusing on recreational use of the river, but not some of the others.

"For whitewater boating and fish passage and water flows," said Purington, "generally speaking, that's something that this town and the other towns stayed out of," choosing instead to let "state agencies and the whitewater boating people that are more knowledgeable and have a greater vested interest" weigh in on those matters.

FERC has granted several extensions for finalizing the agreements, but set a final due date of March 31 this year. The board had included on its agenda a "first look" at publicly-available agreements, with the see **GILL** page A6

New Governor Tours Farm, Touts Coming Rural Initiatives

By SARAH ROBERTSON

GREENFIELD – It was warm and muddy at Just Roots Farm last Friday, and governor Maura Healey arrived wearing duck boots, flanked by a posse of state officials. The farm was their first stop on a tour of western Massachusetts to tout funding for small towns and to announce the creation of a new position, the state "director of rural affairs."

"I don't think we've ever seen

more funding put forward by an administration for our rural economies, and that shows our commitment," Healey told the *Reporter*.

The yet-to-be-selected director of rural affairs will report to economic development secretary Yvonne Hao, who joined the delegation on Friday, and will be tasked with helping small towns identify and access various state grant opportunities.

Lieutenant governor Kimberley see **GOVERNOR** page A6



ROBERTSON PHOTO

Clockwise from top: Newly inaugurated governor Maura Healey, who said her FY'24 state budget proposal includes the most funding ever for rural communities; a chicken.

Comerford Drops By Montague, Hears Plea to Speed Mill Demo

By JEFF SINGLETON

"Montague is beautifully represented by its municipal officials," state senator Joanne Comerford told the town's selectboard on Monday. "I just am so moved." The senator then spent over 40 minutes responding to tough, but friendly, questions about the town's legislative priorities.

Town administrator Steve Ellis began the discussion by asking about the status of special legislation to remove the Montague's po-

lice department from the state civil service, which was endorsed by town meeting last spring but died in the 2022 state legislative session and has had to be refiled this year. Ellis said the home-rule legislation seems to be bogged down in state-level efforts to reform and regulate local police policies.

Ellis noted that there is "a critical mass of communities looking to exit civil service, [but] people wait on POST Commission reports see **COMERFORD** page A5

Déjà Vu? Dam Pistons Appear To Leak

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – Less than three months after engineers filed a final report attesting that a "permanent solution" had been reached to the problem of hydraulic fluid leaking into the Connecticut River from pistons on the Turners Falls Dam, fluid continues to leak from the pistons.

FirstLight Power spokesperson Claire Belanger released a company statement this week stating that after being alerted last Thursday to the presence of a "small oil sheen" below the dam, staff "identified two hydraulic pistons supporting the bascule gates that had saturated absorbent booms."

"Preliminary estimates suggest the leak was around one gallon," the statement read.

In February 2022, FirstLight staff filed paperwork with the state Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup indicating that they believed about three gallons of hydraulic fluid had spilled. This would prove to be an underestimate, and the leak would continue for some time: government affairs director Len Greene told the *Reporter* in April that 300 gallons may have spilled.

A "Permanent Solution with No Conditions" statement filed on December 21 by consultants Tighe & Bond to follow up on that spill says that "[U]pon reviewing maintenance records for the dam's hydraulic system, it was noted see **PISTONS** page A4



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Greenfield kayaker Matt Guertin submitted this photograph appearing to show fluid leaking from one of the actuators of the dam's bascule gates, a problem the company said it fixed.

Gloria K. Wins Our March 2 Cat-Captioning Contest With 'All the Mews That's Fit to Print'

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Neighborly Concern

As a matter of practical policy, the *Montague Reporter* has not been covering Greenfield city news. Our capacity is too small, Greenfield is not one of our core coverage towns, and while many of our contributors and readers live there, we try to keep our nose out of their public-sector drama. We would do more harm than good if we dabbled.

But there's quite a lot happening across the river, as a political battle continues to unfold in the wake of last spring's jury verdict finding the police department and chief Robert Haigh, Jr. guilty of discrimination, and of the city council's decision to take the verdict's estimated cost to the city out of the police budget.

The cuts led to staffing cuts, and to the police advertising, with light-up announcement signs, the hours that they are not patrolling. Everyone in the county has formed their own opinion on the issue, and ours is: *uhh*, not a good look. It's hard not to interpret this move as a hope that something unsafe and tragic will happen during those hours.

The department has been awarded a \$375,000 Department of Justice grant to at least partly restore the hours, and councilors appear to be indicating a commitment to increasing the department budget.

Amidst all this, the chief has gone missing – to Florida, apparently,

ghosting on meetings he himself called. We know this not because our colleagues at the *Greenfield Recorder* are covering the situation – hopefully they are taking the time to get the *full* story together, but it has not appeared as of our weekly press time – but because the activist group Greenfield People's Budget broke the news on their website.

The group repeats rumors alleging the mayor and Haigh have "worked out an arrangement" in which the chief can take a leave while he seeks injured-on-duty-status for "stress," which would allow him to effectively quit while retaining his salary.

Is this true? Who knows! Is it irresponsible for us to repeat it? There are certainly many people discussing it now, which is news in and of itself, and we do look forward to the *Recorder's* coming coverage.

One more thing: At the end of Wednesday's city council meeting, Precinct 5 councilor Marianne Bullock "put it out on public record" that she had discovered that after last May's vote, a Greenfield police officer submitted a public records request to the city, identifying her and three other council members and searching "for any police calls to our residences in the last five years."

Uhh... not a good look.



The Country Creemee at 52 Avenue A is open for the season once again! Robyn Mason and Lisa Aubrey were seen behind the counter on Monday. They are open 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day of the week. In addition to the best fudge sauce around, the Creemee offers sandwiches, grinders, hot dogs, salads, hot and cold drinks including homemade lemonade, and hard and soft ice cream treats.

Letters to the Editors

Concerned for Dupes' Well-Being

I want to express my concerns for regular viewers of Fox News. To learn that Fox's No. 1 opinion host Tucker Carlson went on record saying that he "passionately" hates Donald Trump while telling you, the viewer, what a great guy he is must feel like you've been duped and played like a sucker. That must make you feel more than uncomfortable, if not downright angry.

For my money, the entire cable news "system" plays "sides." But you have to admit, that hands down, Fox leads the pack in lying to its viewers for the primary purpose of making money and working to achieve

network owner Rupert Murdoch's behind-the-scenes support of a conservative White House.

Some of us are able to remember the days of Walter Cronkite and other newscasters from the three then-major networks – ABC, CBS, and NBC – who each presented the news from all perspectives.

I hope you and other Fox viewers can find a new and reliable source of honest news to depend upon.

John Bos
Greenfield

A Slogan and a Snowstorm



Anne Jemas spotted this graffiti, which we assume was intended as a Letter to the Editors, near the Turners Falls dam.

Fight Care Home Closures

On March 2 many advocates – senators, town councilmen, mayors, families – spoke about their deep concerns on the proposed nursing home closures. The phone hearing lasted for hours and hours! The duress expressed by families was heartbreaking.

These four nursing homes closures in MA are unacceptable closures for these frail patients. They close in 45 days!

Can you imagine your frail parent moved to 80 miles away from their family? This can severely affect the health and welfare of frail, vulnerable citizens. Transitional trauma can lead to death.

Calling your state senator with your comments is essential... Thank you sincerely.

Betty Tegel
Turners Falls

CORRECTION

In our March 9 recap of the previous Thursday's special town meeting in Montague (Page A1, *Town Meeting Slowly Agrees*), we mistakenly wrote that two articles approved by town meeting members "gave a stipend of \$4,000 and a budget of \$2,500 to the Great Falls Farmers Market manager."

The newly bebudgeted GFFMM herself, Annabel Levine, reached out to us to correct the record. While her stipend is \$4,000 per year, Levine

said, the budget is only \$1,000. That all starts in the FY'24 budget, she explained, so Article 8 of the meeting funded the half of the season that falls in the current fiscal year.

"The \$2,500 is to cover half the season's stipend (\$4,000/2) and budget (\$1,000/2)," she wrote, "to pay for the part of the season that happens before the new budget gets put into effect in July."

Get it? Got it? Good... Apologies to our readers for the error!

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

This Saturday, March 18 children of all ages and their families and caregivers are invited to the Montague Center Library to play a **giant Candyland game!** Drop in on the fun between 10:30 a.m. and noon.

What kind of programs would be most beneficial for your writing practice? Writers are invited to help brainstorm what a new **WriteAngles Writers' Conference** might look like. Be part of the conversation, led by local writers Nina Gross and Ellen Meeropol, at 1 p.m. this Saturday, March 18 at the LAVA Center, 325 Main Street in Greenfield.

Becky Tracy and Jeremiah McLane are giving **music workshops and a concert** this Sunday, March 19 at the Montague Common Hall. Tracy (fiddle) and McLane (accordion and keys) give workshops beginning at 11 a.m., followed by a jam session at 3 p.m., a potluck dinner at 5:15 p.m., and a concert at 6:30 p.m. The full day's events are \$35 to \$50, on a sliding scale, and the concert is \$15 at the door. Contact www.northeastheritagemusiccamp.com for more information or to RSVP for workshops.

You may want to learn how to stock your cupboard with spices that can help you have a happy and healthy gut. A free talk at the Gill Montague Senior Center next Monday, March 20 can help you **manage and improve your diet and your health.**

The event is sponsored by the Kitchen Club and by the YMCA Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring (BPSM), a four-month program designed to help people manage and improve their blood pressure through diet, skills, and lifestyle changes. The Kitchen Club is an ongoing food-focused group at the Senior Center that is partnering with the YMCA to make the BPSM program available in Montague.

The program is open to anyone 60 years and older. It's at 1 p.m. at the Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls. For more information, call (413) 863-9357.

Learn about good and bad credit at a **"Money Matters" presentation** from 10 to 11 a.m. next Tuesday, March 21, also at the Gill Montague Senior Center. The focus will be on credit ratings, credit reports, and the importance of maintaining a good credit record even if you are not considering borrowing for a large investment.

Expect a lively and fun discussion about banking and, as usual, almost anything finance-related. Casandra Morrey, a VP at Greenfield Savings Bank, is the presenter. She oversees the daily operations of residential lending, so bring your questions and bring a friend. There will be coffee, tea, fruit, and pastry, and lots of information.

These financial awareness programs are presented monthly by the Greenfield Savings Bank and ar-

ranged by GSB community engagement officer Linda Ackerman.

Montague public health nurse Robin Neipp and FRCOG community health educator Maureen O'Reilly want to let readers know about two upcoming **COVID and flu vaccine clinics** in Turners Falls.

The first one is at Montague Catholic Social Ministries from 3 to 6 p.m. next Thursday, March 23. They will have food and face painting, as well as Spanish-speaking staff. A second clinic will be held at the Gill Montague Senior Center on Friday, March 31 from 4 to 7 p.m.

Anyone who receives a COVID-19 vaccine or booster will receive a \$75 gift card! At past clinics these have been to Target, Walmart, and Stop & Shop. You may sign up online at frcog.org/covid.

The Brick House Teen Center is excited to announce its partnership with Great Falls Discovery Center on a **youth art exhibit in the Great Hall.** The exhibit, titled *Life Is ____: An exploration of being - through the eyes of local young people*, will feature a variety of art by young people in our community who have used different mediums to explore their perspectives and experiences. The exhibit has an opening reception Saturday, March 25 from 1 to 3 p.m. and will be up until April 26.

Live music is coming back to the Discovery Center this year, starting with a kick-off concert on Saturday, March 25, at 7 p.m. The annual **"All Cooped Up" music concert** by the Franklin County Musicians Cooperative will feature solo artists, established duos, and small-group performers performing unpredictable mix of folk, rock, country, Celtic, jazz and swing. Donations are welcome; refreshments will be available.

If you love drums, check out the **UMass Percussion Ensemble** on Saturday, March 25, at 7 p.m. at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center. This is a free concert for youth and museum members, and \$5 for everyone else.

The ensemble, made up of graduate and undergraduate percussion students at UMass Amherst, will play works for a wide range of percussion instruments, composed and/or arranged by Richard Rodney Bennett, Ross Edwards, Paul Lanksy, Bruno Mantovani, Akemi Naito, and Toru Takemitsu. The ensemble director is Ayano Kataoka. Purchase tickets at brattleboromuseum.org, at the door, or by calling (802) 257-0124 x. 101.

Take a hike on Sunday, March 26 and discover **Plants and Insects in Late Winter** with naturalist Adam Kohl of Wendell. Kohl will guide you with tree and shrub identification as well as signs of emerging life at the end of the winter. This is the time of year for the beginning of activity in vernal pools and the earliest plants of the forest begin to emerge.

The hike will start at 9 a.m. at the Erving Conservation Area parking lot on Old State Road in Erving. Dress for the weather; bring water, and possibly a thermos of cocoa for after the hike.

The description warns that "portions of the trails are steep and there may be snow and ice. Consider bringing snowshoes with cleats, microspikes or Yaktrax or similar traction aids for ice and snow; trekking poles are highly recommended."

Please join us for a **poetry fundraiser for the Montague Reporter!** Hear some great poetry and support your local paper at this online fundraiser on Sunday, March 26 from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Register to read or attend at www.nature-culture.net/events-1. This is the second year for this event, generously created by our former Science Page editor, Lisa McLoughlin of Northfield.

People interested in exploring the idea of **forming a neighbors-helping-neighbors network**, like the ones described in an article in our March 2 edition, are invited to the library in Montague Center at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 27 to talk about forming one in Montague.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors is a national organization that helps elderly people stay in their homes. "Most of our surrounding towns have formed groups; we could too," writes Lee Wicks, who wrote about those services in the article and sent in a notice about the meeting. Contact Wicks for more information at (413) 834-2247.

Fiddleheads Gallery in Northfield is still taking submissions for their upcoming **Steam-y Art & Science exhibit.** Find inspiration in mathematical patterns, architecture, biology, chemistry, physics, environmental science, science fiction, etc. for this fun exhibit.

A variety of associated activities is scheduled on the theme of "Art & Science." Contact Marge at margedvaa@gmail.com if you'd like to submit. The show runs March 31 to May 14.

On Tuesday, March 28 at 6:30 p.m. the New Salem Public Library

will welcome GeekGal, a.k.a. Sarah Hodge-Wetherbe, as she presents "Faster than a Speeding Bullet: **A brief history of comics.**" The workshop will look at how sequential art has evolved throughout the years, and what influence it has had on popular culture.

To learn more about the presenter, visit www.panelsbygeekgal.com. For more information on this event, contact the library at (978) 544-6334 or n_salem@cwmar.org.

