

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 21 – NO. 21

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1.50

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 13, 2023

## Montague Finally Lands New Public Health Director

By JEFF SINGLETON

**MONTAGUE** – The Montague board of health, after six months of frustrating twists and turns, appears to have found a new director for the town’s health department. Ryan Paxton, a Northampton resident who works for the state Department of Public Health, was interviewed by a screening committee on Monday in a non-public executive session, and hired two days later by the board after a half-hour public interview.

Paxton, a western Massachusetts native, has a bachelor’s degree in health sciences from Boston University and a master’s of public health. **see HEALTH page A4**



The board of health voted Wednesday to offer the position to Ryan Paxton.

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Hybrid Town Meeting Test Fails: Echo Evokes ‘Crimson and Clover’

By JEFF SINGLETON

“The bottom line is, we’re not going to have a hybrid meeting,” Montague town meeting moderator Ray Godin told the selectboard meeting Monday night. Godin was addressing the venue for the town’s May 6 annual town meeting. “I had originally planned on that, subject to testing the technology actually working, and it failed miserably,” Godin told the board.

Godin said that he, executive assistant Wendy Bogusz, Montague Community Television (MCTV) director Dean Garvin, and Gill-Montague school district IT director Tina Mahaney had spent three hours the

previous Tuesday at the high school auditorium, where the town meeting will take place.

“We could get Zoom to work, we could get the town meeting equipment to work, we could get the connection between the school and MCTV to work,” Godin reported. “Couldn’t get them to work together. If you are old enough to remember ‘Crimson and Clover’ – the auditorium was literally an echo chamber.”

“Crimson and Clover,” a 1968 single by Tommy James and the Shondells, reached #1 on the US Billboard charts in February 1969. It featured a guitar with an echoing “tremolo effect” that vibrated with **see MONTAGUE page A7**

ERVING SELECTBOARD

## School ‘Crisis’ And Layoffs Prompt Calls For Override

By KATIE NOLAN

“We have a crisis at Erving Elementary,” Mark Burnett told the selectboard and finance committee at their joint meeting Monday. “I am asking you – actually, begging you – to do what is right for our children, and fully fund the school’s original budget request.”

Approximately 25 people attended the meeting, and most applauded Burnett’s remarks.

In February, the school committee requested \$3.9 million for Erving Elementary School (EES) in FY’24, an increase of \$541,355 over the current year. The selectboard and fin com determined that the proposed expenditures for all town departments exceeded revenues by \$1.7 million, and asked all departments to submit reduced requests. The school committee reduced the EES request, first by \$85,000, and then by \$332,000.

Burnett, an EES teacher and member of the board of assessors, listed the staff positions slated for cutting under the reduced budget: two preschool teachers, two math interventionists, and two education specialists. He also listed positions cut over the last few years which he said have put pressure on remaining staff: an early childhood administrator, **see ERVING page A5**

## Senator Joins the Rat Race

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**ATHOL** – Joanne Comerford, the state senator from Northampton, paddled in her first-ever canoe race down the Millers River last Saturday to get to know a community that she now represents. About 180 teams signed up for the 58th annual running of the Athol-Orange River Rat Race, a cherished tradition for the North Quabbin region.

“There’s an unbelievable community spirit,” Comerford said minutes before the race. “Generations of people have done this – sons, fathers, grandfathers. Last night, waiting to get their numbers with their partners, everybody was

talking about their boats, or the times they fell in. It really made me realize what a substantial event this is for the community.”

The senator represented the town of Orange before the 2021 re-districting process, and her district now includes the Worcester County communities of Athol, Royalston, Winchendon, Petersham, and Ashburnham. Worcester and Hampshire District senator Anne Gobi, an experienced River Rat racer, previously represented these towns.

“Senator Gobi said to me, ‘You really can’t represent Athol unless you do the River Rat,’” Comerford said. “I was certainly **see RAT RACE page A5**



State senators Anne Gobi (left) and Jo Comerford (center) paddled in this year’s race.

## Winter Fuel Aid Backlog Nearly Done

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**GREENFIELD** – Community Action Pioneer Valley is catching up on a backlog of fuel assistance applications, with the help of five new staff members and additional government funds, after an especially challenging winter season.

Thousands of fuel assistance application decisions were delayed this year because a new online system was introduced, many more people applied for the program than ever before, and the understaffed nonprofit tasked with processing the applications could not keep up.

Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV), a Greenfield-based nonprofit, is contracted by the state to process applications for the federally-funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). CAPV serves the communities of Franklin and Hampshire counties, and is one of 18 Community Action agencies across the state tasked with processing LIHEAP applications.

After losing its longtime fuel assistance program manager in November and struggling to hire temporary application intake workers, CAPV found itself in a “heck of a jam” this season, as one employee **see FUEL AID page A8**

## Six G-M School Committee Seats Up for Grabs In May

By MIKE JACKSON

**MONTAGUE** – Voters in next month’s town elections in Montague and Gill will determine the makeup of six of the nine members of the regional school committee, twice as many as in a normal year. Though Montague must fill four seats, only one resident has filed papers to run, making it likely three write-in candidates will end up on the committee.

On the town side, by contrast, Montague’s election is marked this year by competitive races down-ballot: two candidates for each of two library trustee positions, three for a seat on the housing authority, and no fewer than four candidates vying for a single opening on the board of assessors.

The Gill-Montague school committee’s third full year meeting **see SEATS page A4**

GILL SELECTBOARD

## Gill Looks to Northfield For Ambulance Services

By KATE SAVAGE

In Monday’s meeting, the Gill selectboard moved forward on an agreement with the town of Northfield for ambulance services, discussed future electricity contracts, and planned for an upcoming town election that will likely be held outdoors.

The selectboard approved an agreement with Northfield to provide emergency medical services to the town of Gill from July 2023 through June 2024. If approved by town meeting, Northfield EMS will become the primary ambulance service for the town, with Gill paying \$15,000 annually for the service. Northfield EMS already provides

the service to Bernardston and part of Erving.

Northfield EMS chief Mark Fortier said Erving also pays them \$15,000 for the response service. Bernardston’s assessment is “slightly lower,” he said, “but we also do double the call volume into that community, so the insurance reimbursements are much higher.”

When asked how the \$15,000 price was determined, Fortier answered “I’ll be perfectly honest with you: it’s a number that came about to appease my finance committee.” He said he foresaw contracts for future years costing more money to all partners, including the town of Northfield, citing the need **see GILL page A6**

## SENDING IT BACK



DAVID HOULT PHOTOS

Top: Turners Falls’ Noah Kolodziej returns a serve in the #2 singles match as the Thunder hosted Pioneer Valley Christian Academy on Tuesday. Bottom: Derek Wissmann blasts a single during the baseball season home opener against Pioneer Valley on Tuesday. (Final score: Pioneer 5, Turners Falls 1.)

### A Little Newspaper To Call Your Own

Letters: Cleanup Season.....A2	Reflection: Bringing Down the House.....B1
Local Briefs, Local Faces.....A3	Montague Police Log Highlights.....B3
Northfield Commentary.....A4	Monty/Musik/Mountain: The Reissuer.....B4
Leverett Selectboard Notes.....A6	Three Reviews of Two Movies.....B6
10, 20, and 150 Years Ago This Week.....A7	Our Monthly Children’s Page.....B8
A Stray Match at a Holiday Mass.....B1	Arts & Entertainment Calendar.....B9
West Along the River: Phony Proto-Spring.....B1	Three Comics and a Puzzle.....B9
Heartfelt Café: Seafood is Local Too.....B1	Memories: The Obituary Machine.....B10





# The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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**Founded by**  
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold  
August 2002

## To Tennessee

The unprecedented expulsion of two representatives, Justin Pearson and Justin Jones, from the Tennessee House of Representatives last week over a breach of rules of order has riveted national attention.

The story only became more interesting this week when both men were unanimously appointed by their local governing authorities – the Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County for Jones, the Shelby County Board of Commissioners for Pearson – right back into the seats they had been expelled from, at least until special elections are held.

Reps. Pearson and Jones have been comfortable in the national limelight. The two young, outspokenly progressive Black politicians were stripped of their office through a dubious process in retaliation for a brief and symbolic expression on the legislative dais of solidarity with throngs of young protestors outside.

And who were those throngs? Mostly high school kids, who have been walking out of class in direct-action protest against gun violence and macho gun culture in the wake of a horrific mass school shooting in their city.

And the target of their protest? A one-party-supermajority legislature obsessed with culture-war issues: with passing laws allowing students to sue professors for promoting "divisive concepts," for example, or banning "male or female impersonators" in impossibly vague language. (The latter was temporar-

ily blocked by a federal judge last week, we should note.)

Something for everyone, in other words – and everything all at once, a conflict so naked and irrevocable it feels like only a matter of time before we can figure out how to replicate it in every state and town. The bizarre overreach, the crude weaponization of process, the boomerang backfire: it all makes political representation seem intensely, charismatically *relevant*.

And yet here we are, in our own semi-rural small towns not immune to political opinion-mongering, with local ballots routinely listing unopposed incumbents and blank lines yawning for write-ins.

In Montague, the only truly politically catalyzing topic in the last decade was the school committee's elimination of a high school sports team logo. Interest and participation spiked for two years, then cratered.

All of which raises the question: Is there any good *political* reason to contest local seats? Aside from once-in-a-decade cultural blowups and personality conflicts, it seems the worst sin in town politics is simply poor management. So who wants to volunteer to help a technocracy plod capably along?

We often see older participants applauding millennials for showing up to town politics. That will work if the end goal is simply to show up, shoulder some of the bureaucratic weight, and share some cider and donuts. What else, though, should they expect to *accomplish*?

## 'Project 911': Can We Find Your House?

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – Is your house number clearly visible from the road, so police, fire, or ambulance responders can find you quickly? Can your number be easily seen in the dark?

The Montague Center Fire Department reminds all residents to clearly mark your address with reflective, easy-to-read numbers. Remember, minutes save lives! Valuable time could be lost if we are unable to locate the correct address.

A number nailed to your door is not enough – even posting one on a mailbox may not be enough, especially if there is a cluster of mailboxes. If you live in a multi-family home, along with a clearly visible house number please ensure that your apartment number is clearly



marked on your door.

The Montague Center fire department will install a five-foot-high metal stake with a reflective number (example above) at the end of your driveway. The cost is \$15. To request your number, please send your name, street and house number, a phone number, and a \$15 check payable to the "Montague Center Firefighters Association" to: Ann Fisk, 15 Meadow Road, Montague, MA 01351.



Jessica Orrell stands behind the counter at Weatherheads Convenience Store on Route 2 in Erving. Orrell, who has worked there for a year and a half, reports that it's a good job and that owner Ralph Semb is "the best boss ever."

## Letters to the Editors

### Spring Cleaning in Wendell

For several decades, the Wendell Litter Pickup has been put together by a few townspeople. The person that was always there to help in many ways was Ted Lewis. Whether it was walking alongside me, driving the town truck to gather bags of trash, receiving phone calls from townspeople as to where they were planning on cleaning up the roadside... Ted was there 100% of the time.

For many years, the Litter Pickup Day was just that – one day. Several years ago it was suggested that people have a whole week to pick up the roadside litter, allowing them to fit it in whenever they could. They would either bring the litter/trash to

the WRATS or let us know where they had cleaned so we could pick up what they had found on the designated Saturday.

In thinking about this year, I thought it would be a wonderful idea to have it be the same week every year, and call it Wendell's "TED WALK" in honor of our dear friend Ted Lewis.

We have decided for it to be the week of April school vacation – Sunday, April 16 through Saturday, April 22 this year – with us picking up the filled bags and other debris from 1 to 2:30 p.m. on the designated Saturday, which this year will fall on 4/22.

If you want to be involved, please remember to be safe... wear gloves, wear bright colors, and leave the items by a telephone pole or at the end of guard rails. Free collection bags can be picked up at the Wendell Free Library and Diemand Farm.

Please call one of us for more information, and to let us know where you have cleaned: Maggie Houghton at (978) 544-7773, Deb Lewis at (978) 544-7102, or Anne Diemand Bucci at (413) 522-4453.

Thank you,

**Anne Diemand Bucci**  
Wendell  
Owner, Diemand Farm

### Cemetery Cleanup

The Montague Cemetery Commission is coordinating a clean-up day this Saturday, April 15 at the Highland Cemetery, located at 390-398 Millers Falls Road.

The cleanup will include the removal of dead flowers and wreaths, broken items, and debris such as plastic flowers that have blown off the gravesites onto nearby headstones.

According to the cemetery rules and regulations, all winter decorations must be removed by April 15 and summer decorations by October 15: "If these items become unsightly, dangerous, detrimental or diseased, or when they do not conform to the standard maintained by the commission, they will be disposed of."

It is our purpose, as a Commission, to take reasonable precautions to keep the cemetery clean, free of clutter, and safe for visitors and all who have loved ones buried on the property. Please do your part by being mindful of items that make it difficult to maintain the area around the headstone.

**Jo-Ann Prescott**  
Montague City

Member, Montague Cemetery Commission

### Candy Enablers

On Saturday, April 10, hundreds of children and family members from throughout Franklin County (and beyond) flocked to Unity Park to participate in Montague Parks & Recreation's Annual Peter Cottontail's EGGstravaganza. Children aged four to twelve were given the enviable task of finding over 5,000 candy-filled eggs strewn throughout the park, as well as getting their picture taken with Peter Cottontail.

The EGGstravaganza would not have been possible without the generous support from the Montague Elks, Greenfield Savings Bank, Taylor Greene, and our countless volunteers who spent a lovely day at the park serving the community. MPRD also appreciates Paul Wonsey for providing the sound system, and WHAI for donating extra candy!

We would also like to give a special thanks to Peter Cottontail for setting aside time from his busy schedule to be present during the festivities. We hope to see you all next year!

Sincerely,

**Jon Dobosz**  
Director, Montague Parks & Recreation

#### Published weekly on Thursdays.

Every other week in July and August.  
No paper the fourth week of November,  
or the final week of December.

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The LAVA arts center in Greenfield started a new podcast series, The indivISIBLE Hour. The podcast is based on their indivISIBLE Project that celebrates the lives of the indispensable seasonal agricultural workers of Franklin County by documenting their stories.

The first episode features folklorists Michael and Carrie Kline and educator Doug Selwyn talking about how to invite people to tell their stories and make them feel comfortable while doing so.

Look for the series on your favorite podcast platform, or catch it at [www.indivisiblegreenfield.org](http://www.indivisiblegreenfield.org). If you have a story to share or want more information about the story-collecting project, contact Alfonso Neal at [alfonso@indivisiblegreenfield.org](mailto:alfonso@indivisiblegreenfield.org).

This Friday evening, April 14, marks the first Great Falls Coffeehouse of the 2023 season at the Discovery Center in Turners Falls. Alive n' Pickin' will perform a range of bluegrass, country, and folk tunes from Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, Steve Goodman, and more. Performers are Dave LeBlanc, John Halstead, and Larry LeBlanc.

Refreshments will be available, and the admission is by donation, from \$6 to \$15 (children are free). Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

This Saturday, April 15 at 9 a.m., the Greenfield Garden Cinemas will show *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* as a fundraiser for the Sheffield Elementary school in Turners Falls. Tickets are \$5 each.

There's a one-day wool and fiber sale at Whispering Pines farm in Colrain this Saturday, April 15 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

They have fleece, roving, wool, dyed and spun yarn, rug-hooking supplies, and other fiber-related craft stuff for sale. The farm is at 8 High Street in Colrain.

On Monday, April 17, the Gill Montague senior center in Turners Falls is hosting a presentation on uncommon spices as part of its ongoing food-focused Kitchen Club. If you are 60 or older, you may join them at 1 p.m. to learn about the benefits of certain spices.

Greenfield Savings Bank community engagement officer Linda Ackerman will give a talk at the senior center at 10 a.m. Tuesday, April 18 about "romance scams." She will outline how not to fall for one of these hucksters. There will be coffee, tea, pastries, and fruit on hand.

