

The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 6, 2023

No Visa for Health Director; Town Nurse Gives Notice

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – The Montague selectboard learned from town administrator Steve Ellis Monday night that the town had failed to win a special visa, assigned by lottery, for the candidate recommended by the town’s Board of Health to be the new health director, Candaicy David, a citizen of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

But, Ellis said, another candidate who had withdrawn their name during the search process has indicated they would reconsider working for the town. A screening

committee is scheduled to meet this Thursday, potentially to interview that candidate in a non-public executive session.

Ellis also announced that town nurse Cheryl Volpe will be leaving her position on April 24. “It was great [she gave] the town a full month’s notice,” he said.

The H-1B visa process which the town entered to hire David is targeted to foreign citizens “who wish to perform services in specialty occupations” and who have a bachelor’s degree or higher, according to the website of the US Citizenship and

see **HEALTH** page A8

The Next Half Century: FirstLight Submits Agreement on River Flows, Fish Passage

By MIKE JACKSON



FILE PHOTO BY JOE R. PARZYCH

A major milestone is reached in the hydro company’s relicensing process as it files an agreement, signed by state and federal fish and wildlife agencies, about the rules that will limit its use of the Connecticut River’s water to generate power in the future.

TURNERS FALLS – A major milestone was passed last Friday in the decade-long relicensing process for hydroelectric projects at Turners Falls and Northfield Mountain. Their owner, FirstLight Power, filed with the federal government an agreement with a number of stakeholders about the limits on its use of the Connecticut River to generate power.

FirstLight is seeking to renew its licenses from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to operate the hydro projects for 50-year terms, the maximum available length. If the company can come to terms with all the recognized

see **FLOWS** page A2

AN ART TOWN



PAM ALLAN PHOTO

Local sculptor Tim De Christopher (left) has installed a new piece, Bread Man, on the stoop of the Upper Bend café in Turners Falls. Jimmy DiSilvestro (center) and Jay Majerowski (right) helped De Christopher with the installation last week. De Christopher said that Bread Man was not commissioned by café’s owners, but that he offered to install it as part of something new he is trying. “I am very happy that Turners has achieved a profile as an art town,” he told the Reporter. “I think there is still room for more, so I would like to push that envelope a bit, to make the town a place people will want to come to see what’s new. In due time I hope to do more works for more businesses and locations in town. I welcome inquiries...”

State Officials Criticize UMass Privatization Plan

By SARAH ROBERTSON

AMHERST – The University of Massachusetts Amherst is still pursuing plans to move about 100 public, unionized jobs to the non-unionized private nonprofit UMass Amherst Foundation, despite recent statements by elected officials urging the school to consider other plans.

The affected employees work on fundraising and marketing projects for the school’s Advancement office, and are represented by two unions, the Professional Staff Union (PSU) and the University Staff Association (USA). University officials announced the proposed change in an email to Advancement

staff earlier this year, saying the move was necessary to keep the university in compliance with state and federal pension laws, and to secure the retirement accounts of employees already enrolled in the state system. Both claims have been disputed by the unions.

US Congress member Jim McGovern, state senator Jo Comerford, and state representative Mindy Domb released a joint statement last week urging the university to drop the plans to privatize the jobs.

“Based on the nature of the work that these individuals perform, and have performed, their eligibility for state pensions has been validated

see **UMASS** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD Transportation Improvement, And Other Gravy Trains

By JEFF SINGLETON

April in New England may not be the “cruellest month,” in the words of the poet TS Elliot, but that memorable phrase seemed to apply to the meeting of the the Montague selectboard on April 3. Town administrator Steve Ellis and assistant administrator Walter Ramsey reported on the need to restart, for the second time, the hiring process for a health department director, with the most recent candidate having failed to clear the federal immigration lottery for a special skilled worker visa.

Ellis also reported on stakeholders’ failure to reach an agreement on federal license provisions for the FirstLight power company by a March 31 deadline, and Ramsey on a requirement to spend over \$300,000 for engineering a culvert over the Sawmill River that will cost \$300,000 to actually construct.

The hybrid meeting, combining in-person and virtual components, experienced frequent glitches even as town officials discussed the possibility of implementing a hybrid annual town meeting, a far more complex undertaking, in May.

But the board managed to get through it all in well under two hours and in good humor, with Ellis frequently expressing “optimism” in the face of multiple challenges. Most decisions were made without member Matt Lord, who appeared only briefly via Zoom to vote in favor of an all-alcohol liquor license transfer to the Shea Theater.

The meeting was dominated by procurement and personnel issues.

Procurements

Ellis reported that “bid specs” for the Colle building and Shea Theater roof project would be issued on April 5, with a return date of April 20. He said the town wanted to get the project “in the field in a May-June timeframe” because the HVAC

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

Swift River School Awarded \$100K for PFAS Filtration

By SARAH ROBERTSON

WENDELL / NEW SALEM – Swift River School will receive \$100,000 from the state Department of Environmental Protection for a water treatment system to remove toxic chemicals from the school’s water supply. The grant was announced Monday as part of \$1.05 million in funding for small public water supplies across the state.

“New Salem is very happy about

this news,” town coordinator Kathy Neal told the Reporter. “First of all, this system will make the drinking water at Swift River School safe for our children and teachers to drink.”

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a class of man-made chemicals of growing concern worldwide. Massachusetts began recommending water suppliers test for PFAS in late 2020, and dangerous levels were detected in

see **SWIFT RIVER** page A4

TIME TO SPRING!



DAVID HOIT PHOTOS

Top: Turners Falls High School’s Madeline Brandl attempts the 4’6” height in the high jump on Monday as the Franklin Tech-Turners Falls high school track teams hosted Pioneer Valley for the season opener. Bottom: Turners’ Braden McCord lands a winning 17’8” long jump during Monday’s meet.

Newsgatherers on the Edge of Time

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The Montague Reporter

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Founded by
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August 2002

FLOWS from page A1

stakeholders, FERC is expected to largely accept the terms, simplifying the path to renewal.

While the "Flows and Fish Passage Settlement Agreement" only covers one part of the negotiations, it is, as Montague town administrator Steve Ellis told his selectboard on Monday, "kind of the core of everything."

"It talks about what amounts of water will be flowing above and below, and at what levels, the Turners Falls Dam," Ellis explained. "It has significant impact and meaning relevant to the 'Turners Falls impoundment' – the river northwards of [the dam] – and also the area below the dam."

At the dam, FirstLight diverts water into a power canal that feeds two power plants before rejoining the river. The section of the river deprived of this water, termed the "bypass stretch," has been the focus of intensive research, activism, and lobbying over the decades of the dam's first license.

Protected species – fish, plants, dragonflies, and even a certain beetle that likes to mate on beaches downstream – must be taken into account for the impacts of low or fluctuating water levels on their habitats, and fishery scientists' interest in restoring more water to the bypass stretch is shared by whitewater hobbyists, entrepreneurs, and a town hall interested in attracting river tourists.

In a 2017 hearing before the state appellate tax board over the disputed value of FirstLight's properties at Turners Falls, an expert witness hired by the company, Ann Bulkley, testified that the company expected to lose "at least 10%" of its generating capacity under its new license.

When the company filed its amended final license application (AFLA) in December 2020, the limits it suggested be placed on its use of the river – specified in terms of minimum flow rates over the dam and through the small Station

No. 1 plant on Power Street at various times of the year – would mean a loss of 11.3% of its capacity.

At that time, the company decided to restart the settlement negotiations, which had previously been abandoned. Separate groups have met since to discuss flows and fish passage, recreation, erosion, and traditional cultural resources, with all parties signing non-disclosure agreements while the talks are underway.

In March 2022 an "agreement-in-principle" (AIP) on flows and fish passage was filed publicly. Surprising many onlookers, it appeared to allow much more water to be used in the canal during the summer months: though FirstLight's 2020 AFLA offered to ensure that 670 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water passed over the dam during July and August and 500 cfs September through November, the AIP reduced both figures to 250 cfs.

The AIP was signed by the Nature Conservancy, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the chief of hatcheries at the state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), as well as another division of MassWildlife, the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP).

Andy Fisk, then the director of the Connecticut River Conservancy, told the *Reporter* that the water over the dam in the summer and fall had been "dialed way back" in response to concerns brought by NHESP about certain protected plants that may have established a habitat on the riverbanks below the dam.

The AIP called for an independent study of these "rare plant species," stipulating that "[p]ending the results," NHESP might "authorize" the figure to increase to 400 cfs after the first three years of the license.

In the final settlement filed last see **FLOWS** page A6



Mary Clemens hails from Chicago and waits tables at the Five Eyed Fox in Turners Falls. She says she loves western Mass and likes to do a variety of art, including printmaking, silkscreening, and line drawing. She'd like to find a ceramics studio to work in.

Letters to the Editors

'An Open Letter to Our Community'

Your Co-op needs you! The Leverett Village Co-op is struggling, despite all our efforts and fiscal responsibility. Business has dropped off and we can't keep operating like this – we need you to shop.

Remember how you felt when A. J. Hastings closed and you realized there was nowhere else around to find the perfect card, or newspapers like the *Financial Times*?

Remember when Wilson's shuttered and that old, great behemoth of a department store was no more? All that was left in the end were some empty shelving units and generations of memories of first shoes, work uniforms, linens, and wedding registries.

Some of you may still remember when Louis Foods closed and Amherst lost its beloved small grocery store.

It hurts when we lose the places we care about. Especially when they are gone forever. We need our small businesses, and our small grocery stores are a vital part of their communities.

Right now, due to lagging sales,

we are faced with the very real possibility of closing our Co-op forever.

You came out and supported the Co-op three years ago as the pandemic hit and the LVC became everyone's favorite small shop, allowing us to avoid the big box stores and their crowds of people carrying an illness we didn't yet understand.

Through the past year, we have lowered prices. We have greatly expanded stock and there is a growing selection of both organic and traditional, less expensive brands. You can find almost everything you need at our little Co-op these days – and if you don't see something, tell us and we'll do everything we can to order it.

We are a community gathering place – the only one in town – offering live music year-round, summer artisans markets and pizza on the patio – right here in your backyard, with no need to drive 30 minutes to larger communities. We've listened to your suggestions and added gluten-free items in both our café and on the shelves. We've expanded pet foods and added a permanent artisans gallery, featuring the works of local artists and craftspeople. We have seeds for spring planting. Our pizza chefs have perfected the dough and our kitchen is now open for hot meals, in addition to the dozens of items in the grab-and-go cooler.

And yet, dear community, many of you have abandoned us. Our sales numbers have fallen. Where have you gone? We are at a point in which we can't afford to keep the lights on too much longer if sales don't increase. This is a heart-breaking realization for staff, for

the board of directors, and for the volunteers who work so hard every single day to operate a store and community gathering place that meets the community's needs.

We have crunched the numbers and the reality is that we need you to shop – and to shop more often. We also need volunteers to help with store tasks – we promise that part is really fun, and you will get to help save the Co-op and be a part of something special: your community.

The future of the Co-op is in your hands, as it always has been, like any good democracy.

Without your support and shopping, your Co-op and all your memories here will go the way of Hastings, Wilson's, Louis Foods, and the dodo.

We are hosting a special meeting for members and other interested community members on **April 13 at 7 p.m. at Leverett Town Hall**. We need you to brainstorm with us and figure out what else we could be offering or doing to earn loyal shoppers.

We've had some transitional periods, but we're on track to be your co-op, your market, your gathering place. Please come and tell us how we can better serve your families, including your four-legged members.

We look forward to seeing you on Thursday, April 13!

In Cooperation,

Your LVC Board:

Kari Ridge, Danielle Barshak,
Sam Black, Martin Pittman,
Don Southwick, MaryJo Johnson,
Liz Etheridge, Lori Lynn Hoffer

Magnificent Issue

This week's issue of the *Reporter* was magnificent! As one who has had a long-term fascination with the place of death and dying in this society, this issue was just delightful for exploring many aspects of the subject that I had never looked into.

I wish more publications could have the courage to go into the subject of death, dying and related subjects with the thoroughness and clear-eyed objectivity (and non-judgmental subjectivity) as the *MR*

did this week. It's a natural part of life, and yet one of our last taboos. And the fact that it spilled out into every aspect of the paper, even into Section B (*MoRe*), was even more impressive.

I've never seen it done better in any daily or weekly publication anywhere. Bravo, *MR*, for courageous and relevant reportage!

Karun Das
Montague Center

Further Plaudits

Congratulations to your staff on last week's issue highlighting death and dying. It was informative in many ways using different venues.

Brooke Thomas
Leverett

WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS!

ORIGINAL CONTENT ONLY, PLEASE LIMIT 4 PER YEAR

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LOCAL BRIEFS

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Great news for any readers whose marshmallow Peep dioramas weren't completed in time for the entry deadline of the **Second Annual Peeps Diorama Contest** at Fiddleheads Gallery in Northfield! Set down this newspaper and plug the glue gun back in immediately, as the deadline has been extended!

Entries to the contest may now be submitted this Friday, April 7, from noon to 4 p.m. at the 105 Main Street gallery. Viewing and voting for the "People's Choice Award" will run Saturday, April 8 from noon to 5 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, April 14 and 15, from noon to 4:30 p.m.

The contest is presented by the Deerfield Valley Art Association. There are three categories for entrants ages 12 and under, 19 and above, and in between the two. Winners receive small treats, and People's Choice Award winner will receive a \$50 Fiddlesticks gift certificate. Contact Marge at margedvaa@gmail.com for more information, or to pre-register.

Though this may not reach many readers in time: Montague will begin **street sweeping in downtown Turners Falls** this Thursday night. Parking is prohibited between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. Friday on Avenue A and Third Street.

The **Easter Bunny comes to the Greenfield Garden Cinemas** this Saturday, April 8 between 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Parents are invited to bring kids for free photos and to stay and watch a free 30-minute feature *It's The Easter Bunny, Charlie Brown* at 11 a.m.

Seniors and fans of nostalgia can stop by at 10 a.m. for a show of Irving Berlin's *Easter Parade* (1948) with Judy Garland and Fred Astaire.

The theme of the featured performance at the next **Montague Center Open Mic**, this Saturday, April 8 at 6:30 p.m. at the Common Hall, is "Echoes of David Kaynor."

Featured performers, including Becky Hollingsworth on piano and Rebecca Weiss and Gianna Marzilli Ericson on violin, will pay tribute to the late Montague musician. The traditional open mic includes a full evening of musicians and other performers. Feel free to bring your own beverage and food.

Join Música Franklin on Monday, April 10, at 6 p.m. for a student performance and **family-friendly concert** with the Connecticut River Flute Choir.

The Choir is an ensemble of musicians from a wide variety of musical and professional backgrounds who love to play the flute. Besides the traditional C-flute, there will be a piccolo, recorder, alto flute, bass flute, and even a contrabass flute!

This concert will take place at Sheffield Elementary School, 43 Crocker Ave, Turners Falls and is free and open to the public. Masks are recommended.

On Monday, April 10 at 7 p.m., a **Death Café** will be held at Second Congregational Church in downtown Greenfield.

"We will have tea and cake and discuss anything related to death and dying," organizer Kate Mason writes. "Our Death Café offers participants an opportunity to share experiences, hopes, and fears, and helps people make the most of their (finite) lives."