You either love or hate marshmallow Peeps, which are out on store shelves during the Easter season every year. Regardless of whether you want to eat them, how about making a diorama of some kind featuring these uber-sweet chick-shaped puffs for the **Second Annual Peeps Diorama Contest** at Fiddleheads Gallery? Small treats are given to winners! And the "People's Choice" winner gets a \$50 Fiddleheads gift certificate.

There are three categories: ages 12 and under, 13 to 18, and adult. Drop off your creations on March 29 or 30 from 3 to 6 p.m. There will be viewing and voting on April 1 through 3 and on April 7. Contact Marge for more information at margedvaa@gmail.com.

The Erving Public Library's **Film Noir series** continues with the book *One Man's Secret* by Rita Weiman. Check out the book at the front desk and read it before attending the screening of the movie version, *Possessed* (1947), from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 30. Joan Crawford and Van Heflin star in the black-and-white flick, which will be screened in the library conference room. It's free, plus there'll be pizza and drinks!

The Montague Center Library has sent notice that its next **Book Club** will be discussing the novel *Fresh Water for Flowers* by Valerie Perrin. Pick up your copy soon, and come for the discussion at 7 p.m. on Thursday, March 30. Contact KateMartineau@cwmar.org with any questions.

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FACES & PLACES...



Ed Gregory captured the demolition last week of the Rugg Manufacturing Company buildings on Newton Street in Greenfield. "Rugg Mfg. began in Montague Center in the early 1830s," Ed writes. "It burned in Montague's historic fire of 1899, and was moved to [this] location later in 1899. The business closed down in Greenfield in 2008. Western Mass Demolition out of Westfield handily and safely razed the multi-building complex. The demolition began on March 6, and final cleanup is expected around March 15. This March 7 photo looks to the north at the northernmost building. The entire structure came crashing down in a massive cloud of brown dust. A modern self-storage facility will occupy the grounds."

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AT LARGE

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – Three years ago the Pioneer Valley Regional School District committee voted 7-5 to close Warwick Community School and merge it with Northfield Elementary School. The cost-saving measure wasn't well received by residents of Warwick (pop. 750), who decided to keep the school and leave the district.

The effective date for Warwick's breakup with the PVRSD is June 30.

The school committee's vote to close both the Warwick and Leyden elementary schools was done under different leadership. The current superintendent at Pioneer is Patricia Kinsella, and Jordan Burns is the new director of finance and operations.

When I emailed Kinsella asking for a statement regarding the impact "Wexit" would have on North-

field taxpayers, she forwarded eight attachments totaling 58 pages of memos, spreadsheets, transition and tuition agreements, and town assessments.

It appeared that Warwick's departure would have minimal impact, and that Northfield's obligation to the school district's net operating budget would actually decline.

"Not accurate!" responded Kinsella. She handed me off to Burns, who translated the documents in layman's terms.

"At first glance, it probably appears that Warwick's departure has actually positively impacted the pocketbooks of Northfield residents," he began. "Yes, Northfield residents will see a 1.14 percent reduction in PVRSD assessments for FY'24, [but] this reduction is not an accurate picture of the overall cost to educate Northfield resident students."

What's overlooked, said Burns, is that many Northfield students plan to attend the Franklin County Technical School. "This means that although the PVRSD assessment will decrease in FY'24, Northfield will receive a larger assessment from Tech, and overall the town will spend more, not less, on educating its students."

Warwick wasn't bluffing, and consequently the school committee's vote to close their elementary school has backfired. "If Warwick was still a part of the district, the PVRSD assessment likely would have decreased even more than 1.14 percent, which would mitigate the large increase in the Franklin Tech assessment," said Burns.

Moreover, he added, Warwick's departure will reduce Chapter 70 aid by \$246,000 and eliminate Warwick's \$814,000 contribution to the town assessment. "Those

reductions are partially offset by an estimated increase in tuition of \$264,450 from Warwick students attending PVRSD," he said.

Regardless, said Burns, "The impact of Warwick's departure cannot be overstated."

The Northfield Elementary School will suffer. The number of classroom teachers will be reduced by two, and all classroom instructional assistant positions above kindergarten will be eliminated.

"The complexity could fill an entire book," said Burns. "It's hard work dealing with Warwick's departure while simultaneously trying to ensure the vitality of our district, but we will ultimately prevail and provide an even better education to our students."

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

OP / ED

By DOMINI LENZ

FLORENCE – For years our national media have raised the alarm about the threats to democracy posed by disinformation. This is usually framed as a problem posed by "rogue states," and thus as one solvable by US regulation of domestic companies such as Twitter and Meta.

To accomplish this, there must be some entity which acts as an arbiter of what information is true and what isn't. Since most people agree that a Mark Zuckerberg or an Elon Musk would be poorly equipped to handle such a task on their own, the responsibility of managing these captains of industry naturally falls to the US government.

As reported by *The Intercept* last December, the "Twitter Files" contain some important hints toward how this public-private partnership has been going. Beginning in 2017, Twitter began "white-listing" certain accounts operated by the US Department of Defense. This means, essentially, that the Twitter systems built to recognize bots and throttle their reach were made to turn a blind eye to these accounts, allowing them to operate freely on the platform.

This network of white-listed accounts was used to spread various news stories of uncertain accuracy. One particularly dramatic example was a claim that the Iranian government was stealing the organs of Afghani civilians.

Last month, an investigation involving 30 media outlets including *The Guardian* and *Der Spiegel* revealed the existence of an organization called Team Jorge. This international group of ex-government hackers and psy-op special-

ists would take many sorts of jobs from intelligence agencies, corporations, or other groups willing to pay, with the investigation focusing on their interference in elections.

During the six-hour pitch given to undercover reporters, team head Tal Hanan explained that they had interfered in 33 separate political campaigns, and had done so "successfully" in 27. Along with social media manipulation, which they apparently made prolific and successful use of, Mr. Hanan demonstrated to reporters how the team could interfere with personal communications to achieve their aims.

Accessing the Telegram account of a Kenyan political strategist, he chose someone from the contacts list and sent the message "hello how are you dear" before deleting it on his target's end, assuring it would only be seen by the recipient. "I can write him what I think about his wife, or what I think about his last speech," Hanan stated. "Or I can tell him that I promised him to be my next chief of staff."

Hanan also claimed that – rest assured – he does not directly meddle in US politics. He did not make a similar claim about any other nation.

As alarming as these threats are to our collective grip on reality, the pace of technological development virtually guarantees that it is about to get unimaginably worse. Despite the obvious strategic advantages that the capacity to directly interfere in an entire population's individual personal communications and relationships might grant, reliance on relatively small teams of human operatives has so far assured that this has remained an impossible dream for officials wishing to use every means at their disposal to

protect national security.

Recent developments in artificial intelligence, however, present them with a possible solution. By taking advantage of our nation's unique degree of control over global communications infrastructure, it is becoming easier to imagine a system which might track all communications on a given platform, identify social connections deemed likely to pose a threat to overall social order, and disrupt those communications through outages, message failures, or clever alterations to messages designed to elicit minimal suspicion regarding their origin.

Such a system could intelligently rank people by risk level and flag potential threats to be approached by police – a perhaps somewhat more holistic and in-depth version of the keyword filters and other software that have been used against US civilians in general for over a decade.

What exactly is to be done about this trend is a tougher question. This question was asked about the NSA global dragnet surveillance program PRISM after its existence was revealed in a 2013 leak, and it quickly became clear that the state security apparatus would allow for no workable answer. And so the NSA and its software still watch over us, the breadth and sophistication of each growing by the day.

Perhaps someone worried about these things could read an old book. Go for a walk and leave your phone at home. Visit with friends in real life and have a chat. Or pray – maybe God was busy and just hasn't yet realized all this is going on. Worth a shot at least!

Domini Lenz lives in Florence, Massachusetts.

PISTONS from page A1

that FirstLight personnel added approximately 418 gallons of hydraulic fluid to the hydraulic system reservoir to top off the reservoir."

The document details a timeline of work to contain and stop the spill up until November 18, the date when "[v]isual and olfactory evidence of hydraulic fluid contamination were not observed" in the water below the dam.

"All sources of oil or hazardous materials have been eliminated or controlled," the firm attested. "All threats of release have been eliminated..."

Matt Guertin, a Greenfield farmer and kayaker who called public attention to last year's spill, went last Thursday to check the dam. He found the bascule gates' pistons were wrapped with the same absorbent booms the company used last year in an attempt to contain the fluid. "And sure enough, there was an oil sheen on the water," he said.

Guertin shared photographs and a 30-second video with the *Reporter* that appear to portray an opaque surface sheen.

"I have to say, it wasn't as horrifying as it was last year," Guertin said. "Last year you could smell it from a distance, and there was quite a lot of oil everywhere. [This year] I could only find oil sheen up close to the dam – it wasn't so egregious."

Guertin raised an alarm, notifying a number of state, federal, and private environmental oversight bodies immediately and apparently prompting FirstLight's own inspection.

"The absorbent booms were replaced to control the issue until the source of the leakage can be identified and permanently resolved.... FirstLight will not be able to closely inspect the pistons to identify the root cause until the ice and snow are gone," the company's statement read. "Our team is confident we can monitor and replace the absorbent booms before reaching saturation, preventing additional release."

According to Belanger, the pistons that may be leaking are #3 and #5, which actuate the second and third gate from the Turners Falls side of the dam, respectively.

Last year's leaks were primarily from #7

and #8, on Gate 4. "Those were dry," Guertin reported. "They did not have socks on them."

Guertin challenged the estimate that only one gallon of hydraulic fluid had been released, pointing out that it would have taken significantly more to "saturate" the booms wrapped around the pistons.

Last year FirstLight used PIG brand absorbent socks to soak up the fluid below the dam. PIG offers products advertised to retain either 6 gallons or 12 gallons of oil. FirstLight was unable to respond by press time when asked what model boom is wrapped around the pistons.

Attempts to reach the Licensed Site Professional at Tighe & Bond who filed the Permanent Solution Report in December were also unsuccessful as of press time.

The report identifies the fluid as the Exxon-Mobil product "Mobil DTE 10 Excel 32," containing alkyl dithiophosphate, which "may be a reproductive toxicant" according to the product's materials safety data sheet.



Guertin's photographs appear to portray an opaque surface sheen in the river water below the dam, though he emphasizes the spill is not comparable to last year's.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

Town Meeting Holds Out For a Better Plan to Upgrade The Generator at Town Hall

By JOSH HEINEMANN

On Thursday evening, March 9, Wendell voters approved six of the seven articles on the special town meeting warrant in just under 30 minutes. Citizens authorized using \$90,000 of free cash for repair of the Mormon Hollow Road Culvert replacement, \$21,534.20 to pay for Swift River School special needs transportation, and \$16.00 to pay a board of health bill of the prior year, and then authorized moving \$278,892.80 from free cash into stabilization.

Following the recommendation of the finance committee and after some discussion, the roughly 30 citizens at the meeting voted down using \$21,000 from free cash for a new larger commercial generator for the town hall. Fin com co-chair Thomas Richardson said he felt the town would be served better by exploring other options.

A grant may be available, because that generator will keep Good Neighbors’ freezers working through a prolonged interruption of electric service; if another interruption occurs before an adequate generator is in place, someone can come and unplug the freezers in series so that the generator now at the

town hall, repaired after the recent outage, is not overloaded.

Fire captain Asa DeRoode said the town barn generator also failed during the last outage, and the manual system did not work as it should. That generator might be more critical for town welfare.

Voters unanimously approved the article authorizing the selectboard to petition the legislature to allow fire chief Joe Cuneo to continue as chief beyond his scheduled retirement in October.

Project coordinator Phil Delorey gave a short history of the Mormon Hollow culvert repair. Shortly after Mormon Hollow Road was opened after a summer spent replacing the old culvert, a heavy rain undermined the new one. The contractor, Davenport Construction, came back and made a temporary patch that is still holding.

Davenport claims they followed the engineer’s plans, and the engineer claims the fault is not theirs. The individual who created the design left the company. At the town meeting Delorey said this argument may continue, but the full repair needs to be made as soon as weather allows in the spring, and he hoped the town would not ultimately be liable for the second repair.

ERVING from page A1

Downs-Bembury complained that the school committee and administration did not provide a written narrative explaining their revised request, as other departments had.

Debra Smith said the board’s request to all departments was for a level-funded budget, or an explanation if the request was not level-funded. She, fellow fin com member Charles Zilinski, and selectboard chair Jacob Smith all expressed dissatisfaction with the administration for not attending Monday’s meeting to answer questions.

School committee chair Jennifer Eichorn, who was in attendance, said she had set a personal goal of \$200,000 in budget reductions at the March 9 school committee meeting, but that the meeting had only produced \$22,400 in cuts. “I hope we can have a different meeting next Tuesday,” she said.

Debra Smith said she had watched the March 9 school committee meeting on television and was surprised at a remark, which she attributed to Erving Elementary principal Lisa Candito, that in “normal” schools field trips and classroom supplies were not as well-funded and parents were asked for contributions, but that this was “not Erving’s level of normal.”

“Why does Erving seem to be such an outlier?” she asked.

“We’ve always had the funding,” Bastarache replied. “We’ve had the funding not to have to ask parents to supplement educational costs.” However, he said, the town now has concerns about reaching its levy limit.

The joint meeting brainstormed ideas for school revenue and budget reductions, such as increasing tuition for preschool, opening the school to choice students, encouraging students who choice out of Erving to return, providing more special needs education in-house, buying a van and transporting special-needs students rather than contracting their transportation out, and eliminating one paraprofessional position, vacant since a retirement earlier this school year.

“It’s practically 10:10 [p.m.],” Jacob Smith commented as the discussion continued, “and we can’t go much longer tonight. Just on this topic, we’ve gone an hour-plus more than the school committee does at their meetings, usually.”

PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 138, General Laws, as amended, the Inhabitants of the Town of Montague are hereby notified that the **Shea Theater Arts Center**, Christopher Belmonte as manager, has applied for a transfer of the On Premise, Section 12, Annual All Alcohol Liquor License from Hubie’s Tavern, Inc. D/B/A Hubie’s Tavern and Restaurant.

This transfer request represents: change of manager, from Joshua N. Goldman to Christopher Belmonte; change of location, from 66 Avenue A to 71 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA; change of license type, from Restaurant to General On-Premises; and change of category, from Wine & Malt to All Alcohol.

The licensed premises (Shea Theater Arts Center) is located at 71 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA and consist of approximately 8,775 square feet (total building), with 3,869 square feet on the first floor and 908 square feet in a basement area. One front entrance and 5 emergency exits. Alcohol to be stored in a locked refrigeration unit and/or a locked cabinet in the bar area.