Next Tuesday, April 18 at 7 p.m. at the Academy of Music in Northampton, Western Mass author and illustrator Jarrett J. Krosoczka launches a live, full-cast reading of his new graphic memoir *Sunshine: How One Camp Taught Me About Life, Death, and Hope*.

In high school Krosoczka was part of a program that sent students

to be counselors at a camp for seriously ill kids and their families. *Sunshine* is about what he found there – the hope and determination that gets people through tough times.

Joining Krosoczka on stage will be Monte Belmonte of New England Public Media, Amanda Riley, and a crew of teenage actors. Tickets are \$19 via [www.aomtheater.com](http://www.aomtheater.com), and include a paperback copy of *Sunshine*.

The Food Bank of Western Mass comes to the Gill Montague Senior Center on the third Wednesday of every month – that's April 19 this month – from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. There are no eligibility requirements other than showing up with boxes or bags to bring your food home in. All are welcome to help themselves to fresh and non-perishable groceries. The truck will be in the parking lot at 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls.

The Montague Center Library's local author series continues next Wednesday, April 19 at 6 p.m. with Rebecca Daniels reading from her book, *Finding Sisters* (Sunbury Press, 2021).

With almost no information of her genetic heritage, adoptee Daniels follows limited clues and uses DNA testing, genealogical research, thoughtful letter writing, and a willingness to make awkward phone calls with strangers to finally find her birth parents. Join in on the author's discovery of family and self. Daniels is a retired university professor who taught acting, directing, and playwriting for 25 years.

The Brick House Community Resource Center at 24 Third Street in Turners Falls is hosting a Family Game Night with free dinner included on Thursday, April 20 from 6 to 8 p.m.

The Millers Falls Community Improvement Association (MF-CIA) meets the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. at Element Brewing Company, 16 Bridge Street.

"Murals, walking trails, clean up days, social events, and a community garden are some of the projects that we have worked on in the past, or have in the works," Kate Martineau reports. "Come help make our village great!" The group's next meeting is on April 20.

The People's Pantry (La Despensa del Pueblo) is starting back up again this month, with free food distribution next Friday, April 21 from 4 to 6 p.m. at 104 Fourth Street in Turners Falls.

The People's Pantry offers great quality local food free of cost without qualification to the community on a monthly basis. They are working on expanding the program in the coming months. To get involved or for more information, email [sarah@pvworkerscenter.org](mailto:sarah@pvworkerscenter.org). For the most recent updates on distribution days and times, visit [www.pvworkerscenter.org/mutual-aid](http://www.pvworkerscenter.org/mutual-aid).

The RECOVER Project has announced Friday night activities are back, and there will be karaoke every third Friday from 7 to 9:30 p.m. Mark your calendar for April 21. They are also considering an open mic night on first Fridays – keep an eye out for updates on their Facebook page, or call (413) 774-5489.

Founded in 2003, the RECOVER Project is a community open to all concerned with alcohol and drug addiction. They offer peer-to-peer support for those in recovery. Find out more at [www.recoverproject.org](http://www.recoverproject.org).

The 44th Annual ArtSpace Market, canceled due to bad weather in early March, has been rescheduled for Saturday, April 22 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Greenfield High School. There will be over 25 vendors selling crafts and original fine art, and a "huge artwork raffle." Organizers welcome additional vendors as well as volunteers; email Julie at [julie@artspacegreenfield.com](mailto:julie@artspacegreenfield.com).

The Montague Clean Water Facility is celebrating Earth Day on April 22 with a "safe drive-through tour" for families. They will be handing out Earth and Water cycle themed goodie bags for elementary school aged children.

Stop by between 10 a.m. and noon at 34 Greenfield Road, Turners Falls.

On April 22 the Montague Center library branch will hold a "Call of the Wild" outdoor skills program for youth with Frank Grindrod of Earthwork Programs. The two hours of instruction starts at 11 a.m. Students will build a survival shelter, learn about survival blankets, take a Wild Edible Walk, and learn what to do when lost.

Registration is required; the minimum age is 8. Call (413) 863-3214 to register.

Head to a pancake fundraiser for the Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter on Sunday, April 23 at the Montague Elks lodge in Turners

Falls. The breakfast starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 11 a.m. Tickets are \$10 per person and \$7 for children under 7 years of age.

On Sunday, April 23, the Wendell Free Library hosts a talk on "Native Plants as Insect Habitat" with Charley Eiseman at 7 p.m. Your yard can "teem with life" if you follow recommendations outlined in the talk to create a habitat planted with native trees and shrubs.

Actors of all ages and identities are invited to audition for play readings at the LAVA Center slated for this spring and summer. There are many roles for actors who can play characters in the 18-to-21 age range, and female characters in the 50-to-70 age range, in addition to a wide array of identities and ages.

Auditions will be held at the LAVA Center, 324 Main Street in Greenfield, on Sunday, April 23, from noon to 3 p.m. and Monday, April 24 and Wednesday, April 26 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Actors will read from play scenes, and will read in groups of six or fewer. Expect to stay for approximately 40 minutes. No advance preparation is required.

Mark your calendar: Erving town planner Mariah Kurtz is holding a community discussion about the potential demolition and redevelopment of the former International Paper mill on Thursday, April 27 at 7 p.m. at the Erving Elementary School, 28 Northfield Road.

A poetry reading to benefit this paper, *Local: Paper, Place, and Poems*, is now available for viewing on YouTube at [www.tinyurl.com/MRpoets](http://www.tinyurl.com/MRpoets) thanks to the efforts of Lis McLoughlin, our former Science Page editor. You can find a link in the video description to make a donation to this paper.

Many thanks to Lis and all the poets who participated for putting together this unique fundraiser!

Send your local briefs to [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org).

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# FACES & PLACES



Joe R. Parzych returned to his former elementary school in Gill last week to donate a cache of his photos of local scenes to the school. Above: Principal Walter Huston holds up a photo during last Friday's all-school assembly while Parzych looks on, camera at the ready. The freelance photographer said he hopes teachers will use the photos as learning tools in the classroom.

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## AT LARGE Three Candidates, Two Seats in Northfield...

By CHIP AINSWORTH

**NORTHFIELD** – Selectboard meetings here are as long as Michael Cimino's epic flop *Heaven's Gate*, and as mind-numbingly dull. Homer Simpson once dozed off in the front row of a Northfield selectboard meeting.

Bernardston-Northfield Community TV posts them on YouTube, but folks don't make popcorn and come running from the kitchen asking what they missed.

On March 21, town administrator Andrea Llamas addressed chairperson Bee Jacque, Heath Cummings, Alex Meisner, Bernie Boudreau, and Mary Sullivan-Bowen. As the town's *de facto* CEO, Llamas presented her plan to borrow money for capital projects. She spoke of debt exclusions, of spending money on OPMs, and of "language in articles and milestones in contracts."

The document required the selectboard's introspection and approval, and first-term member Mary Sullivan-Bowen wanted to show she was up to the task.

"Andrea, can I ask you a question?" she asked. "Or anyone?"

"Yeah," said Llamas.

"It says here..." and Sullivan-Bowen began reading the small print as if it was important. Her pen followed each word as she read. "It says at the bottom, 'By borrowing, or taking any other action on, or in any relation thereto?'"

She looked up for an answer.

"Standard language," said Alex Meisner. "That's at the bottom of

every motion."

"Thank you," said Sullivan-Bowen.

Sullivan-Bowen owns the Northfield Creamie and must be a good businessperson, but this was like inspecting the contents on a jar of mayo.

She and Jacque are up for re-election. Sarah Kerns has thrown her hat in the ring, and two seats will be available for three candidates.

The election is May 2.

At the end of the night, during the "citizens' concerns" part of the agenda, Kerns rocked their boat by saying a \$14.5 million safety complex should be secondary to the crisis regarding East Northfield's sewer and water infrastructures.

Llamas scolded her. "This is not a question appropriate for the selectboard," she said. "That is a question for the sewer commissioners, and the people in the Water District have their own funding."

Bernie Boudreau defended Kerns, saying that the selectboard does have a right to impose its will. "The land is owned by the town," he reasoned.

"You just need to sit tight and trust in the selectboard," said a peeved Sullivan-Bowen, who slammed her palm on the table, Khrushchev-like.

Jacque sat back and put her arms out and hands up, palms out. "It's late," she said. "I appreciate everyone slogging it through here."

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

ground and "fewer years in the field" than some previous directors, but said the candidate's responses to interview questions gave the screening committee a "sense of lived experience."

At Ellis's request Paxton repeated the story of an incident in Holyoke in which he had responded to a customer complaint about a well-known restaurant. The restaurant had so many health code violations it could not stay open even for a day, Paxton said, but the owner strongly resisted closing, leading to an escalating conflict. After receiving support from city health officials, Paxton developed an "action plan" with the owner to address immediate and longer-term code issues, allowing the business to reopen after just one day.

Asked by Nelson what his first 30 days on the job would look like, Paxton said that "one of the most important things to do as a person coming in, especially as a department leader, would be to introduce yourself to everybody in the city."

"So many people skip that step," he added. "Putting yourself out there, introducing yourself to as many people as possible, really goes a long way toward making things work efficiently in the future."

Paxton's hire could bring closure to a difficult six months for the health department since former director Daniel Wasiuk resigned abruptly last October. Two rounds of searching yielded candidates who either withdrew their applications or failed to ignite the enthusiasm of the screening committee. Greenfield health director Jennifer Hoffman filled in on a part-time basis, and in December retired former director Gina McNeely agreed to serve on an interim basis.

In February the committee and board determined that a citizen of the Turks and Caicos Islands, Candaicy David, would be ideal for the job, but the town would need to apply for a special H-1B visa, which involved entering a lottery with under a 30% chance of success.

The town failed to pass the lottery, but at that very moment Paxton, one of the candidates who had withdrawn from the earlier search, reapplied. Because the screening committee "knew this might happen," in Nelson's words, the town had left the search open and continued to post the job.

The motion that approved Paxton's hire, pending negotiations and a background check, set a provisional starting date of May 8.



**SEATS** from page A1

remotely has seen remarkable attrition of its membership. The regional committee is made up of three members from Gill and six from Montague, and voters from both towns vote on candidates from both towns. As the representatives serve three-year terms, in a normal year one Gill seat and two Montague seats would appear on the ballot.

From Gill, longtime incumbent Bill Tomb is unopposed for re-election to a three-year seat, but another member, Valeria "Timmie" Smith, resigned last summer and was subsequently replaced by Cristina Marcalow, appointed until this election. Marcalow is now running unopposed to fill the final year of what would have been Smith's term.

The situation in Montague is considerably more chaotic, with two three-year seats, a two-year seat, and a one-year seat in play.

John Irminger of Turners Falls filed papers to remain in one of the three-year seats. Irminger, a retired California math teacher, was originally appointed in January 2022 and agreed with reluctance to run last spring to finish out term. He publicly stated again this year that he would only file if not enough other candidates stepped up.

The other three seats are not only blank on the ballot but are actually empty, following the midterm resignations of Cassie Damkoehler, Haley Anderson, Jennifer Waryas, this week Brooke Billings, appointed to Damkoehler's seat.

At Tuesday's school committee meeting, the five members in attendance voted unanimously to suspend a district policy requiring a reorganization meeting to be held within 72 hours after the election – a policy felt by members to create logistical difficulties in 2021 and 2022, as town clerks scrambled to count write-in votes in time.

Montague selectboard member Matt Lord, who won a four-way special election in 2021 by one vote to fill a seat vacated by Michael Nelson, is running unopposed for reelection. Nelson, who remained

on the board of health, is also running unopposed to hold his seat.

Lori Lee Adams and Chris Boutwell are running for the veteran and non-veteran Soldiers' Memorial trustee seats, and an open seat on the parks and recreation commission will be determined by write-in.

One-year and three-year seats on the library trustees have attracted competition, perhaps because the long-term plan for the library buildings is under consideration. Louisa Khettab of Turners Falls was the sole candidate to file nomination papers for the one-year seat, but the town's Democratic party caucus, which may place candidates directly onto the ballot, nominated Miryam Vessel to run against her.

For the three-year seat, incumbent trustee Lydia Ievins faces a challenge from tree committee member David Detmold.

A five-year seat on the Montague Housing Authority has attracted a race. Linda Ackerman and Brendan Kuntz filed nomination papers, but incumbent Karen Casey-Chretien secured the Democratic nomination. Kuntz, until recently a resident of New Salem, is also seeking to join the board of assessors. He faces several opponents: Diane Sumrall, Chris Pinardi, and incumbent Rebecca Sabelawski, who secured the Democratic caucus nod.

The town elections will be held Monday, May 15 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. in Gill – an election that might be held outdoors, if the Gill town hall is still undergoing asbestos remediation work – and on Tuesday, May 16 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. in Montague, at three polling places.

A "Candidates Meet and Greet" will be held in the reading room at the Carnegie Library on Tuesday, April 25, from 6 to 7 p.m.

"Want to know what's going on in your community?" reads the announcement. "Join us for an informal reception at the Carnegie Library to chat with this year's slate of local candidates about local interests and issues. Light refreshments will be served."



### PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

## The GMEF Gala is Back!

**TURNERS FALLS** – "Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be." (Rita Pierson)

Eighteen years ago, the Gill-Montague Education Fund accepted the challenge to enrich the lives of their students by raising funds that would provide programs and resources with educational opportunities. To date, we have awarded nearly \$126,840 in grants.

Returning in April 2023 after a four-year hiatus generates mixed emotions – excitement, hope, and uncertainty – to name just a few. The impact of the pandemic on K-12 student learning was significant. It widened preexisting opportunity and achievement gaps, hitting historically disadvantaged students hardest. During the past four years, we continued to award three \$250 scholarships each year, gave roses for our graduates, and assisted our staff financially with enrichment projects.

The GMEF is excited to welcome on Saturday, April 29 at 7 p.m. to the TFHS Theater, "Faithfully – An Eagles & Journey Ex-

perience." Faithfully will re-create the music of the Eagles and Journey with material from all eras of the bands' careers, encompassing their biggest hits as well as fan favorites, including "Tequila Sunrise," "Desperado," "Open Arms," "Don't Stop Believin'," and many more.


Faithfully formed in Nashville, Tennessee in 2011 and has quickly established themselves as one of the United States' most popular tribute acts, garnering international recognition, press and fan following. They boast excellent musicianship and have an amazing stage presence.

Tickets are \$30 in advance, \$35 at the door, and are available at these locations: Hillside Pizza in Bernardston; Weatherheads in Erving; World Eye Bookshop in Greenfield; Bobby's Hair & Nail Salon in Northfield; and Freedom Credit Union, Greenfield Savings Bank, and Scotty's store in Turners Falls. They are also available at [www.thegmef.org](http://www.thegmef.org).

Checks should be made payable to GMEF. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your payment to: Tickets/The GMEF, PO Box 383, Turners Falls, MA 01376.

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**RAT RACE** from page A1

psyched to do it.”

The Millers River begins in Ashburnham and flows for about 50 miles through north-central Massachusetts before joining the Connecticut. Comerford’s district now includes over 100 miles of moving water, and most of the shoreline of the Quabbin Reservoir.

“For me, it’s a holiday,” said Jerry Whaland, Comerford’s paddling partner last Saturday. “It’s the most important day of the year. Truth is, my business wouldn’t exist without this race.”

Whaland is the owner of Billy Goat Boats, a canoe and kayak rental business located at the race’s finish line on the bank of the Millers in downtown Orange. The name of the business was inspired in part by his mentor in boating.

“I couldn’t afford a race boat, so a local guy Bill Ellsworth – who I couldn’t keep up with – taught me how to paddle, and taught me how to build boats,” Whaland said. “I was repairing and building boats long before I was renting them.”

Whaland said customers traveled from New York, Minnesota, and Texas to participate in this year’s River Rat Race. “I’d love to see more locals getting out there and just having a blast,” he said. “I don’t think people in this region realize quite what we have.”

Every year, on the second Saturday in April, the US Army Corps of Engineers releases a specific amount of water from the Birch Hill flood control dam in Royalston for the River Rat Race. Without the managed flow, the river can be too rocky at points for the flood of canoes to pass, or dangerously high.

