

The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MAY 25, 2023

IT'S MULLINS FIELD!



Top: Coach Gary Mullins thanks the crowd of supporters during the dedication of the Turners Falls High School varsity softball field in his honor last Friday. At his side were his grandson and his daughter. Above: Alumnae Deb Partridge (left) and Kelly Tompkins Markol pose with their former coach and a planned plaque. See Page B1 for more coverage.

Baystate Reverses Course on Consolidation, Will Keep Greenfield Mental Health Wing

By JEFF SINGLETON

GREENFIELD – Baystate Health announced on Monday that it has reversed a decision, made over four years ago, to close its 22-bed mental health unit in Baystate Franklin Medical Center on High Street in Greenfield and move services to a new facility in Holyoke.

The company buried an announcement that it planned to keep open “East Spoke,” as it is known, in a lengthy press release Monday focusing on the new Holyoke mental health center, but it was highlighted Wednesday by the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA), the union representing nurses at the hospital.

“This is tremendous news, and a hard won victory for equitable health care access for residents in rural Franklin County,” said state senator Jo Comerford, who represents Greenfield in the legislature.



Four years ago, the hospital chain announced that the mental health services offered in Greenfield would be consolidated into a new facility in Holyoke.

The union’s statement quoted Donna Stern, a registered nurse who works in the Baystate Franklin mental health unit and co-chair of the MNA. “The potential closure of our mental health unit would have made it harder for patients to access quality care, recover close to their loved ones and connect with local

resources,” Stern said.

The Network of Care website, managed by the Massachusetts Association for Mental Health, explains that the behavioral health unit at Greenfield provides “evaluation and treatment of acute mental health and/or substance use conditions. Care is

see BAYSTATE page A3

GILL SELECTBOARD

Gill Rep Denounces FirstLight Negotiations: ‘Why Are We Being Run by a Corporation?’

By KATE SAVAGE

Gill’s selectboard was visited Monday night by former member John Ward, who said he came to “plead with” them not to sign a proposed recreation settlement agreement with FirstLight.

Ward, who served on the selectboard from 2010 to 2021, was formerly an appointed representative to the settlement negotiations. The talks were convened by the hydroelectric company as an optional

component of its application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for renewal of its licenses to operate the Turners Falls dam and power canal and the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage project.

“I was extremely dissatisfied with the process, right from the beginning,” he said. “The consultants for FirstLight were very heavy-handed.... Basically what they tried to do is pit us against each other.”

Ward described negotiations in

which various stakeholders had to fight over crumbs. “If any of us were to get any of what we wanted,” he said, “there had to be compromises all the way down the line. FirstLight was able to say what those compromises were, and how much they were willing to give.

“There were a lot of things that each stakeholder tried to bring to the table that FirstLight blanketly said: ‘That’s not up for negotiation, that’s off the table, that will cost us

see GILL page A8

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Costlier Trash Pickup Offered

By JEFF SINGLETON

“I don’t think there’s any service without problems, but we’ve had a lot in the past two years with Republic, and that’s concerning,” said Montague selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz at the board’s May 22 meeting. “But there’s not a lot of players out there.”

The bids for a new contract for Montague trash and recycling pickup are in and the low bidder appears to be Republic Services, the company that currently provides that ser-

vice and has been frequently criticized for missing routes and for not communicating with the town and its residents when problems arise.

Town administrator Steve Ellis reported at Monday’s meeting that the only other company to respond to the town’s “request for services” was Casella Waste Management of Massachusetts, a subsidiary of a national corporation based in Vermont.

The town is not required to assign the contract to the lowest bidder, Ellis noted, and may

see MONTAGUE page A7

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Erving Signs Rec Agreement

By KEITH WATERS

The Erving selectboard reviewed a recreation settlement agreement with FirstLight Power at its meeting Monday night. The hydroelectric company is seeking to renew its federal licenses to operate the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage project, which is located largely in Erving, and the Turners Falls dam and power canal. As part of the process, FirstLight has been encouraged to grant

concessions to towns neighboring the projects.

Selectboard member Scott Bastarache noted that much of the recreation agreement is about projects in Northfield and Turners Falls. The section about Erving specifies making the Farley Ledges climbing area into a public space. Under the agreement, Bastarache noted, if FirstLight cannot grant a conservation restriction through “diligent and commercially reasonable efforts” within six

see ERVING page A4

G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Super Floats Stipends for Committee

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – “This was not put on the agenda by the chair, or the vice chair, or any school committee members,” Gill-Montague regional school committee chair Jane Oakes disclaimed at

Tuesday evening’s meeting. “The superintendent asked that it be on the agenda this evening.”

The final topic for the night, “Discussion of Proposed School Committee Stipends,” was addressed by a three-minute presentation by

see GMRSD page A8

City Shuts Down Church ‘Nightclub’ Against Backdrop of Neighbor Squabble

By SARAH ROBERTSON



Florence Congregational Church pastor Marisa Egerstrom accused the city of “selective enforcement” of safety regulation.

FLORENCE – The day before the Bombyx Center for Arts and Equity was scheduled to host a music and arts festival, the city of Northampton notified organizers that large live music events may not proceed at the church-based venue. Florence Congregational Church, as it was being used by the nonprofit arts organization, qualifies as a “nightclub” according to the fire department, and requires rezoning and a new sprinkler system before such events may continue.

“This is very quickly going to crush our organization, and put an end to Bombyx,” said Kyle Homstead, co-director of the nonprofit and founder of concert promoters Laudable Productions.

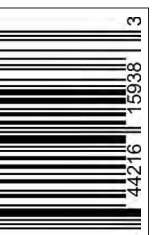
At a press conference on Tuesday, Homstead explained that the Bombyx Center and the church began a partnership with the intent of hosting events to raise funds to restore the historic building. While an outright sale would have required the owners to meet all modern building codes immediately, he said, the church’s historic status was expected to offer some leeway.

Florence Congregational Church, first opened in 1861, now shares the building with the Beit Ahavah Reform Synagogue, Cloverdale Preschool, choral groups, artists, educators, and food preparation and catering services. Bombyx, Homstead said, plans to purchase the building through a six-year lease-to-own agreement and continue to operate it as a multi-purpose

see CENTER page A5

But Don’t Switch Streams Mid-Horse, Either

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The Montague Reporter

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August 2002

Levitating

We slid across another new threshold Monday when blue-check-certified fake news accounts on Elon Musk's intentionally terrible version of Twitter pushed headlines about a large explosion at the Pentagon, accompanied by an "AI"-generated image of a big black plume of smoke next to a building that didn't even look pentagonal.

Before the news that the hoax was a hoax overtook the hoax, the S&P 500 had dipped ever-so-slightly and "(o)ther investments," as the Associated Press put it, "also moved in ways that typically occur when fear enters the market."

Later that day a 19-year-old Indian-American man from Missouri reportedly crashed a UHaul truck into security bollards at the White House, pulled a straight-up Nazi flag out of his backpack, and told responding police that he admired Hitler, intended to kidnap and kill the president, and had been crafting this ingenious plan for six months.

Events like this used to seem more significant, but the misadventure was either ignored or shrugged at, another *News of the Weird*-style entry. We all take for granted now that given the odds, at least a few people are going to be going over the edge at any point. After all, the old "data smog" led to "social media bubbles" and now the wealthy can foster "microtargeted disinformation" for profit, political gain, or sick fun – so increasing millions of our fellow Americans have spent years living in curated fictions.

In fact, we have to wonder just

how awash in boutique political violence we'd be now ("stochastic terrorism," some call it) if we weren't also so surrounded and surveilled by cameras.

Though it's easier to see and count one-on-many attacks, particularly mass shootings – 227 since New Year's, far outpacing any previous year – social conflict is also erupting through those cameras in many-on-one attacks. In these the target, who may or may not be deserving, is beset by a mob of hundreds, thousands, or tens of thousands who Hoover up data, compare notes, and attempt to surgically separate them from employment, housing, and community support.

These tactics are becoming fused with the culture-war campaigns led by politicians and think tanks. On Wednesday the big-box megachain Target (no relation) announced it would be removing or obscuring LGBTQ-themed products, long part of a Pride Month cash-in, after staff "experienced threats impacting our team members' sense of safety and well-being while at work."

Many are left wondering how far all this will go: if we are at or nearing or past some tipping point from culture to social war or worse. Things are already 100% bad for *some* people. When does "fear," as the AP so blithely frames it, finally "enter the market"? (Is this a safe time for a debt-ceiling showdown in Washington?)

And, if you're staying still, hoping it all turns a corner soon... just what are you imagining the exit ramp is going to look like?

Careful!

As a resident of Cheapside, I'm happy that I can take the General Pierce Bridge into Montague again, but I'm also glad it'll be replaced in a few years. It wouldn't be Turners Falls if at least one of the ways in wasn't blocked at all times!

But seriously, without shoulders or bike lanes, cyclists crossing the bridge must choose between hugging the edge, taking the lane, or walking the sidewalk.