Date and place of hearing: Monday, March 27, 2023 at 6:35 p.m. via Zoom. See agenda for the link: www.montague-ma.gov/d/8943/Selectboard-Meeting

Montague License Commissioners

The selectboard and fin com voted to request that the school committee lower its budget request by \$350,000, and asked that the superintendent, principal, and director of finance and operations attend their next joint meeting on March 27.

Further Revisions

Police chief Robert Holst presented a revised budget, eliminating the cadet program (\$47,598) and state police academy training (\$15,300), and reducing the estimated costs for fuel and electricity based on the most recent bills.

“We’ve been operating without it,” Holst replied when asked whether the cut to the cadet program would leave the department short-staffed. He said the department would continue to have six full-time officers.

Bastarache suggested leaving enough in the budget to outfit a new hire in the event of another officer leaving.

The board discussed reducing the amount transferred into the “other post-employment benefits” (OPEB) account next year from \$300,000 to \$100,000. Eichorn, in her role as town treasurer, reported that with regular transfers of the larger amount to OPEB, the account would be fully funded by 2032, and that with the lower amount it would be funded by 2039.

Jacob Smith said employee wage increases, debt service for the Church Street bridge project, the bridge repairs on Swamp Road, IT upgrades, and the costs of the demolition of the former International Paper Mill complex were not included in the current budget.

The board asked town administrator Bryan Smith to prepare a spreadsheet showing all changes to budget

requests, including these projects, and to indicate whether items were funded by free cash or taxation.

Bryan Smith said the proposed FY’24 budget should be finalized by April 10, leaving enough time to print and mail it to residents before the annual town meeting in May.

Other Business

Town planner Mariah Kurtz presented options for funding the \$4 million needed to demolish buildings at the former International Paper Mill, including borrowing, debt exclusion, capital exclusion, or a Proposition 2½ override.

The selectboard and fin com rejected borrowing and a Prop 2½ override, and asked Kurtz to develop scenarios showing the effect of debt exclusion and capital exclusion on property taxes, and including the possibility of funding half the cost from stabilization. She noted that the town has secured a \$600,000 grant that can be applied to the demolition cost.

Kurtz will organize a public engagement meeting at 7 p.m. on Monday, April 24 in the elementary school gym, where residents will be able to get more information about the costs and provide feedback.

The selectboard approved a scope of work from Tighe & Bond for \$12,800 to work on the sewer system evaluation survey, and approved Weston & Sampson’s scope of work for engineering services on Bridge Street and Maple Avenue construction.

The board also finalized the animal control officer job description, and approved installing two grant-funded electric-vehicle chargers at the police station.



Montague Community Television News

Don’t Just Read About It...

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – The meetings are up! Spend some time with your favorite committees, such as the Gill selectboard, the Montague selectboard, and the Montague finance committee. Each of them met this week, and if you didn’t join on Zoom or stop by the town hall, then you can always tune in on the MCTV Vimeo page.

All MCTV videos are available on our Vimeo page, and all community members are welcome to submit videos to be aired on Chan-

nel 17 and featured on the Vimeo page. Think of what you would like to make and come see how we can help! MCTV is always available to assist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for check-out, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

Or is there 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.

COMERFORD from page A1

relative to reform of civil service... Montague, at this point, is past the point where we feel we can responsibly wait. Is there light at the end of the tunnel?”

Comerford said Montague’s representative Natalie Blais has refiled the legislation for the town in the current session.

“I think you’re right to call a concern here,” she said. “Police reform has been tremendously complex.” She noted her support for legislation to increase the number of graduates from the police training academy, “so communities can hire them,” but went on to say that “we have to do more to break down these barriers for communities like Montague.”

The next topic, introduced by assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey, was state funding to demolish nearly all of the historic Strathmore Mill complex in order to pave the way for more “open space,” in Ramsey’s words, along the Connecticut River.

Comerford said it might be a good time to make an “early invitation” to the new governor, Maura Healey, for funding. “Montague is textbook good at this,” she said. Calling Yvonne Hao, the new secretary of economic development, a “rock star,” she said Hao and other

state officials “know and love Montague.”

“They do know and love us, and we’ve had lots of conversations with them,” said Ellis. “My biggest concern is that we are taking such an incrementalist approach that we’re going to wind up with a building that starts to fall at some point. And that once that happens, cost accelerates, [the] timetable accelerates, and you’ve got a crisis.”

Ellis expressed concern that the state’s current approach to the Strathmore could take a year and only lead to “additional design.” “We need to think bigger and faster,” he argued.

Next on the list was “roads and bridges.” Ellis said there was “good news, and then there is an ‘Oh my god, we still need help!’ conversation to be had.” He pointed to state investments in bridges in Montague as “incredibly good news over the past two years.” “We appreciate the role you have played,” he added.

On the other hand, Ellis said Comerford was “well aware” state Chapter 90 highway aid has not kept up with inflation. “We get \$485,000. It’s great to get \$485,000,” he said. “But it’s the same money we were getting ten years ago.” Noting that the state’s overall Chapter 90 appropriation has remained at \$200 million despite constant complaints from cities and

towns, he asked: “Do you see a path forward?”

Comerford responded that at a hearing on local aid earlier that very day, “person after person, beginning with [Massachusetts Municipal Association director] Geoff Beckwith, talked about the nuttiness of the rate of Chapter 90 and how it is apportioned.”

The senator then criticized the amount of “Fair Share” money raised from the recently-approved millionaire tax likely to go to the MBTA, Boston’s regional public transit system.

“Just so you know, that’s my own little piece of advocacy,” Comerford said. “Like, no way, man – we can’t spend so much of our tax dollars, and so much of this Fair Share money, for something we see no benefit from out here at all.”

She then suggested a letter would be “warranted” from the Montague selectboard focusing on the level of Chapter 90 aid and the formula for distributing it.

Later in the discussion Comerford was asked about the possibility, raised in an article in this newspaper, that the legislature is headed toward banning the land application of biosolids generated by wastewater treatment plants because of the potential presence of

PFAS chemicals. She was read a statement by a spokesperson from the Massachusetts Water Environmental Association: “They need a master plan for biosolids so things can be done in a controlled manner, not chaos, and it looks like we’re headed to chaos.”

“I do have a bill that is looking at biosolids, but it’s not banning them,” Comerford replied, “because I do know that anything like, that without an understanding of the consequences, could be catastrophic for the communities I represent.” She said she supported “identifying and testing the solids to see how big the problem is... and then [making] a plan.”

She went on to discuss the ongoing work of a state “PFAS taskforce,” and endorsed banning consumer products that contain PFAS, citing non-stick cookware, baby mattresses, and lipstick.

After dealing with a range of other topics, including state funding to implement election reforms and for sewage disposal, selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz thanked Comerford for the discussion. “These are important things for communities, and I think you hear it over and over,” he said. “You teamed very well with Natalie [Blais], and I think that works for us.”



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GOVERNOR from page A1

Driscoll acknowledged that applying for state grants can be burdensome. “We’ve got policies and funding cycles that really don’t always take into consideration the different needs of rural communities,” Driscoll told the *Reporter*. “Part of the role of this position is making sure that we’re being more intentional with how we get dollars out, and thinking about how policy implementation can benefit our small rural communities, and how we can advance an economic agenda in places that feel forgotten.”

Among the provisions in Healey’s FY’24 budget is more funding for rural schools, transit, and food access programs such as the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG), a pandemic-era capital funding program that would receive \$25 million, up from \$22.5 million this year.

“While we are a state where a lot of people are doing well, and have means, there are a lot of people in our state who are dealing with real food insecurity,” Healey said. “We’ve got to find a way to deal with that.”

Standing by the farm’s chicken coop, Healey told reporters that her administration is recommending the FSIG be made permanent. Since 2021 the program has funded equipment and infrastructure upgrades for farms trying to keep up with system changes caused by the pandemic.

“It’s a joy and a relief knowing that that funding is permanent,” said Just Roots director of farm operations Meryl LaTronica. “Making it permanent allows farms to just relax and work on their proposals, figure out what they need, and know that the state cares about our farms becoming more efficient and resilient over time.”

The organization, which became a non-profit in 2014, aims to increase local access to healthy food. It was awarded a \$53,096 grant under the FSIG program last year for upgrades including a new floor in a section of a barn devoted to food processing, as well as \$30,000 from a federal Urban Agriculture grant to build a new greenhouse, where thousands of onion seeds were getting started last week.

This year, according to LaTronica, the organization plans to apply for \$500,000 from FSIG to fix a barn.

“Coming out of the pandemic there was certainly a heightened need for local access, and Just Roots is one of the farms that’s really enhancing that work,” said Ashley Randle, the newly appointed commissioner of the state Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR). “It’s been an incredibly successful program.”

Randle grew up on a dairy farm in Deerfield, a fact pointed out by her colleagues several times during Friday’s event.



Left to right: Just Roots farm operations director Meryl LaTronica discussed the impact of public grants with lieutenant governor Kim Driscoll and governor Maura Healey.

High School Sports: Clock Runs Out on the Cats



Left: Pioneer Valley’s Kurt Redeker takes a shot over Maynard Tigers defenders Nolan Carrier and Abraao Alencar during last Friday’s MIAA Division V quarterfinal game at Messer Gym in Northfield.

Above: Hugh Cybowski passes the ball to a teammate in a court crowded with Tigers. Maynard advanced to the semifinals with their 45-32 win over the Panthers, who were the last local team in the playoffs. Stay tuned for our spring sports coverage!

Healey, Hao, and Randle were joined by Rebecca Tepper, secretary of energy and environmental affairs, Ashley Stolba, undersecretary of housing and economic development, and local officials including Greenfield mayor Roxann Wedegartner, state senator Jo Comerford, and state representative Natalie Blais.

“The FSIG grant is incredibly flexible in terms of how they can apply and what the applicant can use the money for – so in that way it’s truly spectacular – but it also helps fuel the local economy,” said Blais. “That’s the sweet spot: having those funds flow in, supporting organizations like Just Roots, while also supporting the local economy.”

As they toured the farm, LaTronica described to the officials how other agricultural nonprofits are struggling to hold onto their land under current economic conditions. Just Roots is fortunate, she said, to have signed a 30-year lease with the city of Greenfield last year on land protected under an agricultural restriction.

“Think of all the municipal land out there that could be engaged in this kind of public-private partnership,” Just Roots executive director Laura Fisher added. “We enjoy a wonderful partnership with the city.”

Food Access

Inside the barn, dignitaries were offered tote bags stuffed with canned tomatoes, popcorn, and garlic.

Just Roots community engagement coordinator Brooke Bullock discussed the centrality of food access to the farm’s mission, specifically the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), a state-funded food stamp supplement that reimburses customers fully for produce purchased from qualified local farms.

“It’s free money for fruits and vegetables – this is huge,” Bullock said. “This is money that people never would have had in their accounts, and usually wouldn’t be able to prioritize spending on local farm foods. I’ve seen tears in people’s eyes when they come here and they’re like, ‘It’s free!’”

Approximately two-thirds of the members of Just Roots’s community-supported agriculture (CSA) farm share program qualify as low-income, using either food stamps or the farm’s sliding-scale pricing to help pay for their share.

Under another program, Farm to Family, the organization allows doctors to refer MassHealth patients to receive weekly deliveries of fresh local food, which comes with a free set of cookware as well as cooking classes.

The governor’s budget would fund the HIP in the coming fiscal year with a \$5 million appropriation, which Healey said she anticipates supplementing with \$8 million in unspent funds from the current year.

While the program is not guaranteed funding every year, a bill filed this session in the legislature, *An Act relative to an agricultural healthy incentives program*, would make it permanent. Comerford is co-sponsoring the bill filed by representative Mindy Domb and senator Anne Gobi.

“As a result of federal funding as well as state funding, we’ve been able to increase access at farmers markets and CSAs through the HIP program,” Randle said.

“It’s critical,” said Just Roots food access and equity manager Joshua Faller. “These are people who didn’t necessarily think that farmers markets were for them, or who didn’t necessarily have access to a CSA in the past.”

Though the delegation was already running late to its next stop – a full press conference at Williams Farm Sugar House in Deerfield – Healey paused to admire the chickens, and held one aloft for photographers. Driscoll declined, opting to pose with eggs instead.



GILL from page A1

goal of being better prepared to sign a final settlement agreement at its March 28 meeting.

No new agreements, however, had yet been made public at the time of Monday’s meeting, and no other discussion on the talks could take place, as town officials were required to sign non-disclosure agreements before participating.

Purinton was able to say that there have been tweaks and fine-tuning over the past year, and that he didn’t think “anything significant in changes... would come out in the finalized versions.” He later commented to the *Reporter* that “for something with a potential 50-year term of the licenses, there really should be more public discussion.”

The board met in executive session at the end of its meeting to discuss the draft agreements confidentially.

Wake of the Flood

Purinton reported that cleanup was continuing after a burst water pipe caused flooding in town hall in early February, but that questions remained as to how to handle the closure of the building to the public during repairs, and whether to expand the asbestos-abatement portion of work to include the entire first floor.

“A little over 50%” of the asbestos flooring was damaged by the flood and would be covered by insurance, Purinton said, and replacing just this portion could be accomplished relatively quickly, but the entire floor will eventually need to be replaced due to the asbestos problem.

“There’s money to be saved by doing it all at once,” Purinton commented, “but there are a lot of unknowns to try to nail down in too short a timeframe” – too many for him to make a recommendation at the meeting.

Staff offices can move temporarily to the second floor, said Purinton, but the building would need to be closed to the public during the work due to a lack of handicap access while certain doorways and the elevator are not accessible.

Purinton said he needed to confer with the Slate Library and Gill Elementary School to “nail down a few more continuity-of-operations plans and details” about using those facilities for meetings and walk-in business before fully addressing the question of the asbestos removal.

“We may have to go with some unknowns,” said board member Randy Crochier, “but I’m still strongly hoping to do it all at once.... The cost of asbestos abatement and removal is not going down.”

Purinton agreed that “if we only do part of first floor... someday we’ll be closing town hall and doing it all over again,” but added that the town may get “another bite at the apple, so to speak” as asbestos remediation is also needed in the basement “within the coming year.”

Purinton also reported that documents in a fireproof safe had absorbed “significant amounts of moisture and water” during the flood, and have been moved to an isolated room with a dehumidifier.

Other Business

The board reviewed a recommendation from the personnel committee to give 6% cost-of-living adjustments to the town treasurer, town clerk, and tax collector. Crochier said he favored the move, commenting that their “workload is such that they are much more like a part-time employee,” and their pay is likely more consequential to them than it is for other elected town positions, such as members of boards.