The race, which began in 1964, is open to two-person canoe teams. In 1980, a record 421 canoes participated. (State police were called to stop a brawl at an

afterparty at the Orange Armory.) The 2020 and 2021 races were canceled.

At least one boat capsized in the chaos at the start of this year’s race, which is typical. Teams launched from the muddy riverbanks of the Alan E. Rich Environmental Park. Comerford and Whaland, who had drawn the 55th starting position at town hall the night before, finished the race without tipping into the ice-cold water.

“This time of year, hypothermia is no joke,” Whaland said. “There’s a lot of dumb people out there with boats, and we can’t control what they do.... Paddle faster! It’s the only way to be more stable.”

Emergency responders from the Northfield Dive Team and area fire departments line the banks of the river for the duration of the five-mile race. They all serve as volunteers or are paid by funds their departments raise separate from municipal tax dollars.

After the race, Wendell residents Kathleen Nolan and Joshua Heinemann were interviewed by Athol-Orange Community Television. Heinemann has been paddling in the River Rat Race since 1978, and Nolan for the last decade.

“It used to be crazier,” Heinemann said. “And more drunken,” Nolan added.

The winners of this year’s race were out-of-staters Shane MacDowell and Ryan Zaverla, who completed the course in about 35 minutes. There was a problem getting the numbers to stick on some of the canoes this year, so final results for the slower paddlers, our senator included, were still being calculated as of press time.

“There’s something buoyant about it in a time when we need community,” Comerford said. “It really feels like it’s the spine of something that is so good, and fun, and maybe a little dangerous. It feels perfectly North Quabbin.”



**ERVING** from page A1

a behaviorist and a behaviorist assistant, and a part-time custodian. He said 30% of the classrooms are not supported by a paraprofessional, as vacant positions have not been replaced.

According to Burnett, the main driver for the EES increase for FY’24 is out-of-district placement and transportation costs for several special needs students, “services they need and lawfully deserve,” he said. “The school has no control over that.”

Burnett added that teachers and administration have been dealing with student “emotional and behavioral dysregulation,” after-effects of remote and hybrid education during the pandemic. He detailed some of the problems at EES, including that students are no longer able to use bathrooms unaccompanied, that there is an increase in inappropriate and unacceptable language, and that students are less able to deal with difficult situations.

Asked how to pay for restoring the school funding, Burnett said there should be an amendment at the annual town meeting to “fully fund the school” and force a Proposition 2½ override for \$332,000.

Selectboard member William Bembury commented that this would lead to a “permanent tax increase to the community.”

Burnett replied that according to his rough calculations, a \$332,000 override would increase residential taxes by 22 cents per \$1,000 valuation. The real tax rate for residential property is currently \$7.90 per \$1,000.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith commented that Erving’s per-student spending was significantly higher than in similar-sized towns, but other towns were able to provide a similar level of education. He said he has often heard the question “Why do we, as Erving, spend more per child?”

“We’re just about outspending our levy limit,” said selectboard member Scott Bastarache. “We haven’t really wrangled in how to stop our budget from exponentially growing.”

Bastarache characterized an override for FY’24 as a “band-aid,” and predicted there would be calls for another override within five years: “Well, we ran out of money again, let’s do another 2½ override.” He concluded, “I’m not sure if, long-term, that works.”

“I think it is more than a band-aid,” Burnett replied. “I think a band-aid would be pulling money out of stabilization, free cash. That would be a band-aid, because it doesn’t increase the budget for next year. Doing this Prop 2½ override would automatically set that up for next year.”

Burnett pointed out that the board and fin com had been considering a debt exclusion to pay for the demolition of buildings at the former International Paper Mill, and argued that school funding was more important than “spending over a million dollars to tear down buildings that sat vacant for 20 years.”

Smith invited Burnett to come to the April 24 public informational meeting to discuss the proposed IP Mill demolition, and said that the tax effects of a debt exclusion would be limited to one to five years.

Parents of children attending Erving Elementary recounted behavior problems, attributed to remote and hybrid education, including swearing, acting out, and defacing school property, and predicted that staffing cuts due to reduced funding would increase problems.

One parent said she is now considering choosing her child out of EES. “I can’t believe I moved here for the school,” she said, “and this is what is happening.”

Another praised the math intervention program, slated to be cut under the reduced budget, for allowing her third grader to successfully complete the state’s standardized math exam.

Bastarache said that besides parents seeking excellent education, the town also has residents on fixed incomes wanting a low tax rate.

Bembury said that although he wants “the right thing done by our students,” the town needs to “talk about what’s sustainable, and what

we can afford.” He added that he did not want to pit the school against other town departments.

“We want them to get the best education they can, but we don’t have an endless well of money,” said fin com member Daniel Hammock.

“It is very frustrating to have an administration that is not transparent and forthcoming,” school committee member Mackensy Bailey told the meeting. “It is something that the school committee is going to have to work on.”

“I am hoping never to have to be in this situation to this degree that we are now,” she added. “The school committee was just given this budget with no real information ahead of time... This was never the want of the school committee, to have to cut such a huge amount. It stems from the administration not talking to the school committee.”

Bastarache said other departments including a police department program, also submitted reduced budget requests, and suggested that an override should include requests from other departments. He asked principal assessor Jacquelyn Boyden to prepare estimates of the tax consequences for overrides between \$100,000 and \$800,000 for future discussion.

Burnett said that he did not want to pit departments against each other, but “would be concerned if [the override] was too big. We’re advocating for the school, that’s why we’re here.”

The board approved the warrant for the May 10 annual town meeting with a \$5.7 million operating budget, and the reduced EES budget of \$3.5 million. The warrant and proposed budget will be printed and sent to all Erving households.

**Other Business**

The May 10 town meeting warrant also includes articles proposing \$1.5 million for secondary education, \$528,000 for Franklin County Technical School, \$911,000 in capital improvements, \$150,000 for the capital stabilization fund, and \$60,000 for employ-

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Reliability, flexibility, a sense of humor, and ability to cooperate is a MUST. Experience working with youth is required for Program Director and Lead Counselor and is preferred for the Counselor positions. We will provide training. The Summer Parks Program runs for 6 sessions, July 3, 2023, to August 11, 2023. (No program on July 4th).

Application deadline is May 12, 2023.

These positions are seasonal employment opportunities. Full position descriptions are available and applications can be completed online by visiting [www.erving-ma.gov/employment](http://www.erving-ma.gov/employment). Printed applications can be mailed to Town of Erving, Attn: Recreation Commission, 12 East Main Street, Erving, MA 01344.

A CORI check will be performed on successful candidates. The Town of Erving is a drug free workplace. The Town of Erving is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. Questions can be sent to [careers@erving-ma.gov](mailto:careers@erving-ma.gov).

**TOWN OF ERVING  
Animal Control Officer**

The Town of Erving is accepting applications for the position of Animal Control Officer. This position is per diem and non-benefited.

The Animal Control Officer (ACO) is responsible for enforcement of state and local laws and regulations related to animal control for the Town of Erving. The ACO oversees the care and control of domestic animals, and in some instances wildlife. The ACO is a civilian position within the Police Department, reporting to the Chief of Police, and does not possess police powers. For the complete job description and to download an employment application, visit [www.erving-ma.gov/employment](http://www.erving-ma.gov/employment).

Applicants should possess a high school diploma or equivalent, and at least one to three (1-3) years of work experience, preferably in animal care and control; an equivalent combination of education, training and experience which provides the required knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the essential functions of the job may be considered. Must have valid Massachusetts Driver’s License. Must have or be willing to obtain a certification as an Animal Control Officer by the Animal Control Officers Association of Massachusetts and a Firearms Identification Card within the first year of employment.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, with a preference for applications received by Monday, April 24, 2023. To apply please send cover letter and resume to [careers@erving-ma.gov](mailto:careers@erving-ma.gov) or by mail to: Town of Erving, Attn: Bryan Smith, Town Administrator, 12 East Main Street, Erving, MA 01344.

A CORI check will be performed on the successful candidate. The Town of Erving is a drug free workplace. The Town of Erving is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

**COMMUNITY DISCUSSION**  
*of the potential demolition and redevelopment of the former IP Mill*

Monday, April 24  
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#### NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

## Transportation, School Funding, Bus Safety, Housing, Climate Mitigation, Mosquito Control, Watershed Stewardship All Key to Rural Agenda

By GEORGE BRACE

State senator Joanne Comerford checked in remotely with Leverett's selectboard on Tuesday, updating the board on her work and fielding questions. The board also heard a status update on the town's comprehensive plan.

In 2021 Leverett's state senate district was made larger in response to declining population, and now includes five towns in Worcester County. Comerford said the Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester district is now a little larger, and more politically diverse.

Comerford said her assignments have given her a stronger footing in leadership, and more opportunity to fight for the district's priorities. She is now the chair of the joint committee on higher education, the vice-chair of the joint committee on agriculture, and the assistant vice-chair of both the senate and joint ways and means committees.

The senator credited teamwork with state representative Natalie Blais in providing strong representation for a western Massachusetts "rural agenda," and noted that the governor's newly-created office of rural policy was one of its elements. She also highlighted a recent transportation bill that carved out \$25 million for low-population-density areas. While both were "good signs," she said, "we are way, way, way, far away from the kind of justice that we need."

In response to a question about mosquito management, Comerford commented that the state's approach is "from another era," relying too heavily on downstream tactics like spraying rather than testing and mitigation. A "bug bill" aiming for a "21st-century" approach to the problem, she said, is in committee, but has "a long way to go."

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis asked whether Leverett might be eligible for money earmarked for local mosquito control programs. "Absolutely," Comerford told her.

Comerford said caps on municipal contributions to match Chapter 70 school funding result in towns that can "easily" afford to pay five

to 10 times what is required do not do so, whereas many small towns are in "spending hell," forced to decide whether to cut firefighters or teachers. She credited the town of Leverett and Blais with providing a "call to action" on school bus safety, and said she had co-sponsored a bill addressing the subject.

The senator said two pending bills propose to tax transfers of "luxury real estate" – homes selling above the median price – to help communities raise money amid fiscal constraints. The one she is working on, she said, would require the proceeds go to affordable housing, while a similar bill from another senator would give a choice between affordable housing and climate mitigation.

Another bill Comerford mentioned filing was S.447, which would provide payments to communities and non-profits in the Quabbin Reservoir watershed, including Leverett. "Our recompense is small, relative to the way the eastern part of the state benefits," she said. "Our region stewards this water. It came at the cost of four towns, and at some cost of economic development, both past and present."

Selectboard chair Tom Hankinson asked if any funding programs for townwide decarbonization efforts were in the works. Comerford said that the idea was a "beautiful vision," but that there weren't any, currently.

#### Planning for Planning

Planning board member Tim Shores delivered an update on his board's work to develop Leverett's first comprehensive plan for managing development. Shores said the project began in 2021 and is expected to be completed this fall. It aims to prepare Leverett "for environmental, economic, and demographic change for the next decade and beyond."

Shores said the planning board has "conceptually framed" the effort to prioritize the plan being both "evidence-based" and "community-driven." Consultants hired under a grant, he said, were providing the evidence portion, and the community part will come when residents are invited to

GILL from page A1

to pay workers more.

"At the end of the day," Fortier said, "we need to generate more revenue in order to solidify staffing, because you can have all the equipment in the world, but if you don't have any butts in the seats, it's just a garage full of equipment."

Gill deputy fire chief William Kimball noted that this would be a one-year contract, and that "there's nothing that says we don't look to someone else in the future. But I think you're going to see that wherever you go it's going to be within the same realm, and it's the level of service we have to look at."

The ambulance issue became urgent last year when the private company American Medical Response (AMR) began occasionally charging area towns without EMS contracts for service calls. Gill fire chief and emergency management director

Gene Beaubien said that "rumor has it" that AMR will resume billing towns, "and they will be charging upwards of \$400 per call to respond."

Beaubien noted that since Gill residents make around 140 emergency medical calls each year, the town could be on the hook for nearly \$60,000 in fees if it doesn't sign a contract.

#### Energy Hikes Likely

The region's Municipal Electricity Aggregation Program is in the process of figuring out its next contract, energy commission member Claire Chang explained, and the cost to Gill residents is likely to increase. "Currently we have Dynegy as our energy supplier, at an amazing 9.6 cents [per kilowatt hour]," Chang said. "Unfortunately, the new pricing is coming in at basically 14 cents, give or take."

"It's not terrible," she said. "It's not super good, either."

Under the aggregation program, 13 towns in Franklin County come together to lock in an electricity price for a specific term. The current three-year contract runs through the end of 2023.

Chang said that on Monday, April 24, the towns will have "a couple hours" to agree on a supplier and a contract duration.

The selectboard set a hard cap at 15.5 cents per kilowatt-hour, but otherwise gave town administrator Ray Purington the authority to remain flexible and follow the guidance of the program's aggregation consultants from Colonial Power Group in the negotiations.

The selectboard and energy commission expressed a preference for a longer contract, covering two or three years. "I can't see where electricity is going to get that much cheaper," said Chang. "But so much depends on the geopolitical situation."

Selectboard members noted that the current three-year agreement has given Gill residents much more affordable energy than their neighbors have. "But, if we get to the third year and it turns out that the Eversource price is cheaper, you can switch to Eversource," Purington said.

If an agreement is not reached this month, the towns will try again in future months in the hopes that prices will go down.

"Right now, the odds of the

worldwide energy markets settling down in the next couple of months doesn't seem that likely," Purington mused. "The odds that they go berserk are more likely."

#### Other Business

Beginning Monday, April 24, Gill's town hall will be closed to the public for asbestos remediation. "Meetings after that date will be in other locations," Purington said. He said he wasn't sure how long the closure would last, but expressed hope for "a smooth, quick process."

The upcoming town election will be held on Monday, May 15 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Purington said the town is procuring a tent, so the election can take place outside on the town common if town hall is still closed for remediation at that time.

Offices on the ballot include the selectboard and sewer commissioner, as well as town assessor, tax collector, library trustee, and constable. Three offices on the ballot are currently vacant: cemetery commission, board of health, and tree warden. Nomination papers were due this Wednesday.

Purington announced that First-Light Power had filed a "flows and fish passage" stakeholder settlement agreement with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and that public comment is open until May 7. However, Purington said he'd "rather not go on the record" about the details of the agreement.

"The town is still in the heart of the negotiations on a possible recreation settlement agreement that may or may not have wording that states to what extent we can or won't oppose the fish and flow agreement," Purington explained. He said that by the next selectboard meeting, town officials would have a better sense of whether they would need to file comments on the agreement.

In other announcements, state senator Jo Comerford will attend the selectboard meeting on June 5, and the Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter will hold a benefit pancake breakfast Sunday, April 23, from 8 to 11 a.m. at the Montague Elks Lodge.

Finally, the deadline to submit town meeting petition articles is Monday, May 1 at noon. "If you've got something, bring it in!" said selectboard member Charles Garbiel.



#### PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

## Third Annual Leverett Earth Day Cleanup

**LEVERETT** – The Leverett Community Builders are sponsoring the Third Annual Earth Day community-wide cleanup next Saturday and Sunday, April 22 and 23, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day. This year, Rep. Natalie Blais will be coming with us at 9 a.m. prior to her 10 a.m. community meeting at the Leverett Village Coop.

People can participate by choosing an area to clean and signing up at [www.bit.ly/3JVTEyT](http://www.bit.ly/3JVTEyT). Participants can bring trash/recyclables to the Transfer Station. A prize will be offered for the most trash collected.

The Highway Department will pick up large items left on the side of the road the following Monday if participants arrange pickup by emailing [highway@leverett.ma.us](mailto:highway@leverett.ma.us). The Selectboard and the Transfer Station are waiving fees that weekend for cleanup trash.



The event offers a great opportunity to not only clean up Leverett, but to also be part of a community-wide effort. People are encouraged to show up with your family, and invite your friends and neighbors to participate. Be safe. Have fun.

Any questions, concerns, and photos can be sent to [LeverettCommunityBuilders@gmail.com](mailto:LeverettCommunityBuilders@gmail.com).

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**MONTAGUE** from page A1

the rhythm of the song, as did James's vocal refrain: "Crimson and clover / over and over."