Montague's death cafés, held monthly at the Gill Montague Senior Center, were featured in an article on Page A1 of last week's *Montague Reporter*. The Greenfield group is newly starting.

The Finders Collective will host a **reading group** next Tuesday, April 11 at 6:30 p.m. for the short speculative fiction novella *A Country of Ghosts* by Margaret Killjoy, and again on Tuesday, April 18.

The story is described as about a mountainous anarchist country of Hron which finds itself invaded by an expanding empire as a foreign journalist learns about their egalitarian society. The Collective is at 104 Fourth Street in Turners Falls. Email finders@riseup.net for a copy of the book to read in advance of the meeting.

The LAVA Center in Greenfield hosts a monthly series, **Writers Read**, on the second Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. Coordinated by Lindy Whiton, the series brings in local writers and a couple of outside surprises. Jessamyn Smyth, Amy Dryansky, and Loren McGrail will be reading on April 12. There is a \$5 suggested donation. Find out more at www.thelavacenter.org.

Christina L. Kwapich, PhD, assistant professor of ecology at UMass Lowell and the co-author of the 2002 book *The Guests of Ants: How Myrmecophiles Interact with Their Hosts*, will give a presentation at 7 p.m. next Wednesday, April 12, online and in person at 100 Main Street, Athol.

Her presentation, "**The Guests of Ants**," will "explore the hidden biodiversity inside ant nests, and the behavioral mechanisms diverse parasites employ to infiltrate ant societies," we are told. "Some intruders tickle ant mouthparts to steal regurgitated meals, while others use specialized organs and glandular secretions to entice ants or calm their aggression. Once able to speak the language, these outsiders can masquerade as ants. Suddenly colony members can no longer distinguish friend from foe."

Kwapich's laboratory examines the organization of labor in seed-harvesting ant societies, subterranean ant nest architecture, and ant guests. Register in advance for the webinar at www.tinyurl.com/anttalk.

The LAVA Center presents a **staged reading** of an adaptation of George Gissing's novel *The Odd Women* by local playwright P.H. Crosby next Thursday, April 13, at 5:30 p.m.

"This 1893 work has the unusual distinction of being a feminist classic by a Victorian male author," reads the press release. "George Gissing explores the contradictions and challenges of being a woman in a time when everything was expected of you, everything was changing, and everything had to be fought for."

P.H. Crosby has adapted the novel into a full-length drama. The first half was staged last year at the LAVA Center. This year, a synopsis of the first half will precede the staged reading of the conclusion. Donations are welcome at the door. Limited seating.

Leverett Village Coop has announced that their winter sales numbers were way below projection. (See letter, Page A2.) They are calling a special members' meeting next Thursday, April 13 at 7 p.m. at Leverett Town Hall to discuss how to go forward.

Historic Deerfield kicks off the season at the museum on Saturday, April 15 at 10 a.m. with the **Barnard Tavern Opening Celebration**, a day of festivities, tours, and activities including horse-drawn wagon rides, hearth cooking demonstrations featuring tavern fare, a craft activity for kids, games in the bar room, and early 19th-century music and dance in the assembly hall.

There will also be historic demonstrations of broommaking, 18th-century medicine, and coo-pering. General admission applies, with no extra fees for any activity.

Silverthorne Theater Company announces they are offering an **acting class** where participants can learn from actor Gabriel Levey, recently seen as Mr. Marks in their production of *Intimate Apparel* (reviewed in our pages on March 23).

Levey will begin the six-week class, Acting as Play, on April 15. Participants will have the opportunity to work on a monologue of their choosing, and a scene which will be assigned. Sign up online at www.tinyurl.com/act-class.

Do you like to sing with others? An **informal a capella group** meets monthly at various members' homes in Greenfield and Turners Falls, and they are looking to add new members to their 13-year-old group.

"We like to have fun and don't worry about perfection," they wrote to us. "We sing rock and roll, folk, even some show tunes. The event starts with a potluck, and then there's about two and a half hours of singing. We have songbooks with hundreds and hundreds of songs." The next meetup is on April 16. If you have interest, contact Ruth Witty after 2:30 p.m. at (413) 522-6756.

The annual **Gill-Montague Educational Fund Gala** is planned for Saturday, April 29, at 7 p.m. in the Turners Falls High School theater. Tribute band Faithfully will present "An Eagles & Journey Experience."

The group, we are told, recreates 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 more. Advance tickets are available for \$30 at Freedom Credit Union, Greenfield Savings

The Gill-Montague Education Fund 2023 Annual Gala

"Faithfully"

An Eagles & Journey Experience

Saturday, April 29th
7:00 pm

Turners Falls High School Theater

Advance Tickets: \$30 At the Door: \$35

Ticket Locations: Hillside Pizza, Bernardston; Weatherheads, Erving; Bobby's Hair & Nail Salon, Northfield; World Eye Bookshop, Greenfield; Greenfield Savings Bank and Scotty's Convenience Store, Turners Falls; and the GMEF website, www.thegmf.org.
Corporate Underwriters: Greenfield Savings Bank, The Management Solutions, Inc.
Corporate Sponsors: Construction Monitoring Services, Franklin First FCU, Gilmore & Farrell Insurance Agency

* RESCHEDULED *

44th ANNUAL Artspace Market

Saturday, April 22nd

10am- 3pm Greenfield High School
21 Barr Ave, Greenfield, MA 01301

Local artisans, accessible artwork, family activities, community performances, door prizes, & fundraising for our Community Arts Center

FREE ADMISSION!

Bank, Scotty's Convenience Store, or online at www.thegmf.org.

"Our Annual Gala has made it possible for the GMEF to award over \$126,840 of grants throughout the District in science, music, art, athletics, language, math, technology, and reading," the gala organizers tell us.

Música Franklin is seeking craft vendors for their fifth annual Fun Fest on Saturday, May 20, from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m. in Unity Park, Turners Falls. Fun Fest is a free, family-friendly festival that features music and activities for the whole family.

Featured performers this year include TONY award-winning Abena Koomson-Davis, Isabella Mendes, Viva Quetzal, and others. There will also be workshops, make-and-take crafts, and a range of fun activities.

The anticipated audience size is around 500 people. Fill out a vendor application form at www.tinyurl.com/musicafest or email rachelle@musicafranklin.org.

An exciting development at the *Montague Reporter* office: Beginning April 10, subscribers paying online at www.montaguereporter.org/subscribe will be able to sign up for **yearly automated renewal payments**. This should prevent a lot of routine grief, and free up staff and volunteer time for better things!

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Senator Says Rural Condition to Improve; Town Paying to Ship Bottled Air in Trucks

By JOSH HEINEMANN

State senator Jo Comerford came to the Wendell selectboard's March 29 meeting in person and spoke at length about initiatives that should help small western Massachusetts towns. She started by saying municipal service is the hardest in these small towns.

Comerford said governor Maura Healey had created a new state office of climate innovation and resilience, headed by climate chief Melissa Hoffer. The state needs a "roadmap" for bringing carbon dioxide emissions down to zero equitably.

Trees make significant contribution, Comerford said, and Wendell's stewardship of its trees helps. She promised to write a letter to Healey and the Department of Public Utilities about the 12-acre battery storage facility Borrego and New Leaf Energy propose to build in wooded land behind 68 Wendell Depot Road.

Comerford said she is asking for a rural schools bill to address inequities small communities face in funding education, especially special education. A single special-education expense of \$100,000 might be lost in the budget of a large metropolitan district, she said, but can make a big difference to a small rural school.

In Wendell, increasing education costs and incompletely-funded mandates are colliding with the town's levy limit. Comerford said Healey's proposed FY'24 budget includes more money for Chapter 70 school aid, regional school transportation, and payments in lieu of taxes on state land.

Comerford has sponsored a ban on PFAS, part of a new omnibus bill. One problem is the presence of these toxic chemicals in sewage sludge which has been spread as fertilizer on agricultural land, putting farms in jeopardy. The state of Maine has made PFAS illegal. Comerford said some PFAS can be mitigated, and that UMass researchers are looking for ways to break them down.

The senator said she is working with FRCOG and FRTA to increase public transit options, including "microtransit," the use of appropriate-sized vans.

Selectboard member Dan Keller asked Comerford to keep Wendell officials informed about scheduled hearings. It is now possible to attend these remotely, saving a person hours of travel, driving, fuel, emissions, parking, and other fees for a chance to speak for three minutes.

Town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad said it is hard for small-town and part-time personnel to keep up with the burden of bureaucracy when the state rolls out new regulations.

"We can try to 'right-size' legisla-

tion," Comerford said, but regulatory changes may not be as easy.

She noted that the Eversource's plan to clearcut an extra 100-foot right of way along 27 miles of its transmission lines was brought to legislators' attention by a Wendell resident. "If you tell us what's wrong, we can act," she said. "Don't be shy."

Project Management

Project manager Phil Delorey said town counsel advised against agonizing over assigning accountability for the culvert washout on Mormon Hollow Road, and to prioritize making a permanent repair as soon as weather allows in spring.

Delorey said he had talked with other contractors and concluded that Wendell should hire the existing contractor, Davenport Construction, to make the repair for the fixed price of \$84,281.10. The work requires an extension of Davenport's contract until May 30, a change order, and a notice to proceed, and the selectboard voted to approve all three.

After taking a long look at the town barn with fire captain Asa DeRoode, fire chief Joe Cuneo, and road superintendent Al Frost, Delorey decided the building needs more than the new roof approved at the March 15 selectboard meeting.

Its wood siding is original, dating to the 1980s, and is in poor condition after 30 years without maintenance, and the interior can use fresh paint. There is agreement on the need for a new backup generator, but its size should only be determined after assessing the building's electrical load and evaluating what solar panels and battery backup can provide, all the work of an electrician.

Delorey said wood cutting around the WRATS is mostly done, and monitoring wells around the old landfill should be in place by mid-summer. Road paving this summer is limited by a \$20,000 shortfall but is expected in June.

Recycling & Transfer

Delorey also reported that Carl Johnson plans to stop working at the WRATS. Ray Stone, the prior supervisor, never saw a job description, and Delorey said there should be one.

He proposed raising the supervisor pay to \$20 an hour to bring it up to New Salem's rate, and the assistant up to \$17.25, starting in the next pay period. There is enough money in the budget to cover both raises this fiscal year.

Returnable bottles and cans take up half the WRATS attendants' time, and half the space in the recycle shed. The money they bring in goes to Good Neighbors, but is not enough to justify the time and

space they take up.

Franklin County Solid Waste Management District director Jan Ameen said Wendell is the only town that collects returnables.

Recycle trucking is charged by volume, not weight, so Wendell is paying to ship air in the detergent, juice, and milk bottles in the recycle container. Selectboard member Gillian Budine said a grant might be available for the town to buy returnable machines like grocery stores have, but Delorey said shredded plastic is not accepted.

WRATS brings in \$50,000, mostly for recycled materials, and costs the town \$86,000.

Meeting Passed Over

The only timely agenda item on the next meeting, which was scheduled for April 5, was a draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) with New Salem about a fire chief shared by the two towns. Joe Cuneo is now serving both towns in two part-time positions, and is scheduled to retire in October, but is willing to continue for a limited time until a new chief is hired.

The MOU would create one full-time position, with benefits and expenses shared by both towns. The towns offer different benefits, so they will need to agree on those details before sending the MOU to a lawyer.

Johnson-Mussad pointed out that April 5 was the first and most important night of Passover, and suggested holding the meeting on April 4. Instead, the board approved the draft MOU, and agreed to skip the meeting entirely.

Other Business

A Mass Audubon representative was scheduled to attend the April 5 meeting to discuss the camp scholarships Audubon offers in lieu of paying taxes on land they own in Wendell. Johnson-Mussad said he would schedule them for the next meeting on April 19.

The board approved a request by the Friends of the Wendell Library to retroactively allow the librarian a snow emergency day for Tuesday, March 14, when the library was closed for snow. She does not have to use her vacation time for that day.

The board granted a one-day liquor license to Lori Perkins of Home Fruit Wine of Orange for a wine tasting from 1 to 3 p.m. on April 29, during the Diemand Farm spring festival.

Johnson-Mussad said the office building entryway is being kept open, with the main door locked, when no one is working inside. This change, a trial waiting for feedback, will allow citizens to pick up needed forms any time of day or night.

SWIFT RIVER from page B1

the elementary school's drinking water in its first monthly tests.

After extensive deliberation, Wendell and New Salem agreed last year to share the cost of installing a PFAS treatment system. The project, anticipated to cost \$140,000, is currently out to bid.

"[I]t is wonderful to have state funding for this project, and we don't have to dig too deeply into town coffers to pay for our share," Neal said. "The support we've gotten from our elected officials for this funding has been very important to the process."

Wendell and New Salem used \$40,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) relief funds to hire an engineer to assess the contaminated well and design a treatment system. The towns each anticipate spending another \$20,000 during the design phase, and about \$5,000 annually for the upkeep and replacement of the system's anion-exchange resin filters.

"We are unsure of the recurring costs, as we don't know how often we'd have to replace the filters and the cost of disposal of the waste," Neal said. "[R]ealistically, we won't know until the system is operational for a year or two."

Swift River School was one of 21 small public water suppliers that will receive a total of \$1.05 million in grants from the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to address PFAS-contaminated water.

Other awards include \$35,000 for the Petersham town hall, \$50,000 for the currently unused Phillipston Memorial School building, and \$38,079 for the Brewery At Four Star Farms in Northfield.

The Golden Eagle Restaurant, located on the "hairpin turn" on Route 2 in Clarksburg, will receive \$50,000 for the drilling of a new well on the property, an alternative that Swift River School had also considered.

"I am heartened to see schools, businesses, and municipal buildings in our district receive PFAS remediation grants," senator Jo Comerford said in a press release. "Constituents gather at these places, drink the water, and I will breathe easier knowing these funds are in place to address concerning levels of PFAS. My sincere thanks to MassDEP for confronting the PFAS challenge head on."

Often called "forever chemicals," PFAS are commonly used in products such as waterproof clothing, nonstick pans, firefighting foam, and food packaging. The chemicals readily bind to proteins found in blood, and have been linked to a wide array of health problems including cancer, reproductive issues, and immunodeficiency.

Comerford has introduced two bills on the issue. One would ban the sale of consumer goods manufactured with PFAS, and the other would require the labeling of fertilizer products made with municipal wastewater sludge, while protecting

farmers from liability over soil contaminated by its past use.

"Removing PFAS from our drinking water is one of the great environmental challenges of our time," energy and environmental affairs secretary Rebecca Tepper said in a statement. "Working closely with communities dealing with PFAS is essential to eliminating these contaminants."

In October 2020, Massachusetts set the state's first safe drinking water standard for PFAS at 20 parts per trillion (ppt). All public water systems in Massachusetts are required to test for the sum of the six of the most common PFAS chemicals, and new regulations requiring the testing of private wells are in the works.

The grants announced this week are in addition to \$28.4 million secured through supplemental budgets during the administration of governor Charlie Baker to address PFAS contamination. Of those funds, \$20 million was set aside for the Clean Water Trust and \$8.4 million was spent on a statewide testing program to provide MassDEP with data to address the issue.

"Removing PFAS from our drinking water is one of the great environmental challenges of our time."

— Rebecca Tepper, Massachusetts secretary of energy and environmental affairs

As part of this effort, MassDEP offered free PFAS testing to homeowners in communities where the majority of residents use wells. Some of the highest levels detected in the state were found in a cluster of residential wells in North Leverett, with levels as high as 435 ppt.