Purinton reported that Gill’s Chapter 90 road funding from the state for next fiscal year went up roughly \$400 from the current year, though total Chapter 90 funding statewide has remained the same for roughly 10 to 12 years. Selectboard chair Charles Garbiel commented the amount was “not adjusting for inflation, by any means.”

The board voted to change wording in personnel documents to clarify town policy on the pay rate for full-time, non-police employees required to work on designated holidays. Such employees receive regular holiday pay plus double pay for hours worked on the holiday.

Bev Demars has resigned from the Council on Aging. “We ought to recognize her,” said Crochier, commenting that while he had been involved with the town for 30 years, “she was involved before me – and her dad before that.”



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MONTAGUE from page A1
Comerford (*see article, Page A1*) – turned into a marathon.

Assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey reviewed the status of projects funded or proposed for funding with Montague’s nearly \$2.4 million in ARPA money. Ramsey showed a chart of already-funded projects and “potential projects” divided into four categories: “economic development / recovery,” “wastewater infrastructure,” “town hall,” and “other.”

The total of unobligated ARPA funds “remaining” was just over \$1.58 million. Proposed “potential projects,” meanwhile, totaled \$2.72 million – though Ramsey said this total included an estimate for Montague Center park improvements which had ballooned from \$400,000 to over \$1.57 million, and that this request had been “withdrawn, because they need to do a little more planning.”

The three selectboard members proceeded to individually rate the rest of the projects in terms of priority, from low (4) to high (1), and added their values to produce aggregate ratings from lowest (12) to highest (3) priority.

Projects rated “3,” the highest priority, included funding for the Montague Cultural Council, money to fill gaps in block grant funding of social services; a septage receiving station at the wastewater plant; re-constructing the town hall parking lot; and repairing the roof of the old town hall in Montague Center.

Mark Fisk of the Montague Center Water District, speaking during public participation time at the beginning of the meeting, asked the board to consider allocating ARPA money to an electrical line from the center of the village to the district’s pumphouse. Fisk estimated that the request would be for \$70,000.

When this request came up during the priorities discussion, it received an aggregate rating of “7” from the selectboard.

Though no votes were taken, the discussion of ARPA funding and a related presentation on the use of other available reserves became contentious. Capital improvements committee member Ariel Elan said the lack of detail and lack of public vetting of the list of proposed projects were “sad and distressing,” and singled out selectboard member Matt Lord, saying that his “approach deeply bothers me.”

Lord replied that Elan’s comments were “inherently contradictory, which is bothersome,” objecting that she was criticizing the board for not backing up its decisions with numbers and also for putting too much research into favored priorities. Elan disputed this characterization.

Later in the meeting, when finance committee member John Hanold was discussing an obscure account named the assessor’s overlay, a very loud expletive could be heard over the meeting’s Zoom audio. Hanold apparently got the impression that the disrespectful expletive came from Lord, which proved not to be the case, and led to a number of apologetic emails after the meeting.

Microbes Hungry

Clean Water Facility superintendent Chelsey Little came before the board, wearing its collective “sewer commissioners hat,” to review a number of topics.

The first was Montague’s latest

monthly report, required by state and federal environmental agencies, on treated sewage discharge into the Connecticut River. The report contains four criteria: total flow; biological oxygen demand (BOD), a measure of organic matter; total suspended solids (TSS); and acidity.

Little’s chart showed that the treatment plant conformed to state and federal standards on three of the criteria in February, but the level of BOD was high. She said the averages in the report did not constitute an emergency that required immediate notification of state and federal agencies.

Little attributed the violation to influent reaching the plant with BOD much higher than design estimates, and speculated that the public works department had been “doing some extra cleanings in the collection system” upstream. “The plant can really handle a lot, but it takes time to get used to anything that is outside of the norm,” she said.

The board approved an application to the Environmental Protection Agency to allow plant foreman and operations manager Tim Little to submit the monthly discharge reports, as well as a memorandum of understanding with the Franklin Solid Waste Management District (FSWMD), which helps the town bill other communities that send sludge to Montague for treatment.

FSWMD executive director Jan Ameen, who attended the meeting, said that one of the main criteria for Montague accepting sludge from other towns would be that it has “no detectable” PFAS concentration. “We have five communities lined up that meet the test,” Ameen said.

Chelsey Little said that more sludge coming into the plant will improve the health of micro-organisms that reduce BOD levels.

At her request, the board reduced an \$800,000 ARPA allocation for replacing the facility’s screw pumps down to \$26,500 already “encumbered” for engineering. The remainder is expected to come from a US Department of Agricultura (USDA) grant and loan, and the lower ARPA figure was included in Ramsey’s discussion. The board also approved applying for a federal “wood innovation” grant from the USDA for a new wood-pellet boiler at the plant.

Chelsey Little announced that an interview with her will appear in the October issue of *Treatment Plant Operator Magazine*. She also announced a self-guided tour of the plant from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturday, April 22 in celebration of Earth Day.

Clerks Multiply

Ellis initiated a discussion of the hiring process for two expected vacancies at the town clerk’s office. Montague plans to add a third position in the office due to an increasing workload around elections, and Ellis said current town clerk Deb Bourbeau will retire on June 30. To further complicate matters, the recent special town meeting decision to change the clerk from an elected to an appointed position will be on the spring election ballot on May 16.

Whether the transition to an appointed position passes or fails, Ellis said, the town will need to appoint a new clerk by July 1. He said that current assistant town clerk Kathern Pierce would be a strong candidate if she chooses to apply, but that the town can opt for an “open” process with a hiring committee.

“I had a thought,” said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz, “and I am free-forming it as we speak.” Kuklewicz proposed establishing a “town clerk office group” that would “look at both positions” – first to interview the current assistant clerk and “hear what they have to say,” then to decide whether a broader search is needed, and then to fill the assistant town clerk position, if necessary.

Both Lord and member Chris Boutwell nodded in agreement, but Ellis reminded them that the assistant clerk was a union position, and that union members are normally hired by department heads.

“Well, let’s do the clerk’s piece first,” said Kuklewicz. Ellis agreed to form a committee to interview Pierce as soon as possible.

Elan asked whether the town clerk could “legally” be appointed without a search, to which Ellis nodded in the affirmative. Elan then offered to serve on the “interview committee.”

Next, Ellis presented a plan to hire Bourbeau as a consultant during the transition in order to lend “on-call time for training support and handling things out of the work flow.” Town accountant Carolyn Olsen, he reported, had put together a proposal to fund the position that was “almost budget-neutral,” assuming new staff are hired at a lower salary and Bourbeau is hired at ten hours a week.

The board also discussed the need to reorganize, and potentially expand, the town clerk’s office to accommodate the proposed staffing and workload increases. Ellis said the office had a “long-term interest” in expanding into a renovated town hall annex, but that the best “near-term” solution to its needs would be to expand into the conference room across the hall. He proposed that two new “workstations” be constructed in that room – one for the “state computer” – and that space be provided for genealogical research.

Other Business

Addressing other personnel matters, the board voted to approve the job description for the new “collection system lead operator” at the department of public works. Ellis said the description had been tweaked after discussions with the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) union, and still requires a memorandum of agreement with them.

The board executed contracts with the UE, which represents workers at the public works department and Clean Water Facility, and the National Association of Government Employees (NAGE), which primarily represents town hall staff. Contracts with the town’s two police unions were, at the request of Ellis, put on hold due to last-minute changes the board needs to discuss.

The board approved an entertainment license for the organization Música Franklin for an event at Unity Park from 12 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, May 20. Associate director Rachele Ackerman said the event is the “year-end opportunity” for students in the program, which supplements music at public elementary schools, “to shine.” She said there would also be craft vendors at the event.

Ramsey briefly reviewed the progress of the demolition of the former Farren Care Center. Based on contact with officials from Trinity Senior Communities of New En-

gland, the owner, Ramsey said that “interior demolition is being done, and we can expect exterior demolition within the month.”

The board approved a \$2,926 payment to Berkshire Design for work on the Avenue A streetscape project, managed by the county housing authority.

Ellis discussed the next phase of the streetscape project, which will be funded by a federal earmark and administered by the town. “These projects are different to manage, compared with our typical state grants,” he said. “They are going to be much more time-intensive, and we’re in a good position to do that.”

Near the end of the meeting, Ellis reviewed the latest developments in the process to renew FirstLight’s federal hydroelectric licenses. The federal government has required FirstLight to wrap up all negotiations on a proposed settlement with local stakeholders by March 31. Montague’s preliminary agreement, focused on river recreation, and a similar tentative agreement on “fish and flows” were included in the meeting materials but not discussed.

The meeting adjourned after over three hours. The next board meeting will be held on March 20.



LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on March 14, 2013: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Village Post Office Opens

The ribbon has been cut and the new Village Post office, the first in the state, is now open for business on Route 2 in Erving. The office is in the Weatherheads convenience store, which also includes a Dunkin’ Donuts and is owned and operated by Ralph Semb and his family.

At this smaller version of a post office, customers will be able to mail letters and buy stamps. Packages and package services will con-

tinue to be offered at the regular US Post Office across the street, which will be open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Saturdays from 8:30 to 11 a.m.

Shutesbury Opts Out of Region

Concerned that its townspeople did not support the move to regionalize their elementary school with the schools of Amherst, Pelham and Leverett, the town of Shutesbury punted on current regionalization planning efforts following a vote of the regional school district planning board during a five-hour meeting in Amherst on Saturday.

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on March 13, 2003: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Finn to Leave Gill-Montague

Superintendent Brenda Finn will be leaving her position as Superintendent of the Gill-Montague Regional Schools at the end of this school year. Dr. Finn has taken a similar position at the Concord-Carlisle regional schools.

“I was on the search committee that hired Dr. Finn in 2001,” school committee vice chair Joyce Phillips recalled. “She is a strong education leader who has demonstrated her ability to make tough decisions.”

‘Smoke and Mirrors’

State representative Chris Donelan came to Gill town hall Monday evening for a question-and-answer session. Upon his arrival, Donelan told the crowd a lot of Governor Mitt Romney’s budget “doesn’t add up.” But he said Romney is a “highly effective communicator,” who chooses his speech settings and backdrop materials well.

Email shows broad support among state residents for the Governor’s stand against new revenues, Donelan said, adding: “Our biggest challenge right now is convincing people that the Governor’s budget is smoke and mirrors.”

150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on March 19, 1873: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

Local Matters

Monday was the “Seventeenth of Ireland.” High mass was held at St. Mary’s Church, on St. Patrick’s morning, a large number of young ladies from Greenfield forming the choir.

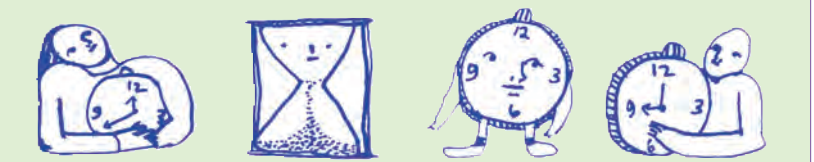
John Driscoll has added another local institution, viz.: a Fish market, at his place on L street.

We are requested to state, by authority from headquarters, that the rumor to the effect that the Joseph Griswold Manufacturing Co.

had given up the idea of locating their mills here, is not only incorrect in every particular, but that they intend to build at least one half more than what they had plans drawn for, owing to their success in getting out lumber this winter.

Two important questions: When are we to have a telegraph office here? And, when will the *Pathfinder Railway Guide* put us among the towns having railroad connection?

Blessed is the man who keepeth the sidewalk opposite his domicile and place of business clear of snow, for verily he shall receive the public benediction, while thorns and briars shall spring up in the path of the negligent.



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RESULTS

Ice On, Ice Off – Finally!

By DAVID JAMES

LAKE PLEASANT – In the 47-year history of the Ice Off the Lake contest in this youngest (founded: 1874) and smallest (zip code census: 124) of Montague’s five villages, high drama has traditionally occurred as the event nears its ending. This year, however, high drama focused more on its beginning. Local oddsmakers – Las Vegas wannabes – were offering heads-or-tails Big-Bucks wagers on whether there would be a contest, or be a contest not.

The event has been a vintage village rite of seasonal passage since 1977. Participants pay a dollar to make a blind-luck draw from an old pretzel jar of a slip of paper with a date between February 22, the earliest ice has departed (2012), and April 19, the latest date of ice vanishment (1978).

Pages of village residents’ daily calendars were torn off and thrown away as opening day approached this year under the influence of late-April-in-mid-February weather, causing the iced surface of the lake to recede daily farther, daily faster, in all directions from its shore.

At 7 a.m. on February 21, the author, a 15-year contest judge, viewed Lake Pleasant’s panorama from the official judging spot, the “Raisin Rosen picket midway across the wooden walkway of the Bridge of Names. All that greeted that bird-watching binocular judge’s eyes (blind in one, lame in the other), all that remained afloat, was tiny bits of icy flotsam and cubelets of icy jetsam.

By 5 p.m., the official Judgement Hour, a second judge, Lake Pleasant Village Association treasurer Jackie Stein – a natural for the ice-off judiciary, because if you can’t trust your treasur-

er, who can you trust? – surveyed the surface too, and both judges concluded icy bits and icy pieces yet remained. Consequently, the 2023 event was declared officially underway.

For 16 days and 16 nights, Icer Armies of the Night attacked from dusk to dawn, covering the lake’s surface with a thin sheet of ice almost shore to shore. Almost, but not quite. Then, from dawn to dusk, aided by unseasonably-elevated temperatures, De-icer Armies of the Day counterattacked, denuding the skim-ice surface of the lake almost shore to shore. Almost, but not quite.

On March 9, however, the see-saw stalemate came to its cessation. Judges saw no ice at 5 p.m. and declared Katy Emond of Putney, Vermont, the winner. Katy is the wife of Josh Emond, the elder son of Linda and Bob Emond, Sr. of Massasoit Street, the 2007 contest winner. Bob Emond, Jr. won the event in 2021.

If the contest had lasted one day longer, Denny Emond, the 10-year-old son of Katy and Josh, would have been in the winner’s circle and \$57 wealthier. If it had ended one day sooner, the winner would have been the Spirit of Varion Hicks, the first personage to win alive (1987, 1994, and 1998) as well as dead.

Hicks was born in 1911 and died in 2003. He was noted far and wide for chauffeuring the late artist and English Cocker Spaniel breeder Louise Shattuck a (2019 winner, as a Spirit) on the highways and byways of Franklin County in a “Vintage 1776” Dodge LE station wagon, a United Kingdom Union Jack flapping from its radio antenna, at a steady speed of no greater than 15 miles per hour, passenger and driver unfazed to be leading a parade of angry motorists.