Town meeting members may not have been aware that the meeting audio might resemble this song when they were polled recently by town hall about options for the event's format. According to Bogusz, of the 63 members who responded, 50 said they would attend a hybrid meeting in person, 11 said they would participate over Zoom, and two checked the "not at all" box.

Montague's representative town meeting officially contains 126 members – 21 from each of six precincts – and requires a quorum of 64 to convene.

"It's going to be a disappointment to the 10 or 11 people who said that they would attend a hybrid session [remotely]," Godin said, "but we just cannot guarantee that it's going to work." Godin said the town should "explore options for doing hybrid meetings in the future."

Godin indicated that the in-person meeting on May 6 would have a designated area where attendees who wish to wear masks and practice social distancing can sit. This has been the practice at the last two special town meetings.

The hybrid meeting possibility emerged at the end of March when the state legislature and the governor extended COVID-era virtual meeting options for local and state government until April 1, 2025. The legislation unexpectedly allowed municipalities with representative town meetings to hold them in a hybrid form, but required them to affirm that they had successfully tested the technology, according to Montague town administrator Steve Ellis.

In addition to the question about hybrid meetings, the poll also asked for members' reaction to a proposal from finance committee chair Francia Wisnewski, endorsed at a recent selectboard meeting by capital improvements committee member Ariel Elan, to hold a "cider and donuts" get-together an hour before the annual meeting begins. The purpose will be for members to ask town officials questions and express concerns about articles on the warrant.

Twenty-six members who responded to the poll said they would attend the event, while 15 said they would not and 23 checked "maybe."

The board informally approved this session, which will take place at 8 a.m. in the high school cafeteria. "We're going to leave it to the proponents to set the agenda," said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz.

"As long as there's coffee as well as cider," said member Matt Lord.

The board unanimously voted to recommend the warrant articles and motions for the May meeting without reading the document aloud, as has been the tradition. Ellis assured them that he had spoken with town counsel and was advised that the board could read the full warrant "as has been the practice, but you are not legally bound to do so."

"If we don't have to, I'd prefer not to," said Lord, who has recently been the one reading the document.

The 32-article warrant, discussed on numerous occasions by the board over the past five months, includes salary ranges for elected and appointed officials; annual budgets for the town, Clean Water Facility, and airport; assessments from the Gill-Montague School



An extended (5:26) version of the song appeared on the album of the same name.

district and Franklin County Technical School; 14 capital projects; and transfers into a variety of trust and stabilization funds.

**Future Work**

The board authorized a grant agreement with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the latest step in implementing a \$975,000 federal budget earmark obtained by Montague's representatives in Congress. The grant will fund streetscape improvements on the northwest side of Avenue A in Turners Falls from Third Street to the Discovery Center, and on the southeast side in front of town hall.

"It's more administrative work than usual, but it's a bigger grant than usual," said assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey, who said he had reviewed at least five separate applications for the earmark but had not yet completed the application for the final grant.

Ramsey then presented an "overview" of a six-year capital plan he is working on with the capital improvements committee. The plan begins with a "financial summary of the community," considers over 20 currently-funded projects, and creates a "six-year project schedule" including all potential projects identified by either a study or a "departmental leader."

The spreadsheet identifies over 130 projects, with projected costs totaling more than \$30 million. "It's going to change every year as projects move onto the list and off the list," Ramsey said.

Asked whether historic buildings were a component of the list, and if the historical commission has been "in the loop" while creating the plan, Ramsey said the plan would identify buildings in historic districts "with historic restrictions on them." He also said the historical commission would be notified when "we do engagement with the public."

**Beloved River**

Clean Water Facility superintendent Chelsea Little came before the board to review the monthly summary, required under the plant's state and federal permits, of its discharge into the Connecticut River.

The average monthly flow into the river was well below the amount allowed, and the levels of biochemical oxygen demand (BOD), a measure of organic matter, and total suspended solids (TSS) removed by the treatment process were also above the state and federal criteria. The level of acidity, or pH, in the effluent fell within the criteria as well.

"We met permit [requirements] on all of our different parameters," Little said.

Little also reported on the plant's new dechlorination process, intended to balance the need for greater levels of chlorine to kill pathogens with the need to reduce the amount

of the chemical that then flows into the river. A test run of the system "went very well," she said, and the state was notified.

At Ellis's request, the board approved an agreement with FirstLight Power to allow signs at three access points below the dam on the Connecticut River warning of combined sewer overflows (CSOs). CSOs occur when heavy rains cause sanitary sewage to overflow into the river, bypassing the treatment process.

Ellis said the signage will be located just below the dam, at Cabot Woods in the Patch, and at Poplar Street in Montague City, all potential access points for boaters and rafters. The signs will include a QR code directing boaters and fishers to the town website, where information about CSO events is posted by the health department.

The CSO signage is unrelated to FirstLight's federal relicensing process. Ellis told the board that local towns and the power company are "moving forward" to reach settlements on outstanding recreational and cultural resources agreements despite the missed March 31 deadline set by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. "It is likely we will be able to bring something forward to the selectboard and to the public for consideration," Ellis said, "but that is still not confirmed."

Ellis noted that company's "next deadline" to get agreements in would be May 31, before the federal environmental analysis is "triggered."

**Other Business**

At the request of library director Caitlin Kelley the board transferred \$2,750 from the town's "community development discretionary unallocated fund" into the "community development library outdoor facilities fund" to pay for a tent for outdoor children's programming. Kuklewicz noted that the tent vendor, Hilltown Tents, had reduced their price by 75%.

The board executed a Massachusetts Cultural Council grant to help fund a "Makers Market" event on Saturday, June 3. The event, sponsored by the parks and recreation department as well as Nova Motorcycles and Pioneer Valley Brewery, will take place at the end of Second Street next to Unity Park.

Licenses for the "extended use of public property" for outdoor dining were approved by the board for the Upper Bend café, on the Avenue A sidewalk, and Pioneer Valley Brewery, for the alley between the brewery and Unity Park. The walkway next to the park will remain open to foot traffic.

The board appointed Eli Smith to the tree advisory committee.

"I kinda can see you're a young guy behind the mask, so thank you," said Kuklewicz. "We need more young people to volunteer for things."

Bogusz reviewed the selectboard's summer meeting schedule, with the first meeting of each month held in hybrid format and the rest virtually. Between June 12 and the end of August, the board will tentatively meet every other week.

The board retired into an executive session for contract negotiations with Little and police lieutenant Chris Bonnett. The next scheduled meeting will be held Monday, April 24 via Zoom.

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

Here's the way it was on April 11, 2013: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

**Expanded VY Evac Zone Endorsed**

Residents Jean Bergstrom and Ann Ferguson attended this week's Leverett selectboard meeting to seek endorsement of a town meeting article calling for Entergy Vermont Yankee to expand planning and preparation for the emergency evacuation zone around its 41-year-old reactor at Vernon, VT.

Leverett emergency planner Jim Field attended the meeting, and brought maps showing the path of the worst concentrations of radiation from the Fukushima meltdowns, which he said exceeded government safety standards of exposure in a concentrated area up to 23 miles from those damaged reactors.

"You don't need to convince us," said selectboard member Peter d'Errico.

**Judd Wire Hires New Prez**

The Judd Wire company, one of the largest employers in Montague, has announced that Hidetoshi "Toshi" Kinuta stepped down as President and CEO effective April 1. Kinuta, who has been with Judd Wire since it was purchased by the Japanese firm Sumitomo Electric in 1988, is being replaced by Hiroyuki "Hiro" Watanabe.

Judd's products are used in satellites, guided missiles, automotive airbag ignition systems, medical electronics and rail transit, among others. The company has plants in Montague and San Marcos, California, with the Montague facility employing about 275 of its 300 employees.

**20 YEARS AGO**

Here's the way it was on April 10, 2003: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

**School Committee to Reconsider Layoffs**

Controversy over the non-renewal notices sent to elementary principals Bob Mahler, of Gill Elementary School, and Anna Garbiel, of the Montague Center School, dominated Tuesday night's meeting of the Gill-Montague school committee.

The committee heard the concerns of a group of nearly a hundred parents and teachers from both towns, who had gathered over 700 signatures in three days from local residents asking for the notices to be rescinded.

By the end of the meeting, the committee voted six to two, with one abstention, to ask superintendent Brenda Finn to reconsider

opening the search for elementary principals and to discuss with Mahler and Garbiel the possibility of reassigning the principals within the district.

**A Source of Pride for 50 Years**

Carroll's Supermarket is located on East Main Street in Millers Falls. It fits the requirements of an old-time general store, one that has managed against all odds to persevere, modernize, and provide a full assortment of what a regular person needs to survive in this day and age.

Carroll's stands out for its homemade products – fresh rice pudding, tapioca, homestyle baked beans, German-style potato salad, fresh and spicy ground horseradish, and of course their *pièce de résistance*: boneless chicken wings, bathed in hot and spicy or honey barbecue sauce.

**150 YEARS AGO**

Here's the way it was on April 16, 1873: News from the Turners Falls Reporter's archive.

**Local Matters**

BEAUTIFUL days, and moonlight nights.

Workmen are engaged in grading Prospect, Seventh and G streets.

The Oakman School House, on the hill, is being finished up, and furniture for two rooms has been ordered.

Zenas Clapp is getting ready to erect a store on his lot corner Avenue A and Seventh street. The building is to be 60x30.

The Germans commemorated the death of Our Saviour, on Friday, by religious services, which were quite largely attended.

The new wheel from the Clark & Chapman Machine shop was put into the Montague Mill at the

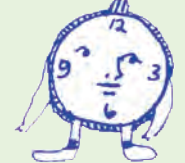
first of the week.

R.L. Goss is having plans prepared for his new building, corner Avenue A and Fourth street. It is to be similar to the Farren House in size and style.

The Turners Falls Pulp Company have been "having a spring cleaning." They are repainting their machinery, etc. Will start up again in a day or two.

The walls of the Pastor's residence, on Seventh and L streets, are all ready for the brick, but a delay is experienced in getting them. Father Quaille expects to occupy his new home about the first of August.

When are we to have some more places to live in? The best investment that could be made in Turners Falls to-day would be the erection of at least twenty-five neat, pretty cottages. We will guarantee to let every one of them, to first-class tenants, as fast as completed.



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**FUEL AID** from page A1

put it. By the end of January, the *Montague Reporter* reported, fewer than half of the 7,448 applications CAPV had received had been processed, and of those that were, nearly one-third had been approved after becoming emergency circumstances.

Since then, CAPV has hired four full-time and one part-time employee to catch up. Tasks formerly managed by the fuel assistance manager were assigned to two new positions: a LIHEAP coordinator and a data management coordinator.

As of last Friday, according to CAPV energy director Peter Wingate, the organization had received 8,552 applications for fuel assistance and had processed 7,126, or 83%. That figure includes all applications that have been accepted, denied, or deemed incomplete.

Wingate told the *Reporter* his office is now processing applications at a rate of about 1,600 per month. Of all applicants, he said, about 25% were applying for the first time; the nonprofit received about 2,000 more applications than last year.

The number of applications processed as emergencies also jumped significantly this year, from 605 to at least 1,734. When an applicant is days away from running out of fuel or falling behind on their electric bill, it is considered an emergency, and CAPV is required to address the situation within 18 business hours.

Benefits granted under LIHEAP depend on household size, income, and heating costs, and have ranged from \$840 to \$2,200 annually. Wingate said more federal and state funding has newly become available for the program, which will increase the maximum benefit for most recipients and gives his organization more money to process the applications.

“We always move forward with the expectation of funds, then have to respond to actual funding levels,” Wingate told the *Reporter*. “This year we did not know our actual funding level until April – for a program that started October 1. It makes it difficult to plan and execute the program not knowing your budget for the first six months.”

In Massachusetts, the deadline to apply has been extended from the end of this month to May 12 in response to the additional funding. While LIHEAP can only pay for fuel delivered from November to April, unspent benefits can be rolled into the next season.

The state is also integrating the verification processes for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and LIHEAP so applicants for food and heating aid no longer have to verify their income twice. About half of all households applying for LIHEAP receive SNAP, said Wingate, and this spring the expedited program will receive a “trial run.”

“[W]e actively encourage folks to apply,” Wingate said. “We often hear from folks, especially elders, who fear that if they use fuel assistance, there will be less for others who may be in greater need. The state, and Community Action, is very well funded for all.”

For next season, Wingate said CAPV will push the state to make sure it is prepared to accept new online applications, and to give its contracted agencies a clearer idea of how much funding they have to work with. “Unfortunately, we never have assurances for the next season,” Wingate said. “However, LIHEAP is a program that has support from both Republicans and Democrats, and has been funded every year for decades.”



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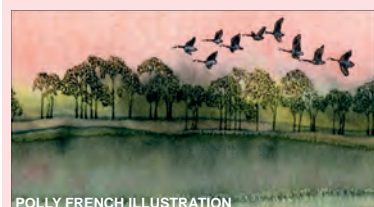


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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

APRIL 13, 2023



## WEST ALONG THE RIVER STEPPING STONES TO TRUE SPRING

POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

BY DAVID BRULE

**THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE** – Sometimes gray and damp, other times sun and latent chill, spring’s always a tease.

By March’s end, a wave of song sparrows finally reached this northern yard during the night, and daily now song trills forth from every low bush and twig perch. A dozen came in to join our one lone resident songster. He spent the winter with us, quietly and earnestly procuring his breakfast in his solitary way, away from the swarm of ruffian English sparrows.

This one lone song sparrow individual started tuning up his pipes around March 15, and now has a baker’s dozen of back-up group members and competitors vying for spring’s attention.

Long ago, my first song sparrows would sing from the top of the tufted cattails standing guard over the marsh at the Narrows, near my boyhood home. That marsh is gone, disappeared and drowned under the power company’s heightened dam, but that first bird from seventy years ago still sings in my memory. His descendants now echo that aria from back beyond the 1950s.

By the first week of April, the river rushes loudly by the old house, white water pours over boulders in the stream. Below the house, wood ducks arrive on the frog pond, where the batrachians cavort, croak, and copulate with joyous abandon. They chant in the first warm sunshine of spring and just as quickly the next day remain deadly silent in the gray cloud chill of near-freezing weather.

I can confirm that the wall-eyed woodcock has come and gone, done his twilight dance, whether in wood margin or our backyard lawn. He’s moved up to the highlands of East Mineral Mountain that overlooks this neighborhood

along the river. Up there, his mate will rear another generation of woodcock. They’ll all be back down here in the lowlands come July and August. Grandfather used to shoot them back at the beginning of the 1900s, but now they’re safe with us, far from the shotgun.

A company of deep russet fox sparrows (*Passerella iliaca*) have spent most of the month here before journeying further north. The bird guides say this species breeds in the taiga, the region that borders the arctic ecosystem. I’ve convinced them to linger awhile, using sheer willpower and enticing, top-shelf seed mix along with cracked corn. They in turn spend their days and evenings with us, scratching the earth under the slowly awakening lilacs.

The fox sparrows remind me of the russet Rhode Island Reds we used to raise here. Leaves fly up in the air as these sparrows thrust forward and back, eying the earth for their evening meal before dusk sends them off to roost. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* considers their spring song as the “richest and most melodious of all sparrows.” Rarely heard in these parts given their usually swift passage through the yard, the melody enhances the mood of the brightening morning, as does the dark coffee steaming at the writer’s elbow.

April 7 dawns after a light rain of the night before, but now the sun, accompanied by a lingering chill, reaches the corners of the woodshed, mostly empty save for my Adirondack chair. The woodpile cycle will be renewed over the coming months before the shed is once again filled by October. For now, next winter’s wood stays stacked, drying all by itself, out where the 1880s barn used to be.

That ghost of a barn, where Old Dan, one cow, and Depression-era pigs used to dwell, where horse tackle and pitchforks used

see **WEST ALONG** page B3



LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES ILLUSTRATION

Fox sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*).