The source of the Leverett contamination remains unknown, and the same is true at Swift River School, where tests have ranged from 17 to 72 ppt.

In February, the Biden administration dedicated \$2 billion in infrastructure spending to remediate PFAS and other emerging contaminants. Last month, the US Environmental Protection Agency proposed the first-ever federal maximum level for PFAS in drinking water: 4 ppt.

For many small communities and homeowners, the cost of new treatment equipment is daunting, and state and federal support may be crucial to meeting future standards.

"The grant funds supporting New Salem and Petersham are indispensable to addressing the challenges PFAS poses to our drinking water systems," state representative Aaron Saunders said in a statement. "I look forward to our continued work together to ensure the availability of clean drinking water for all of our residents."



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UMASS from page A1

and, in doing so, their public employment and retirements are no longer at risk," they wrote. "If there are issues that extend beyond the pensions of these employees, we are confident that a resolution can be developed and, through good faith collective bargaining, executed."

Staff at both the Advancement office and the UMass Amherst Foundation work on marketing and fundraising to support UMass students, faculty, programs, and facilities. According to state law, employees of a public college cannot spend more than 25% of their working hours on projects related to an affiliated private foundation. University officials claim that most Advancement employees' work exceeds this limit, and that most jobs in the office should therefore be transferred to the Foundation.

However, union members estimated that fewer than 10% of their members are out of compliance with these standards, and say management is refusing to return to the bargaining table to find a solution that maintains their status as state employees. In a joint press release, the unions state that the change would move Advancement office's \$13 million annual budget "beyond the reaches of state accounting oversight and public scrutiny."

Arwen Staros Duffy, who serves as both UMass's vice chancellor for Advancement and the executive director of the UMass Amherst Foundation, told the staff of the proposed changes to their employment on February 18. The Massachusetts State Retirement Board (MSRB), she said, had set a deadline to submit a plan for compliance by February 20.

"I write to share that, regretfully, the University, USA, and PSU have been unable to reach an agreement on a reorganization plan," she wrote. "To meet MSRB's February 20 deadline, the University will submit a plan that necessitates ensuring that the UMass Amherst Foundation, not UMass Amherst, performs most of the advancement and fundraising work to maintain legal compliance moving forward."

"[T]hese positions are not being lost," she continued. "[T]hey are being moved for compliance reasons and in the interest of protecting your past and future retirement contributions."

'Tremendous Misunderstanding'

Last month members of the two unions staged a demonstration outside the Whitmore Administration building against privatization of the Advancement office jobs, and potential loss of their pensions.

State treasurer Deborah Goldberg urged UMass to resolve the legal compliance issue soon, "with the clarity and the empathy their employees rightly deserve."

"The university is still bound by its agreements with the union around the Advancement division, and no state agency is going to rescue them from their obligation to bargain with the unions," said PSU co-chair Andrew Gorry.

In a March 27 statement, Comer-

ford and Domb wrote that they were "not convinced that UMass Amherst's plan to restructure is needed," and publicly urged UMass to seek other alternatives. The state legislators weighed in three days before the regular meeting of the MSRB, the state governing body that oversees retirement eligibility.

"Their justification to privatize these jobs clearly holds no water."

— Andrew Gorry, co-chair, UMass Professional Staff Union (PSU)

"As legislators who represent UMass Amherst and its people, we are gravely concerned about the 100 employees at UMass Amherst — many of whom are our constituents — whose positions focus on building support for the university," they wrote. "Their state jobs, careers, and retirements are on the line as the flagship campus endeavors to move their positions to a private entity."

At the virtual meeting last Thursday, MSRB members noted an unusually large number of people present, voted to move the UMass item up the agenda, and discussed it for about five minutes.

State treasurer Deborah Goldberg, who chairs the five-member board, assured attendees that UMass employees' money already paid into the state pension system is not at risk of being lost, but warned the compliance issue would need to be addressed moving forward.

"These employees will retain what pension-creditable service they have earned through the date of UMass Amherst's anticipated restructuring," Melinda Troy, the MSRB's director of legal services, said at the meeting. "To date, with the exception of one employee, the individuals who have been enrolled in the state retirement system have appropriately been entitled to membership in the system, in part due to a state law which permits them to do some limited work for the foundation in the course of their state employment."

Goldberg called the idea that UMass employees could lose their existing pensions a "tremendous misunderstanding," and said that the compliance problem is "100% UMass Amherst's responsibility" to resolve. She and other members said they did not plan to take any action to bring the school into compliance.

"I personally feel very badly that their employees have been confronted with a confusing, disruptive, and stressful situation for them and their families," Goldberg said. "I advise and strongly encourage UMass Amherst to resolve this as soon as possible with the clarity and the empathy their employees rightly deserve."

Increased Urgency

"Today's emphatic statements by the Treasurer and the state retirement board put an end to the university's deception," Gorry said after last Thursday's meeting. "Their justification to privatize these jobs clearly holds no water."

According to the MSRB, UMass officials first reported the problem to the state.

"The university became aware of the issue as a result of another pension matter and immediately began a review to determine whether UMass employees would be impacted," UMass spokesperson Edward Blaguszewski said in a statement. "All of the positions moving to the UMass Amherst Foundation were determined to have compliance issues that put employees' pension and retirement eligibility at risk."

Blaguszewski told the Reporter that the university's legal team reviewed corporate documents, job descriptions, and job offer letters to determine that the jobs did not comply with state law. The MSRB has not conducted its own assessment of the employees' eligibility.

"As far as I know, we've been given no information other than a letter from a law firm hired by UMass," MSRB member Theresa McGoldrick said at the March 30 meeting. "There's no information or evidence to show whether they do that kind of work or not, whether there's been any violation in statute, and for that reason, we're not acting on this — we're simply saying it is UMass's issue to fix."

In a letter to the university, the MSRB had said that having staff in non-compliant positions paying into the state pension system could be "problematic" for the Massachusetts State Employees' Retirement System, which must follow guidelines set at the federal level by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

"If ineligible members are permitted to participate, the entire plan risks losing its status as an IRS-qualified retirement plan, jeopardizing the retirement system and the associated benefits for all of its members," Troy explained at last week's meeting.

The next day, Comerford and Domb — this time joined by US representative Jim McGovern — again issued a statement calling for the university to end the privatization plan.

"Thanks to the Treasurer's statements, it is clear that this is 100% UMass Amherst's responsibility to resolve," they wrote. "As a result, with increased urgency, and based on University officials' comments that their plan was based on the need to secure these retirements, we call on UMass Amherst to immediately abandon its plans to eliminate and privatize these public positions and to announce a renewed commitment to work with the union to protect these employees' careers and futures."

The legislators also urged the MSRB to document in writing the fact that each Advancement employee is eligible to collect their pensions earned thus far.

Blaguszewski said that if the plan goes forward, Advancement employees would not need to reapply for their jobs at the Foundation, and that any who wish to remain public employees can discuss opportunities to do so with the university's human resources office.

UMass officials did not answer additional questions from the Reporter about how the work of the Advancement office is distinguished from that of the UMass Amherst Foundation, or other details about the proposed changes.

"The university will not be making any additional comment at this time," Blaguszewski said.



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MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, the Montague Conservation Commission will hold a public meeting to review the following Request for Determination of Applicability at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 13, 2023: RDA #2023-03 filed by FirstLight Power to determine whether the removal of invasive and non-native plant vegetation; removal of an existing fence; planting of native vegetation; and installation of a fence at 2 Gatehouse Drive, Turners Falls (Map 4, Lots 5, 6, & 7) is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act. Remote meeting login information and the filing is available for review at www.montague-ma.gov/calendar.

TOWN OF ERVING Summer Park Program

The Town of Erving seeks fun, energetic, motivated summer staff for our popular Summer Parks Program for children entering grades 1-6, for the following positions:

- Program Director (age 21+)
- Lead Counselor (age 18+)
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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. 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.

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.

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 or by mail to: Town of Erving, Attn: Bryan Smith, Town Administrator, 12 East Main Street, Erving, MA 01344.

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NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

FY'24 Town Budget Sent To Spring Town Meeting With Full-Time Fire Chief, Without Fourth FT Cop

By GEORGE BRACE

At their meeting on Tuesday, Leverett's selectboard made final adjustments to the town's FY'24 budget and approved it to go before voters at the annual town meeting on April 29.

The majority of the discussion concerned a request to change the position of fire chief from part-time to full-time. The request was first made two weeks earlier at a town-wide budget hearing, leading the selectboard to postpone approving the budget in order to give the personnel board and finance committee time to review the request and make recommendations, as per the town's established budget process.

The personnel board met immediately prior to Tuesday's selectboard meeting, and voted 3 to 1 to recommend the move.

A three-member quorum of the fin com then met jointly with the selectboard, though it failed to recommend the proposal by virtue of a vote tied 1 to 1. Fin com chair Phil Carter voted against, member Jed Proujansky in favor, and member Nancy Grossman abstained due to her prior service in the fire department.

The selectboard then approved the request 2 to 1, with members Patricia Duffy and Melissa Colbert voting in favor and chair Tom Hankinson against.

The debate centered on fire chief Brian Cook's decision not to go through the established budget procedures by including the request in the draft departmental budget reviewed by fin com and the selectboard in February. He instead asked for the change at the end of the joint budget hearing on March 21.

Carter and Hankinson both argued that following established budget procedures was important in order to provide transparency and allow for the smooth functioning of town government. Carter pointed out that the town missed public input on the question due to the lateness of the request. Townspeople "didn't know, couldn't know" of the request, he said, whereas if it had been made public in February there would have been plenty of time to look at the question.

Carter also pointed out that the same proposal had been made last year during the normal budget process, but the decision was reached that while the benefit would be clear, the cost was too high, so a compromise was reached. He said this year the benefit hadn't increased, but there was an "additional cost of damage to the process." Leverett, he said, "shouldn't establish a precedent that department heads can make their own rules."

Hankinson agreed that the process was "very, very, important," and the "last-second" request "hindered the board's ability to make a decision." He gave the example of deciding whether or not to hire a fourth full-time police officer, which had also been under con-

sideration, as something that could be affected by changes in other departments' budgets.

Hankinson said Cook's reasoning – that the town's aging population needed more emergency services – was a "strong argument," but that he couldn't support the request. He suggested a compromise of delaying the move for six months, but the idea was not supported.

Colbert said that she, too, objected to the process, but was "happy to get behind the personnel board's recommendation."

Duffy also commented positively on the personnel board's recommendation, and that she didn't "feel that going outside the process should determine whether we get services." "In the future, everyone should know," she said. "This time, no problem."

Proujansky said he was "not thrilled about it," but wanted to separate the process from the subject. He suggested that the matter could be taken up by town meeting as a special article, rather than included in the budget.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis noted that the decision to hire a third full-time police officer had been a special article in a previous year. Duffy said she felt a special article would result in "too much attention."

Hankinson made a motion to send the fire chief's hours increase to town meeting as a special article, but didn't receive a second, leading to the 2-to-1 vote to include it in the budget.

Other Budgets

The board approved a number of special articles for inclusion on the town meeting warrant, including three recommended by the capital planning committee: a pavement project at the highway department and library; an exhaust fan system for the fire department; and money towards a fire truck.

Police chief Scott Minckler withdrew his request for a fourth full-time officer, replacing it with a request to increase his budget for part-time police work by an amount that would allow for two additional eight-hour shifts per week.

Minckler said that he wanted to take more time to educate the public on a need for a fourth full-timer, but that in the meantime the additional funding would help him address coverage issues more efficiently than he is able to currently. Scheduling officers to work 12-hour shifts on weekends was a particular concern, he said, and this would help him move to eight-hour shifts.

The board decided to include the new request, and finally, approved the overall town budget by a 2 to 0 vote for presentation to voters at town meeting.

Colbert abstained from the town budget vote, citing a lack of understanding of the numbers involved in the request for additional part-time officers.

FLOWs from page A1

Friday, the summer figure has been restored to 500 cfs, but the fate of the plants is not apparent – the NHESP is conspicuously missing from the list of signatories. In its place are five river-recreation stakeholders: American Whitewater, the Appalachian Mountain Club, New England Flow, and the private companies Crab Apple Whitewater and Zoar Outdoor, which lead rafting tours on the Deerfield river.

FirstLight spokesperson Claire Belanger told the *Reporter* that the maximum flows defined by the settlement would correlate with a 12.4% overall reduction in energy generation under the lifespan of the new license.

Hidden Gains

The settlement includes a number of other stipulations, with many aimed at reducing FirstLight's impact on local organisms. The largest items include the replacement of the fish ladder at Turners Falls with a fish elevator and facilities designed to specifically support eel passage, by Year 9 of the license, and installing a barrier net hoped to keep fish and larvae from being sucked into the pumped-storage project at Northfield Mountain by Year 7.

The Connecticut River Conservancy, one stakeholder that declined to sign either the AIP or last week's settlement, has been outspokenly critical about the delayed timelines for building these measures.

"The spillway lift project at the Turners Falls Dam represents a massive capital investment," Belanger said when asked about the timeline, "and requires years of permitting, engineering, construction, and capital planning, which requires a significant time frame to complete."

She defended the timeline for installing the barrier net on similar grounds, and said that complaints that it will only protect two species – eel and shad are named in the settlement document – are unfounded.

"It's not that it won't benefit other types of fish," she said. "Eel and Shad were simply raised as species of concern."

In its public announcements, FirstLight has touted the \$152 million estimated price tag of the promised improvements aimed at supporting fish and other species in the river over the license's 50-year lifespan, but the settlement agreement closely follows the company's 2020 AFLA in most regards. At that time, the company had listed \$121 million in protection-related expenses.

Belanger confirmed that a signif-

icant amount of the difference is accounted for by inflation.

"The increase in cost is driven by higher inflation rates – including realized inflation rates as high as 7% over our initial project estimates as macroeconomic pressures impact our initial projections," she said. Furthermore, Belanger said, while the AFLA projected a license lasting from 2021 to 2070, the new settlement assumes 2024 to 2073. All of the projected expenses are listed in nominal dollars.

"It's a three-year difference, but inflation was high during that time, and [there are] also increased expected inflation values going forward," she told the *Reporter*.

A figure that has grown more significantly since the AFLA is the total cost FirstLight estimates the license changes will impose, the sum of these mitigation investments and the energy revenue lost by passing more water over the dam: from \$238 million in 2020 to \$352 million last week.

As the actual loss of energy generation has only increased from 11.3% to 12.4% between the two scenarios, it appears that the company's total projected revenue over the next half-century has grown substantially on the basis of energy prices.

Next Steps

"This agreement represents a major step forward in restoring sustainable migratory fish populations and recreational fishing in the Connecticut River," US Fish and Wildlife assistant regional director Rick Jacobson said in an official statement the agency released on Monday.

The agency said the agreed-upon standards would "enhance the quantity and persistence of habitat" for tiger beetles, lampmussels and pondmussels, dragonflies and "plants," and improve spawning conditions for sturgeon, shad, and even sea lamprey, known locally as the least understood fish in the river.

Belanger said that the company is "incredibly proud of the extensive collaboration with our partners to reach this agreement – we are grateful for their counsel and persistence through this decade-long process."

But even after 11 years, more obstacles must be cleared before a license can be issued.