MONTAGUE REPORTER

By coincidence, two of our contributing writers made it over to Spain last month:

Heartfelt Café columnist Trouble Mandeson (below) reviewed our January 26 edition from the balcony of the Suites Murrillo, next to the 10th-century Alcazar Reale in Seville ...



SUBMITTED PHOTO

... and our February 9 edition came in handy for Claire Hopley (above) at the “fabulous” fish market in Cadiz, on the country’s southern coast!



CATHY GOUGH PHOTO

ON THE ROAD

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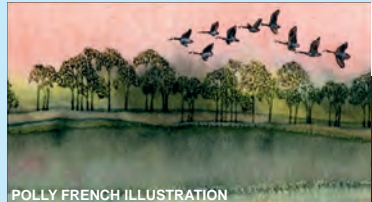
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WEST ALONG THE RIVER
OCCUPIED MASSACHUSETTS

[A] place never belongs to one group: there are always multiple claimants, passers-through, and understandings of the same physical setting.
– Christine M. DeLucia, *Memory Lands*

BY DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – The following is an excerpt from an essay I contributed to a book of photographs recently published by Sandra Matthews entitled *Occupying Massachusetts: Layers of History on Indigenous Land*. I call my contribution “Occupying Indigenous Land: Finding a Way Forward.”

Acknowledging that we occupy land that was taken by force or deception and violence from those who had lived in balance with that land for more than 13,000 years is a first step in trying to heal the injustice.

Yet how do we move forward from such an admission of guilt embodied in a simple acknowledgment of Indigenous land?

The pain is great, the injury has not healed, the multi-generational trauma continues from father and mother, passed on to son and daughter over the ages. Healing is elusive and may well never be complete.

But there are ways that individuals can seek a separate peace, to help a reconciliation process that may well never bring real justice.

Justice and healing will not come through a sweeping, performative proclamation but rather our individual efforts on a small scale that could build progressively to a new coexistence between tribal and non-tribal communities.

How to create or seize the opportunities knowing that injustices and repression that began more than 400 years ago will never be forgotten, undone, or erased? Indeed, how could Indigenous peoples ever erase the sight of current devastation the colonizers and col-

onizing processes are still bringing upon this land?

For Indigenous peoples, the land is alive and populated with an extended kinship among all those inhabiting that land. Native peoples have an intimate relationship with the land, with the stones, mountains, waters, and woodlands, and are constantly renewing those relationships with all the inhabitants of that land. In Native eyes, these lands should never have been parceled out in allotments of private property. Ever since the forced transfer of the Indigenous landscape during the last 400 years, the relationship has been out of balance and ruled by greed and dominated by the strongest, either individual or corporate. How can there be any reconciliation or healing?

For some of us, all we can do is to start small and continue individually and locally to seek ways to heal. We can support legislation that proposes to end the use of harmful caricatures of Natives as mascots, to urge the official adoption of Indigenous Peoples’ Day, to support the Massachusetts Indigenous Agenda, etc.

Locally, some of us have been able to contribute in a larger way: a mixed committee of tribal and non-tribal people have been participating in the ongoing study of a particularly brutal massacre of Native elders, women, and children in 1676 during King Philip’s War at the site known to Indigenous people as Peskeompskut. The site is now named Turners Falls, after the man who led the massacre and who, much like Custer in 1876, paid with his life.

Representatives of five municipalities within whose modern-day town boundaries the incidents took place and four tribes whose ancestors were the victims of that massacre have been meeting at the same table once a month for nine years, directly across the site of that horrific event. These representatives from Montague, Greenfield, see **WEST ALONG** page B2



Photograph by Sandra Matthews, “On Nipmuc and Pocumtuck homelands. Charlemont, 2017.”

The winter’s biggest snowstorm hit us in its last week, deep and slushy. Above: Collection on the Avenue.

Aunt Marie’s Letter

By LOUISE BOUCHER CROLL

SOUTH HADLEY – As a child in the 1960s, on my first visit to “the Library” on Avenue A “by myself,” Mrs. Conway, the librarian, led me to the stacks in the children’s room, stacks that were much taller than me. There, she introduced me to the author Laura Ingalls Wilder, and the *Little House* series for children, later a TV series.

Inspired by Wilder, I collected family stories from



Joseph O. Fugere and Lena (Beaumiier) Fugere, Aunt Marie’s parents. (From the collection of the late Henry G. Boucher, Jr.)

prior generations like shells at the seashore. I still have the shells, and I still have the scraps of paper on which I tried to capture the precious memories of those family elders who had been young at the turn of the century.

It was my Memere (French for grandmother), Eva Fugere Boucher, who told me about the mice in the cellar. They had lived in a four-family house that still stands. The dirt cellar was creepy. But it contained the only two toilets to service four families with 23 children! As can be imagined, a line would form. My grandmother recalled, with a twinkle in her eye, that she would make a sound like a mouse so that her younger siblings would jump out of line like corn popping out of a hot pan.

One of her younger siblings was “Aunt Marie.”

We three Boucher kids waited expectantly on Memere’s couch in her living room. We were waiting to be greeted by Aunt Marie on her visit to her sister Eva’s home in Turners Falls. We were not disappointed. Aunt Marie didn’t walk into the living room. Instead, she danced in, twirling around like a lighthouse beacon beaming her warm smile at us, her dark eyes sparkling with merriment.

“I am happy to see you!” she would always say, and she always was.

Eva and Marie’s older brother, Eddie Fugere, had the lock on the reputation as family historian. Eddie lived to the ripe old age of 101, taking the Town Cane as Montague’s oldest resident at the time of his death in 1994. With Eddie’s death, Aunt Marie picked up her pen and, see **AUNT MARIE** page B5

GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By ANNABEL LEVINE

MONTAGUE – Despite chilly temperatures I am pleased to report that a true harbinger of spring has made an appearance, for I came downstairs a few mornings ago to find my cat napping in a warm sunbeam! While I know it’s still winter for some time yet, it feels like each day is bringing more warmth, sunshine, and *joie de vivre*. Hopefully I can take that feeling and hold it close as this week’s snow falls and once again covers my garden in a blanket of white.

Spring being on the horizon means that the Great Falls Apple Corps is gearing up for our sixth season managing the Unity Park Community Garden. Each season brings new plant wonders to behold, and if we are able to get our new well up and running before the season is out, who knows what bounty we may be able to grow!

We’ll be throwing a spring clean-up party in late April or early May. so keep an eye out for dates. If you’re interested in tending a plot, you can put your name on our current waitlist by sending an email to greatfallsapplecorps@gmail.com.

A few weeks ago I had a great opportunity to help the folks organizing the *Crossroads* exhibit put on an evening of food, games, and

discussion called “Food for Thought.” The event was designed to gather folks who work in food systems in Franklin County with the intention of strengthening our local food system over a hot meal.

I was already inclined to help with an event like this, but then I heard that there’d be trivia! In lieu of intramurals or a *capella* groups in college, I was a member of the

trivia team for all of my four years. While we did compete in academic tournaments, we also wrote countless rounds of the bimonthly bar trivia that we hosted in the campus pub. I had to dust off my skills a little bit, but there was something a little comforting and nostalgic as I sat in the Upper Bend putting aside real, pressing work to concentrate see **APPLE CORPS** page B8



Community conversations around food at the Montague Common Hall.

Pet of the Week



“OAK”

Meet Oak, a male mixed-breed dog who recently made his way to our shelter from Louisiana. Oak’s friendly and affectionate nature will make him a great addition to a lucky New England family!

At his previous shelter, Oak was known for his love of people and other dogs. He greeted everyone he met with a wagging tail and an enthusiastic demeanor, and enjoyed spending time with his fellow furry friends in playgroups. However, Oak is also content to entertain him-

self and is happy to relax and take in the sights and sounds around him.

Whether you’re looking for a companion to go on long walks or just a cuddle buddy to relax with on the couch, Oak is up for anything.

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

MARCH 20 THROUGH 24

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 .	11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo 4 p.m. Mat Yoga Thursday 3/23 9 a.m. Chair Yoga 1 p.m. Cards & Games Friday 3/24 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. Pizza Party 2 p.m. By The Seat of Your Pants
WENDELL Foot care clinic is 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.	ERVING 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 are the first Wednesday of each month. For more information, please call (413) 423-3649.
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. From March to April there are no-cost appointments available with AARP Volunteer Tax Aid tax preparers. For more information please call 863-9357.	Monday 3/20 9 a.m. Interval 10:15 a.m. Seated Workout Tuesday 3/21 9 a.m. Good For U 10 a.m. Line Dancing Wednesday 3/22 9 a.m. Cardio Low Impact 10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics 11:30 a.m. Bingo Thursday 3/23 9 a.m. Core & Balance 10 a.m. Barre Fusion Friday 3/24 9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

WEST ALONG from page B1

Deerfield, Gill, and Northfield and their counterparts from the Chaubunagungamaug Band of Nipmuck Indians, the Elnu Abenaki, the Aquinnah Wampanoag and the Narragansett Indian Tribe, have been poring over documents, oral histories, archival accounts, and archaeologies of the event, doing as best as can be done to find out what really happened. They will then be faced with the challenge of teaching the wider public and finding a way to commemorate the lives that were lost that fateful day of May 19, 1676.

Beyond exploring the documentation, these individuals are communicating, learning in a subtle, indirect, and implicit way about all those seated around the table, about the cultures and histories they each embody. Through the tribal representatives the Indigenous participants are able to express deeply felt resentments and are hearing their painful memories and generations of trauma being validated by the non-tribal participants.

Indeed, some of the non-tribal participants in the study who are descendants of the colonial settlers who partic-

ipated in the atrocity also release and vent their generations-old resentments and prejudices about the tribal attacks on the fledgling white settlements in this valley.

Yet through this process where each person is able to tell their side of the story, to share and have that view heard and perhaps validated by the others around the table, and by studying together the different perspectives of the 1676 event, a new implicit understanding is emerging.

To be sure, the occupation of Massachusetts will never end and the wounds of tribal people are deep and will never be completely healed. Finding a way forward through remembrance, respect, and validation that engenders a new understanding and a new sense of cooperation between tribal and non-tribal communities may well be the only way forward.

The photobook “Occupying Massachusetts,” with photos by Sandra Matthews, is available locally at Amherst Books and Broadside Bookstore. Or, contact D. Brule c/o the Montague Reporter.



Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

SOUTH HADLEY – Happy Women’s History Month of March! And happy belated Black History Month.

When I first learned of Black feminist adrienne maree brown’s 2019 book *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (AK Press), I felt almost a religious mandate to obtain and read it. As I began reading it in 2021, I was blown away by brown’s articulate openness about the importance of pleasure, and about how healthfully and holistically pursuing pleasure is a radical and revolutionary act. As all of her writing supports the mission of my pleasure-positive sexual health column, the juncture of Black History and Women’s History Months seems like a serendipitous time to share just a small taste of the power of her ideas.

Since dipping into this book and dog-eared dozens of pages, I have given many copies away to friends for birthday and holiday gifts, inspired to expand the ripple effect of her ideas. I find this book so stimulating and earth-shattering that I often have to put it down between reading sessions in order to both follow the breadcrumb trail of other writers and thinkers cited, as well as to simply metabolize her profound ideas.

“Pleasure is a feeling of happy satisfaction and enjoyment,” brown writes. “Activism consists of efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic or environmental reform or stasis with the desire to make improvements in society. Pleasure activism is the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy. Pleasure activism asserts that we all need and deserve pleasure and that our social structures must reflect this.”

Brown makes a distinction between pleasure activism and “generating and indulging in excess,” noting that “because most of us are so repressed, our fantasies go to extremes to counterbalance all that contained longing. Pleasure activism is about learning what it means to... generate an abundance from which we can all have enough.”

Brown’s book is sorted into six sections, the first titled “Who Taught You to Feel Good?” with

others titled “Radical Sex,” “A Circle of Sex,” and “Pleasure as Political Practice.” Throughout the book she offers questions to consider, references to radical thinkers, pleasure exercises, and advice towards pleasure liberation.

One of the first “homework” suggestions is to write up one’s “pleasure activism lineage,” consider who “politicized your experiences of body, identity, sensation, and feeling good,” and then express gratitude to them, living or dead.

As both prose and poetry is needed to address to our society’s pleasure deficit, here is a small section of brown’s poem *Sex Ed.*:

*Touch yourself early and often
Learn your body before you
share your body
Use mirrors to learn how
beautiful you are
Let yes come from every part
of you before you share you*

Brown then goes on to spell out “five tangible tools of a pleasure activist.” Here is a brief summary of these tools:

1. *Self-love* (a.k.a. masturbation): “an orgasm a day keeps the doctor away.” She explicitly states what I and many sex educators and trauma therapists observe: that the active encouragement of masturbation – and the resulting improved capability to communicate what feels good – would likely result in “less sexual trauma, assault, patriarchy, misogyny, and general awkwardness.”

2. *Orgasmic meditation*: Brown describes a practice she learned in San Francisco where she spent 15 minutes each morning for a few months “stroking the upper left quadrant of the clitoris.” An orgasm is not necessary to engage in this practice, despite the title. Brown noted that this practice made her day easier and more joyful. This practice apparently was originally designed to be partnered, and to only focus on vulva/clitoris areas. Folks with penises could likely discover a similar practice to connect to themselves.

3. *Self-pornography*: Brown details her process of taking pictures of herself, including every inch of her skin, beginning with her face – in order to truly understand her moods, expressions, etc. – and then filming herself masturbating.

These images were only for herself, and increased her sense of power, personal agency, and knowledge of herself, particularly in a culture where so much pornography features white individuals.

4. *Developing erotic awareness*: Brown also calls this quality “staying curious.” This step is about finding an openness to learning about one’s relationship to one’s sexuality, one’s lovers’ sexuality, and the variety available to us all.

5. *Talking about sex*: Much harder than it sounds, the goal is to continuously converse with oneself, one’s partners, one’s friends, and perhaps even one’s family members – in developmentally appropriate ways – about the realities of sex. Anytime we do this, we fight erotophobia.


While there are many many other gems within this virtual pleasure-positive bible that I would share in a much longer column, I must note that brown referenced the gender- and sexuality-expanding science fiction writing of Octavia Butler so frequently that I often had to pause reading brown to read the Butler series or book that she referenced. I have since read and passionately loved all of Butler’s books, and highly recommend them.