*Above: On Easter morning shortly before 8 a.m., the Northfield Fire Department responded to a fire At Our Mother of Perpetual Help Chapel at Thomas Aquinas College in East Northfield. Firetrucks and emergency service vehicles from Erving, Hinsdale, Turners Falls and Greenfield also responded. A reliable source told our photographer that the fire destroyed the sacristy where vestments are stored and where priests prepare for mass, and was caused by the careless disposal of a match by an altar boy.*

## CHECKING IN

# LAUGHING DOG FARM AT A DIFFICULT CROSSROAD

By DANIEL BOTKIN



SUFI ALI PHOTO

Danny Botkin holds chestnuts in this photo taken at Laughing Dog Farm in Gill.

**GILL** – On a sunny hilltop in Gill, on the site of a notorious but long-defunct commune, there’s a small organic farm that was the source of nearly thirty years of joy, learning, healing, and unbridled inspiration.

For over twenty-five years, my dear wife and I cultivated a permaculture-inspired sanctuary and homestead while practicing and refining a uniquely opportunistic, low-till, “guerrilla gardening” style of growing amazing organic food all around the calendar. Through it all, Divya and I worked doggedly and reveled in a cornucopia of heirloom veggies, fruits, chestnuts, goats, rabbits, milk, cheese, interns, and down-home, joyous living. Although modest in our reach, our farm became known and loved locally, and we’ve been celebrated as foodie role models of backyard permaculture and sustainable living.

Sadly, it turns out we were not actually as “sustainable” as folks thought or we’d hoped. Having abandoned the farm due to my failing health a year ago, the giant, problematic farmhouse was demolished the last week of March, and the farmer – me – is still facing down a medical crisis. The future of Laughing Dog Farm is wholly un-

see **FARM** page B5

## NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE BY TROUBLE MANDESON

**GREENFIELD** – “Fish! Fish! Fresh Fish!” Who remembers the Foster’s Supermarket commercial with patriarch Bud Foster’s immortal words referring to their seafood offerings purchased directly from the Boston pier three times a week? I love the fact that although we are landlocked in western Massachusetts, we can still purchase fish fresh from the not-so-far-away coast.

Our participation in a global marketplace means we can find items that don’t necessarily come from our local land or sea, but it is nice to choose to consume what’s native to our area if that’s a priority. We’re lucky that we have local retailers who make the journey to Boston, which is just within the 100-mile radius that comprises locally-sourced food.

Seafood is delicate and has a definite shelf life unless it’s dried or canned. It doesn’t last long when it’s fresh, and it’s not something we can just throw in the fridge and forget about like a jar of sauerkraut to be eaten in increments over a long period of time. It’s immediate and,



CATHY GOUGH PHOTO

A fried oyster po’ boy, enjoyed during a visit to New Orleans, makes for a satisfying meal with a mix of soft and crunchy textures.

for the best experience, it should be consumed while fresh, firm, and with no offensive odor.

It’s recommended by the American Heart Association that we eat fish at least two times per week, with pregnant women consuming less because of mercury found in

fish. Salmon, sardines, and trout are best as they have the lowest mercury levels. Additionally, uncooked fish should be avoided by pregnant women as microorganisms may harm a fetus.

Seafood is rich in so many see **HEARTFELT** page B2



# Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

## “BRIAN”

Meet Brian, an easygoing older Beagle who is looking for an easygoing home. He enjoys the comforts of indoors, but really enjoys being outside exploring, like Beagles do.

Brian is looking for a home with no kids – he’s old, he’s got arthritis and he just doesn’t have that kind of energy. He would be good with another calm dog to lounge around in the sun with, but we don’t know

how he would do with cats. Despite his age, he is still an on-the-go kind of guy.

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

## HEARTFELT from page B1

vitamins and minerals that support our health. With omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids essential for our immune system, eating fish helps to lower our risk of developing eye disease, heart attacks, strokes, and even lessens our chances of getting Alzheimer’s disease. It helps our brains to function better, provides high levels of protein, and is low in saturated fats. It’s a good alternative to red meat, especially for those worried about their cholesterol levels.

I read several articles which give conflicting dates on when humans began to consume seafood. Wikipedia puts it at 50,000 to 10,000 years ago in eastern Asia during the Upper Paleolithic period; *Science* magazine states that it was almost two million years ago, in Kenya, where evidence of fish bones and stone tools were uncovered; and to confuse the issue even further, *Scientific American* says humans were first eating fish 165,000 years ago, also in Africa.

Suffice it to say that early hunter-gatherer humans did eat seafood, even if we can’t pinpoint when they began. In Israel, researchers tested fossilized fish teeth to determine if they were cooked before being consumed, and while it isn’t known exactly how they may have been cooked, there is some evidence, including a lack of fishbones, which suggests the fish were subjected to high heat.

The great thing about fish and other seafoods is that they can be eaten



MANDESON PHOTO

Fish can be a great addition to a cocktail board. Here, smoked whitefish is enjoyed on a cracker with cheese and pickles.

raw or cooked, and there are so many ways to prepare them. One of our favorite seafood recipes is salmon patties made from canned salmon. I like to eat mine with lots of lemon juice or malt vinegar, while wifey likes to make her own tartar sauce – or “aioli,” if you want to be fancy – from mayonnaise, ketchup, lemon juice, and capers. Try the following recipe for salmon patties on a brioche bun for a really tasty fish sandwich.

Poke bowls, or diced fish salads, were popularized in Hawai’i and can now be found in some local co-ops. They are a complete meal in a bowl, and usually consist of cooked rice, cubed fish (raw or cooked), seaweed salad, pickled vegetables

and/or ginger, and sesame seeds, drizzled with an aioli or similar dressing. Ingredients vary but they are a lovely combination of flavors and textures. I’ve even made some of my own at home since my Hawai’i trip last year. They’re fun to put together from whatever variety of ingredients I have on hand.

On my recent trip to Spain, where I ate a lot of seafood, I noticed that the tuna they served came in large chunks rather than the small flakes we get in a can. Upon my return I started looking for Spanish tuna, and have begun to buy it packed in jars in either water or olive oil. While I haven’t yet found any from Spain, it is exported from other countries like Thailand and Mexico. I find the jarred tuna more flavorful overall. Naturally it’s more expensive than canned because it’s imported.

When cooking fish, a great rule of thumb is to cook it for approximately eight to nine minutes per inch of thickness, although it’s good to keep an eye on it when cooking as heat may be uneven. Fish is done when firm and opaque. It does keep cooking when you remove it from the heat, so remember to err on the side of just under-done.

It’s also good to brush your fish with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. A squeeze of lemon is a nice finish for any seafood. Or you can dip filets or chunks in beaten egg and breadcrumbs and fry it up for a nice crusty dish. Sautéing and grilling also work well for fish; there really is no end to how it can be prepared and enjoyed.

*Trouble lives in Greenfield with her wifey and energetically wrangles a farm office, loves to copyedit, write, and read, volunteers everywhere food is served, and has recently taken up painting.*



## EASY SALMON PATTIES

1 can of pink salmon, drained  
1 shallot or ¼ onion, minced  
1 Tbsp. horseradish sauce  
or Dijon mustard  
parsley and dill, dried or fresh, to taste  
1 Tbsp. of capers (optional)  
¼ cup breadcrumbs  
1 egg

Combine all ingredients and allow to sit in the fridge for 30 minutes. Form four patties and bake, fry, or grill them for about five minutes per side.

Enjoy with malt vinegar, lemon juice, or tartar sauce.



CATHY GOUGH PHOTO

A gorgeous salmon patty served up with a poached egg and a sprig of sage.

## Senior Center Activities APRIL 17 THROUGH 21

### 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](mailto:coa@leverett.ma.us).

### 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.

### 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 4/17

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
1 p.m. Kitchen Club

### Tuesday 4/18

9:30 a.m. Tuesday Knitters  
10 a.m. Fruit & Financials  
3 p.m. Tai Chi

### Wednesday 4/19

9 a.m. Veterans’ Hours  
10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

11:45 a.m. Friends’ Meeting

12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo

1:30 p.m. Food Bank

4 p.m. Mat Yoga

### Thursday 4/20

1 p.m. Cards & Games

### Friday 4/21

10:15 a.m. Aerobics

11 a.m. Chair Exercise

2 p.m. By the Seat of Your Dance

### ERVING

Open 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Open for cards, coffee, and snacks daily. Fitness room open daily.

Ask the Nurse and Blood Pressure Clinic is the first Tuesday of each month. 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.

### Monday 4/17

9 a.m. Interval  
10:15 a.m. Stretch & Infusion

### Tuesday 4/18

9 a.m. Good For U  
10 a.m. Line Dancing

### Wednesday 4/19

9 a.m. Cardio Low Impact  
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics

### Thursday 4/20

9 a.m. Core & Balance  
10 a.m. Barre Fusion

### Friday 4/21

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

## Montague Community Television News

# A Toxic Plug; Free Heat Pumps

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

**TURNERS FALLS** – They’re getting even more toxic as the weeks go on. Tune into “Toxic Reality” on MCTV to see what everyone’s talking about.

And aside from the Gill selectboard, Montague selectboard, and Montague finance committee meetings, MCTV has also uploaded information about free heat pumps and weatherization.

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

eos to be aired on Channel 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 checkout, 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 [infomontaguenvet@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguenvet@gmail.com).

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**WEST ALONG** from page B1 to hang. Now just a memory, but I know it's still there.

On a morning like this, there are wings and constant movement everywhere in the yard. Jet-black redwings swoop and sing, flashing their red epaulets to intimidate other males, while jays flash by in those spring baseball clothes of theirs. The clan of 12 song sparrows has lingered for the month, and their cousins, the four taiga fox sparrows, show no signs of wanting to move on. The pickin's here are pretty easy; no need to rush off.

Fine with me. I can still look forward to hearing that russet sparrow sing his rare spring song. It only happens once a year, if I'm lucky; he and his kin usually don't stick around long enough to feel inspired to sing. Once gone, he'll be back for a day or two in November. But let's not try to think that far ahead.

On Easter Monday, a sparkling frost covers all, but the promised bright sunshine will warm the yard and woods quickly. The whole bird kingdom seems to be calling out the news of the springtime resurrection. It always feels like that in this chorus: they are thanking us for helping them get through the winter. Juncos, song sparrows, whitethroats, chickadees, titmice, even jays raise their voices. Of course, they have their own reasons for singing, but it's nice to think it's in part for us too. Around here we barter bags of

winter birdseed in exchange for a yardful of spring song.

Even the wild goose couple residing now across the river in the beaverland oxbow trumpet their *halleluiahs*, echoing up and down the river in the bright morning.

Yonder hillside of the bowl of this curving valley is washed with a pastel pink and pale red as the maple buds emerge, coaxed out by the early spring sun.

But we are still weeks away from true spring. We in this region are fully familiar with the caprices of April.

*It is not enough that yearly, down this hill, April comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers...*

— Edna St. Vincent Millay

We know how teasing spring can be, even covering us with a cloak of snow at some point in the fourth month of the year, before those days of May. Then all of outdoors will be a riot of flowering dogwood, cherry, apple, lilac all at once. Those late spring colors will be all ephemeral brilliance, a book-end set of two with blazing October far into the future. But in between, oh what a time we'll have!

But still that's only a promise, a wink, and a handshake. We'll take it one day at a time.

We do give ourselves permission, however, to celebrate with the birds, to be thankful that once again, we have made it through five months of New England winter.



## EXHIBITS

**Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls:** *Life is \_\_\_: an Exploration of Being through the Eyes of Young People.* Youth from the Brick House Teen Center artfully explore their experiences of living in modern rural America using a variety of mediums. Created in partnership with the Smithsonian *Crossroads* exhibition. Through April 26.

**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 April 30.

**Barnes Gallery, Leverett Crafts and Arts:** *Over Under and Through the Warp: The Art of Tapestry Weaving,* group show of textile artists. Through April 30.

**Goose Divine Energy, Greenfield:** *Topographies and Other Surface Tensions.* Dr. Adhi Two Owls explores the surfaces of natural forms. Through June 15.

**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. Through April.

**LAVA Center, Greenfield:** *Taking Flight,* paintings of birds by Annie Quest and photographs of big birds by Lindy Whiton.

**Artspace Gallery, Greenfield:** *A Pastel Exhibition.* The Mill Street Artists (Becky Clark's students) exhibit their work. April 14 to 27. Reception this Friday, April 14, from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

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

**Leverett Library:** *Words of Inspiration,* paintings by Jane Gruber. Through April 27.

**Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls:** *Apricity,* photographs by Carin Teresa. *The Worlds Below Us,* paintings by Rosa Beryl. Through June 26.

**Shelburne Arts Coop Gallery, Shelburne Falls:** *You Wear That Well,* wearable textile art by Nancy Baker, Arthur de Bow, and Sue Kranz. Through April.

**Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield:** *STEAM-Y Art and Science,* art that incorporates the sciences. Through May 14.

**Sunderland Library:** *Art with Heart.* Local artists work with grieving children in the Center for Grieving Children and Teens, a Cooley Dickinson Hospital program. Through May 4.

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

**Gallery A3, Amherst:** *Becoming Form,* abstract paintings by Karen Iglehart. Through April.

**Anchor House of Artists, Northampton:** *Primordial Memory,* new work by Anna Bayles Arthur. *Way Out There: Drawings from the Field,* sketches from biking around New England by Micah Litant. *Finding,* abstract oil paintings by Robert Markey. Reception and poetry events during Arts Night Out this Friday, April 14, from 7 to 9 p.m.

**Brattleboro Museum and Art Center:** Keith Haring: *Subway*

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

### Cane Guy Makes A Splash; Accident Across Bridge; Hug Didn't Work; Car Fells Tree; Knock-Knock-Ditch

#### Monday, 4/3

8:03 a.m. 911 caller reporting that his vehicle was hit by a recycling bin that fell in front of him while driving on Sunderland Road. Damage to passenger-side mirror. Caller will come in later this afternoon to make a report. Caller did not come to department.

4:29 p.m. Caller from Highland Street states that every day cars speed by his house and misuse lanes. Today he was turning into his driveway and a car passed on the left, then passed the car in front of him as well; a woman and her children had to be yanked back into their yard to avoid being hit. Caller states multiple vehicles do this at all times of the day. Referred to an officer.

4:42 p.m. Caller states he is sitting in town at the Steel Bridge and being harassed by cars that drive by. States he knows the occupants of the vehicle are purposefully doing this, as they are often intoxicated while harassing him. Caller able to give plate number for one vehicle. Caller advised of options; has moved along.

#### Tuesday, 4/4

7:42 a.m. Caller states a male in a black track suit with a cane is yelling and banging at a neighbor's door on Avenue A. While on the phone, caller states the male left the building and is yelling from the sidewalk. Officer spoke to involved male, who was on the phone just having a loud, heated conversation; no problems.

8:12 a.m. Caller states two males, one dressed all in black walking with a cane, are fighting on Avenue A near Third Street; states she yelled out the window for them to stop, and she heard mention of him having a gun. Second caller states male from previous call is back inside the building. Officers confirm male is not in possession of a firearm. Female victim not being cooperative in giving name. Male told to leave and not return.

8:17 a.m. Caller states that three apparently domesticated ducks are in Greenfield Road near Randall Road; they seem confused. Unable to locate.

8:22 a.m. Requesting officer go to Turners Falls High School for vandal-

ism. School is aware. Report taken.

10:34 a.m. Caller reports fighting is going on again on Avenue A; states involved parties do not even live there; believes same male party from previous calls is involved. Received a second call stating an older man with a cane wearing a dark-colored jacket is causing a disturbance at the same address. Officer out with male party matching description at the Avenue A/Third Street bus stop. Tenant of apartment and subject causing disturbance advised of trespass options. Subject stated he will not return.

11:14 a.m. Party from Bridge Street came to department looking to speak to an officer about a male party who stole gas cans out of his yard. States he has videos for evidence. Officer advised. Party states he will come back tomorrow morning. Officer advised.

1:36 p.m. 911 caller from Greenfield states there is a car on its side on Turners Falls Road with entrapment of occupants. Transferred to Greenfield PD; all GPD units on their way to accident scene.

1:38 p.m. Greenfield PD requesting road closure at canal bridge due to two-car accident. Officer shutting down road. One involved party from accident with officer now. Greenfield made aware of second vehicle. Party denies need for medical attention. Heavy damage to car. One involved party brought home by her sister. Greenfield requesting ambulance for male party with stomach injury. Male party not transported to hospital. Road reopened.