First, there is the issue of the remaining sections of the settlement talks. Though FirstLight was unable to complete the negotiations and merge all the agreements into a "comprehensive settlement" by the final deadline FERC set last week, the company insists it will continue

to reach agreement with the stakeholders, and says there is precedent for FERC to take into account settlements turned in past deadline.

Ellis, who has been participating in recreational negotiations on behalf of the town of Montague, said Monday that "it was difficult to endorse that agreement because there were cross-references from it to other documents, including the flow and fish passage, which we did not have possession of a final copy of."

Now that the flows and fish passage settlement has been reached, Ellis said, it may be easier to complete other sections, and he warned the selectboard that they may need to schedule an executive session in the coming weeks to discuss a recreation settlement.

And second, the company faces a final major process with broad opportunities for public input: securing a "401 Water Quality Certification" (WCQ) from the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The process is outlined at www.tinyurl.com/FLNextStep. FERC is expected to draft a version of the license called a Ready for Environmental Analysis (REA) before the end of May, at which point the company has two months to submit its WCQ application. The state then has up to a year to analyze the proposal, including a public comment period and four public forums.

Kelsey Wentling, river steward at the Connecticut River Conservancy, told the *Reporter* that the filing of the settlement also means that a public comment period is now open on the FERC docket until April 20.

"It's a great time for people to review the agreement and to write in," Wentling said, "to first let them know what they appreciate and support within the agreement, and then what they think might be missing, and things that they might not support."

Wentling said that from the Conservancy's perspective, efforts to curb large fluctuations in water levels are positive, but the proposed summer flows below the dam are "around half of what we think is necessary to provide enough habitat for fish, and for macroinvertebrates like dragonflies."

Asked whether successfully reaching last week's settlement is expected to simplify the WCQ process, Belanger said FirstLight "can't speak to whether or not it will be simpler, but it means that a major group of conditioning authorities are comfortable with the settlement terms and will be supportive."



MONTAGUE REPORTER



Left: Peg Bridges of Montague Center (seen at left) celebrated her 92nd birthday in Cabo San Jose, Mexico with her San Diego family – and, naturally, the March 2 edition of the Reporter!

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MONTAGUE from page A1

system on the Shea roof will have to be removed, causing “several days of disruption” at the theater.

Ellis also reported on the bidding process for curbside trash and recycling pickup. A bid will be released this spring, he said, for a contract to begin in July 2024, in the form of a “request for proposals,” to allow the town to consider “credentials, behavior, [and] past references” and not just accept the lowest bidder.

Another construction-related highlight was a report on the status of several projects now on the state and regional Transportation Improvement Program (“TIP”) list. These included the South Street Bridge over the Sawmill River in Montague Center, which will be advertised in 2024 and is currently budgeted at \$4.2 million; and another bridge over the Sawmill on North Leverett Road, projected to be advertised in 2025 and currently budgeted at \$6.4 million.

Ellis said the list also included what he called the canal district “mega-project”: constructing new bridges over both the Turners Falls power canal and Connecticut River as well as replacing the Bailey bridge over the canal to the Patch. This would be advertised in 2026, and carries a projected cost of \$60.54 million.

The state list also included what Ellis called the canal district “mega-project”... This would be advertised in 2026, and carries a projected cost of \$60.54 million.

The state has “advanced a design” for intersection improvements at the corner of North Leverett Road and Route 63, but has not projected a date or cost.

Ramsey then reported on a project to replace a culvert over the Sawmill River, which was originally to be funded with the assistance of a state grant. But Ramsey reported that the grant for the project, which is estimated at \$300,000 to construct, would require a fee for initial engineering of \$313,000.

The board balked at the cost ratio, and Ramsey said he would evaluate the possibility of having the town’s public works department build the culvert.

The board awarded an \$89,000 contract to Power Gen Technologies for a used boiler at the Clean Water Facility (CWF) and accepted a bid of \$103,181 from Smith and Loveless of Lenexa, Kansas for a lift pump station at the industrial park. Both votes were taken at the request of CWF superintendent Chelsey Little, who also received approval to apply for a state grant to help finance an all-electric utility van.

Personnel

Turning to the personnel side of the agenda, the board approved a committee to conduct a “qualifications review” of assistant town clerk Kathern “Beanie” Pierce, who could potentially be elevated to the position of town clerk, which Deb Bourbeau is vacating.

The committee will consist of Bourbeau, Ellis, town meeting moderator Ray Godin, town accountant Carolyn Olsen, town treasurer Eileen Seymour, planning board chair and former selectboard member Mark Fairbrother, and Elizabeth Irving,

vice chair of the planning board and member of the board of registrars.

Health director candidate Candaicy David, a citizen of Turks and Caicos Islands, failed to clear the required federal lottery for a special H1B employment visa, and Ellis discussed the hiring process. Ellis serves on the special hiring committee for the position, which will meet this Thursday to consider next steps in the hiring process. He also announced the resignation of town nurse Cheryl Volpe, effective April 24. (See article, Page A1.)

At the request of public works superintendent Tom Bergeron, the board appointed Richard Bernier as a truck driver/laborer and Smith Vocational School work-study student Chris Vecchio as a part-time mechanic beginning April 10.

Treatment Plant

CWF superintendent Little gave a lengthy presentation of requirements under a draft federal discharge permit received by the facility at the end of March. The permit, which Little noted is 185 pages long, would allow the facility to continue to discharge treated effluent from the sewer system into the Connecticut River and its watershed.

In addition to discharges directly from the sewer plant, the permit would require monitoring procedures for the town of Gill, which sends sewage to the Montague plant; industrial monitoring and pretreatment requirements; and monitoring for PFAS chemicals.

Little said the permit would expire in five years, although according to the document sent by the EPA it replaces a permit issued in 2008. “There’s a lot more sampling, which we knew was coming,” she said, “which is why we have added the laboratory manager position – there’s a lot more reporting requirements.”

The town and public at large are allowed to comment on the proposed permit until April 28.

Little said the town also needs to produce a “major flood events plan” over the next year and conduct “local limits study,” which measures the maximum level of contaminants a facility of a given size is able to process.

Management Burdens

The board approved the latest version of a liquor license transfer, amended at the state’s request, from Hubie’s Tavern to the Shea Theater once again by a vote of two to one, with chair Rich Kuklewicz voting in the negative. Although he opposed the transfer, Kuklewicz had insisted that the other two board members be present to vote.

Although he opposed the license transfer, Kuklewicz had insisted that the other two board members be present to vote. The transfer was approved by a vote of two to one.

Executive assistant Wendy Bogusz discussed the state’s recent extension of COVID-era policies on outdoor liquor service and dining until April 2024. Three of the six establishments in Montague with outdoor dining and liquor service, she said, now have the option included in their state-approved licenses, and two of the remaining three have approached her for permission to ex-

tend it until the new deadline.

“I think that we should review them again,” said Kuklewicz. “They can basically submit the same paperwork.”

Kuklewicz also raised the need for the Rendezvous, which now has outdoor liquor service as part of its state license, to apply to the town for the use of the Third Street parking lot.

Ellis reported on the latest developments in FirstLight Power’s federal relicensing process. (See article, Page A1.) Although final agreements with key stakeholders had not been reached before the federal deadline, he said, a settlement on “fish and flow” provisions had been filed by the power company, and he believed negotiations on other potential agreements involving recreation and cultural resources would continue.

Ellis also reported that he had been invited by the Massachusetts Municipal Association, which represents cities and towns on Beacon Hill, to present comments to the state cannabis control commission about new regulations governing towns’ agreements with local cannabis companies. He said he planned to emphasize the need to avoid placing “unreasonable reporting or management burdens on communities.”

Other Business

Use of public property was approved for the annual Newt Guilbault youth baseball league opening day parade on April 23, and a “fun run” sponsored by the Brick House on June 17. A heavy-metal music festival at the Millers Falls Rod and Gun Club, “RPM Festival,” on the weekend of September 1 to 3 was also approved.

The board briefly discussed the annual town meeting on May 6. Ellis said meeting moderator Ray Godin is holding a hybrid meeting, combining in-person and virtual attendance, and would be testing the technology in the high school auditorium on Tuesday with representatives from the high school and Montague Community Television.

Bogusz reported that in a survey of town meeting members, 50 respondents said they would “show up in person” if a hybrid meeting were held, 11 responded they would participate via Zoom, and two checked off “not at all.” Montague’s town meeting includes 126 members, 21 elected from each of six precincts.

Although the board did not take a formal vote, it appeared to approve of a “coffee-and-donuts” session prior to the meeting, where town officials and committee members could respond to questions. The board will read and approve the final warrant on April 10.

The board did read and approve the warrant for the annual town election on May 17. The ballot includes elected officials, board members, and at least seven town meeting members from each precinct.

Bogusz asked whether the board wanted to continue its current practice of holding a hybrid meeting on the first Monday of each month and the remaining meetings via Zoom. No vote was taken, but the board agreed to continue doing so, and expressed a preference for a hybrid meeting next week due to the need for an in-person executive session.

The board’s next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 10 and will be a hybrid meeting, with the executive session starting at 6 p.m.

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LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on April 4, 2013: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Brick House Break-In

The wave of theft that has plagued downtown businesses in Turners Falls this winter has now spread to affect service providers as well. Sometime between Saturday night, April 23 and Sunday morning, April 24, the Brick House was broken into and burglarized. Among the items stolen were several staff laptops, musical instruments from the teen center (bass guitars and a midi keyboard), an audio mixer, and a bass amplifier.

The Brick House, a community

center on Third Street that runs a teen drop-in center, hosts community events and workshops, and connects many other resources and services to people around town, offers its programs free of cost.

Erving Studies Vacant Plant

The engineering firm Tighe & Bond has completed inspection of the remaining Usher building, which the Usher Plant re-use committee seeks to rehabilitate for some future use that would benefit the town. Tighe & Bond’s extensive report estimates the cost of stabilizing the building will be in the vicinity of \$385,000, of which \$150,000 will go to rebuilding the roof.

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on April 3, 2003: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Two Principals Given Notice

Bob Mahler, for ten years the principal of the Gill Elementary School, and Anna Garbiel, the Gill-Montague regional school systems’ most senior administrator, for 22 years the principal of the Montague Center School, have been given notices of non-renewal of their contracts.

At a Tuesday afternoon meeting, members of the personnel subcommittee and superintendent Brenda Finn defended their decision regarding the two veteran administra-

tors’ contracts as a necessary move brought on by fiscal constraints, and nothing more, in front of a distraught crowd of parents and teachers, and the principals themselves.

Wendell Town Coordinator Comes and Goes

The search for a new town coordinator is on again, as Donna Walters recently submitted a letter of resignation several weeks after starting the job. Walters cited lack of office equipment and furniture as her reason for leaving. She said she feels awkward asking the town for extensive investments in this tight budget time, and does not have the tools required for the job.

150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on April 9, 1873: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

Local Matters

As we go to press, the ice is going out of the river fast.

Mr. Schuler is laying down a brick pavement in front of his block. J.P. Morgan has begun the erection of a blacksmith’s shop and carriage factory on K Street. Henry Billings of Greenfield does the mason work, and Geo. L. Greene is engaged on the hod-carrying.

On Thursday evening last a “sugar party” was attended by some fifty or sixty ladies and gentlemen. The idea only originated in the

morning, and the success of getting so many together, with the walking in such bad condition, was solely due to the perseverance of the young gentlemen who so attentively saw to the serving of invitations.

When are we to have a Cemetery? The population of our town is rapidly increasing, and the deaths will increase in ratio. That we should have one, none can deny. That now is the proper time to take action, all must admit. We propose that a public meeting be called, a committee of citizens chosen, and the initiatory steps taken as soon as possible. The Turners Falls Company have expressed a willingness to aid the enterprise by a generous donation of land for the purpose.



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HEALTH from page A1

Immigration Services. A variety of occupations are covered, including research and development workers for the Department of Defense, fashion models, and a range of other qualifications – but the process starts with a lottery.

The number of lottery slots is capped at 85,000 annually. *Forbes Magazine*, which has been critical of the limitations on the H-1B process, estimates that in 2021 companies and government agencies registered more than 300,000 potential employees.

From the beginning of the decision to hire David, town officials have said they are aware that only 30% of potential employees are approved through the lottery to go to the next phase of the process. “It’s a blow,” said Ellis, but a “strong candidate who had previously elected not to interview” had recently approached the chair of the screening committee with renewed interest in the position.

Ellis said the health board had authorized the screening committee the previous week to “proceed, and interview if appropriate” at its meeting on April 6. Michael Nelson, who serves as the board of health’s representative on the committee, told the *Reporter* that the town did not need to begin a whole new search process, but could interview earlier candidates.

“We left the position open because we knew this might happen,” he said.

Nelson appeared confident that the screening committee could interview the candidate on Thursday and could make a recommendation to the health board the following week. As of press time, the board of health is

scheduled to meet next on April 19.

If the screening committee decides to bring a new candidate forward, the health board is required under the state open meeting law (OML) to conduct an interview in public. A “preliminary screening committee,” on the other hand, is entitled to discuss or interview a potential candidate in a non-public executive session, “if the chair declares that an open meeting will have a detrimental effect in obtaining qualified applicants.”

That language from the OML appears on the posted agenda for the screening committee’s April 6 meeting.

At Monday’s meeting, Ellis told the selectboard that there is also a “slight chance” the H-1B visa lottery could reopen in the fall if some winners are “weeded out” later in the process for not meeting federal criteria. The application for the lottery, he noted, required Montague to hire an immigration attorney, which cost “a few hundred dollars.”

If the process had gone further, he said, “we are probably talking about three to five thousand dollars.”

The *Reporter* was unable to contact Cheryl Volpe for comment on the reasons for her departure as of press time, and health board members expressed hesitancy to comment publicly on the issue. The town nurse is not a town employee but works on a contract basis.

Volpe, who has served as a nurse for other towns in the region, has recently worked approximately 10 to 12 hours per week. The former nurse’s office on the first floor of town hall is now occupied by Shayna Reardon, administrative assistant to executive assistant Wendy Bogusz.

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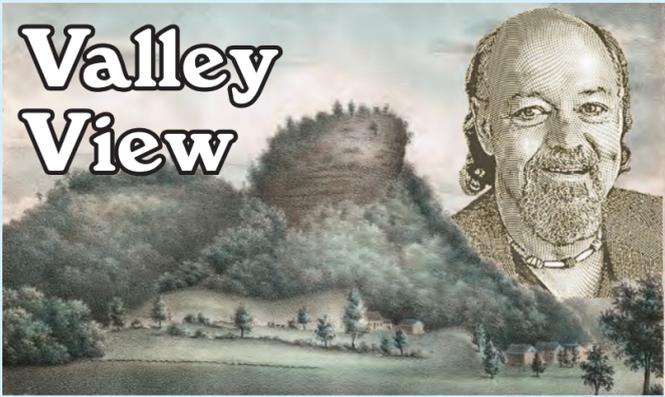
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APRIL 6, 2023

Above: Well. Look who decided to join us.



ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Choosing a column topic, a process I once faced twice a week, is a decision that can be influenced by many different factors and stimuli.

Maybe I've finished a provocative book, read an interesting magazine article, attended a gripping presentation, seen something on the boob tube, or engaged in impromptu conversation that initiates a strong reaction. Often nature-driven, the narrative may address something I've seen during a country ride, solitary hike or, back in the day, hunting an isolated hardwood ridge or thorny alder swamp.