If you are looking to expand the ways gender and sexuality can be conceived, broadened, and depicted, please read the *Xenogenesis* series. The way the Oankali mate with humans is genius. Also, Butler’s version of vampires, in *Fledgling* (2005), pushes the boundaries of how human (and vampire) love and symbiosis is depicted, particularly regarding gender, race, age, and relationship status.

My only regret regarding Butler’s incredible *oeuvre* is that I learned about it close to my fifth decade of life. How much more imaginative might my life have been if I had known and read Butler in my twenties?

Stephanie Baird, LMHC is an OWL facilitator, EMDR consultant and psychotherapist, certified in Advancing Clinical Excellence in Sexuality (ACES) and encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health. She welcomes feedback and suggestions at sexmatters@montaguereporter.org.

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EXHIBITS

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Crossroads: Change in Rural America*, Smithsonian on Main Street exhibit. Through March 18.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Montague at Work and Play: Illustrations from the Montague Reporter, 2019-2023*, fifty-two full-color illustrations by Nina Rossi of people at work and play in the villages of Montague. Through March 29.

Montague Center Library: *Carolyn Wampole*, paintings and collages. Through April 12.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Mystra Art Show!* Work by Dawn Cook, J. Burkett, Nora Charters, Shannon Ketch, Erica Pinto, Troy Curry, Andi Magenheimer, Phineas Roy, Ariel Kotker, and more.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *No Somos Maquinas (We Are Not Machines)*, words and portraits of farmworkers in Western Mass, bilingual; *Joseph Ackerman*, photographs. Through March.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: *Painting With Fabric*, textile art by Sandra Rosenberg. Through March 25.

Geissler Gallery, Stoneleigh-Burnham School, Greenfield: *Another Way to Experience Winter*, mixed-media work by Malaika Ross. Through March 17.

Wendell Free Library: *Stephen Dalmass*, photography. Through April.

Shelburne Arts Coop Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Through a Window*, group show by members. Through March.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *Figuratively Speaking*, art featuring the human figure. Weekends through March 26.

Augusta Savage Gallery, UMass Amherst: *Portraits in Red: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls*, paintings by Nayana LaFond. Through May 12.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Sculptures in Wood*, three-dimensional carvings by GK Khalsa. Through March.

Anchor House of Artists, Northampton: *Order and Chaos*, contrasting works on paper and wood by mother and daughter Nan Salky and Helen Murphy; *Absence and Fondness*, poetry and art by Mary Dunn; *Sanctuary*, Leilah Cohen's life work; *Glass Factory*, multimedia work with social relevance by Yaning Xing.

Oxbow Gallery, Easthampton: *Kate Spencer and Stephanie Vignone*, paintings of Mount Toby. Artist discussion from 1 to 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 26 with Spencer and ecologist Peter Grima.

Brattleboro Museum and Art Center: *Keith Haring: Subway Drawings*, eighteen works from NYC subway stations, through April 16. Four new spring exhibits: Daniel Callahan, *EnMassQ*; Mitsu-ko Brooks, *Letters Mingle Souls*; Juan Hinojosa, *Paradise City*; and Cathy Cone, *Portals and Portraits*.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

‘Sorry, Babe’; Wrestling Match; Movie Spotlight; Throwing Things Around; Orange Bulbs; Woodstove

Monday, 3/6
4:44 p.m. Officer conducting motor vehicle stop on Avenue C. Vehicle showing revoked for insurance. Vehicle stored/impounded. Summons issued for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license, subsequent offense.

8:48 p.m. Caller reporting that earlier today when she was at Family Dollar, a male came up behind her and was talking to her about looking for an old hat and asking questions about the Salvation Army. Caller states the male then said she looked familiar, and this made her uncomfortable. Caller states when she was getting into her car he repeated that she looked familiar and he asked where she worked. Caller states she drove away. Male described as 30 to 40 years old, short with dark hair, and looked uncleanly.

Tuesday, 3/7
4:27 p.m. Silent 911 call from Turners Falls High School. No answer on callback. Officers spoke with faculty, who are unaware of anything going on. Took a walk around

the school; no sign of an emergency.

7:28 p.m. Caller states someone hit his vehicle near Carroll's Market then took off. There is damage to his bumper that he would like to report. Officer will follow up with Obear for possible footage. 7:39 p.m. 911 open line from Avenue A; could hear female who sounded upset and male who kept saying "Sorry, babe." On callback, male stated phone was in his cupholder and he doesn't know why it dialed. Nobody located; employees did not see or hear anyone arguing or in distress.

11:19 p.m. Report of a suspicious person seen on camera behind the Shanahan's Construction Supply building. Officer advises building clear; area search negative.

Wednesday, 3/8
1:23 p.m. Officer off on Sherman Drive investigating a possible bylaw violation. Officer spoke with male and left a copy of the bylaw.

3:47 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states there is a black Chevy Suburban with CT plates and a busted-out rear window that always parks on the sidewalk, forcing people to walk in the road. Caller also states there is a section of sidewalk that never gets cleared after a snowstorm, which causes a hazard for elderly people walking. Unable to locate. 4:09 p.m. Report of vandalism to back door on Davis Street following an ongoing issue with another party. Referred to an officer.

8:50 p.m. Caller from Avenue A states a group of teens is pounding on her windows, then running away. Officer advises nobody seen in immediate area; will keep checking.

Thursday, 3/9
2:19 a.m. Caller from Central Street reports that for the past 15 minutes, a female party who resides on the floor above him has been screaming someone's name. Caller advises the noise also sounds like a wrestling match and states he is unsure if the female is alone or not. Officer advises he spoke to the female about the complaint and advised her to keep the noise down. Female party states she is headed to bed.

8:18 a.m. Officer on Marshall Street checking up on unregistered motor vehicles on property. No answer at door. Copy of town bylaw and officer's contact info left on front door.

7:02 p.m. Multiple 911 calls reporting disturbance coming from an apartment on Avenue A. Male

party states he is outside the apartment and was attacked physically and verbally by the female party; states he is having an asthma attack. Declining medical attention. Second male party states female party knocked on his door requesting he call 911 as the other male party purposefully hit his head with the intention of making it seem like she did it. Again, declining medical attention. Advised of options. Mediated and separated for the night.

8:37 p.m. 911 caller states her boyfriend needs to leave for the night. Officer advises male party left scene prior to officers' arrival. Will be on lookout as caller is nervous he will return tonight. No physical threats at this time; just verbal altercations. Caller advised of options.

Friday, 3/10
7:50 a.m. Report of ongoing threatening/harassment on West Street. Message/summons delivered. 8:14 a.m. Officer attempting to follow up with Marshall Street residents about unregistered vehicles on the property. No answer at door.

11:18 a.m. Report of disabled motor vehicle on Canal Road bridge. Bridge is clear; unfounded.

12:52 p.m. Officer checking on a vehicle driver for impairment on Sandy Lane. Vehicle driver tested under the limit but is going to have someone come and pick her up.

2:37 p.m. 911 caller reporting yelling and banging inside a Fourth Street apartment. No issues; just loud music.

3:38 p.m. Caller states her boyfriend was pulled over Monday driving her car with expired insurance and was told if she renewed her insurance within four days, the citation wouldn't need to be paid. States that her insurance was active again on Monday at 5:30 p.m., but the car was already being towed. Caller will need to bring paperwork to court with her proving active insurance.

6:03 p.m. 911 caller from Fourth Street states the kids next door are banging on the walls. Parent of child advised of complaint. Caller advised of proper usage of 911 line.

7:30 p.m. Caller from Fifth Street states a spotlight is shining down the road, and it's keeping his four children awake. Filmmakers in town filming the movie. Caller called in again stating he called MSP and was told to call MPD; states two out of his four kids have autism and are being kept awake, and the spotlight is making cars drive off the road. Caller states

he is going to go down and talk to the filmmakers and let them know they can't be filming.

8:15 p.m. Walk-in solicitation application for Trinity Solar.

8:55 p.m. Caller from Central Street states the woman in the apartment above his has been screaming the same person's name for the past hour and it sounds like she is throwing things around. Hoping an officer can come check on her. Female party advised of complaint; declines all services. Female will be quiet for the night.

9:25 p.m. 911 caller from Elm Street states a child outside is screaming, "Mom, stop!" Officer advises kids playing on trampoline. Spoke to adults in household as well.

Saturday, 3/11
5:49 a.m. Caller from Central Street reports female party yelling on third floor, waking people up. Officer advises quiet upon arrival; knocked several times; no answer.

5:31 p.m. Caller reports he hit a deer near the cemetery on Turners Falls Road. Referred to an officer.

11:33 p.m. Caller states there may be a fire on Lake Pleasant Road; states she thought it was a large fire in a pit at first, then it looked like there was fire in the windows. Officer in area not seeing anything. Caller thinks it might just be the color of the lightbulbs; they appear to be fluorescent orange bulbs. Confirmed by FD to be house lights.

Sunday, 3/12
11:28 a.m. Report of cast-iron stove in road on Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. MassDOT contacted.

12:30 p.m. 911 caller states his girlfriend is being kept in an apartment on G Street; he is outside and can hear her screaming. Officers advised; requesting backup from Gill. Not as reported. Contact made with female party outside of building. Does not want to speak to officers. They will be in the area.

1:41 p.m. Caller from Twelfth Street states her daughter's backpack and sweatshirt were stolen last week after staying at a friend's house. Property is believed to be in Northampton after another friend took it from the house she was staying in. Caller has not talked to girl's parents; states they are rude and violent. Caller will call Northampton police to attempt to obtain property.

3:21 p.m. Caller from Federal Street states residents are making a lot of noise hauling cars into/out of their backyard. Referred to an officer.

COMPARISON

One, Two, Three *Twilight Zones*

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone* was an original concept for an anthology TV series that started in 1959 and went on until 1964. It is a sci-fi TV series that I like. I believe that it is because it was so popular back then that two remakes of the TV series have been made, in 1985 and 2002.

Both of the remakes a couple of times even made exact versions of classic *Twilight Zone* episodes a couple of times, or ones similar to classic episodes. This one from the '60s had a Christmas episode called "The Night of the Meek," and the '80s show aired an exact remake of the original episode, alongside a couple original Christmas episodes of their own. One was about a secretary who was transported to a world where she was a treasured commodity.

Other original episodes from the '80s one included "Ye Gods," which involved Roman gods – namely Cupid, who affects this one guy – and one with a piano that transports someone back in time, called "The Convict's Piano."

My favorites from this one are named "Personal Demons," "Dead Run," and "Welcome to Winfield." A similar one from that series is "Dead Woman's Shoes," which was based on the 1959 episode "Dead Man's Shoes," which involved this dead man's shoes and the effect they have.



Creator Rod Serling in the original *Twilight Zone*.

A similar concept from this series involves a man traveling back to the time of Kennedy's assassination, which was done in the original with Lincoln's assassination in an episode called "Back There." The Kennedy one is called "Button, Button."

The 2002 version of that one, called "Memphis," involves a man going back to the day of Martin Luther King's assassination. I personally like that version the best of the three.

Some 2002 episodes that were very original were called "Future Trade," which involves the literal trading of people's futures, "Developing," which is about some photographs, and "Found & Lost." Developing and Found & Lost were my favorites from 2002 series.

I should mention that this se-

ries did something that the one in the '80s didn't do with a classic episode. They made a sequel to the episode called "It's a Good Life" which they called "It's Still a Good Life." It features a kid with psychic powers, played by Bill Mumy, who terrorizes people as an adult, and a kid of his own with powers like his. The story actually works very well as a sequel to the original concept.

One other classic episode that was re-done was called "Eye of the Beholder," which involved a world where normal-looking people were seen as ugly. The 2002 series made a pretty exact remake of this episode – so much so that I can't really say which one is better.

Overall, the version of this series that I like the best is the 2002 one.

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THEATER REVIEW

Intimate Apparel Reminds Us Things Don't Always Work Out

By MAX HARTSHORNE

GREENFIELD – It’s 1905 in New York City. We meet the protagonist sitting at her sewing machine. Esther Mills (Tahmie Der) has lived a tough life, beginning in South Carolina where her grandparents were slaves and the family struggled to make it by working on a farm.

Esther has the pulled-back hair, the matronly long skirt, and the sensible shoes of a working woman, in contrast to Mrs. Van Buren (Linda Tardif), who we see prancing about in her extensive undergarments bemoaning her opium-puffing, unfaithful husband.

Despite the fact that Esther dreams of someday being married, there aren’t a lot of role models or good examples to give her hope. And soon a letter – remember those? – from Barbados comes in the mail that will change Esther’s world.

In the center of the stage is a bed and in the back, a fabric store run by an immigrant from Romania named Mr. Marks (Gabriel Levey). Marks is the character who treats Esther the best, as an equal and as a good customer, and she rewards him by buying yards and yards of the fine fabrics he shows her.

Mrs. Dickson (Alika Hope) runs a boarding house where seven young women reside, all working hard to pay their rent and keep up. She is tough on Esther and isn’t very kind about her chances of ever moving up in the world. We root for Esther, but sometimes, you gotta be careful what you wish for.

The bed at the center of the stage acts as a scene-setter, because this bed will be used by many different people, each with a different quilt. Time and again we watch the actors change that comforter: from bright red to a multicolored bawdy pattern, then to a fine white quilt that was hand-sewn by Esther.

And inside that last quilt is where Esther



Esther (Tahmie Der) and Mayme (Kyle Boatwright), on stage in the Perch at Hawks and Reed.

stashes away her money, with a dream of opening a beauty salon where hardworking black women like herself can be pampered and feel almost as good as the privileged white women for whom she sews intimate apparel.

It’s a hard time for African Americans, and for anyone living in the tough conditions of the Lower East Side, and racism is as common as the clear class divisions that pit the characters against each other.

The character of Esther is revealed to be the true hero of the play. We watch her with sympathy, and then with hope, as the letters grow more frequent, and when we see her in a wedding dress, we hope for the best. But let’s

get real. It’s 1905, and George Armstrong, this cad from Barbados, isn’t up to the task. He is barely changed out of his wedding suit before he’s asking for money and heading down to the saloon.

The audience had developed some sympathy for this noble, hardworking man, through the letters about his struggles digging the canal in the malaria-infested jungles of Panama. And we sympathize with George again when he recounts the bitterness of not being able to find a job in the big city, despite his construction skills and work ethic.

We want to root for him, and the young actor Colby Chandler does a fine job of making us feel that way – for a while, anyway.

He has regaled her with letters written by a smarter man than him, and she’s replied with letters written by her pal Mayme (Kyle Boatwright). Neither of them knew what they were getting, but Esther becomes the better of the two when George Armstrong muddies the waters with the same friend who helped her write her letters.