3:43 p.m. Caller from Chestnut Street states her neighbor is having a fire in the backyard, but his yard is too small, and her house is filled with asbestos. Call given to Shelburne Control.

7 p.m. Caller states she was driving on Route 47 earlier today when a vehicle ran a stop sign, cut her off, and almost hit her. Caller states the side of the van has "Elite" written on it, but she could not find what company that was. Vehicle owned by a gutter company in Springfield.

11:16 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street asked if we are busy; states she might need the cops to her house; yelling could be heard in background; caller was telling someone to get out. Caller then stated "Never mind, my daughter left, I don't need anything right now" and hung up the phone. All quiet; nothing showing. Daughter has active warrant.

11:34 p.m. 911 caller from K Street states her apartment is filling with smoke and her detectors are going off; source of smoke unknown. She is getting her daughter and going outside. Control contacted to dispatch TFFD.

#### Wednesday, 4/5

12:22 p.m. Caller advises he just struck a deer near the Rod & Gun Club on Turners Falls Road. Car has some damage; deer is injured in road. Environmental Police officer dispatched deer prior to MPD officer's arrival. DPW notified of animal in road.

8:35 p.m. Multiple callers reporting two-car accident at Park and Unity streets. No injuries reported. Officer requesting Rau's for tow.

10:22 p.m. 911 caller from Keith Apartments states a female party is slamming on the windows and doors, has paper plates thrown in front of her door and trash all over her porch. Officer advises no answer at door. All quiet upon arrival. Spoke to caller and advised of options.

#### Thursday, 4/6

1:06 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that a male party in her apartment is refusing to leave. Male party gone on officers' arrival. Officers checking area on foot to try to locate male and tell him not to go back.

3:29 p.m. Caller from L Street reporting that he observed an adolescent male putting a large kitchen knife in his pants and walking near the gas station. Officer searched area; unable to locate.

6:15 p.m. 911 caller states he was just assaulted and the vehicle took off. Caller states he was in the crosswalk at Seventh and L Streets; a car didn't stop; he yelled at them; the car then went around the block, came back, and assaulted him. After speaking with caller, officer advises incident not as reported; no need to continue looking for car.

#### Friday, 4/7

1:39 p.m. 911 caller states that a driver who was at her house yesterday to pick up a dumpster broke her car windshield before the PD arrived. PD was responding to a well-being check at the same time that the dumpster driver was there. Report taken.

#### Saturday, 4/8

8:33 p.m. Caller from L Street states that for the second night in a row, people are knocking on the front and back doors of his house then running away. Caller states he looked outside tonight and saw two individuals; he yelled at them to come back, but they laughed and walked away. Requesting that offi-

cers drive by the area as his children are now scared. Officers will be in area.

11:10 p.m. 911 caller reports that a male party who is known to her knocked on her door upset and crying, so she gave him a hug. Caller states male party pushed past her and mumbled bad stuff was going to happen to the caller; he started opening packages that belonged to her mother while he muttered "Money." Caller told male to stop; he began to wrestle with her and choke her. Caller states her mother was able to get male out of the house; he is no longer on scene. Officer advises no injuries; involved parties will be filling out statements.

11:45 p.m. Caller from L Street reports someone has been knocking in his door for the past several days and states he has footage of the individual. Caller into station to speak with officer and show camera footage. Officer advises he checked the area extensively and did not see anyone matching the description. Officer at involved location asking clerk if they recognize the person in the photo. Officer advises clerk has not seen anyone; however, a patron did note a group of kids walking together in the downtown area. Officer out with juveniles and individual matching description caller provided earlier. Officer spoke with juveniles and moved them along; advises he witnessed them return to address on L Street. Officer states caller was advised of findings and does not want to press charges.

#### Sunday, 4/9

1:30 a.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road states that he was watching TV and observed/heard a vehicle hit the curb, strike a planted tree down, and hit a parked vehicle, then take off. Report taken.

9:23 a.m. Caller states that the rental car her sister is using was hit while parked overnight in a parking lot on Turners Falls Road. (See previous call.) Advised of options.

11:36 a.m. Caller states that the front doors to Montague Village Store are unlocked, but the lights are off and no one appears to be inside. Contact made with new owner. They are responding.

6:37 p.m. Caller states she is receiving harassing phone calls and texts because someone posted her information on Facebook with a picture of litter with her name on it. Referred to an officer.

7:24 p.m. Caller states there are two loose horses near Stoney's on Federal Street. Caller called back stating that the owners arrived home and the horses are put away.

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By RICHARD ANDERSEN

**MONTAGUE** – The year is 1869. A precocious twenty-two-year-old French kid publishes his first book, *Les Chants de Maldoror* (*The Songs of the Maldoror*), under the pseudonym Comte de Lautréamont.

Only this count is a no-count. His real name is Isidore Ducasse. In two years, he'll be found dead in a shed, but not before publishing under the same pseudonym a collection of seemingly random thoughts on a considerable range of subjects. He called this book *Poésies*.

Both books had long been resid-

## BOOK REVIEW

# Lauçanno Translates the Work of a French Surrealist Icon

ing in the dustbin of pulp when a copy of *Maldoror* was discovered in 1917. It had been accidentally misplaced on a bookstore shelf next to "Mathematics." Surrealist-in-Chief André Breton was called in for his opinion, and he quickly pronounced *Maldoror* the birthplace of Surrealism. Welcome, Comte, to the Pantheon of Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and Sade.

Were there other works written by the same Lautréamont? Breton found *Poésies* in the first place he looked: the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. He was so taken with Lautréamont's free-associational ranges of thought and distinctly individual prose style that he copied out the whole book by hand.

It later appeared in the first edition of Breton's Surrealist magazine *Littérature* in 1919, and, by 1927 both books were contained in a collection with the name Isidore Ducasse on the cover. Subsequent editions appeared in 1938, 1953, 1958, 1973, and 2009 with a special edition of just *Poésies* in 2016.

It is this special edition that Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno used as his source for launching *Poésies* into its English-language debut. And check out the cover by Imogene Pruitt-Spence: a strikingly beautiful, metaphorical design that so well encapsulates all that is contained between the covers that you can judge the book by it.

As with his previous translations, the newly christened *Poetry* maintains and extends Sawyer-Lauçanno's ability to deliver reader-accessible prose that is as close to the original texts as the English language can provide without being strictly literal. While it may still be "surreal," it's no longer avant garde.

At first encounter, *Poetry* appears and reads like a collection of miscellaneous email messages. Some are as short as a few words:

*The moderation of great men limits only their virtues.*

*The best way to persuade is not to persuade.*

Other dogmatic pronounce-

ments never run longer than a single paragraph:

*The masterpieces of French language are school award speeches, and the academic speeches. Indeed, the instructor of youth is perhaps the finest expression of duty, and a good appreciation of the works of Voltaire (look up the word appreciation) is preferable to the works themselves. Naturally!*

Just what you'd expect from a kid still young enough to know some things about everything and everything about some things?

Well, in a word, yes.

What makes Ducasse's pronouncements grab hold of our attention – aside from his youthful, often arrogant tone of voice – is the attention he pays to the world in which he lives. Unlike so many of us today – old as well as young – his ability to focus on subjects of serious consideration hasn't been hijacked by social media platforms

playing handmaiden to the kinds of consumption being orchestrated by our product-defined culture.

Ducasse lived before everything became a commodity, and everyone had yet to be monetized.

When did sustained focus and serious critical thinking become undermined by profit and political power agendas? Pay attention to what really matters, Ducasse is telling us. Facts are the enemy of truth. Focus on the dramas taking place beneath the words that parade through our cultural discourse:

"When a thought presents itself to us as a truth that roams the streets, when we take the trouble to develop it, we find that it is a discovery."

*Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno is the editor of this newspaper's monthly Poetry Page. A few copies of this very limited edition of Poetry are available for sale (\$50) at the offices of the Montague Reporter. Call (413) 863-8666 to arrange purchase and pickup at the newspaper's 177 Avenue A location.*

## MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN



### #LVIII: Ian Nagoski

Interview by J. BURKETT

**TURNERS FALLS** – "I'm a music researcher and record producer specializing in early 20th century musics in languages other than English. I have a record label called Canary. I live in Baltimore, Maryland."

This is Ian Nagoski's simple description of himself on his Bandcamp page, but it's really just the tip of the "Ian iceberg." In the past 20-plus years of doing deep research and issuing compilations, Ian has shown us a lot of amazing stuff that most of the world had no idea about.

If you are into old music, especially 78s, then this interview is right up your alley. Or if you just want to read about an interesting guy with a different kind of life, then you will probably be interested too. Actually, I recommend reading this to anyone.

Ian constantly tours doing lectures, so check him out next time he's in the area. I also think he still buys interesting 78s, if there are some in your attic...

**MMM:** Hi Ian! Can you tell us about your youth? How did you get into music?

**IN:** I was born in Wilmington, Delaware and came from a musical household where I was taught by my mother and grandfa-

ther, and lived in a house full of instruments: a nice piano, a half-dozen guitars, a century-old banjo, dozens of harmonicas, an accordion, a mandolin, a drumset, etc. There was a small, interesting record collection that included "far out" leftovers from my father's art-student hippiedom.

My sisters and I attended dance classes. We never had enough money, and I was sometimes cold or hungry and often sick, until I was 13 or 14 years old, at which point I knew my way around a few instruments and identified as a musician, although I never played well.

I dabbled as a songwriter for several years as a teenager, going so far as to release a couple tapes. I was a drummer initially, then taught myself guitar. I played in school bands and had garage bands, playing the kind of "college" or "psychedelic" rock that was what smart kids of the late '80s were listening to.

I did go looking for peculiar music in peculiar places and was voracious about it. I equated music with ethics, although I'm ashamed to admit that I sometimes stole in order to fill the need and sense of deprivation that I had.

**MMM:** And you worked in record stores growing up, right? Is that when you got into 78s?

**IN:** My first jobs outside the fam-

ily business were shelving books at the library at 15, then – having dropped out of high school at 16; I was a terrible student – working in record shops from 16 to 19, with intermittent library jobs.

I attended university part-time for several years, thinking I'd study art history like my dad, before deciding to do something that would combine anthropology and music when I was about 19. I found out that was called "ethnomusicology," a subject that was not taught where I lived. I tried to transfer somewhere else to study that but was rejected.

I quit school at 21 and moved to Manhattan to live with "far out" artists, but it was like another strange parent-child relationship that I didn't want. I gave that up after six months and went home to start over.

**MMM:** You had your own record store...

**IN:** I spent all of my 20s making experimental electronic music that no one wanted to hear, but when I became a father at 30 years old, the time it took to lose money making my art was untenable. So, with a loan of five grand from my parents – which I never repaid – and similar investments from two friends, we opened a record shop, which I ran for nearly five years.

During that time, a behavior I'd picked up of buying foreign-language 78 rpm discs over a decade or so resulted in my releasing a CD collection called *Black Mirror: Reflections in Global Musics*. In the process of making that, I realized a couple things: one, I could learn to tell stories about old records, and two, there were some really interesting stories that hadn't been told before.

**MMM:** Can you talk about the reissue set that you put out called *To What Strange Place? It's one of my favorite reissues ever!*

**IN:** This was during the period '06 to '09, the second Bush administration when the US was still deep in the Afghan and Iraq wars, and when the financial system collapsed. The story that compelled me the most had to do with immigrants from the Near East – speakers of Greek, Turkish, Arabic, and Armenian. It gave me a chance to learn a lot about America.

After a few years of work, during which time I supported myself in menial work and again periodically went hungry or faced my utilities being shut off or being evicted, I published a 3-CD set called *To What Strange Place: The Musics of the Ottoman-American Diaspora*.

**MMM:** What about your reissues on the Mississippi label?

**IN:** Another record shop that opened around the same time as my store was a place in Portland, Oregon called Mississippi, and we saw eye-to-eye. They started releasing LPs and asked me to make records for them. That worked out well for several years, and I got a few ambitious projects done, along with a few glorified mixtapes that I now regard as a bit half-baked.

But by around 2010, the party trick I'd had of playing 78s and telling stories about them became elaborated into lecture tours. I went around Europe a bunch of times and found that I loved touring, even just breaking even, as I had as an electronic musician in my 20s.

I've always been a bit of a ham, and sharing to audiences things that mattered to me intensely was very gratifying.

**MMM:** So you mostly tour and do lectures now? What are some of your favorite current projects?

**IN:** After getting divorced in 2013, I again found myself doing menial work to survive between lectures, writing gigs, and small reissue projects. Around that time I began regularly uploading small projects to Bandcamp, combining my ability to make mixtapes, do sound restoration, and write liner notes.

In the past decade, I have uploaded nearly 100 projects of widely varying scale to Bandcamp, a handful of which have resulted in physical releases. The most significant of them was a book and CD project that I published last year in collaboration with two researcher friends, Harout Arakelian and Harry Kezelian, with funding from the Gulbenkian Foundation in Portugal on the subject of an Armenian-American soprano to whom I have been especially devoted named Zabelle Panosian.

I'm very proud of that project,

and although its success has been marginal, I hope to do more of that kind of work on some other performers whose work especially interests me.

**MMM:** What would you like to do in the future?

**IN:** In particular, this year I hope to publish a project I've been working on for many years on a performer named Charles Kellogg who was a celebrity over a century ago for both his ability to imitate birds and various other animals as well as his message of the interconnectedness of all beings on Earth. He was an utterly American performer, driven relentlessly by the need to earn a living on the road and by a novel sense of environmentalism in our newly industrialized society.

Having worked for a decade with my dear, old friend Rich Pell, whom I've known since we were both teenagers in the same high school and in the same rock band, and who now is an Art Professor at Carnegie Mellon University and the curator of a small museum called the Center for Post-Natural History, I think that I can get this done soon.

**MMM:** Do you have any advice to younger folks working in this field?

**IN:** The best advice I could give to a young person is the advice my old friend Blaster Al Ackerman got when he wrote to the great writer Frederic Brown back in the 1950s. Brown told him: "Always try to be lucky enough to work in a despised medium."

If you're not climbing a ladder, and if you don't have something to live up to, you can really do some good work, so long as you don't mind being ignored, maybe forever...

**MMM:** Thanks so much! Any last stories or jokes?

**IN:** Best joke related to this?

A snail, crawling along, got jumped by two turtles who beat him up, stole his wallet, and left him for dead in an alley.

The cops showed up and asked him, "Who did this? How did it happen?"

"I don't know," he said. "It all happened so fast."

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**FARM** from page B1

Over our years at LDF, we laughingly tagged our little operation “farming on the fringe” as a humorous nod to our thin experience, advancing age, and all the money we did not make. After surviving through 9/11, the Bush/Iraq War years, the war on terror, the climate crisis, and then Trump, we decided this moniker might also refer to our living on the dark fringe of history, with ominous “Earth Changes,” war, political chaos (and school shootings) still plaguing our singularly favorite species and planet.

Reacting to the extreme alienation and upheaval of the '60s, the commune hippies that preceded us here on the land aspired to create an entirely new social order based on a lovely shared vision of radical collectivism. But what began with wide-eyed group meditation, hard work, and random acts of charity devolved over time, due largely to the untamed ego and drug-induced chaos of their mercurial founder, Michael. After several years of struggle Michael was eventually banished from the land, and the commune functionally ceased to exist in the '80s, not without significant heartache and lingering acrimony.

Knowing the history of our land only increased my own belief in and longing for enduring community for ourselves and for our little farm. I too had harbored utopian dreams and fantasies of “collective agrarian living,” and once spent a year at age 19 hitchhiking around America visiting and “studying” various communes and communal farms out west.

From the start we invited all manner of visitation and collaboration at Laughing Dog, with the underlying, explicit hope that enduring comrades and/or co-stewards or co-owners might one day join and grow with us.