Once in a while, as deadline pressure builds, a totally spontaneous subject is delivered like a gift from the heavens. Other times an idea unfolds during restless bedtime introspection, the wheels spinning to a sleep-interrupting scream. Then, with the topic already settled by still, gray, day-break waking time, a few paragraphs may begin their development before lifting from the pillow.

This week, the topic arrived quite unexpectedly during an early-morning walk to the backyard, brookside dumping place carved out for weekly pailsful of woodstove ash and embers. As I embarked on this familiar path, I could plainly hear Hinsdale Brook's jovial springtime rattle from the driveway in front of the carriage sheds, long before I turned north and followed the barn back to the soothing sound.

Standing along the high, southern bank, sandwiched between the kennel and cook-shed under a naked maple, I bore witness to the swollen stream's audible and visual glee as its cleansing, white-capped meltwater raced toward the Green River three-quarters of a mile away. Though frosty, spring was in the air, evoking pleasant thoughts and memories.

Not surprisingly, my mind first wandered back to a deep trout-fishing past, a springtime pursuit enjoyed by many. For me, spring fishing was a tradition dating back to childhood and extending well into adulthood, occasionally with wide-eyed sons in tow.

Having long ago learned to analyze trout-stream dynamics, I can still read the runs and riffles,

the pools and eddies, from a fishing perspective. Looking down that morning, I visualized plunking a soft pendulum cast upstream from trout in their feeding lairs and dead-drifting my offering past them for an aggressive, predatory strike. Whether using live bait or artificials, success comes down to the angler's abilities to read water, understand feeding patterns, and present bait in a natural manner without a hint of suspicious drag.

There is no better time than spring for trout fishing; well, then and during sticky summer rainstorms that color the water brown with silt and washed-in feed. But I didn't dwell long on fishing thoughts that morning. My thoughts hopped like an ovipositing mayfly to baseball, a springtime game that in my world trumps all others – even fishing and turkey hunting.

I'm not certain why baseball memories moved in as I stood along that rollicking trout stream. It just happened, transporting me to a place I love to visit. I suppose the impetus could have been a surprise visit a day or two earlier by an old summer teammate who occasionally stops on his way home to Vermont. Many years ago, we used to play weekend Northern League doubleheaders in places like Bennington, Vermont and Half Moon, New York against good college-age ballplayers.

Then again, maybe the baseball reminiscence was driven by all the gloom-and-doom Red Sox chatter leading up to Opening Day at Fenway Park. Whatever the stimulus, memories raced back more than a half-century to my turbulent Frontier Regional School days, when the "privilege" of playing ball was always at risk if you had a beef with a vindictive teacher, coach, or principal.

I must say that liked my baseball coach. The late Tommy Valiton, a Buckland boy who loved to hunt and fish, was a spirited bundle of mischievous enthusiasm. We became good friends and hunting buddies long after our days at Frontier and before he left this world for the Happy Hunting Ground nearly two decades ago.

Tommy was the lesser of two valuable commodities Buckland gift-wrapped to Frontier. The other was his fellow Arms Academy see **VALLEY VIEW** page B4

Contemporary Tapestries At Leverett Crafts & Arts

By NINA ROSSI

LEVERETT – I am a big fan of textile arts like embroidery, rug hooking, and quilting, so I really wanted to go see the tapestry exhibit that opened at Leverett Crafts & Arts over the weekend. "Over Under and Through the Warp: The Art of Tapestry Weaving" is a group show of about 75 tapestries made by members of Tapestry Weavers in New England (TWiNE).

Yes, there are enough tapestry weavers in New England that they have an association, with about 50 to 60 members! According to the two members I spoke with at the Barnes Gallery on Saturday, TWiNE is a pretty active group that meets in person several times a year – during the COVID shutdown, they met online monthly – to cross-pollinate their creative ideas, share techniques, and network about exhibits and other artistic opportunities.

The opportunity to exhibit in this show was extended to all members equally, so it includes the work of students and newbies along with work from those who are nationally and internationally known. If you are envisioning unicorns and other medieval motifs when you read "tapestry," you will be surprised how far these modern interpretations of an ancient art have busted loose from the historical frame in both subject matter and execution.

The artists are not secretive about their process – three of them have illustrated how they created the work in pictures and text on the wall, and there will be someone demonstrating weaving at the gallery almost



ROSSI PHOTO

Linda Rhyndard's homage to American abstract artist Arthur Dove literally "pops out" at the viewer.

every day the exhibit is open.

The exhibit spills into the hallway inside LCA's main entrance. A glass case filled with reference materials about tapestries has a placard telling us that the artform is "a hand-woven material into which the design is woven during the weaving process so that it see **TAPESTRIES** page B8

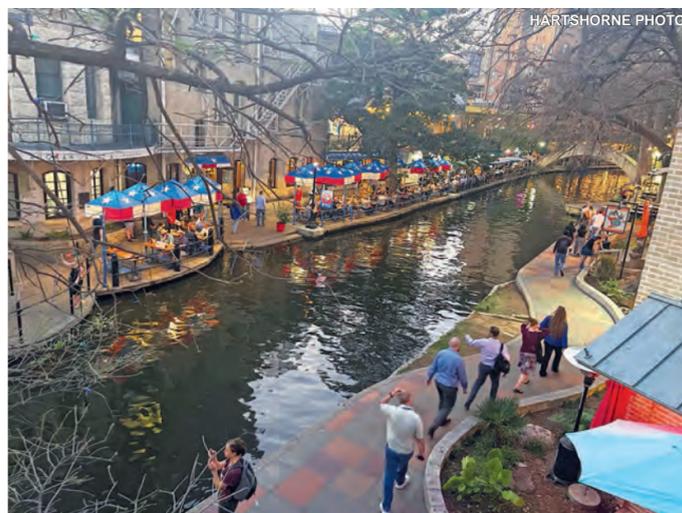


Texas's most popular city: San Antonio!

SOUTH DEERFIELD – A few weeks ago, I flew down to San Antonio, Texas for a four-day visit. I came back with a really positive view, and I've figured out what is making the city such a magnet for Americans.

More than 13,000 people moved to San Antonio between 2020 and 2021, more than any other major city in the US. Today the population is around 1.5 million, it's Texas' third largest city, and the city planners have done a lot of things right that makes the city very livable. Tourism is fast becoming the biggest industry, with military bases and healthcare right behind.

I took a bike ride downtown with Brian Benavidez of Mural Ride Bike Tours, who explained that there is a new building boom on the city's south side, with apartments, breweries, and food halls under construction. Brian said that the city is more like a town: people know each other, and the bicycle social network is strong. That same evening we would pass 120 or so bi-



HARTSHORNE PHOTO

San Antonio's famous River Walk.

cycle riders taking a social ride together at the pleasant time of dusk.

All around San Antonio you can see housing being built, and it's not all for the very rich. Rents down here are around \$1,300 to \$1,500 a month, affordable by most urban standards.

Brian's bike rides are a great way to see the city and its more than 200 urban murals. Biking there is very easy: there are virtually no hills to climb, and the ride is mostly on bike paths. The city has 210 miles of see **TRAVELS** page B4

Pet of the Week



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“STORM”

Storm is an active, independent and adventurous bunny who's accustomed to roaming freely in the living room or den. We suspect she prefers those rooms because she can watch Peter Rabbit and Bugs Bunny on the TV. However, when it's time to go back in her cage, she hops right in!

Storm is accustomed to living in a quiet environment with an adult caregiver and her brother Patches, who came to Dakin with her. Her caregiver says she's generally

friendly, curious, and playful with children. This bunny vacillates when it comes to being petted and held, but she is very loving and sweet. Storm is litterbox-trained and is good about using it, for the most part.

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



By CASEY WAIT

TURNERS FALLS – Hello, dear readers. We made it through another pandemic winter! As much as I want to celebrate that fact, I'm also painfully aware that the shift into April brings with it greater precarity for millions of Americans. On the first of the month, an estimated 22 million people will lose access to vital health insurance as part of what the Biden administration is calling the “unwinding” of the emergency public health measures put in place during the pandemic.

When the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) was declared in March 2020, states were prohibited from making their usual yearly Medicaid redeterminations, a grueling and dehumanizing process that forced people to prove their worthiness for basic access to healthcare and medication again and again. It was not unheard of for entire families to lose coverage for simply failing to open a generic-looking piece of mail from their state's Office of Health and Human Services.

Over the course of the three-year PHE, the percentage of uninsured Americans reached a historic low. Instead of seeing this as a societal good, state and federal politicians are eager to begin kicking people – an estimated 7 million of whom will be children – off the Medicaid books as soon as they can.

And all of this will be happening at a time when we are still seeing 1,500 to 2,000 Americans die of COVID-19 each week, and when Moderna will soon begin to charge \$130 a jab for its COVID vaccine.

With all of this in mind, I want to respond to an article that appeared in last week's special issue of the *Montague Reporter* titled “Assisted-Death Bill Returns to Beacon Hill This Session,” written by Sarah Robertson. As reported, supporters of S.1331, “An Act Relative to End of Life Options,” see access to medical assistance in dying (MAiD) as a matter of supporting greater “bodily autonomy” and giving terminally ill people the ability to choose “death on their own terms.”

While I take no issue with that framing in theory, and do not judge or shame anyone who wants to

seek MAiD for themselves, in the context of a vastly unequal America where access to even the most basic healthcare is not a right, but a privilege, I believe this legislation is naive, short-sighted, and frankly, dangerous.

I appreciate that, as Robertson shares in her article, disability activists have been invited into the process of writing this bill to try to ensure that MAiD is not used towards eugenic ends, and that provisions have been added to the bill to try to protect patients from being coerced into accepting MAiD. The proposed bill limits access to the treatment to those patients who have received a terminal diagnosis – but I want to dig into that a bit more.

When we hear about terminal illnesses, I think many of us jump to cancer or ALS. But a disease that is entirely manageable with proper treatment, such as diabetes or even HIV, can quickly become a death sentence when that treatment is inaccessible. What counts as a terminal disease to the poor and uninsured?

Robertson quotes disability activist Dina Stander as being worried that “people will choose medically assisted dying in situations where different economic circumstances or social supports might have made life worth living.” This is, indeed, already happening in Canada, where access to MAiD is much more widespread than in the US, and where they have recently expanded access to those with mental illnesses and are considering offering it to “mature” minors.

A high-profile case of a Canadian who chose MAiD hits especially close to home for me. Jennyfer Hatch was 37 years old when she decided that dying was easier than accessing care for her Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome – a condition that I, too, was born with, and struggle to manage. Hatch was featured in a now-infamous commercial for a fashion company, La Maison Simmons, which was essentially a mini-documentary showing Hatch's last days on Earth.

While the commercial framed Hatch's death as one of beauty and dignity, it crucially failed to mention that Hatch had previously expressed grief and anger over “falling through the cracks” of a medical system that didn't understand her disease: “If

I'm not able to access healthcare, am I then able to access death care? And that's what led me to look into MAiD and I applied last year.”

Because nearly every aspect of healthcare, even in a country regularly characterized as “socialist” like Canada, is driven by profit, those of us with rare diseases are set up to fall through the cracks. I am currently diagnosed with 10 different complex chronic conditions, about half of which are considered rare and lack effective treatment. I am incredibly lucky to have a care community that makes it possible for me to live a life that is incredibly worth living, even with all of the pain I deal with daily.

But I could just as easily have ended up like Jennyfer, who said in an interview several months before her death: “I can't afford the resources that would help improve my quality of life. Because of being locked in financially as well as geographically, it is far easier to let go than to keep fighting.”

My heart absolutely breaks for Jennyfer and I am filled with rage that she lived in a world where she was forced to make this calculus. Pro-MAiD activists may see their quest as one of simply offering more “choices” to those in pain. But what does “choice” even mean when you are forced to choose between unending – but potentially preventable – pain, and death?

Until we have a radical overhaul in our social support systems – single-payer healthcare, yes, but also public housing, clean air and water and green space, free education, cities and towns built with accessibility at the center, universal access to plentiful and delicious food, reparations for slavery and indigenous genocide; in other words, what my friends Artie Veirkant and Beatrice Adler-Bolton call “Health Communism” in their book of the same name – any MAiD legislation passed, no matter how carefully written, will be coercive and eugenic.

Instead of fighting for a world where people living without adequate care or dignity can only access a dignified death, let's fight for a world where people can live a dignified life – no matter their condition.

With love and rage and a lust for life,

Your Sick Friend

Senior Center Activities APRIL 10 THROUGH 14

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.

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 4/10

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Pot Luck

Tuesday 4/11

9:30 a.m. Tuesday Knitters
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 4/12

9 a.m. Foot Clinic by Appointment

11 a.m. Chair Exercise

12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo

4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 4/13

1 p.m. Cards & Games

Friday 4/14

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

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 4/10

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

Tuesday 4/11

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

Wednesday 4/12

9 a.m. Cardio Low Impact
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bingo

Thursday 4/13

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

Friday 4/14

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

Montague Community Television News

Circuses, and the Bread-and-Butter

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – While it can't beat the live performance, we at MCTV are still pleased to present recordings of some great shows at the Shea Theater! This week we will be airing a concert by The Slambovian Circus of Dreams.

And, of course, there are plenty of good meetings to watch as well. You can find the most recent recordings, as well as all archived recordings, of the Montague selectboard, the Montague finance committee, the Gill selectboard, and the Gill-Montague regional school committee meetings.

All MCTV videos are available on our Vimeo page, and all community members are welcome to submit videos 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 check-out, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

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

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OUT OF THE PARK

APRIL 2023

By JON DOBOSZ

UNITY PARK – Hello, and happy spring everyone! We hope you are doing well, and that you're enjoying the start of the new season. We're about to embark on one of the busiest times of year for us here at Montague Parks and Recreation, and it certainly puts a spring in our step and wakes us up from a long winter slumber.

First off, we would like to remind everyone that we will be holding our Annual **Peter Cottontail's EGGstravaganza** this Saturday, April 8 at Unity Park! The horn will sound promptly at 1 p.m., then the children will be set loose to gather over 5,000 candy-filled eggs strewn throughout the park. Peter will be on hand to watch the kids enjoy themselves, but be sure to bring your own basket and bags for the eggs.

The egg hunt is geared toward children ages 4 to 12 due to the small candy. We would like to thank our friends at the Montague Elks and Greenfield Savings Bank for co-sponsoring this great community event. We hope to see you at the park this Saturday.

We would also like to announce that **registration for Summer Camp** has started for Montague residents. Summer Camp serves children ages 5 to 12, and will be held from July 3 to August 18. We have theme weeks, field trips, special events and more! Non-residents may register starting Tuesday, April 18.

Camp operates Mondays through Fridays, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., but we also offer pre- and post-camp extended care. Our camp is licensed through the state Department of Public Health. For more information visit www.montagueparksrec.com.

Not being "just for kids," we also offer an **Adult Co-ed Softball**



League that goes from May through August. The league is an American Softball Association sanctioned league, with games held Monday and Thursday evenings at Unity Park. Those interested in putting a team together or getting on the individual player list should contact us soon! We'll be hosting a pre-season meeting in the next week or so, and hope to get onto the ballfield in the beginning of May.