Even though I'm in good shape and ride an electric-assist bike, I can't travel in lane on the Pierce without holding up traffic. As a reluctant motorist, I'm also aware of the Mass law requiring me to pass at a safe distance of four feet. Now that I've biked the repaired Pierce, I know that to be safe means waiting until there's absolutely no oncom-

ing traffic before passing cyclists.

Maybe it was always that way, only I used to be so worried about popping a tire, I didn't notice!

**Otis Wheeler
Greenfield**

P.S.: Bryan Dolan is right, Turners Falls Road is unsafe – for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. We need a funicular.

Concedes

Congratulations, Karen:
On retaining your seat!

**Linda Ackerman
Montague**



Suzanne Kretzinger came to Hunting Hills in Montague with her family in 1965. Her father operated a plant nursery, which she has continued to this day in the same location on Route 63. She says she has never before seen a frost like the one last week, which blackened Japanese knotweed as well as the catkins on her black walnut trees.

Letters to the Editors

'An Open Letter to the Citizens of Gill and Montague'

As of April 4, there were 18 professional positions posted for area schools within a 10-mile radius of Turners Falls. This includes teachers, Deans of Students, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, BCBA's, physical therapists, and occupational therapists. Many of these positions are in significant demand due to shortages of professional personnel.

Why is this relevant? Simply put, school districts and private organizations are in competition for a small set of skilled, professional employees. This reality has a significant impact on the quality, depth, and breadth of the education school districts can provide students while educating all students.

The Gill-Montague Education Association (GMEA) and the Gill-Montague Regional School Committee have been conducting contract negotiations since March 2022. While we had a tentative agreement in October 2022, that agreement was rejected by the GMEA membership.

While there were several reasons for this rejection, the main reason can be summed up in one word: value. Value, the amount of worth created by the services we provide, is the main issue. The GMEA asserts that the Committee's salary offers have been below the current market value in comparison to other local districts and the current state of the job market. This leads to an unstable workforce, where employees seeking higher salaries will be hired elsewhere, leaving our students with a revolving door of professional staff. Districts that pay under the current market rate generally end up becoming a training ground for new graduates, who gain experience and then leave for higher-paying districts. This is to the detriment of our students and our district.

It's important to reiterate that in early April there were 18 job postings for professional personnel within a 10-mile radius of Turners Falls. This does not even include paraprofessionals or other non-professional, but absolutely essential, staff. That means, in the last 1/3 of the school year, there were 18 professional vacancies within a small radius of our schools. That is astoundingly high for this time in the school year! Competition for qualified employees is extremely high, which is why salaries of the past don't align with the current job market.

This also holds true for our paraprofessional and

related services support staff. GMEA paraprofessional and related services support staff – Administrative Assistants, COTAs, SLPAs, IT professionals, etc. – are paid a starting wage equal to someone working at a fast food restaurant. Yet, they are responsible for your children's safety, security, and education without being paid what the market dictates. Again, this leads to an unstable workforce, which has a negative impact on our children's welfare and education.

Dr. Christine DeBarge, the Superintendent of the Greenfield Public Schools, recently stated that "when teachers aren't working in a district that's regionally competitive for salary, that makes [retaining teachers] all that much more challenging" (*Greenfield Recorder*, April 28, 2023). This is indeed the case at Gill-Montague. According to a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) report as published in the *Greenfield Recorder* on April 28, the average retention rate for teachers in Massachusetts was 84.6% in 2023, whereas in Gill-Montague it was 77.9%. The data speaks for itself.

Respectfully, we urge the citizens of Gill and Montague to tell our school committee members to recognize the value of our employees and to remain competitive in the job market by appropriately funding our contracts. This is the singular path to keeping our schools strong and the quality of our education high.

Here are the email addresses for your school committee members as published on the Gill-Montague RSD website:

Jane Oakes, Chair: jane.oakes@gmsrd.org
William Tomb, Vice Chair: william.tomb@gmsrd.org
Cristina Marcalow, Member: cristina.marcalow@gmsrd.org
Heather Katsoulis, Assistant Treasurer: heather.katsoulis@gmsrd.org
John Irminger, Member: john.irminger@gmsrd.org
Nicholas Licata, Member: nicholas.licata@gmsrd.org

Respectfully,

**Heidi Schmidt, Co-President
Sheila Thorn, Co-President
Jesse Sinclair, Vice President**

On behalf of the GMEA Executive Board

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PHONE: (413) 863-8666

EMAIL:

editor@montaguereporter.org
features@montaguereporter.org
ads@montaguereporter.org
bills@montaguereporter.org
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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Ice Cream Alley in Greenfield is helping with a **fundraiser to support skateboards** to kids who can't afford one. They have teamed up with Skate Greenfield and Theory Skate and Snow to make sure that everyone gets what they need to fully enjoy the city's new skatepark when it opens in June.

You can bring or mail a check to the 221 Main Street ice cream shop, or donate online at icecreamalley.com/skate. If you have extra skateboard parts to donate or have any questions, get in touch by emailing icecreamalleyskates@gmail.com.

A **talk and show of travel photos with John Rae** will be held at the Montague Center Library tonight, Thursday May 25, from 6 to 8 p.m. John Rae has been telling the stories of major international NGOs for the past 25 years and has taken assignments in over 85 countries working with communities at risk.

Next in the series will be a presentation by Ann Marie Rocheleau on Thursday, June 1 at 6 p.m.

Rocheleau walked the Camino Portugués with her son last fall and will discuss her experiences, as well as the resources she used to plan the trip.

The **indiVISIBLE Storytelling Booth** will be set up at the LAVA Center in Greenfield this Friday, May 26 between 5 and 8 p.m. "Come tell your story of immigration or farm working, share your ideas or a warm human interest tale to add to our collection," reads the announcement.

The recordings will become part of a Mass Humanities "Expanding Mass Stories" project focusing on migrant farm workers' stories, and may be used in The indiVISIBLE Hour podcast or in other LAVA Center documentation.

There will also be a screening of the hour-long Java Films documentary *Risking Their Lives To Cross US Border* at 1 p.m. this Saturday, May 27, followed by a discussion led by Alfonso Neal of the Pioneer Valley Workers Center. Find out more at indivisiblegreenfield.org.

The Greenfield Garden Cinemas announce they have bought the capability for **3D movie projection** from the recently-closed North Adams Movieplex. The first 3D movie shown will be *The Little Mermaid*, on May 25, with plans for a summer run of Pixar's new animation *Elemental*.

Trivia fans will be delighted to know that the DejaBrew Pub in Wendell will hold a Trivia Night with Catherine Decker this Friday, May 26 at 7:30 p.m.

The National Spiritual Alliance will host a **Psychic Fair** from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. this Saturday, May 27, at Thompson Temple, 2 Montague Avenue in Lake Pleasant. To register for a session with one of the participating mediums, or for more information, visit www.spiritualallianceusa.org/calendar. Founded in 1874, Lake Pleasant is the oldest continuously-existing same-site year-round Spiritualist center in the United States.

Turners Falls artist and *Montague Reporter* staff member Jae Southerland is working with tulle as an expression of femme identity and queer desire. Their **large-scale, interactive installation at the A.P.E. Gallery** in Northampton, "tender fortress," will be on view May 28, 29, and 31 from 2 to 5 p.m., and May 30 during a special "after dark" lights-out event from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

"Emulating a painterly style with tulle creates a dream-like world that elicits a simultaneous feeling of safety and childlike wonder (a soft and tender fortress for our inner child), much like the blanket forts we make with our friends and family in childhood," the piece's description reads.

Southerland, a visual artist and graphic designer from North Carolina, began working with tulle to create small adornments, sculptural pieces, and site-specific installations.

Their first interactive public work, "where we dream," was made with hand-dyed tulle and reclaimed wood and installed at Laurel Lake in 2022 as part of the Survivor Art Collective's Queer Trans

Beach Day. The piece was dedicated to the transgender community

The Massachusetts Cultural Council is running a **survey to develop a disability access plan**. If you are a person with a disability who visits arts and cultural institutions, or work as a caretaker for one, or if you are an artist and/or cultural worker with a disability, they would like your feedback before May 31 at surveymonkey.com/r/AccessibleArtsMA.

Tom Swetland, the former owner of Federal Street Books, is showing his work at the LAVA Center in Greenfield during the month of June.

Swetland is a mostly self-taught artist whose work includes collage, assemblage, mixed media and junk sculpture of assembled found objects. His designs pay homage to "the spirits of nature, the politics of internationalism, and our conscious striving for ecological balance," and the work is influenced by surrealism, psychedelic posters of the 1960s, and sci-fi book illustration. Swetland critiques the influence of advertising and how it affects contemporary consciousness.

A reception is planned next Saturday, June 3, from 3 to 6 p.m.

Amy Donovan of Franklin County Solid Waste will lead a **free composting workshop** next Saturday, June 3 from 10 a.m. to noon at Gill Elementary School. Participants will receive easy how-to instructions, tips for successful composting, demonstrations of indoor worm-bin composting, educational handouts, and information on municipal composting.