We ended up having our own long history of diverse and interesting farm interns, housemates, WWOOFers, and other prospective partners over the years. They came to visit and tour the farm, they stayed, they worked, they learned, they participated in all aspects of our little operation. They cooked and ate with us, took care of the animals, and made music, and they partied in the evenings. Some stayed a week, some a season, some even a year or two. Some ended up spinning off and starting their own farms and related green projects in the



*Laughing Dog Farm in full bloom, several seasons ago.*

Valley, across the nation, and the world over!

Some were dynamic, invaluable, amazing additions to our lives, others were more challenging. And yes, we had a few disasters, deeply wounded souls we mistakenly allowed to land and live here, folks that ultimately sucked our focus and sometimes had to be shoehorned away!

Despite the challenges, I have loved these group living experiences. I especially treasured the many, many opportunities to mentor and teach what I love with folks of all ages and backgrounds who were so hungry to learn. But I have been repeatedly sobered by the enormous challenge of navigating cohabitation and community-building, even with like-minded, progressive, smart, and experienced folks. I often said that organic farming and hand-driven permaculture are hugely challenging, but that “people are, by far, the toughest nut.”

Nonetheless, we kept at it, season after season, year after year. That is, until the pandemic interrupted it all.

The truth is, we long recognized that we were wildly, ridiculously over our heads as we attempted to micromanage five acres of

annual gardens, perennials, two greenhouses, diverse orchards, bees, goats and rabbits – all by hand – plus educational programs, a small CSA, two farmers markets, etc., with just one geezer farmer, his loyal wife, and a smattering of WWOOFers, housemates, and itinerant helpers.

It was always a glorious, noble, and deliciously fun adventure, but we knew in our bones it would ultimately require a village to keep the farm alive, and to achieve true sustainability. This simple truth repeatedly reminded us that all of our lovely life’s work and mission hinged precariously upon our continued, robust, good health.

I always intuited the fragile and transitory nature of life. As a small child I remember lying awake in my bed waiting for the “atom bomb” to fall. As an adult I became more adept at keeping war, politics, and other worldly affairs at arms’ length by immersing myself in useful, positive, and productive pursuits.

As a white, middle-class, educated Jewish guy, I knew that I held great privilege. I’ve tried, in my own small way, to parlay that gift and pay it forward. My greatest joys came as a teacher, mentor, farmer, facilitator, and counselor. I’ve had highly satisfying stints as youth counselor, outdoor leader, health/sex educator, street performer, footbag coach, permaculture practitioner, animal husband, and gardening muse. I was repeatedly fortunate to find creative ways to be the “missionary” and to become, in my small but creative way, part of the “solution.”

I had always known that our blissful run working the land would have to wind down at some point, but I had no idea the end would come so soon, or so abruptly! The farm is now abandoned, the house gone, the gardens and greenhouses in hiatus, the animals all given away. The “hoophouse” adventures are suspended, as well as the mentoring, the permaculture, the hosting and feeding, the bees, the goat walks, the chèvre, the celebrating the good life and the changing seasons. Our hearts are shattered. But it is what it is. Nobody is exempt, I see, from the brutal vicissitudes of life.

It is all around us. Just read the news.

We abandoned the farm one year ago thinking the house might have made me sick. But a year away has yielded no improvement. Neither allopathic, nor alternative, nor integrative medicine have helped me turn a corner yet, either, on what presents as a complex, multi-symptom, auto-immune condition.

I am currently working with a “functional” medicine team that focuses on toning and (re)regulating the autonomic nervous system away from shutdown and “protection” as the key to healing and regeneration, whether from stress, trauma, or biological dysfunction. Was it indeed stress, mold, toxins, or trauma that brought on my medical woes? And how does one aging farmer reclaim his “ventral vagal” legacy with his entire world in freefall?

The demolition of “Michael’s” house took a mere several hours. I was stunned to see how easily the entire structure crumbled and crushed beneath one giant hydraulic bulldozer. We are hoping to rebuild a smaller, more efficient, one-story ranch with the capability of accommodating ourselves and another person or couple. We still hope to find another visionary land steward or entrepreneur, or a couple, who might value our land as we do and help us maintain all the fruit and nut trees and some of the ample gardens, build upon the permaculture legacy, and perhaps inherit the future.

Apart from our own uncertain destiny, we’d like to see the land and the rich, deep soil of Laughing Dog Farm cherished and preserved as a green sanctuary in service to the regional community that supported us along the way. An outpouring of love and kindness from family, friends, fans, and loyal boosters has helped us reconcile the difficult current reality facing our beloved Laughing Dog Farm.

We are grateful. But, like, the world at large, our trajectory remains precarious and uncertain.

Danny Botkin can be reached via the Laughing Dog Farm Facebook page, or at dannybotkin@gmail.com.



SARAH ROBERTSON PHOTO



SARAH ROBERTSON PHOTO

Top: The farm house in mid-January of this year. Above: The author harvests kale in the farm’s main greenhouse, again in mid-January. Right: The farm house was demolished at the end of March. “The long term calculus of renovation and remediation ultimately could not be justified,” Botkin says.



BOTKIN PHOTO

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## MOVIE REVIEWS

**Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves** Passes Its Concentration Check

By NATAN COHEN

**TURNERS FALLS** – There are a lot of things that could go wrong when making a movie based on *Dungeons & Dragons*. For evidence, one need only look at the panned 2000 *Dungeons & Dragons* film, or its two doomed direct-to-video sequels, whose existence I only learned of in the process of writing this review.

In order to succeed, the studio must achieve at least three key things: First, introduce a naive audience to the world of Faerûn without overwhelming them with its expansive history and endless factions. Second, include just enough references for long-time players of the game to feel excited and spoken to, and lastly, make a fun movie. Where the 2000 outing failed on all three fronts, *Honor Among Thieves* maintains its focus and stands victorious against almost all of its obstacles – not an unpopular opinion, given the film's over 90% "Fresh" rating from both critics and audiences on *RottenTomatoes.com*.

The film opens with Chris Pine's Edgin, a bard (charming dope with a lute), and Michelle Rodríguez's Holga, a barbarian (pensive, contemplative, murder-happy), incarcerated in an icy prison for past, plot-relevant crimes. They quickly escape in the first of many tabletop-roleplaying-inspired shenanigans involving a helpful, if somewhat bird-brained, parole board member named Jarnathon.

The two then embark on a standard mission to rescue Edgin's daughter (and Holga's surrogate daughter) from Hugh Grant's Forge, a rogue (cunning trickster) of the



particularly slimy and evil variety. In order to do so, the pair travels across some impressive, if briefly shown, fantasy countryside to find an old friend, Justice Smith's Simon, the wild-magic sorcerer (casts spells, unreliably), who gradually becomes wiser and more confident across a classic life-lesson arc.

Simon's recruitment is swiftly followed by that of Sophia Lillis' Doric, the druid (turns into animals). Doric unfortunately gets less to do character-wise, but her powers are brilliantly animated and become the highlight of the first act.

Newcomers to D&D are given just the right number of proper nouns and establishing shots to provide a world that feels lived-in, but not bogged down by 50-years of lore-building. There are several clever, detailed flashbacks scattered throughout the character's conversations about what to do next, which admirably help to show, rather than tell, compelling and relevant details about this world. However, the

quick succession of action > conversation > flashback > action bogs down the movie's pacing at times, which is my main caveat when saying that this film reminds me of comedic fantasy romps of yore, like *The Princess Bride* (1987), *Willow* (1988), or *The Mummy* (1999).

Players of *Dungeons & Dragons* – and fans of related media – are treated to many Easter eggs, which add a little extra to moments that are perfectly entertaining on their own terms without the meta knowledge. Aside from the familiar creatures, spells, and locations, these include a complicated puzzle bridge that the party fails to cross before they've even begun, the final solution to which the Dungeon Master clearly pulled out of their ass; an amusing allusion to intelligence being a dump stat; spells that fail when the caster loses concentration; and background actors dressed like characters from the '80s D&D cartoon.

Based on the joyful chortling of my theater audience, the best part of the film for both fans and newcomers may be the second-act stretch involving Regé-Jean Page, of *Bridgerton* fame, who expertly portrays Xenk the paladin (serious and self-righteous divine knight). Xenk is the classic "DMPC," a high-level, ultra-badass, and slightly annoying character who shows up to explain things to the party, eliminate threats, teach them a valuable lesson or two, and then send them on their way.

During this section, leading up to the inevitable confrontation with Forge and his evil wizard advisor Sofina – played with just the right amounts of menace and intelligence by Daisy Head – the party encoun-

**Roll Again: Another Take** On *Honor Among Thieves*

[This review contains spoilers.]

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – I have some familiarity with *Dungeons & Dragons*: I know it's a role-playing game, and I have also seen a couple of movies involving the concept. I am not what you call a fan of this story, but I like fantasy movies.

In this movie, there is Chris Pine playing one of the thieves, Edgin. I have seen him in a couple of other movies. Another thief in the group, Holga, is played by Michelle Rodríguez from the *Fast & Furious* movies. There is a character who is a wizard named Simon. Hugh Grant is featured, too, as an associate of theirs. Also, a literally small role in this is played by Bradley Cooper.

The star of this is Edgin, and he and Holga are locked up after a failed heist. He does explain what happens with that to people, and how he became a thief. Surprise, surprise: you should be able to guess what happens next. He, along with two fellow thieves I mentioned, attempts to get his family and his life back together.

He sets about doing another heist, and recruits a shape-shifting individual to help that Simon knows. This individual can transform into a huge owl-like creature. This is very cool to see on screen. We see a bunch of other creatures in this, which of course includes dragons – after all, this is called *Dungeons and Dragons: Honor Among Thieves*. One of the dragons is really fat.

Another cool character we see is a knight, who is hiding a magical helmet they need for the heist. This time, the heist does go like they want it to, but the thieves end up having to stop an evil sorcerer with a super bad plot that was being aided by Hugh Grant's character. Let's just say that if you expected these thieves not to succeed, because they are thieves, you will be surprised. The fact that Simon gets better at doing magic comes in handy.

By the time the film ends, after all of that, this band of thieves gets even luckier. We learn exactly how through a character talking about what happened. Edgin does get his life and his family back – just not in the way he expected!

ters fantastical humanoids, weirdly arbitrary rules of necromancy, and the chonkiest monster ever committed to CGI.

The finale of the movie predictably, but not disappointingly, involves a series of CGI battles that are, unlike some other franchises which will go unnamed, remarkably well-lit and easy to follow. And then, a stirring character denouement where a hard decision must be

made, which left both me and my spouse a little teary-eyed despite the obvious tropes at play.

Overall, *Honor Among Thieves* was far better than my dismal expectations for it. As a fan of both *Dungeons and Dragons* the game and fluffy fantasy films, I'm looking forward to where things go next if they choose to expand the D&D Cinematic Universe that is clearly being set up here.

## RESEMBLANCES



Julie Kumble sent in this photo of a beaver-gnawed tree (above) in the conservation area in Montague Center, which bears an odd resemblance to a bust of Nefertiti (left). "I think it could make a nice fundraiser for the MR," Julie wrote, "to take bets on when the beavers will complete their sculpture and the tree will fall." (OK, place your bets!)

## MOVIE REVIEW

**The Quiet Girl (2022)** Imbues Us With Magic

By REBECCA TIPPENS

**COLRAIN** – *The Quiet Girl* is dearly beloved in its native Ireland, and not only was that country's Academy Awards submission for Best International Feature Film, but is the highest-grossing Irish-language film of all time.

It was the first to world premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival, where it won the Grand Prix in its section; the first to open the Dublin Film Festival; and the first to sweep the Irish Film & Television Awards, where it nabbed seven prizes including Best Film. Other wins include festivals in Taipei and Valladolid, and a third-place Audience Award in Sydney. It was also nominated for several awards at the London Film Critics' Circle, including Breakthrough Filmmaker and Young Performer of the Year, and it won Best Foreign Language Film, plus two nominations, at the BAFTAs.

More significantly, perhaps, Ireland is a small country, and many people have friends who worked on the film, bringing the feel of communal quilting to its creative process. Plus, that 95% of the film is in Irish is important. To date fewer than a dozen fiction films have been made in Irish. Cine4 ([www.cine4.ie](http://www.cine4.ie)), an initiative to develop Irish-language feature films, hopes to expand those offerings.

The young girl, Catherine Clinch, who plays the nine-year-old Cáit featured in the film, attends a school in Dublin where all subjects are taught in Irish, so she

could carry the part with ease. Apparently it was trickier to find adults who were so fluent. Though the teaching of Irish has been required in schools since the early 1920s, not all are fully bilingual.

Leaving the film, I heard people share with one another, "That was a lovely film." And, it is visually lovely, filmed in the farm country of County Meath, with images of cows and water, wells and seas, skies and arbored pathways that linger long after you leave the theater.

Also, the story is lovely. It opens with an overwhelmed family deciding that Cáit, one of their four daughters, will go to a cousin of her mother's for the duration of the summer. In her absence, the mother will give birth to yet another child.

From the opening scenes, you are made aware of how little attention this young, somewhat adventurous girl receives from her family of birth. Indeed, not being recognized, she has become a watcher and not a talker. Independent, not apparently needy, she is open to experiencing the unfolding of her days with these distant relatives who have not seen her since she was a baby.

The film is also lovely because her distant relatives, Eibhlín Cinnsealach, played by Carrie Crowley, and her husband Seán, played by Andrew Bennett, are both kind people.

The film shows how the three come together over the summer, the adults honing their skills as teachers of the workings

of the dairy farm, and generally helping the young girl blossom through mastering responsibilities and accomplishments and being treated with kindness and respect.

We are treated to the loveliness of their deepening bonds. The film is as unrushed as a summer's day – its images linger on screen, allowing you to believe that you are one with the land and the characters. The title, *The Quiet Girl*, is apt, as Cáit is a person of few words, though those she shares reveal insight and presence.

Through her more-than-competent acting, we see what she might be feeling in scenes where she is lightly tapping her fingers, staring out a rain-dropped window. Yet, the film might have been called "A Quiet Family" for none of the three are particularly talkative. Their connection is more a dance choreographed by the needs of the farm. *New York Times* reviewer Lisa Kennedy commented that the film is a "hushed work about kith and kindness."

The love it shares is similar to that which we also experienced in this year's films *Close* and *Eo*. I am appreciative of this direction. Whereas films like *Elvis* and *Everything, Everywhere, All at Once* bring an exciting charge, *The Quiet Girl* is a soul journey that imbues the viewer with the magic bestowed by loving kindness.

*The Quiet Girl* is now playing locally at Amherst Cinema, at least through April 20. Hulu may distribute it shortly.

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**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

# Poets Volunteer to Help Protect Island Ecosystem

**NORTHFIELD** – On a small island in the Caribbean, you can buy naming and bragging rights to your own little patch of sand. Cayman Brac is home to many unique endemic species such as the rock iguana. Like all of the Caribbean, this tiny island, with its spectacular limestone cliffs and sandy beaches, is under the dual threat of climate change and overdevelopment, with only 6% protected.

Coast to Bluff Recreational Access and Conservation (CBRAC), a registered Cayman nonprofit, purchases imperiled land on Cayman Brac to conserve as natural habitat and for sustainable public access. Using a unique grid system, CBRAC ([www.cbrac.ky](http://www.cbrac.ky)) virtually divides each parcel into affordable chunks that you can sponsor and name.

Each grid square comes with an inventory of plant and animal species, and an estimate of its biodiversity and ecosystem resources. You will know just what you are saving, in pictures and numbers.

This spring, Writing the Land, a project of NatureCulture in Northfield that pairs poets with protected lands and creates poetry anthologies sold to benefit land conservation ([www.writingtheland.org](http://www.writingtheland.org)), has partnered with CBRAC. A volunteer group of 10 poets is paying their own way to visit Cayman Brac next week to write poetry for the land, to be published in an upcoming anthology.

“The Cayman Islands have a unique ecology nestled in a tiny speck in the middle of the Caribbean Sea,” writes CBRAC director and

cofounder Tristan Rely. “We are genuinely touched that Writing the Land has chosen to highlight Cayman Brac on their poets’ retreat, and are excited to share what nature here has to offer the creative community.”