Finally, we still have a few spots remaining in our **Tee Ball Program**. Tee Ball is for children ages 4 to 6. This is often the first introduction to sports for kids, and it's a lot of fun for parents to watch their little ones run around the bases. Please note that we really need parent coaches, so if you're interested, give us a ring.

That's about it from here. If you want to stay on top of our programs and services, be sure to log onto www.montagueparksrec.com, or view our Facebook page. You can also pick up copies of our spring brochure at the Unity Park Fieldhouse, the Montague libraries, and at the Montague town hall. If you have immediate questions, call us at (413) 863-3216. We'll talk to you next month.

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



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 15.

Montague Center Library: *State of Flux*, paintings and collages by Carolyn Wampole. Through April 12.

Barnes Gallery, Leverett Crafts and Arts: *Over Under and Through the Warp: The Art of Tapestry Weaving*, group show of textile artists (see Page A1). Through April 30.

South Gallery, Greenfield Community College: *Ten Little N---r Girls.* Imo Nse Imeh responds to a 1907 children's book with drawings of contemporary black girls in various states of danger,

expressing modern realities of racial subjugation. Through April 7.

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. Reception this Saturday, April 8, from noon to 3 p.m.

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

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

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 incorporating the sciences. Through May 14.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Former In-Law; Sociopath In A BMW; Deescalation; Possible Coyote; Upsetting Fox; Mailboxes Moved

Monday, 3/27

7:50 a.m. 911 caller from G Street reports a red motor scooter was stolen from the backyard this morning. Report taken.

12:38 p.m. Caller states that some people are skateboarding around the new sculpture near Avenue A and Third Street. Unable to locate.

12:41 p.m. Caller would like to speak to an officer about ongoing harassment. Caller stated his former father-in-law has been parking near his apartment on Second Street and feels he has no other reason to be there other than to harass him. Caller said he has more than three documented incidents of this behavior. Advised of options.

8:23 p.m. 911 pocket dial from Judd Wire; caller talking about TV shows with coworkers. Officer advised.

Tuesday, 3/28

6:01 a.m. Officer advises of a possible coyote struck and lying in the middle of the road at Lake Pleasant and Millers Falls Roads. DPW advised.

9:23 a.m. Caller states that there is a wire on the ground across Taylor Hill Road. MCFD toned out; Eversource contacted by Montague dispatch. Eversource on scene.

10:34 a.m. 911 caller requesting PD for a minor motor vehicle accident at Avenue A and Third Street. Citation issued.

10:55 a.m. Officer located a large pothole under the train bridge on North Leverett Road. DPW notified.

1:28 p.m. Caller reporting he will be soliciting in the area of K Street today for Trinity Solar.

1:51 p.m. Caller from Old Greenfield Road states that a tractor-trailer unit struck

her neighbor's mailbox and destroyed it. Investigated.

5:03 p.m. Caller from Ripley Road states that a young male was on her front porch; he did not knock or drop a package, just started walking away. She asked if she could help him, and he said he wanted to speak to the homeowner. She declined, and he walked away. Officer advises male party not located; spoke to caller, who states male got in his car and took off quickly.

Wednesday, 3/29

1:03 a.m. Officer advises he is out at Canal and Fifth Streets with a vehicle Greenfield PD is looking for. Greenfield PD and MSP advise to identify all occupants (front-seat passenger being sought for open and gross lewdness) and move along.

7:40 a.m. Caller states that for three days in a row, on Old Greenfield Road at Ferry Road, a BMW has blown past the stopped school bus with its lights on and the stop sign out. Caller states the bus driver is aware and makes sure her son gets across the road after the car goes past. Caller is wondering if we can do anything about it. Chief advised; states he will try and keep an eye out as he is in the area at that time.

11:10 a.m. Caller states she and her dog were attacked yesterday and she did not report it; however, today she was advised to call the animal control officer. Caller given ACO's number; will call back if unable to make contact so injuries can be documented ASAP. ACO advises he stopped at the home of the dog who attacked the female and it is up to date on rabies.

3:32 p.m. Caller from Peskemoyskut Park states he is being stalked; wants some-

thing to be done before he "takes care of it." Involved parties are in a black car; unknown plate, make, or model. Officer advises he deescalated the caller, who had an open container, which was poured out.

5:02 p.m. Walgreens employee calling in for hit and run that happened in the parking lot. Witness inside to describe event. Officer advises truck was hit by a moped. Report taken.

7:50 p.m. Caller called in stating she hit a deer at Hatchery and Turners Falls Roads. She is still at the scene; deer is alive but not moving. Officer advised. Deer dead.

11:08 p.m. Caller from L Street states the upstairs neighbors have their music very loud. Area quiet upon officer's arrival.

Thursday, 3/30

1:28 a.m. Caller from L Street states the people upstairs are yelling and screaming again. Caller looking to speak with officer; states he has a recording of the disturbance. Parties state they were playing video games; told to keep it down.

5:54 a.m. Notified by Control they received a call from North Taylor Hill Road; female states there is a strange odor in her kitchen.

12:04 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street reports the white vehicle is outside again.

7:32 p.m. Report of suspicious people/activity on house cameras over the past week on L Street. Advised of options.

7:46 p.m. 911 misdial; caller states her son dropped her phone in the water and it seems to have called. Confirmed misdial. Phone waterlogged; when she turns it on, it calls 911.

8:01 p.m. Report of suspicious people/activity currently on camera on L Street. Responding officer checked area and spoke to caller. No signs of forced entry.

Friday, 3/31

10:01 a.m. Officer conducting a motor vehicle stop. Passenger, a 34-year-old Turners Falls woman, arrested on a straight warrant.

11:53 a.m. Truck driver reporting low-hanging wires at Avenue A and Second Street. Verizon contacted; they will send a truck.

3:09 p.m. Caller from Federal Street states there is a dead fox in her yard and it is upsetting to look at.

3:46 p.m. Control received 911 hangup call mapping to East Main Street. Number in house comes back to male who is deceased. Officer checked the area; multiple people out; nobody looking for help.

4:19 p.m. Officer stopping vehicle that is showing re-

voked for insurance. Rau's has vehicle and operator. Summons issued.

4:20 p.m. Caller states the vehicle that always parks on the sidewalk on Fourth Street and makes it difficult for people to walk past is there again. Described as black SUV with out of state plates, busted rear window, and no inspection sticker. Officer spoke to owner; she said she would move the vehicle into the driveway off the sidewalk and did so shortly afterwards.

5:02 p.m. Officer conducting motor vehicle stop near Rabbit Hill on Turnpike Road. A 44-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on two default warrants.

9:34 p.m. Caller from Federal Street just heard a loud noise and when he looked, his mailbox was in the road. Officer advises another mailbox down on Swamp Road; another possible broken mailbox located on Federal Street. Investigated.

11:19 p.m. Amherst PD requesting officer make contact with a parent on Turners Falls Road whose kid is currently in their town at the conservation area. Officer advises contact made with parent; they will be headed to Amherst to get their kid.

Saturday, 4/1

2:11 p.m. Caller from Sherman Drive states that a neighbor may be burning plastic in the backyard. Shelburne Control notified.

2:56 p.m. Officer checking on a report of an injured bald eagle at Thomas Memorial Country Club. Unfounded.

6:35 p.m. Following a motor vehicle stop on the General Pierce Bridge, a 33-year-old Montague man was arrested and charged with no inspection/sticker; operating a motor vehicle with a revoked license, subsequent offense; and possession of a Class A drug.

9:39 p.m. 911 misdial. Caller states his phone won't turn off. Asked caller if there was an emergency; caller stated no, he told Google to call 911 because the phone wouldn't turn off. Caller wanted to make sure his house was not wired. Caller was told it's not.

Sunday, 4/2

12:20 a.m. Caller from Davis Street states that someone backed into a vehicle/house. Operator of vehicle believed to have left scene. No damage noted; officer will be on lookout in area for involved vehicle.

7:19 p.m. 911 caller states her two dogs are fighting and her husband cannot pull them apart; she is scared for her children. Denies need for medical attention. Caller hung up before further details obtained. Referred to an officer.

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INTERVIEW

Iain Matthews: Like a Cog In Something Turning

By PATRICK BATTLESHIP

TURNERS FALLS – Iain Matthews has led a remarkable life and career. Recruited to be the male voice of the early Fairport Convention in 1967 alongside vocalist Judy Dyble, and later Sandy Denny, Matthews' presence provided a focus and commercial appeal that would never be replaced in that band's subsequent exploration of more traditional forms.

While his time with Fairport was brief – he left in 1969 – it left a mark on much of what Matthews would accomplish as a solo artist and band leader in a career that has now stretched across six decades. Known primarily as a singer-songwriter, his work has as often as not been characterized by his impeccably chosen interpretations of other writers' work. In 1970 Matthews' new group, Matthews Southern Comfort, scored a sizable UK hit with its interpretation of Joni Mitchell's song "Woodstock."

Matthews' peripatetic lifestyle has led him from humble beginnings in the industrial North of England to time spent in London, Los Angeles, Seattle, Austin, and, most recently, the Netherlands. He continues to tour internationally, and to record at a prodigious rate.

I spoke with Matthews about his career to date, which leads most incredibly to the stage of the Shea Theater later this month.

Patrick Battleship: When were you last in New England, and specifically Western Massachusetts, and have you played out here much over the years?

Iain Matthews: It's actually been a while. I tend to book myself these days and without a booking agent it becomes, shall we say, challenging. I don't have a lot of contacts in New England. If memory serves me correctly, it was five or six years ago. I did an east coast tour with Andy Roberts, my partner in Plain-song, and he and I played at Club Passim.

Before then, I honestly don't remember.

PB: You've had an interesting knack for being in the right place at the right time, so to speak. A participant in the British pop and folk rock scene of the late '60s, the LA singer songwriter scene of the '70s and the Austin "Americana" scene of the '80s and '90s. You're living in Europe now.

How has being willing to "move on" – both in a geographic and a stylistic sense – fed into your longevity as an artist?

IM: Personally, I believe it's been a bonus. It's kept me fresh and interested. I can't imagine trolling through the same old songs, night after night. Of course, that makes it challenging for a follower. Particularly as I tend to just do it without announcement. For me, it's always been about the music and the creation and hardly ever about the rewards. There are a few of us out there who still feel that way. Being the best we can possibly be, no strings attached. Of course there was a time when I fantasized about Grammys and the like, but that fades quite quickly. One of my pet peeves is viewing music as a competition. So, yes, I'm pretty happy with the way things have gone.

PB: You sang co-lead with Sandy Denny (as you did on many songs in Fairport Convention) on Richard Thompson's song "Meet On the Ledge" in 1968, written when he was still in his teens. There is something almost oracular about that song, considering the loss of drummer Martin Lamble in a van crash the following year – not to mention the unfortunate passing of Denny in 1978 at the age of 31.

But what was it like to perform it for the first time, and was there a sense of it even then as a significant piece of work? And what does it mean to you now, with the passing of time?

IM: When Richard first debuted the song, I think we all knew where he was going with it. Of course, this was before any of the tragedy hit. Richard is and always has been a deep thinker. I think he was basically saying "this is our path, and we might as well fol-

low it to the end."

I wrote my song "Even the Guiding Light" as a response to "Ledge." I've told Richard that. I don't play either song very much any more. Sometimes as a requested encore I'll do Ledge. But usually I only ever sing it at the Fairport Cropredy festival, when I'm invited up on stage at the end of the event, to sing a verse with the band.

It's a powerful statement, that song.

PB: Your work has been remarkably well anthologized... I'm thinking back to the '90s, with the Orphans and Outcasts series of rarities releases, and more recently with collections like the exhaustive Plainsong box set. Are you your own career anthologist? Are you very organized with demo recordings and outtakes from across your career, knowing where everything is buried?

IM: I have an extensive archive to draw from. I learned very early in the game that "special" releases and projects were a huge part of what fans want. They like to be in on the ground floor.

However, in recent years I decided to relieve myself and ultimately my family of the responsibility of cataloging, by selling most of my solo works and the corresponding archives to an English label, Cherry Red, for repackaging. It's a great deal for me really, because they involve me in track selection for all box sets and finally, most of my archives are seeing the light of day. The most recent box was the Plainsong set and there are lots more to come.

If all goes according to plan, the next one should be *The Vertigo Years*.

PB: You seem to be collaborative by nature and have worked with a number of remarkable musicians, writers, producers, etc.

One intriguing collaboration that I have only read about, but not been able to track down as yet, was a session you did with the songwriter Emmitt Rhodes, whose song "Time Will Show the Wiser" opens the very first Fairport Convention album. What was the context – how and when did that collaboration come about, and what was produced?

IM: Yes, after being a fan from way back – I have all of his albums – I finally met Emmitt in 1974 when he became a floating member of the Elektra/Asylum A&R staff. We were thrown together to record some demos for my third Elektra album (which never materialized).

I went down to his studio in Hawthorne, near the LA airport, to cut three songs: "For the Lonely Hunter," "So Sad," a George Harrison/Alvin Lee song, and "Groovin," an old Rascals tune. Emmitt and I became good friends and stayed in close contact until I left LA in 1977.

PB: Speaking of collaboration, are there any musicians or producers – living or long dead – that you'd love to record an album with, or wish you'd had the chance to?

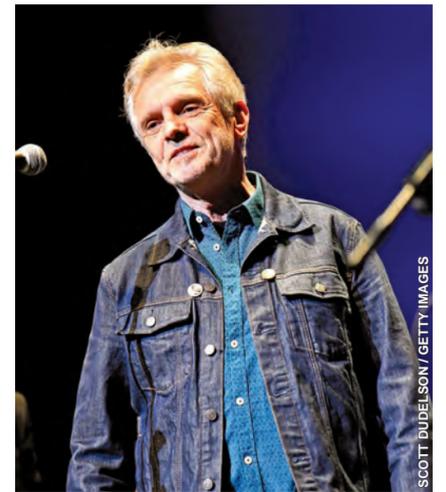
IM: Too many to name... Elliott Smith. Curtis Mayfield. Neil Finn. Judy Sill. M.C. Taylor from Hiss Golden Messenger, to name a few. Richard Thompson and I have spoken many times about making a duo album, but schedules always got in the way.

PB: One of your bigger chart successes was your take on Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock" – #1 in the UK and Top 30 in the US, if I recall correctly. Your version hewed closer to the feeling of Mitchell's original, which feels more mystical than celebratory or brash (see CSNY's cover) with an awareness of something fleeting.

What was your take on that song, and the sentiment you tried to put across, and how did that arrangement come together? Did Mitchell ever comment on it?

IM: Like most people – except for the half a million that went – I heard about Woodstock from a distance, and what I heard intrigued me. At the time, Joni was a goddess and I listened to all she had to say.

I was fascinated by her lyrics to this song and wanted to add my own ten cents' worth



Iain Matthews plays the Shea Theater April 21.

of content, in the form of an arrangement. It was initially done for a BBC session and Dan pressured pushed us into a "proper" recording. No one was more surprised than I when the MSC version won out. I was never privy to her opinion on it, but years and years later, Graham Nash told me that he found our version most pleasurable, or in his opinion, "the best." My hat is off to pedal steel virtuoso Gordon Huntley for his otherworldly effects.

PB: Did you play or attend any of the big fests of the era? Were they as transcendent as Mitchell's song suggested, or just another day out?