The workshop is open to all Franklin County residents, with pre-registration required. Contact jmasucci@msn.com or (413) 863-8694 to register.

Introduce a youngster to fishing at the annual **Family Fishing Day** on Sunday, June 4 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., rain or shine, at Barton Cove in Gill and the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls. Adults and children of all ages, accompanied by adults, are welcome.

At Barton Cove, no fishing license is needed during the event, and some equipment will be available if you can't bring your own pole. The Discovery Center will host a fly-tying demonstration, and at the nearby Turners Falls Fishway you can try your hand at the art of *gyotaku*, or fish printing, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. A free shuttle bus

will run between the locations.

The **Farley String Band** is coming to the Great Falls Coffeehouse on Friday, June 9. The eight-member band plays violin, guitar, banjo, hammered dulcimer, accordion, mandolin, flute, and bodhran. Some members play multiple instruments including harmonica, penny whistle and bones.

The coffeehouse offers refreshments and plenty of seating in the Great Hall of the Discovery Center in Turners Falls. Children can attend for free, with a suggested donation of \$6 to \$15 for others. Proceeds support programming at the Center.

Learn about chestnut science, lore, planting, and cooking at the Seeds of Solidarity Farm and Education Center in Orange from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday June 10. Chestnut enthusiasts Lois Breault and Denis Melican will share their knowledge and efforts to bring back chestnut trees, which they say are vital to food security, climate resilience, habitat, and history.

Pre-registration at deb@seedsofsolidarity.org is required as space is limited, and there is a sliding scale fee to attend. Proceeds will be donated to the American Chestnut Cooperators Foundation. Attendees should bring their own lunch, and each will receive a chestnut sampling to enjoy.

See www.seedsofsolidarity.org to learn more about Seeds of Solidarity and their "Grow the Future" programs.

Veterans are invited to free coffee and camaraderie at the Leverett Village Co-op on Tuesdays between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

A representative of the Office of Veterans' Services will hold hours the first Tuesday of each month to answer questions and help with paperwork. Veterans also receive a discount on many purchases.

On Friday nights, the Co-op has pizza for sale – eat on the patio and enjoy live music from 6 to 8 p.m.

RiverCulture has published a **summer calendar of cultural events** happening in the five villages of Montague. These primarily free events include lots of live music, outdoor movies, theater, family activities, and festivals. In case you missed the insert in last week's paper, copies are available at local retail stores and restaurants, and can be downloaded at www.riverculture.org.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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BAYSTATE from page A1

provided in a 24-hour, secure and protected, treatment environment. The goal of inpatient services is [to] stabilize people who display acute psychiatric conditions associated with either a sudden onset and a short, severe course, or a marked worsening of symptoms associated with a more persistent, recurring condition."

East Spoke is not a long-term care facility. "You could be here three days, or maybe three months, but not for a long time," an employee who requested not to be identified told the *Reporter*.

The hospital chain's announcement in January 2019 of its decision to close the unit and consolidate its mental health services in Holyoke generated immediate protests from hospital employees, state legislators, and the general public. The MNA led a grassroots movement against the closure for over four years.

The *Greenfield Recorder* reported a

"packed house" at the Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew in Greenfield soon after the announcement was made. The meeting was attended by Paul Mark, who at the time represented Greenfield at the state house, and Lindsay Sabadosa of Northampton.

Stern was reportedly in a combative mood at that time. "This is not the first time the MNA has gone to war," the newspaper quoted her as saying. "Believe me, this is going to be a war."

At a virtual public forum in March 2022 to support the nurses, then locked in contract negotiations with the hospital, Stern called it "shocking" that the state Department of Mental Health "gave the greenlight" on the closing of the facility.

This week, after Baystate announced the unit would remain open after all, Stern complimented the hospital for maintaining "an open mind about keeping these mental health beds open... [W]e are proud to have worked

collaboratively to make sure our patients can receive appropriate care."

The Monday statement from Baystate, which focused on the new Holyoke facility, stated that the company had decided to keep the Greenfield unit open "based on geography and Baystate Franklin's strong history of integration of behavioral health services, such as the 24/7 presence of recovery coaches in the Emergency Department."

Baystate Regional Hospitals president Ron Bryant told the *Reporter* that the behavioral unit at the Franklin County facility was "highly integrated" with the local community. He noted a close relationship with the Clinical Support Options, which operates counseling facilities in three counties in the region, as well as his own work on the regional Opioid Task Force.

Bryant said that Baystate seeks to be flexible, and wanted to consider "all the factors" before making a final decision.

"When you add it all up, it makes sense to stay there," he told us.

Tanya Bryant (no relation), admissions nurse at the Greenfield mental health unit, said employees were informed of the decision earlier this month. "They brought us all in two weeks ago and the president made an announcement to the staff that was there on day shift that they'd be keeping it open," she said. "They figured out that geographically it made sense, I guess – and we do have plenty of customers."

"People are really relieved that they're not losing their jobs," she added.

Baystate says it still intends to go forward with plans to shut down mental health units at two other hospitals, Baystate Noble in Westfield and Baystate Wing Hospital in Palmer, after the Holyoke facility opens later this year.

Additional reporting was provided by Mike Jackson.



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ERVING from page A1

years, then the company can simply grant the public an easement.

The board voted to authorize town administrator Bryan Smith to sign the agreement.

Drinking Water

State funding for an inventory of lead in the town's drinking water system, required by law, has been changed from a loan to a grant. Much of the money, \$121,500, is going to engineers Tighe & Bond.

The potential price tag for a water tank mixer, which the town plans to buy to deal with an issue of algae in the drinking water, is \$46,500.

A member of the public asked how often the algae has been an issue while the town has used this water tank. Bryan Smith estimated the tank was built in the 1970s or '80s. He and the board agreed that the issue had only been going on for the last two or three years, and was related to the warming climate.

The price of the mixer is in the range the board expected. The appropriation will go to a special town meeting, possibly on June 28.

The price of water will go up, a little. The board agreed to raise the price from \$5.25 per thousand gallons to \$5.30. Smith said the town sells about 14 million gallons a year, and the board marveled that this price change only resulted in a \$700 difference over the year. The additional money will go to the capital projects account.

Chickens

The planning board is planning to have another public meeting in June about proposed zoning bylaw amendments. They presented their most recent edits to the selectboard for comment.

The selectboard had no objections, except to

the possibility that they may be required to govern yard fowl. The board of health would deal with the possible issue of too many fowl in a yard, but the selectboard would be responsible for noise complaints.

The proposed zoning amendments are still being drafted.

New Policies

The board reviewed a draft policy on security cameras on town property. In keeping with the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, audio would not be recorded, but the policy would allow cameras "in outdoor and indoor places where individuals lack a reasonable expectation of privacy."

The draft continues: "Examples include public common areas such as parking lots, entrances, seating areas, service desks, and areas prone to theft or misconduct. Cameras will not be installed in areas where individuals have a reasonable expectation of privacy such as restrooms or private offices. Cameras will not be positioned in areas where patrons' viewing, listening, or personal account information may be easily monitored."

Chair Jacob Smith suggested the policy allowed for many more people to have access to playback and exporting of the video than he was used to in his experience in private industry.

The board and town administrator discussed for how long videos would be retained, and agreed that the police chief should be able to review them. Town staff will improve the draft for next time.

In a discussion of a draft hazard communication policy, it was agreed to not include a list of hazardous material known to be in use, but instead to note the location of such a list. Also suggested was a periodic audit of hazardous materials on hand in the town.

No votes were taken on either policy.

Dead Ends

A troubled culvert on Wheelock Street continues to generate projects. Now that the new culvert is in use, it has been pointed out the dead-end road really needs a "hammerhead," a truck turnaround. Trucks currently turn around on someone's private property.

Residents are also requesting a "no parking" sign, and perhaps large rocks or other technology to discourage parking. Bastarache expressed reluctance about setting a precedent for the town doing a project to improve a specific resident's property.

Other Business

The town retained a bunch of asphalt millings as part of a construction last year on Route 2 and ended up not needing them. Bastarache said he believes they will go quickly if designated surplus, which was approved.

Someone crossing all their T's called on the town to discharge an old real estate deal, dating to when the town was the lead entity on a "Ten Town Loan Fund" supporting small businesses. "A loan was issued in December 1997 to the Franklin Land Trust, Inc. for the Elmer's Store at 396 Main Street, Ashfield, MA," Bryan Smith explained in a memo to the board, "and a mortgage was recorded with the Inhabitants of the Town of Erving as the mortgage."

Because of an unclear legal situation in the process of selling the property this year, Erving has been asked to assure the deal is done. The selectboard agreed to do this.

Selectboard meetings are tentatively planned for June 5, 12, and 26, and a special town meeting for June 28. The capital planning and finance committees have been invited to the meeting on June 5.