“I’ve been visiting the Cayman islands for 20 years,” says Lis McLoughlin, founder and director of Writing the Land and this newspaper’s former science page editor. “They are beautiful, unique, and losing their Nature and Culture very quickly. All of us working in land protection have seen the difference it can make – how conserved land forms a backbone, or a patchwork, or even a pocket of nature in the midst of development that grounds people to the rest of nature in a life-sustaining way.”

Writing the Land has donated a chapter to CBRAC, and each poet hopes to raise enough funds for a dedicated piece of land to write. Grids start at \$350, and the project is ready to protect as much land as people are inspired to sponsor (see [www.cbrac.ky/sponsor-land](http://www.cbrac.ky/sponsor-land)).

If that looks steep, you can also help crowdfund one – imagine a piece of land in the Cayman Islands conserved in the name of your book group, or your Girl Scout troop, or in memory of someone who loved the beach. (See [gofund.me/c4922d1c](http://gofund.me/c4922d1c) for the crowdfunding campaign.)

If you help sponsor a grid during the trip, a Writing the Land poet will send you a signed copy of their poem. If you sponsor an entire grid, CBRAC will send you a copy of the anthology that contains their chapter.

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

# Hold the Foam! Recycling Events for Styrofoam Blocks

**MONTAGUE and NORTHFIELD** – Franklin County Solid Waste Management District is collaborating with volunteers from the towns of Montague and Northfield

to hold special recycling collections for blocky “Styrofoam” packing material. The collections will take place on the last four Saturdays in April from 9 a.m. to noon:

April 8, 15, 22, and 29.

These events are only open to residents of Northfield and Montague. Pre-registration is not required for this free collection. Space is limited and may run out; first come, first served.

These special recycling collections will only accept white blocky packing material and coolers made of “Styrofoam,” or expanded polystyrene foam (EPS or PS #6). In order to meet these specifications, volunteers at the two collection sites will review the materials that each resident brings. Items must be clean and dry. Styrofoam, EPS, and other foams are not accepted in regular household recycling.

Please note: these events no longer accept #4 LDPE foam packaging sheets or foam insulation board (XPS). These collections will not accept food-related “Styrofoam” items such as cups, plates, bowls, trays, clamshells, or egg cartons. There are no local recycling options for these foam materials, so they must go in the trash.

Packing peanuts and wet or dirty materials are also on the “no” list. The UPS Store in Greenfield accepts clean, dry packing peanuts for reuse.

On the last four Saturday mornings in April from 9 a.m. to noon, Northfield residents may bring materials to the Northfield transfer station, 31 Caldwell Road, Northfield (note the new drop-off location).

This collection is for Northfield residents only, but a Northfield transfer station permit is not required. Northfield resident Annie Chappell is organizing this collection.

On the same collection dates from 9 a.m. to noon, residents of Montague may bring materials to the Montague transfer station, 11 Sandy Lane, Turners Falls. This collection is open to residents of Montague and its villages: Turners Falls, Lake Pleasant, Millers Falls, Montague Center, and Montague City. Members of Drawdown Montague, a citizen action group, are the organizers of this collection.

This effort builds on the success of the April 2022 pilot collection, where events in these two towns together diverted 70 cubic yards from the landfill. Foam blocks collected at these special collection events are recycled at Gold Circuit E-Cycling in Agawam. These materials are recycled into picture frames, molding, or building insulation.

Annie Chappell, one of the event organizers, noted that “Everyone that brought Styrofoam packing material was so appreciative that we do this collection.”

For more information, contact the District office at [info@franklincountywastedistrict.org](mailto:info@franklincountywastedistrict.org) or (413) 772-2438. MA Relay for the hearing impaired: 711 or 1 (800) 439-2370 (TTY/TDD). The District is an equal opportunity provider.



KATE O'KANE PHOTO

Foam warrior: Drawdown Montague member Julie Kumble bags styrofoam at the Montague transfer station last Saturday.

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**7th Annual Montague Soapbox Race**

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Seventh Annual Montague Soapbox Races are coming, and will again be held in Turners Falls on the Unity Park hill. All past racers are invited to register for the 2023 competition. Race day is Sunday, September 17, at noon.

Registration is open now, and the deadline is Wednesday, September 13. There will be no same-day cart registration – you must register in advance by filling out the online form at [montaguesoapboxraces.com](http://montaguesoapboxraces.com).

All carts must be hand-built, and anyone 8 to 80 years old can race. This year we will introduce a new Adult Semi-Pro category, in addition to Kids, Teens, and Adults, for those adults who build serious speed carts and want their own special speed prize.

In 2022 we had 20 racers go down the hill, with new speed records (37 mph recorded for the first time) and some spectacular (soft) crashes, as well as amazing cart designs.

We are looking for sponsors, volunteers, vendors, and of course racers! The Soapbox Races are organized by the Montague Recreation Department as a fundraiser for programming scholarships. If you are interested please visit the website, where you can find the full schedule and forms to register your cart or your intention to sponsor/volunteer.

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# The Children's Page

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WRITTEN BY BEVERLY KETCH

ILLUSTRATED BY HANNAH BROOKMAN



AS THE MOON ROSE AND THE SUN SET, THE HAPPY BAND REACHED THE RIVERSIDE. AND WHAT GREETED THEIR EYES? ELDA'S BOAT, FLOATING AND LOOKING BETTER THAN EVER.

ELDA'S MERMAID AND MERMEN FRIENDS HAD FIXED EVERY LEAK, AND PLACED ALL OF HER TREASURES BACK WHERE THEY BELONGED. THEY WAVED AND SPLASHED AS THEY SAW HER DELIGHT. SHE CRIED HAPPY TEARS, AND GAVE THEM HANDFULS OF THE LEPRECHAUN'S GOLD. THEN, WITH A SKIP IN HER STEP, SHE BOARDED HER BOAT.



THE REST OF THE GROUP SET OUT TO THE HOUSE ON K STREET. AS THEY WALKED UP THE HILL, CHELLA SAW HER CAR PARKED OUT FRONT! A SLIP WAS UNDER THE WINDOW WIPER - IT HAD BEEN UNDER WARRANTY!

THE PADLOCK WAS STILL ON THE DOOR OF THE HOUSE WHERE IT HAD BEEN PLACED BY THE BANK. OF COURSE, THE BANK WAS CLOSED, AND THEY COULDN'T PAY BACK THE AMOUNT THEY OWED UNTIL MORNING. THE LEAF MAN HAD A LOOK AT THE PADLOCK. HE TOOK IT BETWEEN HIS HANDS AND GAVE A MIGHTY SQUEEZE. IT FELL TO PIECES ON THE PORCH STEP AND CHELLA AND VIOLA JUMPED FOR JOY. IN RACED SPOT AND FIGARO.



ALL THE FRIENDS LOADED THEIR POCKETS WITH GOLD AND EMPTIED THE LEPRECHAUN'S POT, WHICH CHELLA PLACED AS A SOUVENIR NEXT TO THE PORCH SWING.

THE LEAF MAN AND THE HOBOS DECIDED TO GO TO THE GALUMPKI INN TO PLAY MUSIC, EAT FOOD, AND CELEBRATE. BUT AS MUCH AS CHELLA AND VIOLA LIKED THEIR NEW FRIENDS, IT WAS HOME SWEET HOME FOR THEM TONIGHT!!!



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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



The Reporter is looking for volunteers to help us curate this listing. Interested? Contact us at [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org)

### THURSDAY, APRIL 13

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

### FRIDAY, APRIL 14

Palladium, Worcester: *Carcass, Municipal Waste, Sacred Reich, Creeping Death*. \$ 6 p.m.

Upper Bend, Turners Falls: *Ari Folman-Cohen, Jon Shina, b\*o\*b\*i\*e*. \$ 7 p.m.

Pioneer Brewery Turners Falls: *TJ & Peepers Duo*. Free. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Briezyjane and the Hurricanes, Lonesome Brothers*. \$ 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Voyeur: A Queer Erotic Film Festival*. 18+. \$ 8 p.m.

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

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Club D'Elf, Deep Seize*. \$ 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Twen, Carinae, Prune*. \$ 8:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Shirese, Underwear*. Free. 9:30 p.m.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 15

Element Brewing, Millers Falls:

*A Day Without Love, Lesbiana*. Free. 4 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Pioneer Valley Jazz Shares presents Knuckleball*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Dari Bay, Laszlo & the Hidden Strength, Taxidermists*. \$ 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Pocket Vinyl, Cheap City, Linnea's Garden, Hedgewitch, Chris Goudreau*. \$ 8:30 p.m.

### SUNDAY, APRIL 16

John Doe, Jr.: *Hollow Deck, Playbackers, Dave Scanlon*. Free. 3 p.m.

The Perch at Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Soft Touch Mechanism, Back In '86, Mark of Wrath*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Non Phixion, Subtex*. \$ 8 p.m.

Race Street Live, Holyoke: *The English Beat*. \$ 8 p.m.

### MONDAY, APRIL 17

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Johnnie & The Foodmasters, Ian St. George, Bridge of Flowers*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wes Brown*. Free. 8 p.m.

### THURSDAY, APRIL 20

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Holiday movie double feature: Fantastic Planet (1973) and Kidz Klub (2022)*. By donation. 7 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Sona Jobarteh*. \$ 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Ken Vandermark's Edition Redux with Beth McDonald, Erez Dessel, and Lily Finnegan*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

### FRIDAY, APRIL 21

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

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Iain Matthews, Pairedown, Allysen Callery*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sundub, The Equalites*. \$ 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Dei Xhrist, Id M Theft Able, Neonach, Hissquiet*. \$ 8 p.m.

Latchis Theater, Brattleboro: *Lez Zeppelin*. \$ 8 p.m.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 22

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

The Drake, Amherst: *The Feelies*. \$ 8 p.m.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Unknown Liberty, Grawlixes, Red Herrings*. \$ 7 p.m.

### SUNDAY, APRIL 23

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sunset Mission, Big Destiny,*

*Among the Stars, Vibe Check*. \$ 6:30 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *George Winston*. \$ 7 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Father John Misty, Loren Kramar*. \$ 8 p.m.

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Cirque Us presents: One Man's Trash*. \$ 7 p.m.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *John Gorka*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

### THURSDAY, APRIL 27

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *PWRUP, Jeopardy, Hans Gruber and the Die Hards, Girth Control*. \$ 7 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Fatoumata Diawara*. \$ 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Landowner, Plant Fight, Rockin' Worms, Phroegs*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Zane Provost*. Free. 9 p.m.

### FRIDAY, APRIL 28

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Loudon Wainwright III, David Howley*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Crazy Train, Back In Black*. *Ozzy Osbourne and AC/DC tributes*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bluegrass and Beyond*. Free.

### looking forward...

### SATURDAY, APRIL 29

Daily Op, Easthampton: *Large Professor, J-Live, Tableek, DJ Rec1ne*. \$ 8 p.m.

### SUNDAY, APRIL 30

Brick House, Turners Falls: *PG Six, Stella Kola, Tall Travls*. \$ 8 p.m.

### SATURDAY, MAY 6

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Kalbells*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

### SATURDAY, MAY 13

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Josephine Foster, Stella Kola, Gray/Smith & Speer*. \$ 7 p.m.

### SATURDAY, MAY 27

The Drake, Amherst: *Bill Frisell Trio ft. Tony Scherr, Rudy Royston*. \$ 8 p.m.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 3

Guilford Fairgrounds, Guilford, VT: *Field Day* feat. *Inner Wave, Lady Lamb, Sunflower Bean, Thus Love, Gift, Topsy, Carinae*, more. \$ 12 p.m.

### FRIDAY, JUNE 9

The Drake, Amherst: *Sun Ra Arkestra*. \$ 7 p.m.

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 26

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Pixies, Modest Mouse, Cat Power*. \$ 7 p.m.



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OBITUARIES

# The Night Ike Almost Died (And How the Sixties Ended)

By PETER REICH

**LEVERETT** – Sometime late in the evening in spring of 1969, I was alone on the city desk along with the police reporter at the *Staten Island Advance*, when the Associated Press teletype machine rattled off a bulletin that former President Dwight D. Eisenhower had been admitted to a hospital.

Before long, obituaries for Ike were moving over the several teletype machines in the wire room, a tiny room maybe 8 by 10 feet packed with black teletype machines chattering noisily, spooling out folds of newsprint with tomorrow's news. Meanwhile, out in the newsroom fuzzy photographs of Ike spun out of the Fotofax machine, a precursor of the fax that transmitted grainy images suitable for newspapers.

I tore the latest updated obituary off the Teletype machine, snipped a photo for Page 1 off the Fotofax, and headed to the Morgue. The Morgue was the reference library, rows of tall beige file cabinets with news clippings from past issues and other sources in thin manila sleeves. A few tightly-folded old news clips about Ike involving Staten Island provided a local angle for the lede.

Back at the city desk, I tapped out a new lede paragraph, wrote a kicker and a headline, and headed out to the pressroom to order up a new Page 1 in case the former President died overnight.

Out in the press room while the new version of Page 1 was being assembled I wandered around the vast typesetting chamber watching the inside pages of tomorrow's paper take shape: typesetters pulling larger headline fonts from the font drawers, Linotype operators ticking their funny little keyboards,

and the curious tinkling of lead type from Linotype machines sliding, line by line, into columns, upside down and backwards. It was always warm in that enormous room: at the side of each Linotype machine sat a cauldron of molten lead.

These were the last days of hot lead presses for newspapers.

A year or so earlier I had joined the *Advance* as a cub reporter on the night desk. There, night city editor Al Pearsall gave me lessons in writing obituaries. Al had been at the paper since World War II and arrived at work every night at 7 with a quart of Miller and a fresh pack of Chesterfields. He handed me a dog-eared 3-by-5 card with the names of all the various funeral homes and hospitals, and told me to call and inquire if there had been any deaths. One funeral home director would often tell me "Things are all dead around here."

Pretty quickly, I learned the general format of an obituary, such as sequencing survivors, and most importantly, how to coax a life story and names of survivors from a sad person over the telephone.

Once, early on, I pulled a completed obit out of the typewriter and handed it to Al. A few moments later, a hail of paper clips landed at my end of the city desk. Al tossed the obit back to me, took the Chesterfield out of his mouth and yelled "Nobody expects to die!" (I had written that the deceased had died "unexpectedly.")

After a few months I went day-side, moving to a proper desk in the open-format newsroom. During the Tet offensive in Vietnam, January to September 1968, I spent way too many evenings tootling around Staten Island in my VW bug interviewing grieving moms and dads about their sons, trying to elicit details and a photograph to embellish

the obituary that would appear on Page 1 the next morning.

President Eisenhower survived the night and died soon after, on March 28, 1969.

Ahead of us lay the unforgettable summer of '69 and beyond. In the newsroom, we young reporters cranked out local news on our typewriters while in the wire room, chattering away, the Sixties spooled out of the Teletype on endless rolls of newsprint.

And there were moments then, 54 years ago, when the familiar whirr emanating from the Fotofax machine located directly in the center of the newsroom brought clacking typewriters and carriage return bells to silence. Reporters of all ages rose from desks and gathered around to watch images from Woodstock, the moon landing, Chappaquiddick, Charles Manson, Yippies, the Cuyahoga River, My Lai, and Abbey Road dribble out of the Fotofax machine on leathery paper with the fuzzy clarity and impermanence of a finely executed Etch-a-Sketch.

This was the end of the Sixties, with some bangs and whimpers, summers of love and flowers in your hair.

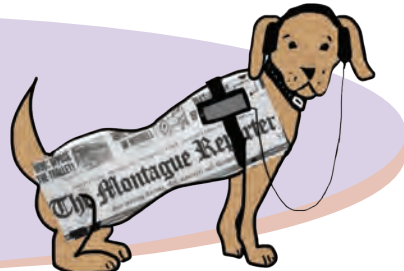
And somewhere in my attic in a crumpled cardboard box sits a yellowed Page 1 proof of the *Staten Island Advance* dated a few weeks prior to March 28, 1969, announcing the President's death in banner headlines.

*Peter Reich lives in Leverett. He adds, as a footnote: "The Staten Island Advance is the mother paper of the Newhouse Newspaper chain, which also owns the Springfield Republican. Both are tiny parts of Advance Publications, a media empire owned by the Newhouse family of Staten Island."*

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