Lynn Nottage, the playwright, is the only woman to have won two Pulitzer prizes for drama, and has also received a MacArthur “genius” fellowship. She is really hitting on all cylinders in this play, truly in her wheelhouse writing about the black experience in America. Her script is concise and there are no redundant or wasteful scenes.

Director Jasmine Brooks brought together a talented group of actors who were able to wring real passion from the script. The dialogue was spot on, and true to the world of 1905 that was such a totally different time and the class divisions were brutal.

The accents of the actors were also spot on, and young Chandler did well with his Caribbean lilt, as did Levey as Mr. Marks. Boatwright had a lot of credits in the show for writing two of the songs, helping with production, and with scenic design. She also got off some funny lines, in her portrayal of a woman of the night.

This show is memorable, poignant, and worth seeing for sure.

Intimate Apparel, by Lynn Nottage, is directed by Jasmine Brooks and produced by Silverthorne Theater. Performances at the Perch at Hawks and Reed, Greenfield: March 16, 17, and 18 at 7:30 p.m. and March 18 at 3 p.m. Tickets are available at the door or at silverthornetheater.org.

Our travel columnist, Max Hartshorne, also reviews local theater regularly on his blog, Readupnit, at www.maxhartshorne.com.

MOVIE REVIEW

Emily (2022, Frances O'Connor) Plays Fast and Loose with Facts, Misses Opportunity for Better Film

By REBECCA TIPPENS

COLRAIN – I was very much looking forward to *Emily*, a fictional biopic on the life of Emily Brontë, the English writer who died in 1848 at age 30. Just before she died, she published *Wuthering Heights* – a year after her sister, Charlotte, had published *Jane Eyre*.

There is apparently not much information available about Emily’s life. There is a scene in the film of her sisters burning notes of hers – a deathbed wish – as if to give evidence for why we do not know much about her life. That is probably fictional, as is most of the plotline.

Maybe most people would not care that a film, in part masking as a biopic, would be so freewheeling with the truth. Trained as an historian, I found that approach grossly disconcerting.

The plotline centers around a romantic relationship between Emily and Weightman, a real person who was hired to be the curate-in-training at the parish where her father was a priest for the Church of England. However, there is no evidence of a relationship between the two of them.

And, quite frankly, here we are in the Victorian era. She was the daughter of a priest, whose declarations about the shame of romantic connections had been made clear. But when the pair first consummate their physical relationship, Emily is shown as having no compunction about disrobing and helping her lover do the same – I mean, *come on...*! And then, the camera shows ecstasy on her face

after intimacy. I felt that too was a stretch. I would imagine ambivalence, if not pain.

Indeed, I had a hard time with Emma Mackey’s portrayal of Emily throughout the film. I felt that she was registering emotions. Call up card: pull out regret, pull out longing... whatever. I did not believe she organically arrived at the feelings she presented but was play-acting them. Perhaps that was all complicated by her loveliness, which I found distracting, although drawings of the real Emily do show an attractive woman.

Fionn Whitehead, who plays Emily’s brother Branwell, with whom (according to this untrustworthy story) she had a close relationship, was the one person in the film whose acting felt believable.

The strangely contrived plot has Weightman suddenly breaking off their relationship out of the blue, with no explanation. He suggests something about wanting to atone for his sin. She is devastated; he, apparently, couldn’t care less about her feelings. The *faux* story suggests that after breaking up with her, Weightman sent Emily’s dying brother a note asking him to forward it to Emily. That note was supposedly meant to encourage her to keep writing.

In real life, however, Emily’s brother Branwell died three months before she did – not exactly enough time for her to write the novel and then have its three volumes published. Yet this *faux* history shows Emily, after receiving the note from her cad ex-lover, diligently following his prompts, sitting down at a desk and writing *Wuthering Heights*.



Emma Mackey, our reviewer says, looks distracting but acts unconvincingly.

The next scene shows her opening a package with the three volumes of the novel, authored by “Emily Brontë.”

Well, because of the sexism of the era, all of the works the Brontë women published were under masculine pen names whose first letters corresponded to the first letters of their given names.

Where did the passion and skill for writing within the family come from? This would have been an interesting storyline! We know that all four of the Brontë siblings wrote, and that as children they would make up stories together. We see Emily lying on the moors, sharing with the skies words that she would later put to paper. Yet that is about all we learn of her writing process other than what a scratchy sound a quill pen makes.

There is another scene when Emily, pressed by her brother to give an honest opinion of a piece he wrote, responds with a critique that reveals a strong sense of the aesthetics of prose. We do hear some of her poems in the film. (She wrote enough to fill books, and many poems carry a grief and despair – born of what, we do not know: her

mother’s and two other sisters’ early deaths?)

Although all of the siblings wrote and were close in age, we do not see the Brontës working together. There is a scene when Charlotte tells Emily that she hates her work, but no reason is given for her ranting disgust. Since so much is fictional in this film, why include jealousy or meanness, then not explore it further? That might have been another interesting exploration.

Though this film is written and directed by a woman, it is rife with sexism that is not called for and does little to contextualize the sexism of the Victorian era in general. That was very disappointing to me.

The movie does make you source out facts on this family’s life. Such research only increased my annoyance for the liberties taken. Yet, it does bring you back to the Brontë family’s works, novels that I have not read since high school. I imagine that after the release of this film, those books are going to be high on library checkout lists.

Emily is playing at the Amherst Cinema through March 23, and is streaming on Vudu.

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AUNT MARIE from page B1

in her neat parochial school script, wrote a total of 16 pages of memories and mailed them to me. At the end, Aunt Marie wrote: “Worked four days on this. Hope it will be of some help.” After the funeral, I shared with her my dream of writing a children’s book about her family in Turners Falls at the turn of the century.

However, it turns out that it was Aunt Marie, not me, who at age 89 wrote the “book,” from which the following excerpt is made.

Letter from “Aunt Marie” (Fugere), 1994.

We were twelve children in the family: six boys (Lucien, Edward, twins Rene and Henry, Arthur & Ernest) and six girls (Medora, Jennie, Eva, Marie, Lillian, and Rosabelle who lived just two days.)

My mother, Lena Beaumier, was born in Lake Aylmer, P. Quebec in 1869. My dear father, Joseph Onesime Fugere, was born at St. Luc, Champlain County, P. Quebec in 1857. My grandfather had been a farmer there along the St. Lawrence River. Father never had the privilege of going to school. His younger years were spent helping



This photo is of the log pile along the river mentioned in the letter. However, the man is a Boucher, not a Fugere. He is Henry Boucher Sr., Louise Croll’s grandfather, who married Eva Fugere, Marie’s older sister. (From the collection of the late Henry G. Boucher, Jr.)

out at the farm. My father wanted to earn money to help his family, so when he was old enough, he worked at chopping down trees. He related to me that the winters were so cold there, that the tree-trunks would split in two. Father also told the story that Missionary Fathers preached “missions” to the loggers where they worked. It was on one of these occasions, in 1879, that he bought his Rosary beads. He was twenty-one years old and prayed on them for seventy-one years.

My father moved to Troy N.Y. after his marriage to Olive Morinville about 1881. Lucien was born in 1883 and a baby girl followed a few years later. His wife died at the time of the child’s birth. After her death, Father “boarded out,” as was common then. Also boarded were the children in the care of those who ran the boarding house. Often when my father would come home from work, he was greeted with a scene that saddened my grieving father. He would find the baby in her carriage covered with flies because they failed to cover it with the net provided. Likewise, during summer heat, he would find that the milk in baby’s bottle had curdled, or the baby had not been changed to clean clothing, yet he paid the children’s board.

Shortly after the baby died, about 1886, Father moved to Turners Falls. Lucien was about four years old. My father searched for a place to board. It so happened that my mother’s sister-in-law took in boarders and that is how he met my mother.

When my parents, Joseph O. Fugere and Lena Beaumier, decided to marry, Lucien was nine years old. They were married in 1892 at the French church on J Street, St. Ann’s, in Turners Falls. They made their home on Fourth Street, in the same house as Aunt Flora. This was a four- apartment house. My brother, Edward, was born in December of that year, when Lucien was ten years old. Mother loved him as her own. We never considered Lucien, whom we called Louis, as a step-brother. I was in my teens when I found out, but nothing changed, we were so close.

My father worked hard all his life. First as a fireman at the “pulp”



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The family. Back row, left to right: Medora, Henry, Rene, Louis, Edward (“Uncle Eddie,” mentioned in the letter, who lived to 101), and Virginia (“Jennie”). Front row, left to right: Marie (Aunt Marie); Ernest, on his father’s lap; Joseph O. Fugere, Louise Croll’s great-grandfather; Arthur; Lillian, with her mother Lena (Beaumier) Fugere; and Croll’s grandmother, Eva. (From the collection of the late Henry G. Boucher, Jr.)

mill until it burned down, or in the “Esleeck Paper Mill” for about fifty years into his eighties. While he was at work, we took turns carrying hot dinners in a special dinner pail, having three sections: bottom for meat and potatoes, middle for dessert, top for soup. The cover of the pail had a cup screwed to it. His was a long day, from early morning until 5 p.m.

Even then, after working all day in the mill, he’d go logging, despite the fact that he did not know how to swim. When the logs floated down the Connecticut River, sometimes “Uncle Eddie,” a youngster of ten or twelve, would go with him to haul logs to the edge of the river where they were piled until they were taken home by horse wagon. Once home, the logs would be sawed and chopped for fuel in the kitchen stove. It was the lot of the younger “non-working” boys to keep the wood-box behind the stove filled. They carried it in from the shed by the arms full.

We saw very little of him during the day, but when we did, we en-

joyed a meal with him and my mother and my older, working, brothers and sisters. We made a good group around the kitchen table. My father spoke very little English. We always spoke to him in French. After supper, we younger girls did the dishes. The grown-ups would be in the front room chatting away or singing, accompanied on the piano by Eva, Henry or Arthur. Most of them played by ear, but really enjoyed every bit of it. Medora, Jennie, and Eva, your grandmother, along with Henry were members of the church choir and sang for many years.

While working, Father had a terrible accident with severe burns throughout his whole body from hot steam, as he was cleaning the furnace. I was rather young, three or four, when he was brought home from the mill on a make-shift stretcher into the house. He was moaning. Being so young, I stood outside on the corner near our house, crying and afraid to enter the house. The owner of the Esleeck Mill came to see him and told

my mother not to spare anything for his well-being, and the bills would be paid by him. It took quite some time before he was able to return to work. Imagine what my dear mother had to go through, caring for Dad and doing the household chores besides!

My dear father retired at the age of 80 years and found he still could have continued working. One day, during his retirement, the head of Esleeck Mill came for my Dad in his limousine and asked him to show someone down the mill how to sharpen the big knives on the paper-cutter. It seems no one succeeded as my father did to sharpen those knives. This made him happy to know that he still could be of some service to others. God called him to his reward in September 1949.

I wish you the best in this endeavor and hope you’ll come to Marlboro.

You are in my prayers, all of you!

**Your Aunt Marie,
Sr. Marie Claudine
S.S.A.**



EXHIBIT

Lady Paints the Blues: Works by Caroline Wampole

By **RICHARD ANDERSEN**

MONTAGUE CENTER – Blue!

This is the name of the color that leaps out at the offerings of Caroline Wampole’s paintings currently on display at the Montague Center Library through April 12.

But Wampole’s blue, in all its various shades and shades of meaning, cannot be described in a single word or any combination of single words. Navy, turquoise, aquamarine, etc.: none of them apply. Each blue has a special hue unto itself. Think of the blue seen in snow that has stopped falling, and the sun has yet to shine. Or the blue found in the stained glass windows of the medieval Gothic cathedrals. They’re almost impossible to duplicate, or even recapture on film.

Wampole was introduced to art as a child by her artist and French-teacher mom. Together



Caroline Wampole in her studio.

they painted murals and quotations by existential French philosophers on the walls of their apartments in Cambridge and Washington, DC.

But it wasn’t until she turned 35 that Wampole felt confident enough

to add “artist” to her already-extensive palette of writer, performer, art teacher, theater director, documentary filmmaker, and American expatriate living in Paris – where she co-founded, played bass, and sang

in the platinum-winning rock-funk band Big Soul. (The band’s big hit was “Le Brio.” *Bien sûr!*)

In a statement prepared for her exhibit, Wampole says that “weather and climate change are constant hums in the background of my work.” That background, however, takes center stage in the full-throated “icy blues and blacks and whites of winter” Wampole has chosen for exhibition. These colors don’t hum; they resound.

But blue isn’t the only color making a powerful statement in this exhibit. The other is only a thin single line in each painting, but when juxtaposed against the blues, it resonates with all the force of a silent scream. That color is red.

Wampole writes that art grounds her “in the present while accepting the inevitability of change. My abstract paintings reflect this tension by combining energetic bursts of

emotion and color with swaths of calm and repose.”

I found the opposite to be true in this collection. It’s the blue that quiets the tension, and the red that creates energy. In fact, I can no longer look at photos of melting glaciers, reduced water levels, charred forests, and more without running one of Wampole’s red lines through each of them. Those red lines beg a question that Wampole asks to underscore her concern about our planet’s future: “What new direction will we need to go in order for our planet to survive?”

The Montague Center Library is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 2 to 7 p.m. and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Anyone interested in exhibiting their art work should contact librarian Kate Martineau during open hours, or telephone her during the same times at (413) 367-2852.

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Aquí se habla español

Esta es la página mensual en español del *Montague Reporter*. Aquí podrá encontrar cuestiones acerca de la comunidad hispana en el área, eventos de interés, curiosidades, y noticias mundiales en español. Si quiere participar o compartir alguna sugerencia, envíenos un correo electrónico a spanish@montaguereporter.org.



OPINIÓN

‘Posmachismo’ ... y feminismo

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO
de AGUILERA

GREENFIELD – Hace unos años en estas mismas fechas y a colación del día internacional de la mujer, escribí acerca del movimiento *#MeToo* y el impacto que estaba teniendo en el mundo hisánico. En este momento, en un mundo influenciado por las redes sociales y la polarización de las mismas, tengo que hablar un movimiento que algunos han empezado a llamar “posmachismo,” y que no es otra cosa que la reacción desmesurada de algunos sectores conservadores al *#MeToo*.

La España en que nací y me crié era una España bajo una dictadura machista, una España en la que las mujeres no podían tener una cuenta bancaria sin autorización de su padre o su marido, un país que hacía suyo el dicho popular “la mujer en casa y con la pata quebrada,” donde en muchas carreras universitarias las mujeres no tenían cabida y por supuesto, ganaban menos en el trabajo, no tenían acceso a puestos directivos y de la conciliación familiar no se hablaba.