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

FY'24 Budget Draws Down Stabilization Account; Town Closes Bottle Shed, Frets Over Pond Crowds

By **JOSH HEINEMANN**

The Wendell selectboard's May 17 meeting was their last regularly scheduled meeting before they legally have to post the warrant for the annual town meeting, planned for Tuesday, June 6 at 7 p.m. They made a provision for a paper copy of the warrant to be posted at the Diemand Farm, as was requested.

As of this meeting the warrant was still in draft form, and finance committee co-chair Meagan Sylvia contributed to discussion of town spending. With longtime finance chair Doug Tanner having departed and member Garrett Sawyer temporarily absent, Sylvia said experience on the committee is limited.

The proposed FY'24 budget includes few capital improvements. Selectboard member Gillian Budine proposed that a capital planning group, including project manager Phil Delorey and a selectboard member, take a serious look at all town buildings.

Sylvia said the \$20,000 to \$30,000 that Delorey proposed for highway building and library repairs might fit in with the article for town building maintenance.

Selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato suggested an article putting \$20,000 into the budget for a generator so the money is in hand when a decision is made as to what is needed and where it is needed most.

The selectboard approved the finance committee's recommendation of a 4.4% cost-of-living pay increase for town employees.

Drawing \$340,000 from stabilization would allow the property tax rate to increase by 32 cents per thousand dollars, and leave stabilization with \$490,000. That size of input

from stabilization is not sustainable, but if the contribution stayed at last year's level, the tax rate would need to increase by \$1.32.

The town meeting will be available through Zoom, but citizens watching on Zoom will not be allowed to vote.

Project Updates

Delorey went through a list of ongoing and completed projects. He said the Kentfield Road Bridge, including the environmental assessment, is complete. The final payment of \$5,476 is "in the process of leaving town."

Delorey said he expected the culvert repair on Mormon Hollow Road to begin "next week," May 22 to 26, after the groundwater level drops a bit further. The work should take eight to ten days. Wendell is holding both SVE, the project engineer, and Davenport Construction responsible for the failure of the original work.

The highway garage roof repair is complete, with a truss and the metal roof replaced, ready for installing photovoltaic panels. The building still needs some minor electrical repairs, along with siding and trim maintenance.

Gutters and drainage have been installed on the library building so roof runoff is directed away from the building. The cellar now looks dry, and is ready for paint. Library staff called Jim's Tree service of Greenfield about six or eight trees that should come down soon. Budine said the tree warden expense budget might cover that cost.

Delorey reported that most of the trees around the WRATS have been cut, making room for a road that will surround the former land-

fill after it is capped. The cemetery commission donated several dozen truckloads of fill needed for the road. Landfill monitoring wells will be drilled after June 1.

The road commission voted to stop collecting, sorting, and returning deposit bottles and cans at the WRATS, and to repurpose the shed area. The WRATS's revenue covers 65% of its operating cost, and taking in returnable containers takes too much attendant time and earns only a small amount of money, which goes to Good Neighbors.

Delorey said he was disappointed with the number of dead trees still standing along town roads, and reported that about \$12,000 for tree maintenance can be carried forward from FY'23.

Road paving is scheduled to start June 12, weather permitting.

Summer Problems

Mary Thomas, a member of the Fiske Pond advisory committee as well as the planning board, brought up the recurring problem of misuse of the Fiske Pond area.

When Wendell acquired the property, the town deliberately made the parking lot small to limit crowding at the small beach. Instead, people park on West Street, ignoring "No Parking" signs. Some bring alcohol, which is prohibited, some leave trash, and some set off fireworks.

Leverett police sergeant Steven Gould brought up difficulties with giving parking tickets. Wendell does not have a parking ticket book, tickets would add to the town clerk workload, and enforcement is likely to lead to resentment. Wendell's former police chief was reluctant to enforce parking restrictions. On-street parking restrictions are enforced

mainly to ease snow removal.

DiDonato, as a neighbor of Fiske Pond, said she and her husband place leaflets on the windshields of vehicles parked on the roadside to remind drivers not to park there.

Budine said the people who work at Lake Wyola should be asked not to send overflow cars to Fiske Pond, a much smaller beach with more limited parking.

Other Business

Handicapped parking for the town hall is limited, and adding one or two more spaces is not simple. One spot could go in front of the human (not garage) door to the police station.

Gould said the station is still in transition, but that the garage door cannot be blocked, and the human door should not be blocked. It was noted that the parking sign is currently held in place by a wheel rim.

Delorey said he would look more closely at the site and check on what is required, based on the occupancy of the town hall and the layout around the buildings.

Town custodian Eric Shufelt, citing paperwork and bureaucracy, has indicated he does not want to continue training to become water tester for the public water supply for town buildings. Housatonic Water Testing has not yet stopped serving Wendell, so replacing them is not urgent.

Budine and town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad will serve as contacts with ENTRE Technologies, Wendell's information technology manager, about non-technical issues.

The board voted unanimously to appoint Amy Simmons to the planning board, giving it enough members to have a quorum and make decisions.

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NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Rec Czars Step Down, Call for New Approach

By GEORGE BRACE

At their first session following Leverett's annual town meeting in April, the town selectboard held a visioning forum on Tuesday on the future of town's recreation commission, and discussed their own goals for the coming year, among other business.

At the invitation of chair Tom Hankinson, over a dozen residents involved in organizing a wide range of recreational activities were on hand to discuss whether or not Leverett should attempt to revitalize the role of the recreation commission in facilitating programs, or let it cease to exist. Hankinson said he organized the roundtable "not because I think there's a problem with recreation in the town, but because I think it could be better."

The two members of the commission, chair Diane Crowe and member Apple Ahearn, had informed the board a year ago they were not seeing much engagement with residents, and were thinking "the time may have come" to step down. Both handed in their resignations at Tuesday's meeting, but also took part in a lively and idearich discussion on the future of recreation in Leverett.

Crowe pointed out several benefits of keeping the commission active, such as providing town insurance for activities organized under its auspices, running background checks on organizers of events involving children and elders, and collecting a 10% fee for the town on activities that cost money. She noted that the commission still has almost \$8,000 in its coffers.

But Crowe also said that resident involvement with the commission had declined over the years due to people "just wanting to do their one thing, like pickleball or hiking," and "not wanting to be responsible for other things, or to have someone telling them what to do." She said that for years, the only role the commission had been playing was defending the open space of the recreation field.

In the general discussion that followed, the idea of creating an online calendar or portal for recreational activities received widespread support among the "recreation leaders" and others in attendance.

Selectboard member Patricia Duffy cited Amherst's leisure services program, which prints pamphlets listing all the programs going on in that town, as an example of a type of beneficial information the town might provide through a central online portal.

Others cited the success and ease of use of the Leverett Connects listserv in pursuing an online

calendar or portal for recreational activities.

The brainstorming did not get as far as deciding whether such a portal, if created, should be administered by a recreation commission. The overall discussion ended with a straw poll vote on keeping the commission active, coming out at about 50/50.

Selectboard Goals

Board members discussed their goals for the coming year, with each member listing specific project areas they intend to work on. Duffy and fellow member Melissa Colbert also commented on establishing better "meeting management," and the desire for the chair and members to do more to establish a "tone of civility and politeness" in the proceedings.

"We're going to have tense meetings," said Colbert, but she added that she would like to "catch things sooner" when discussions get out of hand. Both members also said that improved meeting management would increase efficiency and productivity.

Duffy listed the goals she wants the board to work on as "road calming" to reduce speeding, school bus safety, the establishment of small parks and amenities, and a "pollinator highway" linking north and south Leverett for the benefit of pollinating insects such as bees and butterflies. She also said she would like regular "check-ins" from town departments at selectboard meetings to improve communication.

Hankinson said his priorities, on a three-year timeframe, included coming to a decision about the recreation commission, town-wide solar installation and decarbonization efforts, and "delivering a tangible aging-in-place program."

He noted that technology and money were available for decarbonizing town buildings, and credited the town's Council on Aging for progress it has already made.

Colbert said she was "100% on board" with Hankinson's ideas on decarbonization and aging in place, and added further work on the town's mosquito surveillance project to her list of goals for the board.

Other Business

The selectboard authorized the hiring of Christian Santiago as a full-time police officer to replace officer Meghan Gallo, who recently resigned. Santiago had been serving as a part-time officer, and was recommended by chief Scott Minckler for the position.

The board signed a contract with Kelli Pontbriand for accounting services, and hired Terry Allen as an accounting assistant.

CENTER from page A1

space for worship and art. The building needs about \$5 million in renovations to meet modern codes.

The city was on board with the plan and the timeline, said Bombyx executive director Cassandra Holden, until recently. On May 2, she said, a group of neighbors sent a letter to the city complaining about noise and traffic caused by frequent nighttime concerts at the church.

On May 11, Northampton captain of fire prevention Mark Curtin arrived for an unannounced inspection, and ordered all live music events shut down until zoning and fire safety requirements were met. Religious gatherings, the preschool, choral groups, food services, and other activities may continue.