IM: In short, no I did not. The most people I ever played for, in one sitting, was around 25,000.

PB: Since we are talking about Woodstock, you have just announced Matthews Southern Comfort's Woodstock Album – covering 15 songs that were performed at the 1969 festival. How did the concept of the album originate? How did you go about choosing the material, and what sort of liberties have you taken to remake it in Matthews Southern Comfort's image? Is this your first ever attempt at a Garcia/Hunter original? It's an intriguing concept.

IM: After disbanding MSC, due to the COVID epidemic and the cancelation of all of our live work, I was searching for a way back for the band. We decided that a recording of songs performed at Woodstock 1969 could be a way forward, and actually quite cyclical, when you consider that the band's biggest success was based around the Joni Mitchell song about said festival.

We listened to every song performed in 1969 [at Woodstock], and ended up with a long list of 25. From those 25 we arranged and recorded 15. The versions we present are pure MSC. Different tempos, different instrumentation to the originals.

Some of the songs were more challenging than others. I never imagined myself singing a Sly and the Family Stone tune. But having done so, the process was quite organic and simple. The Garcia/Hunter song was one of our first choices. Eric Devries, our other lead vocalist, wanted to do it and it turned out being one of his best performances in record. It's a terrific song.

PB: Scanning setlists, I notice that Joe Cocker performed his rendition of the Pete Dello (Honeybus) song "Do I Still Figure In Your Life" at Woodstock. You also did a beautiful cover of it on your 1974 Elektra album *Some Days You Eat the Bear...* How did you come across the song at the time?

IM: I listen to a lot of music and when a song touches me, I catalogue it. Being British, I was aware of the Honeybus and their work. Sometimes I "sit" on a song for years before finding the correct vehicle for it.

Iain Matthews performs live at the Shea Theater on Friday, April 21, with opening sets from Pairedown and Allysen Callery.

(Disclosure: The interviewer helped book the show, as proprietor of the Autonomous Battleship Collective, and has a promotional interest in the event. We judged this to be a printworthy interview on its own merit. – Eds.)

PREVIEW

Mother Tongue at the Shea

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

TURNERS FALLS – I looked up events that were coming to Shea Theater in Turners Falls, and found a performance called *Mother Tongue*, by the Performance Project in Springfield, to be of interest to me. A co-director of the project, Julie Lichtenberg, got to back to me with answers to my questions.

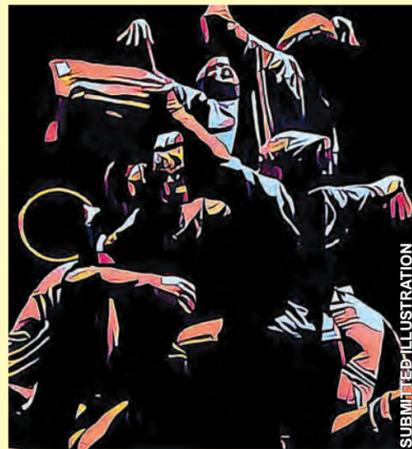
The performance appears to be a collection of different things: it "incorporates music, movement, [and] dance and weaves together stories in Arabic, Swahili, Nepali, and English," according to the description. It has stories and events inspired not just by Nepal, but by places like South Sudan, the Congo, Tanzania, Bhutan, and two locations in Massachusetts, Holyoke and Springfield.

Mother Tongue is made by a group that the Performance Project has called First Generation, which has adults from ages 15 to 22.

The seven members of First Generation are Entsar "Star" Abdelrahman, Montaser Yagoub Abdelrahman, Charlétté Sostre Garcia, Monisha Gurung, Julita Hasani, Moise Jakob, and Iliana "Lali" Quiles-Torres. They are also the authors of the performance.

I learned why this group is called this, and how its stories are inspired by some of these places the creators' families are from, from Lichtenberg. It is called First Generation because its members may be the first in their family to graduate from college, or to speak English. A few other "firsts" that this cast has to their names are to "be an activist," to "be openly LGBTQ+," to "be a feminist," and to "break a silence."

Mother Tongue hasn't been around for a long time. It was first performed on stage in October 2022. *Mother Tongue* took "14



months to create," according to Lichtenberg. I am told the performance is 90 minutes and involves themes of displacement, family, culture, gender, masculinity, and prison.

Lichtenberg also mentioned that it has been "received with great enthusiasm by audiences." It has been performed in Springfield, Northampton, Easthampton, Hampshire College, and at UMass, and at many different types of places other than theaters and colleges, including high schools, middle schools, community events, and even festivals, such as the Springfield Jazz and Roots Festival.

All of these different locations connected to this performance, and the themes it is about, should make people very interested in seeing this play. It seems they have had pretty good luck with that happening already.

According to the Shea's website (www.sheatheater.org), the play is this Friday, April 7, from 7:30 until 9:30 p.m. Tickets for the show are \$15 to \$25. The Performance Project's official website is www.performanceproject.org.

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VALLEY VIEW from page B1

alum Vi Goodnow, a legendary pioneer of girls' athletics in the Pioneer Valley, if not the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Both coaches delivered state championships to the South Deerfield school. Not a bad contribution from a quaint little town buried deep in our bucolic western hills.

I hope my memory's clear, my story accurate. I'll do my best. It was long ago.

I'd say it was 1969, my sophomore year, when Valiton returned to Frontier with a master's degree after a one-year sabbatical at the University of Maine. Playing in cold, windy Down East springtime conditions, Tommy had carved out a nice little career for himself in the early '60s as a speedy center fielder and leadoff man for Coach Jack Butterfield's Black Bear baseball teams. As a Frontier teacher he returned to his old stomping grounds to secure the salary-boosting degree.

During this brief return to the Northcountry, Tommy couldn't stay away from the baseball team and its indoor, preseason practices. That should come as no surprise. Hardball was in his blood. And there in the UMaine fieldhouse, he was introduced to an exciting new tool – indoor pitching machines enclosed in mesh batting cages. He immediately recognized what a huge advantage a cage would give his early-season high-school hitters forced to practice indoors.

A winner and fierce competitor, Tommy was always looking for an edge. He knew a batting cage would provide just that. The more he watched the Black Bear hitters honing their stroke in the cage, the more he realized he had to find a way to obtain one for Frontier.

Though I can't remember every minute detail, it seems we embarked on an aggressive fundraising campaign to raise enough money for an "Iron Mike," an over-the-top pitching machine, and the needed materials to construct a safe gymnasium batting cage. I think we sold raffle tickets or candy bars to raise the money as Tommy wheedled industrial-arts colleagues to build sturdy metal frames to support the netting. I believe he himself built the protective shield protecting those feeding the machine from dangerous comebackers.

And so, the spunky little crewcut devil and former US Marine from Buckland pulled it off. Because of him, Frontier was the first local beneficiary of a batting cage. If I'm not mistaken, that included even bigger Amherst and Greenfield. It gave us an edge, and put us in the Western Massachusetts Tournament when there was only one division for all.

With a good team and high hopes entering my senior year, our promising season was derailed by disciplinary action and ineligibility issues that whittled the roster down to a shadow of itself. Of course, I was right in the middle of the developments. It was sad. The prom-

ising team lost more games than it won.

We won our first two games, one of them a thrilling, low-scoring comeback against Mahar Regional School ace George Eastman. Then, a day or two later, I was ruled academically ineligible and our wins became forfeit losses.

I could have prevented the catastrophe had I not cut down my course load for my last two semesters of high school. Instead, having fulfilled my foreign-language requirement, I dropped Spanish and left myself without any academic wiggle room. Down to four classes as I played out the string, I had to pass them all to maintain athletic eligibility.

My problems began with a third-semester creative-writing class taught by an old battle axe named Alice Spindler, with whom I had "history." The single assignment on which our grade was based was to write a short story. When I submitted my story about an Indian, Spindler accused me of plagiarism without a speck of evidence and flunked me.

She said that although she couldn't cite the source, she knew I was incapable of crafting such a story.

Well, with my father a sitting school committee member and Coach Valiton eager to reverse the decision, it wasn't over yet. Strings were pulled to arrange an emergency morning meeting with the principal, vice principal, guidance counselor, teacher, coach, my father,

and me. Before going in I was advised that if I played my cards right, the teacher would likely pass me. I was urged to keep my cool, diplomatically defend myself, and offer a contrite apology for any perceived disrespect.

Meeting day arrived, and the teacher spoke first. She came at me with both guns a-blazing, airing out a long list of grievances against me. Her presentation so enraged me that, when given the chance, I fired back with a satisfying counter-tirade. A contrite apology was not in play. Although I fought the law and the law won, in my mind I won the battle and lost the war. My baseball season was over.

I'm sure the teacher and administrators felt victorious. They likely believed they had taught an irascible student a valuable life lesson. They were right. What I learned was that it's better to stand your ground and speak your mind than genuflect to empty, bullying authority.

I went home, put my Wilson A2000 baseball glove away for a while, fished trout streams until the summer American Legion Baseball season began, and never looked back.

I must admit to being humored when Tommy Valiton would introduce me to friends as a former ballplayer of his "who writes for the newspaper and couldn't pass English."

What else could I do but curl a sardonic grin?



TRAVELS from page B1

of safe paths, and once you get out of the pedestrian-heavy downtown area, you can ride on the famous River Walk. It stretches for ten miles and becomes quite wild and rural in just a short time.

Many aspects of San Antonio pleased me, and all the people I met who live there have a special enthusiasm for the place. There are dog parks, bike paths, and even clean public bathrooms that people can use right downtown.

Ask the Sommelier

One person who sings the praises of SA is Jen Beckmann, a transplant from Chicago and a certified wine sommelier. She runs a cozy wine bar called Re:Rooted 210 Urban Winery in the Hemisfair Park area of the city, which was built for the 1968 World's Fair. Today there are three parks there, the 750-foot tall Tower of the Americas, a growing residential area, and local businesses like ice cream shops and restaurants at the location which is an easy walk from the River Walk.

Beckmann's business uses a series of wine tanks – like small beer kegs – from which she refills reusable glass wine bottles. Customers buy her Texas wines and bring the empties to be refilled. She swears, even as a certified sommelier, that you can't tell the wine that's been in a keg for 18 months, the varietal's flavors come through strongly. Texas is a state without recycling, so any efforts to save on glass waste are very appreciated. She saves many thousands of bottles by reusing them.

Beckmann has come to really enjoy the top-notch downtown dining scene in San Antonio, and cites Paloma Blanca Mexican Cuisine and Clementine San Antonio as her two favorite restaurants. Botika, nominated as a James Beard award finalist, rounds out her list of favorite local eateries.

I asked Beckmann about the state's reputation as a bastion of MAGA and that red-state atmosphere. She explained that Texas is a huge state, and there are plenty of people who think like that, but in the major population centers like Houston and San Antonio, there are also plenty of people who acknowledge LGBTQ+ rights and recoil at Governor Greg Abbott's stunts against immigrants and others.

"There are plenty of people," she assured me, "who don't agree with him, and don't even own a gun down here." That's somewhat comforting for a blue-state guy like me.

Phil Collins at the Alamo

Did you know that Genesis founder and popular musician Phil Collins is a very devoted collector of Alamo-related documents, weapons, and other memorabilia? Not only are his donations at the heart of the new Alamo Collections Center that opened this month, but Collins does his own narration of the story of the Battle for Alamo that can be heard over a diorama of the Alamo's buildings and grounds.

These and thousands of other artifacts will be relocated to an even bigger visitors' center and museum set to open in 2026. When you visit today you can see workers busy building on North Alamo Avenue. The first stage in the plaza to the right of the Alamo complex will be a recreation of the wooden walls that once

surrounded the site. In three years, a large new building will be built behind the famous Alamo Church.

Now, about that church and its famous arched top: I learned that when the battle was fought in 1836, the church actually had a straight roof line – the familiar arch was added 20 years later!

The Pearl

Besides the many missions the Alamo was a part of, San Antonio is famous for its River Walk, one of the first inner-city walking paths to really change downtown significantly. The walk was built for flood control in the 1940s, and today you can take one of the GO RIO 35-minute boat tours that navigate the canyons formed by tall buildings that go right up to the edge of the walk, beside the San Antonio River.

Along with the River Walk and the newly-expanded Alamo, a third important place draws people to San Antonio, and that is Pearl, a large shopping, dining, and open space at the heart of the city.

Pearl is a historical district and cultural hub where people live, work, and gather. The property was a brewery from the early 1880s until 1999, when Pearl beer moved its operations elsewhere. A farmers market is set up every Saturday here and there are dozens of restaurants, retail shops, and a food hall, along with picnic areas and kids' splash fountains that come out of the patio.

One of the gems at Pearl is the lovingly restored Hotel Emma, named for the wife of Pearl's first brewmaster, Otto Koehler. You can tour the hotel's marvelous common areas to find the high ceilings, walkways, and repurposed old equipment on display in the four-diamond hotel, which is very elegant and smells like eucalyptus. We took a private tour of the magnificent two-story suite called the Emma, which features opulent rooms, two-story ceilings, and a giant deck overlooking the complex.

Art galleries and unique installations are all over San Antonio. At Hopscoch, a crazy, immersive downtown art gallery, you can walk into rooms and do funny things to create your own art, listen to secrets people have shared, and swim in a giant tank filled with foam balls. It's definitely one of those things you gotta experience for yourself. In one room you take what looks like a can of spray paint and it projects your writing on the wall and then all of the colors begin changing – it's both spooky and fun.

A lesser-known art museum is free all the time. It's called Ruby City, and was funded by the fortune made from Pace Salsa, the famous condiment, to house Linda Pace's modern art collection. The reddish building itself stands out, and some of the art exhibits are huge and wonderful.

Dining and Accommodations

We enjoyed our stay in a hotel that looks over the Alamo, the historic Hotel Gibbs, where room rates are around \$179. For something more high-end, consider a room at the Hotel Emma for around \$600, or really take it up

a notch with a stay at the JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country resort with a knock-your-socks off waterpark and a PGA-quality golf course, located in pretty hill country about

HARTSHORNE PHOTOS



Top: The Alamo Church. Middle: People gather downtown at Pearl for picnics, dining, and a Saturday farmers market. It was once a large brewery complex. Bottom: Brian Benavidez of Mural Ride Bike Tours leads guided tours of San Antonio's great mural art.

30 minutes outside the city.

A specialty restaurant located in the Pearl complex, Cured, uses organic methods to cure meats and pickles and features groaning charcuterie boards and their famous cured hams. For something a little more traditional, we enjoyed overflowing plates of barbecue at the County Line barbecue on the River Walk. Be prepared for more food than you can possibly eat.

La Panadería is a downtown bagel and bakery emporium with a case full of huge tempting sweets, including their famous almond tequila pastries. The plates are groaning, again, and too huge to even think of finishing. And the restaurant at the San Antonio Museum of Art, called Tre Trattoria, is right on the River Walk and features a tasty menu.