Poco a poco la democracia fue trayendo cambios positivos para las mujeres. Pudieron abrir cuentas en el banco, estudiar economía e ingeniería, participar en consejos de administración de grandes empresas y el adulterio dejó de ser un delito. En 1981 se aprobó la ley del divorcio, que había sido abolida durante el franquismo, y daba un estatus de igualdad a los dos cónyuges. Un poco más tarde, en 1985 se aprobó la ley del aborto que lo despenalizaba y lo regulaba en tres supuestos.

En 2010 se complementó la ley anterior elevando el plazo en que se puede interrumpir el embarazo hasta la vigésimo segunda semana. En 2004 se aprobó una de las leyes más avanzadas de Europa en cuanto a violencia de género que presta atención a mujeres y menores que hayan sido víctimas de violencia de género. Y el año pasado España aprobó una ley pionera en Europa que considera la baja laboral por dolores y otros síntomas durante la menstruación. Recientemente se ha aprobado la llamada ley Trans que permite cambiar de sexo mediante una declaración administrativa a partir de los 16 años.

Debido a todos cambios ser feminista se convirtió en algo común y dejó de ser algo que se decía en voz baja y casi con miedo. Las mujeres se atrevieron a salir a la calle y a proclamar que eran feministas. Algunos hombres salieron también sin miedo a apoyarlas. La manifestación del 8 de marzo de 2018

en Madrid fue una de las más multitudinarias que se han visto en la historia de la democracia.

Ahora mismo, en el 2023, la situación es muy diferente. El gobierno socialista se considera socialista, y hay el mismo número de hombres y mujeres con cartera ministerial. La situación es muy diferente en la calle, en los comentarios políticos y en las redes sociales.

Pongámonos en situación: Gala de los Premios Feroz, unos premios otorgados por los periodistas a la industria del cine. En la fiesta posterior se produjeron agresiones sexuales a tres personas por parte de un director que había sido galardonado. Los dos hombres y una mujer denunciaron los hechos. La coincidencia hace que la mujer agredida sea una actriz que se ha declarado transexual. Las redes se llenaron de insultos llamándola cínica, inquisidora, bruja e hipócrita. A las mujeres que salen en televisión reivindicando su derecho a abortar se las llamas frívolas, homicidas, y “feminazis.”

El antifeminismo más recalcitrante ha empezado a salir de las cloacas en que estaba metido durante todos estos. Y aquí es donde aparece el *posmachismo* o *neomachismo*.

Un ejemplo de las proclamas de los neomachistas son frases como “las feministas odian a los hombres,” “la brecha salarial no existe,” y “los hombres también sufren violencia de sus mujeres.” Todos estos comentarios son algo normal ahora mismo en las redes sociales en España, y los que los hacen ya no se esconden.

Y esto que parece un hecho casual, no lo es. Estos comentarios han surgido de todo un entramado político ideado por la derecha conservadora, con el partido de extrema derecha Vox a la cabeza de ellos. Este nuevo machismo se ha unido al populismo creado por las *fake news* y ha encontrado un caldo de cultivo en el que desarrollarse.

Por otra parte, la palabra “feminazi” se escucha cada día en los programas de comentario político, en las tertulias de café y en el mismo hemiciclo del congreso. Insulto que no puede tener menos lógica ya que el feminismo nació ante el ataque de los derechos de las mujeres por una parte de la sociedad. Las encuestas dicen que gran parte de los hombres ven el feminismo como un ataque.

Y este insulto aparece cada día en la “manosfera,” una serie de páginas de Internet en las que se discuten como hechos ciertos denuncias falsas acerca de violencia de género, se insulta con epítetos derogatorios a

ARTE

Reseña de Arte: No somos máquinas de Alfonso Neal

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO
de AGUILERA

GREENFIELD – El sábado 12 de marzo se inauguró en The Lava Center en Greenfield la exposición *No somos máquinas* de Alfonso Neal. Se trata de una colección de fotografías y textos bilingües realizados por el autor a inmigrantes trabajadores de granjas a lo largo del Pioneer Valley. Esta exhibición es parte una serie que se inició en Northampton en 2016. En aquella ocasión la muestra estuvo dedicada los trabajadores de bares y restaurantes que pedían cambios en sus condiciones de trabajo y llevó a la revisión de salarios.

A partir de 2017, Neal empezó a documentar las condiciones de los trabajadores del campo en el valle del Connecticut junto con el Centro Laboral de UMass. La exposición lleva el título de la frase que más se repite entre todos los trabajadores de cualquier campo: “No somos máquinas.”

La muestra busca remover las conciencias de los espectadores e intencionadamente se completa con textos y descripciones en inglés y español. Los organizadores quieren llamar la atención sobre la industria alimentaria de Estados Unidos, que califican de “la abundancia enraizada en la exclusión.”

No esperen encontrar en esta muestra fotografías de personas desafiantes, malencaradas, o defensi-



Alfonso Neal presentando No somos máquinas.

vas. Van a encontrar los rostros de inmigrantes que trabajan de sol a sol sonriendo a la cámara, mostrando sus pertenencias y a su familia. Van a encontrar mirando a los ojos de esas personas la tristeza profunda que provoca el drama de la emigración y la explotación. Van a encontrar en esas fotos miradas profundas que

nos hablan del trauma sufrido de generación en generación.

Pueden ustedes visitar la muestra durante todo el mes de marzo en el Centro de cultura The Lava Center en 324 Main Street, Greenfield. Pueden obtener más información acerca de sus horarios y actividades en www.thelavacenter.org.

- Center for New Americans llama a todos los inmigrantes que quieran participar en su evento “**Immigrant Voices: A celebration of Arts.**”

El evento tendrá lugar el próximo domingo, 21 de mayo, en el teatro Shea de Turners Falls. ¿Quiere usted cantar, bailar o recitar un poema que hable de su cultura? Escriba un correo electrónico a Laurie Millman a laurie@cnam.org.

- TFHS organiza “**Extravaganza**”: ¿Quiere usted saber más acerca de los programas académicos y actividades extraescolares que ofrece el Instituto de Turners Falls? El jueves 23 de marzo a



las 5 de la tarde, TFHS ofrece un evento para toda la familia, pero especialmente para los que estén en octavo grado puedan conocer más acerca del Instituto de Bachillerato. Habrá premios, demostraciones y comida gratis para todos.

la mujer, o se dan consejos de como conquistar a las mujeres tratándolas como objetos. De ahí hay solamente unos centímetros para justificar la violencia sexual y organizarse en las redes sociales para cometer delitos de este tipo.

Lo verdaderamente cierto es que en España en 2022 hubo una subida del 10.7% en el número de víctimas y 11.8% en el número de denuncias presentadas en la policía. Esto significa que algo está fallando también en los juzgados y en las

condenas por violencia machista.

Ante esto las organizaciones feministas no han hecho cause común si no que se han dividido ante propuestas de leyes como No es no lo que hace que el “posmachismo” se haga todavía más fuerte.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



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THURSDAY, MARCH 16

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Bee-tle 7* feat. Joel Paxton, Kevin Smith, Steve Koziol, and Leo Hwang. \$. 5 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Pad-ded Waltz, Screensavor, St. In-tel*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 17

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Rave in Pisces*, with *Counseling, DJs Pinky Promise and Maysee Morpho*. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Cinemastorm* double feature: *Raising Arizona* (1987), *Rubin & Ed* (1991). Free. 7:30 p.m.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: Classic Irish music feat. *The Great Craic Blackguard*. Free. 7:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Eli Lev*. Free. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Ruby the Hatchet, Ice Giant, Jeopardy, Coma Hole*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 18

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Mud Season* with *The Love Crumbs, Dave Bulley Band, the barnRocket Imagineers, Jenny Burtis Band*, more. \$. 11 a.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Pleasure Coffin, Nurse Joy, Orange PeelMystic, Agua Viva, DJ Robbie Dean Rhodes*. \$. 7 p.m.

Mount Toby Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Court Dorsey*. \$. 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Adams: *Luci Dead Limb, Faucet, Dysnomia*. \$. 7 p.m.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Lucy Wainwright Roche*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Floodwater Brewery, Shelburne Falls: *She Said*. Free. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Jimmy Just Quit*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Becky Tracy, Jeremiah Lane*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Miners, Toby Summerfield*. \$. 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Dutch Experts, Orange Peel Mystic, Roost World*. \$. 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 23

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Pioneer Valley Jazz Shares presents *Joe Morris / Sam Newsome / Francisco Mela* trio. \$. 7:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Done, Death Defier, Sink, Bricklayer, Valley Gals*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Le-land Sundries, Daring Coyotes*. Free. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 24

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Patch Productions presents *Drag Hamlet*. \$. 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Cajun Two-Step Night* with *Les Taiauts, Honky Tonk Angels*. Dance lessons and country karaoke. \$. 7 p.m.

Roos-Rohde House, Amherst: *Beam Splitter, Cursed Image, Milarepa Dorji, Playbackers*. \$. 7 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene, NH: *Jeopardy, Kurtosis, Vale End*. \$. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Bella's Bartok, Dr. Bacon*. \$. 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Two Car Garage*. Free. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Gaslight Tinkers* feat. *Choc'late Allen, Wormdogs*. \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Heavy Blanket* (feat. J. Mascis), *Willie Lane, DJ Matt Krefting*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 25

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Patch Productions presents *Drag Hamlet*. \$. 3 and 7 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Rock201*. Free. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sunset Mission, Olivia Nied, Kim Chin-Gibbons*, more. North Star benefit. \$. 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *King Tuff, Tchotchke*. \$. 8 p.m.
Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Grammerhorn Wren, Myk Freedman*, more. \$. 8:30 p.m.

TUESDAY MARCH 28

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Eliza Niemi, Jeremy Ray Posse, Wishbone Zoe, Joe Gutierrez*. \$. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Ha-ley Reinhart*. \$. 8 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Jon Mueller, C. Lavender*. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 30

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Brookside Project*. Free. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 31

Mount Toby Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Singalong Concert* feat. *Annie Patterson, Peter Blood*. Benefit for Trans Asylum Seekers Support Network. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Slambovian Circus of Dreams*. \$. 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Rat Bath, DiTrani Brothers, The Bubs, Beetsblog*. \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Moxie, Cloudbelly, Lux Deluxe*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 1

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Jimmy Tingle*. \$. 8 p.m.

looking forward...

SUNDAY, APRIL 2

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Deerhoof, Sound of Ceres, Zannie*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 7

Nova Arts, Keene, NH: *Cave In, Thalia Zedek*. \$. 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 13

Mullins Center, Amherst: *Polo G*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 21

UU Society, Amherst: *Hopkinson Smith*. \$. 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, APRIL 22

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

SUNDAY, APRIL 23

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sunset Mission, Big Destiny, Among the Stars, Vibe Check*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 13

Palladium, Worcester: *Sepultura, Kreator, Death Angel, Spirit World*. \$. 6 p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 10

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Iris DeMent, Ana Egge*. \$. 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 16

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Souls of Mischief*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, JULY 18

Pines Theater, Northampton: *Big Thief, Nick Hakim*. \$. 7 p.m.



“THE SKINNY CRYPTIC”

(We received this one by mail, don't know the answers ourselves, and are not entirely convinced it's not a hoax. Give it a shot! – Eds.)

1. Clay, later, for one, started with nets in Long Island.

2. Fawns over bent reed.

3. Casino employee having a rough time; should he go on break...?

4. In general, overall, a good feeling can be found.

5. Keep singing, except at first, when body odor starts – that'll help you get moving, or fighting!

6. Even unbalanced, actress Campbell's first!

7. Sorted sounds awful!

SEND YOUR ANSWER TO: INFO@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

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APPLE CORPS from page B1

on crafting trivia questions.

While I was pumped for trivia specifically, I was also pleasantly surprised, because my first assumption when I heard about the event was that it would be a panel discussion with an audience. I think that can be a very effective way to deliver information and dialogue, but I wouldn't necessarily call it "fun." But the event was designed to be less of a discussion and more like a slightly structured dinner party meant to introduce folks and have them get to know each other. It was a refreshing concept, and I felt that it was ultimately very effective.

Although inclement weather pushed the event date back a day, there was still considerable turnout. I watched



LEVINE PHOTO

The author contemplates the arrival of spring while looking at this snowy scene on Tuesday.

many familiar faces come through the doors at the Montague Common Hall, along with some new ones. We sat down at bridge tables so old that the local ads covering the tops had phone numbers with only three digits. It felt like we were sitting around pieces of history.

We ate soup provided by Stone Soup Café, Great Falls Harvest, Green Fields Market, and the Rendezvous. Once we had filled our bellies, the organizing committee gave an introduction, and handed me the mic. Five teams battled it out, and eventually one came out on top, claiming their prize – tiny bottles of maple syrup.

For the last question I asked groups to come up with a list of musicians or bands with foods in their names. A lot of great answers were shared, and one team's inclusion of "Yung Gravy" on their list was a nice reminder that there was someone under 25 in attendance, an unfortunate rarity at these kinds of events.

While no one guessed my favorite – Toni Basil – one group did blank on the real answers and decided to make their own band-name food puns instead. While I normally wouldn't award any points for wrong answers, I must admit I almost felt like making an exception for "Simon and Pumpnickel."

After relinquishing the microphone it was time for the meat of the evening, a structured discussion led by facilitators at each table. I had made sure to sit with folks I didn't already know, and ended up at a table with Annie and Terri from Diemand Farm and Marie from New England Public Radio. We had a great discussion that ran the gamut from childhood memories of our grandmothers making soup to how the state's Food Security Grants are providing local farms the opportunity to upgrade their infrastructure, resulting in happier workers and more food for the community.

When the night was over, we were invited to take soup home in to-go containers provided by the organizers. I was able to not only take soup leftovers home for myself, but to bring seven pints of soup to the free fridge on L Street in Turners Falls. A friend tried to grab one an hour later and they were already gone! I'm glad to hear that folks are utilizing the fridge, and I encourage readers to familiarize yourself with its location and drop off food when you can.

As the season begins we shall see if the connections forged over our soup bowls will prove fruitful, and I do hope to see more community work with free food and fun on the agenda. Until then, my cat and I will be here enjoying the last few idyllic wintry scenes outside our window.



mud Season

March 18, 2023
Doors open 11 AM

- ♦ Kip and the Trip
- ♦ Jenny Burtis Band
- ♦ The Dave Bulley Band
- ♦ The Equalites
- ♦ The Love Crumbs
- ♦ barnRocket Imagineers
- ♦ Chica Fuego
- ♦ Tobi Beney
- Many more!



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