The fire department order caused the immediate cancellation of Collider!Fest, a two-day "village-wide festival" planned in partnership with artists from the Brushworks Arts & Industry building, a short walk from Bombyx.

Educational workshops, food vendors, a record fair, a durational art performance and several live music performances were scheduled to take place until 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. ("Afrobeat, rumba, merengue, joropo, Ethiopian groove, gqom," the Bombyx website promised of the festival. "Call the fire department, because this one is going to be HOT.")

While some elements of the festival were relocated to Hawks and Reed in Greenfield, organizers say the cancellation resulted in about \$20,000 in losses to Bombyx and event participants. Subsequent concerts have been moved to Gateway City Arts in Holyoke and St. John's Church in downtown Northampton.

Holden said she will send an appeal of the sprinkler order to the state Fire Safety Commission this week, and hopes scheduled shows can resume this weekend.


"While these actions have been sudden and shocking, we really hope to move back towards a place where we are working collaboratively on this project," said Holden, who is also creative director of Laudable Productions. "Bombyx is a huge economic driver for the region."

Since 2021, Bombyx has received \$265,000 in state cultural grants for building upgrades and professional sound and light equipment. The city of Northampton also provided \$79,000 in ARPA funds to upgrade fire suppression, electrical, plumbing and ventilation systems in the kitchen. Homstead said the group has invested half a million dollars into the building so far.

"We paid a lot of money to conduct a thorough code review of the building, and then consulted with our city officials and our architect," he said. "We understood that for this property to change hands that was going to trigger the building having to be up to 21st century code requirements.... We knew, from the get-go, sprinklers were a part of

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this. We discussed sprinklers specifically with building and planning departments."

On May 16, Northampton building commissioner Jonathan Flagg sent a letter to Bombyx explaining the city's position. "When you spoke with members of city departments last year, you made it very clear that these were not the type of events that your group was planning on having," he wrote.

"You were also made aware that you were going to have to have a fire suppression system installed if and when the Zone Change that you applied for was granted. At this time, the City would like to meet with you to discuss upcoming events and which ones you may be allowed to continue to have."

"This is very selective enforcement of particular codes,"
Florence Congregational pastor Marisa Egerstrom said at Tuesday's press conference.

Fire chief Jon Davine followed up with a cease-and-desist letter on May 19. Because the venue sold up to 330 tickets for concerts, he wrote, exceeding the 100-person maximum occupancy, and because local newspapers advertise the space as a live music venue, the department felt it should legally be considered a nightclub.

The chief also cited live music, reduced lighting, alcohol on the premises, and pews with wheels "so they can be moved to make a bigger dance floor" as reasons for the closure. Bombyx does not have a liquor license, but has received one-day permits to serve alcohol at three of the 40 events it has held so far this year.

"This is very selective enforcement of particular codes," said Florence Congregational pastor Marisa Egerstrom at Tuesday's press con-

ference. "The most frustrating thing is, we are trying to work together to get all those things in place."

Elizabeth Dunaway, president of the Bombyx board of directors, said the organization has been "very proactive" in communicating with neighbors, agreeing to end most events by 9 p.m., and is currently renegotiating a parking agreement with the owners of an abutting office building.

"In the very beginning, we were able to pay our neighbor to have some parking there, and then he changed his mind and we had to renegotiate that," Dunaway said. "Since then, there has been more parking on the street.... We've been trying and working with neighbors to help them feel better about what's going on here. They say they don't want Bombyx to close."


"What we do here with music is an intrinsic part of what makes this project roll forward and work," Homstead argued. "Unfortunately for us, the economic harm is real."

"I fully support our fire and building inspectors in their efforts to ensure the well-being and protection of our community," Northampton mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra wrote in an official statement last Friday. "While I acknowledge and admire the valuable programming presented by Bombyx, their operations must take place in a safe and compliant location."

As of Wednesday evening, Holden told the *Reporter* she did not know whether events scheduled for this weekend – Cuban jazz pianist Harold López-Nussa on Friday, Colorado jam band The Samples on Saturday – will happen. She encouraged ticket holders to check online for more information.

"If Bombyx goes down, the church goes down – if the church goes down, the synagogue and the preschool go down," said Rev. Egerstrom on Tuesday. "There's just no way, without these kinds of partnerships, to maintain buildings like this."

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Aquí se habla español

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



Voces inmigrantes: Una celebración de las Artes

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO de AGUILERA

TURNERS FALLS – Este domingo pasado tuvo lugar en el teatro Shea de Turners Falls uno de los eventos estrella de Center for New Americans: “Inmigrant voices: A celebration of Arts.” Center for New Americans es una organización sin ánimo de lucro que da la bienvenida y ayuda a inmigrantes, asilados y refugiados en el oeste de Massachusetts. Ofrecen clases de inglés para hablantes de otra lengua, clases para una carrera profesional, asistencia legal y ayuda con otras necesidades.

La organización consigue sus objetivos gracias a los esfuerzos y dedicación de sus trabajadores, voluntarios y especialmente la labor realizada por su directora Laurie Millman. Los fondos provienen principalmente de recursos del estado de Massachusetts, donaciones y actos benéficos como este que nos ocupa. No hay duda de que nuestras comunidades en Estados Unidos se enriquecen con la diversidad. Este evento provee la oportunidad de celebrar la cultura y las tradiciones de diversos países.

El 21 de mayo las luces del escenario del Shea se encendieron una vez más para recibir a los artistas de diversos países que llenaron el escenario de color, buenas energías y cultura. Tuve la oportunidad de entrevistar a algunos de ellos antes de su actuación, entre nerviosos y emocionados de poder presentar al público lo mejor de ellos mismos.

En esta ocasión **Biani Salas** de Venezuela repitió como maestra de ceremonias y fue la encargada de dar la bienvenida a los presentes, junto con **Moise Haguma** de República Democrática del Congo. El primer agradecimiento fue para Monte Belmonte que ofrece cada año el teatro Shea en Turners Falls para el evento.

La primera artista es una veterana, **Raquel Artiga**. Va vestida de charra, con un gran lazo rojo desde el cuello a la pechera y con tachuelas en los lados de los pantalones. Raquel cuida siempre la forma de presentarse ante el público, y se nota su profesionalidad. Canta una ranchera titulada “Te quedo grande la yegua,” que habla de una mujer que no quiere someterse a un hombre y a sus caprichos y por eso este la abandona.

La siguiente actuación fue muy emocionante. **Tatiana Riabova** de Ucrania leyó primero en inglés y luego en ucraniano una adaptación del poema, *Alma de flor*. Se dice que cuando hablas más de una lengua, modificas también inconscientemente tu personalidad al cambiar de lengua. Fue increíble como Tatiana cambió al leer el poema en su propia lengua y la emoción que había en sus ojos al hacerlo. Parte del público ondeó una bandera de Ucrania durante su presentación.

Llegaron después **Moise, Agape, Heritier**, y **Steven Haguma** de República Democrática del Congo. Vestidos con unas camisetas blancas demostraron sus dotes de bailarines al ritmo de Salambala. Doy fe de que los pies del público se movían en los asientos al ritmo de la música.

El siguiente en actuar fue un cantante semi-profesional en su país de origen, Haití. **Andree Aristide** interpretó una canción compuesta por el mismo, titulada “Ecoute-moi, Seigneur” (“Escúchame, Señor”). Andree vestía un traje gris con un pañuelo que era la bandera de Haití en el bolsillo. Es muy conocido en su país ya que tiene un canal de YouTube donde cuelga



Raquel Artiga cantando “Patria querida.”

los vídeos de sus canciones.

Rosa Guerra de Argentina leyó un poema escrito por ella en inglés, *I don't want to*. El poema habla del dolor por la pérdida de un ser querido debido a la violencia.

Después de leer su poema, Guerra volvió a salir al escenario acompañada de Agape Haguma para bailar un merengue titulado “Suavemente.” Los dos bailan con gran compenetración siendo una oda a la multiculturalidad ya que una sudamericana y un congoleño bailaron al compás de la música caribeña. Está claro que la música es un lenguaje internacional.

A continuación, salieron al escenario **Rose Ermine Coquillon, Johanne Juste, y Kermande Orélus** de Haití. Son unas veteranas que no tienen miedo de cantar ante el público. Van vestidas con los colores rojo, azul y blanco de la bandera haitiana. Cantan la canción “La paix nap mande” que significa, en español, “pedimos por la paz.”

Uno de los platos estrella del evento son siempre los grupos de niños que bailan en el escenario. En esta ocasión son cuatro niñas **Ashley Torres-Ovalle, Milaidy Tomás Mejía, Evelyn Yazmín Galvez Mendez, y Hederlín Bartolon**. Bailaron la canción “Gracias a la vida,” coreografiadas por **Carolina Barreat de Kenny**. Las niñas bailaron una coreografía muy original con pequeñas linternas en sus manos.