WEBSITES

- Mural Rides**
www.sanantoniomuralride.com
- Alamo Collections Center**
www.thealamo.org
- River Walk**
www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com
- Hotel Gibbs**
www.hotelgibbs.com
- Hotel Emma**
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FRONTIERS

Mushrooms for Sustainable Materials

By HEATHER HAMILTON, PhD

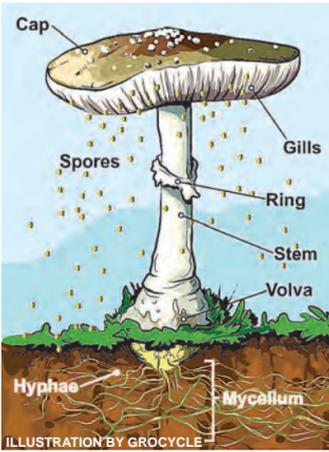
TURNERS FALLS – Sustainability has become an increasingly popular concept in the last several years, especially as more Americans experience the effects of climate change first-hand. A recent poll conducted as part of GreenPrint's annual Business of Sustainability Index report found that 66% of Americans, and 80% of young Americans (ages 18 to 34), were willing to pay more for sustainable consumer products than products purchased from less sustainable competitors.

The United Nations defines *sustainability* as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This definition provides a useful metric by which to evaluate consumer and industrial products, as well as manufacturing practices.

However, sustainability has become a buzzword, co-opted for profit, and its meaning has been muddled by this motivation. Inherent in even the UN's definition is the idea that human civilization is separate from the overarching ecology of the Earth, with human people acting purely as consumers of the Earth's resources rather than members of an interconnected web of life.

The celebrated Indigenous author and ecologist Robin Wall Kimmerer challenges us to move past the concept of sustainability and to accept the idea of *reciprocity* as a more equitable perspective on humankind's place in the global ecology.

In an interview with Krista Tippett on the former public-radio program turned podcast *On Being*, Kimmerer explains reciprocity as an "expansion from" sustainability. "Our role as human people is not just to take from the Earth, and the role of the Earth is not just to provide for our single species," she says. "So reciprocity actually kind of broadens this notion to say that not only does the Earth sustain us, but that we have the capacity and the responsibility to sustain her in return. So it broadens the notion of



The mycelium is the root-like network of the fungus, and is composed of filaments called hyphae. The mushroom is the fruiting body of the fungus.

what it is to be a human person, not just a consumer."

A sustainable future economy must replace, or do without, many consumer and industrial materials currently derived from petrochemicals, such as plastics. Additionally, solutions must be found to address unsustainable waste management practices, specifically for single-use plastics and other hazardous materials that have measured deleterious effects on ecosystems.

For human people to act with reciprocity, we will need to grow a consciousness within our society that places a higher value on the recovery, maintenance, and expansion of healthy and diverse ecosystems. Many conscientious scientists and entrepreneurs are devoting their lives to such environmental reciprocity by developing new ways to manufacture and use eco-friendly consumer and industrial materials.

An emerging class of materials derived from mycelium offers an innovative, feasible, and sustainable option to replace plastics in consumer and industrial products.

Fungi, the kingdom of organisms which includes mushroom producers, are well-accustomed to reciprocal behaviors within complex

ecosystems. Many fungi species are adapted to sustain the plants in their shared soil environments. They serve key roles in the nutrient cycle by decomposing organic matter, and many help prevent dangerous pathogens from harming the organisms they live in symbiosis with. The mycelium is the underground filamentous network that comprises mushrooms' root-like structure.

Fungi and mycelium-based materials have the potential for significant impact on human sustainability goals. Mushrooms have been used as remediation agents to remove toxic chemicals and carcinogens from soil around the world, and, recently, mycelium-based materials have shown the potential for use in functional and structural materials.

Founded in 2007, just west of us in New York's capital region, industry leader Ecovative got its start manufacturing mycelium-based packaging alternatives to single-use plastics. Ecovative runs a mycelium manufacturing platform which is well-suited to produce a variety of functional materials including clothing, packaging, and foam-like substances.

Plastic packing materials have been a major factor behind the accumulation of plastic waste in the environment, an increasingly urgent concern among the public and environmental scientists alike. Recently published peer-reviewed articles have indicated increasing evidence of major organ failure among seabirds due to ingested plastic waste in marine environments. At the current rate of plastics accumulation in the environment, it may be only a matter of time before these effects begin to move up the food chain to affect the human population.

Since the mycelium-based packaging materials made by Ecovative are biodegradable, they can be recycled into compost, becoming a source of enrichment in the environments where they are disposed of.

Mycelium is easy to grow rapidly, and its composites are lightweight and strong. Both NASA and the US military are investigating the use of mycelium-based composite materials for construction, as well as "living engineered materials" for use in extreme environments or high-need areas. Researchers at Columbia University are even engineering houses that "live, breathe, and die" composed of "smart bricks" that serve the dual function of construction material and environmental sensor to detect pathogens and pollutants within the shelter.

Dutch company Loop Biotech even has a solution to reduce our waste at the end of our lives, asking the question "are you waste or compost"? Their Loop Living Cocoon is the world's first mycelium-based

MEDICINE

Microplastics...and You

By CATHERINE DODDS, MD

TURNERS FALLS – *Mr. McGuire*: I want to say one word to you. Just one word.

Benjamin: Yes, sir.

Mr. McGuire: Are you listening?

Benjamin: Yes, I am.

Mr. McGuire: Plastics.

Fifty-five years later, many of my readers will still recognize this quote from the film *The Graduate*. How, in only the past century, have plastics become such an essential, ubiquitous part of all of our lives?

The health impacts of the massive amount of plastic humans have produced are largely unknown. Recently, there is increasing interest in studying and better understanding a specific type of plastic called *microplastics*.

Microplastics are synthetic molecules that do not dissolve in water. They are defined by their size, ranging from 1 micron (or micrometer) up to 5 millimeters, a little smaller than 1/4 inch. So they're quite small. Even smaller plastics, ranging in size from nanometers up to 1 micrometer, are called *nanoplastics*, and may pose similar potential health risks to microplastics. Some nanoplastics are small enough to pass into our body's tissues.

Microplastics are everywhere – in the oceans, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat. They're a part of our daily life, in the thousands of plastic materials we use in our work and home environments. They're sometimes even visible in the rocks around us, deposited in recent decades as sediment.

And yet we don't have a good understanding of whether or not microplastics are toxic.

What does it mean for a chemical to be "toxic"? Something that is toxic causes harm to cells, organs, or one's whole body. This can be due to damage to our DNA – our genes themselves – which can lead to cancers or fertility and reproductive issues. Toxic chemicals may also interfere with our body's internal endocrine-signaling pathways, by blocking or mimicking our own

hormones or receptors.

It's been theorized that microplastics may cause harm related to their tiny physical size, variable shapes, concentration/amount, chemical effects, and bacteria such as *Legionella* or *Pseudomonas*, which can form biofilms on the microplastics. Plastics are petroleum-based chemicals by definition, but often contain additives from the manufacturing process, and can also absorb chemicals from surrounding materials. There is no simple answer to what exactly is in any given speck of microplastic. This makes it very difficult to generalize about the health harms to human beings that can be blamed on these microplastics.

Many of the chemicals in microplastics are simply not understood well enough to be formally classified as "toxic." But even with the limited availability of data, there are known health risks for some of these chemicals, including BPA, PVC, phthalates, and heavy metals such as cadmium, arsenic, mercury, and lead.

So what should we as ordinary people living our lives think about microplastics?

First, we have to acknowledge that they are everywhere. We are exposed to them no matter where we live or what we do. Second, we don't really know whether they're harmful or not. Much more research and monitoring are needed to determine the risks of these microplastics.

Third, we need to be developing technology to remove – or at least reduce – the amount of plastic in our environment, to prepare for a future where this may be essential.

And lastly, whether there are risks to human health from ingestion of microplastics or not, we need to improve management of plastics and reduce plastic pollution, to protect the environment as well as human well-being. No one wants to live in a town littered with plastic waste or vacation at a beach strewn with plastic bottles and bags. "Plastic" may be the one word that has defined the past half-century, but it doesn't have to be the only word of the future.



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



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FRIDAY, APRIL 7

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: The Performance Project presents *Mother Tongue*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Pioneer Brewery Turners Falls: *Chuck & Biscuits*. Free. 7 p.m.

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

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Ian St. George Band, Idaho Green, Thee Holy Oakes, Robby Proudlove & the C St. Band*. \$ 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Myriam Gendron, Izzy Oram Brown*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Drew Paton*, 6 p.m. *Sorry Mister, Plunge Pool*, 9:30 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, APRIL 8

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Echoes of David Kaynor*, open mic tribute night featuring *Rebecca Weiss, Gianni Marzilli Ericson, and Becky Hollingsworth*. 6:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *'80s New Wave / Synth Pop Night* feat. *Heartballoon, Vlnrble, Bux Wild*. \$ 7 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Combo Chimbata, Billy Martin*.

\$ 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Cave In, Barishi, Misery Whip*. \$ 8 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *ZIZIA: Ecology Sound-Art Performance*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *One Was Johnny*. Free. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, APRIL 9

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *The Bunkhouse Boys Cajun Band, Zydegroove*. \$ 1:15 p.m.

MONDAY, APRIL 10

Sheffield Elementary School, Turners Falls: *Musica Franklin Community Concert* feat. *The Connecticut River Flute Choir*. Free. 6 p.m.

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*b*i*e*. \$ 7 p.m.

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

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Briezjane 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.

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.

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: *John-*

nie & 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.

THURSDAY, APRIL 20

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, Pairdown, Allysen Gallery*. \$ 7:30 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.

looking forward...

SATURDAY, APRIL 29

Daily Op, Easthampton: *Large Professor*. \$ 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, APRIL 30

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

THURSDAY, MAY 4

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Rufus Wainwright*. \$ 7 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 14

The Drake, Amherst: *Acid Mothers Temple, My Education, Sunburned Hand of the Man*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY-SUNDAY, MAY 19-21

Nova Arts, Keene, NH: *The Thing in Spring* feat. *Bill Calahan, Marisa Anderson, Aisha Burns, Susan Alcorn, Guerilla Toss, Thus Love, Editrix, Landowner*, more. \$ See novaarts.org/thething.

SATURDAY, MAY 27

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

SATURDAY, JUNE 10

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

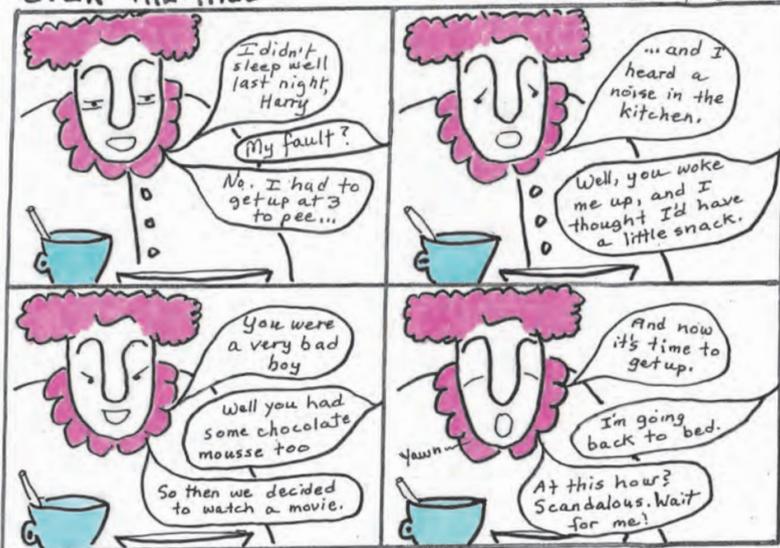
TUESDAY, JULY 25

Tree House Brewing, South Deerfield: *Aimee Mann*. \$ 7 p.m.



OVER THE HILL

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TAPESTRIES from page B1

forms an integral part of the texture. The warp (threads placed on the loom) is a skeletal structure in that it disappears completely beneath the weft (yarns that make up the pictorial weave)."

That it is "time-consuming and exacting" is easy to imagine!

Several pieces in the hallway are three-dimensional. One of them, called *In Love with Dove* by Linda Rhynard of Bristol, Rhode Island, is an homage to abstract landscape artist Arthur Dove. It is the image of a yellow sun reflecting across the water, with the sun coming out towards the viewer like a little yellow-capped mountain.

Rhynard, who was weaving on a small tabletop loom at the gallery Saturday, explained that she "crammed the thick yarn into the warp so that it bulges, so I could pop it out." She then reinforced the area by stuffing the back of the picture with lamb's wool.

Another standout for me was a

corset created by Barbara Burns. The *Little Devils Corset* is a corset tapestry woven with the image of little gold devils, water, clouds, and vines, inspired by the *Apocalypse Tapestry* in Angers, France. On the inner lining of the corset Burns wrote names in curving, swirling loops of very small lettering of people who survived sexual abuse and/or rape.

Burns posted her process to create this one piece, three-dimensional form. To make the corset pinch in around the waist, she left openings on the warp, weaving only the shape of each section. Then she pulled the warp threads to draw the sections together seamlessly. Ingenious!

Burns has an interesting portfolio on her website, www.burns-studio.com, including political commentary pieces and portraits that use areas of color to create faces.

Martha May's work in the hallway shows her sculpture background and her interest in forms whose essential nature suggests movement. *Sauropodees Trio* shows

three abstract, dinosaur-looking creatures, their long necks gracefully curving into the sky. It is not hard to imagine them as sculptures. A similar piece called *Hallelujah* presents six of these creature-like forms in a pose that somehow suggests curiosity towards the viewer.

May writes that these are studies for future tapestries, and part of a series she has been weaving since 2019.

I watched Rhynard weave at her tabletop loom while she explained how she got started with tapestry weaving. "I was on a trip to Scotland," she said. "I was a weaver, a floor loom weaver, and I walked into Scottish tapestry weaver Joan Baxter's studio, saw a piece on the wall, and said, 'That's what I want to do.'"

Was it harder or easier than floor loom weaving?

"The floor loom is very intricate and detailed in getting the loom warped," Rhynard answered. "You are following a recipe, a pattern, and you have to warp it this way.

There is more freedom with tapestry. If you have a freeform design, you're capturing the essence of something, and then it is up to you to figure out which techniques are going to deliver the final image you have in your brain."

Rhynard had positioned a cartoon, or drawing, of the design behind the warp threads of her loom. A bar pulled the alternate threads of the warp open for her to pass little wooden bobbins of thread inside sections of it. She was going side to side with the design, working it up in rows, though she explained that this can also be done by weaving "eccentrics," or shapes of color, and then filling around them. Sometimes the eccentric shapes leave openings in the fabric, slits between colors; some artists close these by stitching with needle and thread, and others leave them open. One could see both methods displayed in the works at LCA.

Rhynard next demonstrated an

outline stitch using a technique called soumak stitch, which wraps the warp threads to create a raised line. This makes that section stand out more, she explained.

Some of the wall pieces I saw were surprisingly large, almost blanket-sized, and many had a mind-boggling level of detail, such as a picture of a sheep with various colors shading the wool of its coat. Many of these artists also noted on their labels that they dye their own yarn.

Come out and see the entire exhibit during the month of April, if you can, and learn about contemporary tapestry weaving from members of TWINE.

"Over Under and Through the Warp" is at the Barnes Gallery, Leverett Crafts & Arts, 13 Montague Road in Leverett. LCA is open Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. Find more information at www.leverettcraftsandarts.org.



Above left: This corset, *Little Devils*, was woven without seams by artist Barbara Burns. Above right: Linda Rhynard's tabletop loom, showing the cartoon behind the warp and her bobbins of different colors. Far right: Taconic Orogeny, a piece in the LCA show by weaver Eve Pearce.

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