Por segunda vez salió **Raquel Artiga** al escenario para cantar a capella la canción “Patria querida,” dedicada a su país, El Salvador. Lleva un vestido típico de El Salvador en colores naranja y blanco, con un pañuelo anudado a la cabeza.

Por unos minutos dejó su trabajo como

presentadora del evento y Biani Salas acompañada de su pareja, **Frank Razzia**, bailaron con una gracia descomunal la salsa titulada “Quiero volver a Venezuela.”

Rose, Johanne y Kerlande vuelven a salir al escenario acompañados de **Ronaldo Locicident** al piano para cantar Lakou Trankil.

Y cerrando el evento Moise, Agape, Steven y Heritier bailan “Jerusalem” e invitando a todos los presentes a acompañarlos tratando de seguir sus pasos al ritmo de la música. Fue un fin de fiesta extraordinario.

Aquí tienen ustedes algunas pinceladas acerca de los participantes en el evento...

Rosa Guerra, Buenos Aires, Argentina: *Consejera laboral y de educación en Center for New Americans.*

Hace 27 años que vive en los Estados Unidos Participa en el evento para apoyar a CNA recaudando fondos y para dar a conocer sus tradiciones y sus valores. Lleva trabajando en Center for New Americans trece años. Tiene una licenciatura en Trabajo Social en SUNY.

Hace ocho años ya participó leyendo un poema, en esta ocasión va a bailar y leer un poema escrito por ella.

Vino a este país por amor ya que en unas vacaciones conoció al que fue su marido en Miami. En aquellos tiempos no había Internet, así que se comunicaban con cartas y faxes. Aquí tuvo un hijo, así que su familia está aquí. Aunque extraña sus amigos allí y parte de su familia, no se arrepiente de haber venido a los Estados Unidos y no le gustaría volver a vivir a Argentina.

Rosa me dice que las oportunidades aquí

son mucho mayores, que tiene voz y voto, es posible tener una familia. Me dice que nunca hubiera conseguido tener lo que tiene en este país en Argentina. Hubiera tenido que trabajar doce horas al día y no se hubiera podido ocupar de su hijo.

Biani Salas, Venezuela: *Asesora comunitaria en Center for New Americans.*

Biani acaba de nacionalizarse estadounidense y trabaja desde el 2020 en Center for New Americans. Le gusta participar en el evento para representar a la comunidad emigrante y que Venezuela enseñe también una cara positiva entre tantas noticias malas.

Lleva siete años en Estados Unidos y trabaja también en Hilltown Health Community Center. Es una de las organizadoras del evento y se encarga también de las redes sociales de CNA.

Raquel Artiga de Paz, Cojutepeque, Cúscatan, El Salvador: *Ayudante de enfermería.*

Raquel ha participado en el libro de Jane Yolen, *Straw Bag, Tin Box, Cloth Suitcase: Three Immigrant Voices*. Este libro para niños cuenta la experiencia real de tres mujeres inmigrantes en tres diferentes épocas. Una es de Ucrania, otra de Irán, y la última es Raquel que huyó con su familia de la violencia en El Salvador. Raquel habla en el libro de lo que perdió y todo lo que ha logrado, especialmente para tener una vida sin violencia.

Raquel hace siete años que vive en los Estados Unidos y está enamorada del país. Empezó estudiando inglés en Center for New Americans y después para ser enfermera. Ahora trabaja en una compañía que cuida enfermos en casa. Siempre quiso ser enfermera y poco a poco lo está logrando. La mayoría de sus experiencias han sido buenas y quiere dar las gracias a todas las personas de la comunidad.

Le gusta participar en este evento porque otro de sus sueños es ser cantante y con sus canciones quiere transmitir lo que siente y a través de ellas puede expresar lo que a veces las palabras no dicen.

Steven Haguma, República Democrática del Congo: *Instalador de placas solares y estudiante.*

Lleva en Estados Unidos siete años. Lo más importante para él es que aquí hay paz. Está entusiasmado con la seguridad que existe en Estados Unidos. Llegó aquí con su familia huyendo de la terrible guerra en el Congo, así que me dice que no extraña nada. Ha hecho nuevos amigos y se encuentra como en casa.

Cuando llegaron no hablaban inglés, ya que swahili es su lengua nativa. Catholic Ministries les conectó con Center for New Americans. Entre las dos organizaciones le han ayudado a conseguir un lugar para vivir, clases de inglés, ayuda legal y a estudiar. Steven quiere trabajar en ciberseguridad y está estudiando en Springfield Technical Community College a la vez que trabaja como instalador de placas solares. Está muy agradecido a CNA porque a través de la organización consiguió su primera computadora, su licencia de conducir y hasta ayuda para comprar su carro para poder ir a trabajar.

Su sueño es terminar sus estudios, comprar una casa y hacerse estadounidense. Por último, me dice que ha venido al evento para mostrar un poco de su cultura y porque bailar eleva el espíritu y quita el estrés.

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MONTAGUE from page A1

negotiate with Casella and Republic over both price and quality of service. However, time is short because the town wants to award the contract, which begins on July 1, 2024, a year in advance to give the winning company a year to purchase a new vehicle.

Casella proposed to charge \$538,000 for collection in the first year, an increase of nearly 50% compared with \$345,000, which Ellis estimated as the cost of the current contract when the dust settles this fiscal year. Republic's bid for the same time period came in at \$445,000.

Ellis mentioned that a third company had shown interest, but had not put in a bid because it only operates automated pickup, as opposed to the current manual system where drivers get out of trucks and collect trash and recycling separately.

The cost of an automated system "would be substantial," he said, because the town or its residents would need to purchase special "toters" for pickup, might need to revamp the current "pay per throw" system that uses stickers for trash, and might reconsider "dual stream" recycling, where paper and cardboard alternate with bottles, cans, and plastic containers.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said he had asked Ellis how much of the collection cost is currently covered by trash sticker revenue. Ellis shared a chart showing that sticker revenue accounted for between 55% and 60% of the cost over the past decade. Kuklewicz noted that under a new contract, the town may need to increase the price of stickers.

"That's another piece to throw on top of the pile," he said.

Ellis was asked whether changes to improve communication with Republic could be written into a new contract.

"I've certainly been extremely direct with them about what they could do better, from a communications standpoint, [and] we now have a live wire into dispatch and operations," he replied. "The communication tends to arrive too late in the day for us to get it out."

Due to high turnover, he added, drivers are not always aware they have missed part of a route, so Republic does not find out until someone complains.

Ellis recommended that the board authorize town officials, along with Franklin County Solid Waste Management District director Jan Ameen, to negotiate with Republic and Casella for a better contract. "We were not comfortable recommending an award without further conversation," he said. "You may have to consider paying a 20% premium if you want to go with a different vendor."

"We'll have to make a decision soon, I guess," said Kuklewicz.

Retracing Steps

The other big news at Monday's selectboard meeting was a new contract for the third phase of the research project on the May 1676 massacre or battle at the Great Falls, now called Turners Falls. The project, which began in 2014, is being funded by a preservation planning grant from the National Park Service, which has funded the project's previous phases.

David Brule, who chairs the advisory board as well as the town historical commission, said the

immediate goal was to finish the archeological survey of the retreat route taken by the colonial troops after they attacked the Native village in the early morning hours, killing by some estimates 300 people. The grant will also be used to develop what Brule called "narrative content" including signage, which will primarily be placed in today's Greenfield.

The contract was awarded to Heritage Consultants, LLC of Berlin, Connecticut, a private research firm that includes key investigators from earlier phases of the project. Heritage was the only organization that responded to the request for proposals.

The board also authorized Kuklewicz to sign memoranda of agreement with the historic preservation offices of four tribes in the the region who are participating in the project.

At the end of the discussion, Brule noted that the project might undertake research about the possible location of "council fires" in the vicinity of Northfield and of the massacre site itself, which is now under Barton's Cove in the Connecticut River.

Retaining History

A third highlight was a discussion of a collapsing retaining wall on the hill that overlooks Unity Park near the corner of Third and Prospect streets. Assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey showed an aerial photograph of the sliver of land nestled between the two streets, and said that he was surprised to discover that the property is privately owned – and currently in the tax title process, for the owner's failure to pay back taxes.

"The history is a little bit unknown," Ramsey added. "It's fuzzy who put that retaining wall in – and this is going back at least a hundred years, probably a lot longer than that."

Ramsey said he had spoken with the owner, who was "not aware of the situation" with the wall, about selling the parcel to the town or giving it permission to stabilize the hill. He said the owner did not consider the collapsing wall their responsibility.

"The history is a little bit unknown," Ramsey added. "It's fuzzy who put that retaining wall in – and this is going back at least a hundred years, probably a lot longer than that."

Public works superintendent Tom Bergeron said he drives by the site every day, and is concerned that if his department puts up concrete blocks to stabilize the hill it will become "a much larger project than we are expecting at the moment." He said he would continue to monitor the wall, particularly if there are heavy rains.

Town meeting member Ariel Elan suggested that rather than spending the money on a tax title lawyer the town might purchase the land for \$7,000, the amount owed in back taxes. Kuklewicz encouraged a discussion with the owner, "but I think a dollar might be more appropriate."

Planning & Development

At the request of town planner Maureen Pollock, the board approved a memorandum of agreement with the state Department of Transportation, which is donating signs to "remind" motorists of the recent law requiring them to keep a four-foot distance from cyclists on narrow roads. Pollock said the town will request 12 signs, and has already chosen their locations.

Pollock also received approval to apply for a state grant to conduct a "market study" for housing on the former Farren hospital site in Montague City. She noted that the town building inspector was about to issue a demolition permit for the complex. Once it is demolished, owner Trinity Senior Communities of New England will fund a site survey, including an environmental assessment of the property, which it plans to donate to the town.

The board held a hearing on the status of projects funded under the two most recent rounds of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. This consisted almost entirely of a presentation by Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Re-development Authority, which administers the grants for the town.

Montague's CDBG has been funding housing rehabilitation for low-income homeowners, social service programs, and construction projects, including the "street-scape" on the southeast side of Avenue A and the reconstruction of the community playground at Hillcrest Elementary School.

The board authorized Ramsey to apply for two state grants – \$120,000 to "advance" design work for demolishing the town-owned Strathmore mill complex and replacing it with a "riverfront park," and \$500,000 to improve the combined sewer overflow system in Turners Falls and reduce overflows into the Connecticut River during rain events. Ramsey said the latter grant, from the Rural and Small Town Development Fund, would pay for both design and construction.

Ellis shared with the board feedback he had given to state and federal regulators regarding the town's proposed new wastewater permit, including concerns about the scope of requirements for testing for PFAS chemicals and the timing of a required study of the "limits" of the sewer plant's ability to process waste.

Other Business

Ellis reviewed the results of the May 16 town election, particularly voters' decision to endorse town meeting's recommendations that both the town clerk and treasurer/tax collector positions be made by appointment, rather than election.

Ellis said the vote meant the board could negotiate and endorse a long-term contract with current assistant Cathern "Beanie" Pierce for the clerk position by July 1.

The board also considered reorganizing itself in light of the election, in which Matt Lord was re-elected. They voted to maintain the status quo with Kuklewicz as chair, Chris Boutwell as vice chair, and Lord as clerk.

The board retired into two executive sessions, to discuss collective bargaining strategy and real estate negotiations respectively. The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 6.

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

Here's the way it was on May 23, 2013: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Davol Leaves RiverCulture

Lisa Davol, director of the Turners Falls RiverCulture project for the past seven years, is now taking on similar work in a broader context as the Events Manager at the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce. Davol has already begun working part-time at the Chamber and will remain in her role as RiverCulture director until her two-year grant funding ends this summer.

Having worked to promote arts, culture, and the related economy in downtown Turners Falls, Davol is now headed to the Chamber, one of 16 regional tourism bureaus in the state, with three member towns: Greenfield, Montague, and Erving.

Davol is working to secure her

eighth Adams Art Program grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. If it is received, Montague will look for a new person to take over the program. "It will be good to have a new person with new vision and energy," said Davol.

Usher Plant Re-Use Budget

Erving's Usher Plant Re-Use Committee presented a draft budget for the property's development process. After discussion with the selectboard, the committee revised the budget: \$25,000 to repair leaking sections of the mill's roof; \$25,000 for a planning consultant; \$1,200 for an LCD projector and portable screen for presentations about the site; \$720 for battery-powered portable lights to allow tours of the un electrified building; and \$500 for surveillance cameras to reduce vandalism and dumping.

20 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on May 22, 2003: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Montague Faces School Crisis

Seventy-three people, mainly teachers, parents, and administrators, packed the finance committee room Wednesday night to talk about the impact of a new round of cuts looming in the state budget. Gill-Montague business manager Lynn Bassett noted that under the latest state budget scenarios, the gap between what the towns could afford and what the schools asked for had grown to over \$464,000 in Montague, and \$180,000 in Gill.

Erving: Storm Drain Causes Overrun

At Monday's meeting, selectboard chair Andrew Tessier told the other members to expect additional

costs from the Route 2 utility work to tie the new police station to public sewer and water lines. Workers bumped into an unknown storm drain line under the highway. The new utilities needed to be re-routed to account for the drain line.

The downtime will result in roughly \$3,000 in extra costs.

Turners Gardens Take Root

The idea was to turn the debris-strewn lot at Fourth and L into a garden. David Detmold talked to Joyce Annear and Jean Hebden, and in 1997 the garden got underway, thanks to the energy and hard work of many other individuals in the community. The town donated dirt, and leaf mold from the dump... A measure of the Garden's success is its expansion into a new garden space on the corner of Third and L, in a lot that formerly housed an unused garage.

150 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on May 28, 1873: News from the Turners Falls Reporter's archive.

Local Matters

A house for sale. Apply at this office.

Mosquito hawks have come to this rich feeding ground.

The Cutlery is running on full time at last.

R.M. Starbuck is making ready to build a large workshop, to form an L to the large block he contemplates erecting on Avenue A, between Third and Fourth streets.

They are extending the Turners Falls aqueduct to the Keith block.

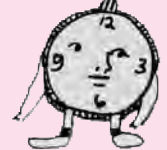
Mr. Thomas Burnham of Montague City fell from a scaffold on the Old Cutlery Building in Greenfield, a few days ago, and was pretty severely hurt in the chest and back. Dr. E.C. Coy was called and

the patient is doing well.

Look out for the foot ball! Would it not be better for our young men and boys to choose some other place to kick foot ball, than the public street. Ladies are prevented from entering the post office, horses are frightened, and it is a nuisance generally. It is a healthful game, but why not go to the fields with it, young gentlemen?

State constable Henry F. Hutchinson searched, last week, Wm. G. Johnson's premises at Riverside, and found nothing; George Thornley's, Greenfield, and seized a barrel of ale; Ct. River Railroad Restaurant, and seized a barrel of beer. Other parties in Greenfield and Turners Falls ordered their ale returned to the persons from whom it was purchased, rather than have it seized.

A band of Gipseys are in the vicinity.



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GILL from page A1

too much money, it's a non-starter."

Negotiation NDAs

Ward said he wanted to "bring to light" more information about the negotiation process. Last week, the town of Montague signed onto the recreational agreement, which was endorsed by a number of rafting and tourism companies as well as state and federal wildlife agencies.

Ward said he felt he could come forward with his experience because he refused to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) at the beginning of the process.

"I said, 'I am an elected municipal official. I'm subject to the open meeting law. I have to be able to answer questions to my constituents,'" he told his successors at Monday's meeting. "I have to be able to discuss anything that we do as a board with the other members of my board, and I cannot do that in private – I need to do it in an open meeting."

When the company told him he would not be allowed to participate without signing an NDA, Ward said, he responded: "What are the optics of that? If FirstLight is to say Gill is not allowed to sit at the table and discuss any of the things that are pertinent to Gill, because there's a potential that what we say at this meeting will get out?"

Ward said he was allowed to participate in the negotiations, but asked to "play nice please, don't talk out of school."

"And I have not," he concluded. "Until I'm sitting at an open meeting, right now, telling you how those negotiations went."

"I would want to check with [legal] counsel before talking any more openly about negotiations," cautioned town administrator Ray Purington.

Obedience Clause?

Ward pointed to an editorial by environmental journalist Karl Meyer in the May 21 edition of the *Greenfield Recorder* criticizing what Meyer calls an "obedience clause" in the recreation settlement. The clause requires all signatories to provide written "support of any administrative approval process that may be required for implementation of this Settlement Agreement or related articles of the New Project Licenses" when FirstLight requests it.

"If I read that right," said Ward, "even signing the recreation agreement holds the town to something that I don't think the town should be

held to, where we could be required to write something at FirstLight's request that looks favorable to them to FERC. We're not lobbyists."

Ward said it looked like lobbying "when a municipality is asked to report favorably to a federal agency on behalf of a profit-making corporation."

"It just doesn't feel right," agreed selectboard chair Randy Crochier. "They might come up with something 15 months from now, 20 years from now – I don't know, pick a date somewhere between now and 50 years – that they're asking us to commit to supporting, without knowing what it could be."

Purington suggested the town could consult with lawyers about the meaning of the clause.

When asked about the deadline for signing the agreement, he noted that it is "already past any kind of FERC deadline" for the settlement track, adding that the deadline to relicense the dam was already passed five years ago.

"The Deck is Stacked"

The selectboard members all expressed a sense of powerlessness in the relicensing process. "It's like 'negotiating' with your parents when you're four years old," said member Charles Garbiel.

Selectboard member Greg Snedeker repeated his disapproval of the requested 50-year length of licenses. "We may not have a choice," he said, "but that doesn't make it right."

Purington said that if Gill doesn't sign the recreation agreement, it might not be eligible to participate in a recreation committee. Crochier said this was illustrative of the entire process. "Thou shalt sign this, or you don't get a voice anymore," he said. "What the hell happened to democracy? Why are we being run by a corporation?"

"The deck is stacked," agreed Ward. "And it's been stacked right from the beginning. One of the biggest reasons that the deck is stacked is because they are still able to operate under their existing old license." He said FirstLight benefits when the process drags on, because they don't have to make any improvements until the new licenses come into force, while towns are forced to compromise for the sake of tiny improvements.

"It would change the tone and tenor of negotiations entirely if they weren't allowed to operate under their old license," said Ward.

"I don't think us signing or not

signing makes a hill of beans of difference with FERC," concluded Crochier. "But it makes a hill of beans of difference to me." He said he imagined residents of Gill 50 years in the future looking at the contract. "God damn I don't want my name on that, the way it is now."

The board took no vote on the matter.

Other Business

"The time of year has come for the election of a chair and clerk for our selectboard," said Garbiel, who served as the selectboard's chair for the last year. Keeping with their traditional rotation, the group named Crochier as chair and Snedeker, who ran unopposed for reelection last week, as clerk.

All appointed representatives to various committees and boards will remain the same, except that Garbiel is the new representative to the Franklin Regional Planning Board, with Ward as an alternate.

The selectboard reviewed and signed the warrant of articles for the town meeting. The annual town meeting will take place June 12, at 7 p.m., at the town hall. The articles for the warrant can be found on the town website, gillmass.org.

Purington expressed hope the town hall flooring abatement and restoration project would be done within the next few weeks, allowing public meetings to return to town hall soon.

A new state law requires motorists to give "vulnerable road users" such as pedestrians and cyclists four feet of space when passing. The town of Gill is applying for a MassDOT grant for signs stating "motorists give four feet to pass." The town would provide the signs-post and install them.

Purington said the signs would be placed at every road that enters Gill, and that the highway department and frequent cyclists would be consulted to determine where others should go.

"Being that we're in Gill, could they also put a picture of a horse on there, too?" asked Garbiel.

The board approved the purchase of an intake valve replacement at \$2,197 for the fire department's older fire engine. "When the new truck arrives, it will eventually be switched over to that one," said Purington.

Matthew McCarthy was appointed as a firefighter through June 30, contingent upon the results of a recent medical evaluation.



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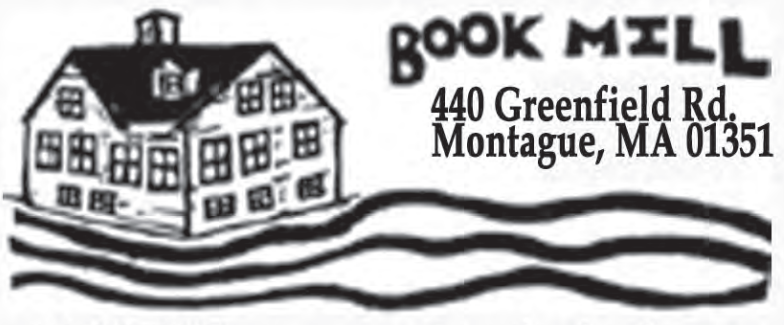
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GMRSD from page A1

superintendent Brian Beck. At last month's annual town meeting in Montague, Beck said, he and business manager Joanne Blier had noticed people voting on whether to increase stipends for certain town elected officials. Afterward, they contacted the town administrators of Gill and Montague, and are "beginning a process to explore the idea of providing similar types of stipends to members of the school committee in the future."

"Thank you for that information," Oakes responded.

The school committee, which has been meeting via Zoom for over three years, has been challenged to retain members, particularly from Montague, and this spring all three new members – Janice Katsoulis, Wendy Thompson, and John Reynolds – were elected by write-in votes.

Tuesday's meeting was the first since the election, and the committee had a chance to reorganize itself for the new year. Reynolds, Nick Licata of Montague, and Cristina Marcalow of Gill were absent.

Jane Oakes, a Gill member who has served as school committee chair

since May 22, 2018, was the sole nominee for the position, and won it unanimously. Bill Tomb remained vice chair, Heather Katsoulis remained assistant treasurer, and John Irminger remained secretary.

Subcommittee assignments were similarly uneventful. Montague is missing a school committee representative to the Six Town Regional Planning Board. Tomb said that body, which is studying the feasibility of combining the Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley districts, is meeting on May 30 and June 7 in case any members wish to check it out.

A number of members of the Gill-Montague Education Association (GMEA) attended the Zoom meeting, and union co-president Heidi Schmidt read a statement during public comment session (*see letter, Page A2*) urging the committee to increase teacher wages, a sticking point in ongoing contract negotiations and a factor the union says is driving teacher attrition.

"We'd love to have the school committee come to the school again, now that it's a little safer," Schmidt added pointedly.

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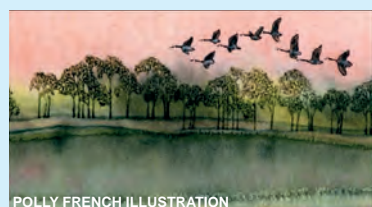


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MAY 25, 2023



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

THE BIRDS I USED TO SEE

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – On *May 11*, the yard and woods are full of birdsong, though some migrant voices are missing. I myself have reached the high point of my migration across the twenty feet of backyard deck, my balcony seat opening out onto the theater of the world out of doors.

Let me explain. Winter has me ensconced in the woodshed at the end of the deck, open to the east, facing the early sun of December through April. The wood is stacked behind my Adirondack chair, where we can get at it anytime day or night. From the woodshed I count the growing length of days by noting the eastward progress of the morning sun peering through the trunks of sentinel white pines on the ridge towering over our valley.

Spring finds me migrating out of the sheltering woodshed to the midpoint of the deck where I can aim my chair and vantage point straight to the south. And now in May, my final remove involves setting up my summer office at the eastern end of the deck in the growing shade of the cherry tree. In this part of May, the sun throws a lacy shadow pattern across the pages of my notebook, as I sit taking notes, as secretary to the spring.

Just overhead, a Carolina wren cuts loose with a loud *teakettle*, *teakettle* call, a persistent, musical, and ear-piercing song. This wren species, never present in my

earliest birding days in the late '50s, is now a common busybody bustling and fussing all over the neighborhood, oftentimes the first singer of spring. This wren even beats the February piping of the song sparrow.

Soon the house wren will join his cousin in setting up a household. I'm trying to interest either cousin into nesting in an old fishing creel of my grandfather's. I found the woven-rush creel lingering useless last fall in a dark corner of the dirt floor cellar.

I stuck the creel on its side in one of the woodshed's rafters for the wren to find. The Carolina nests in various nooks and crannies of sheds and garages. Let's see if wren likes the retired heirloom, in which many is the trout that has lain on a bed of ferns.

Both trout and ferns would have been harvested up on Four-Mile Brook before reaching the cast-iron spider here in grandmother's kitchen. (The Old Folks always called the ancient frying pan their "spider." Too bad the ancient term is being lost! I'll keep it going a little longer just by mentioning it here.)

It seems I'm always writing, writing, especially in the aftermath of some weather event like a snowstorm, an ice storm or the recent welcome downpour of *May 20*. The rain started on late Saturday afternoon and sent rivers of rainwater running down our street to the real river that flows by here every day.

see WEST ALONG page B3



LOUISAGASSIZ/FUERIES ILLUSTRATION

Blackburnian warbler (*Setophaga fusca*).

Above: Blooms now on L Street.

MUSIC

Antenna Cloud Farm Readies Sixth Season

By NATHAN FRONTIERO

GILL – Perched on the hilltop site of a 100-acre former dairy farm, Antenna Cloud Farm will unfurl its sixth season of music, artist residencies, and community building this summer.

Mainstage performances run throughout July, bringing folk, classical, and new music to the farm's sweeping green space, with room to accommodate a couple hundred people. An indoor venue on the grounds with room for around 60 people will play host to more intimate performances.

The season kicks off July 1 with the Antenna Cloud Farm Music Walk in Turners Falls, a one-day special event with jazz, world music, and more at Unity Park, Great Falls Discovery Center, Spinner Park, and Peskeomskut Park. In August, ACF will hold partner events with the 10th Annual Pocumtuck Homelands Festival at Unity Park and Stone Soup Café in downtown Greenfield.

For artistic director Michi Wiancko, an accomplished composer and violinist, ACF isn't close to home – it is home. The outdoor festival grounds belong to her and her husband, fellow composer Judd Greenstein, and the indoor concert and residency spaces are parts of their house and property's cottage.



CALLUM DUNN PHOTO

Antenna Cloud Farm will bring music to 100 acres of sweeping hilltop green space in Gill this summer.

The summer event, which also includes a tuition-free experimental music institute, began from "a vision of creating a musical hub in Franklin County," Wiancko says. "This is like my side project gone berserk.... Every year, I feel like I'm honing in on my vision and I'm able to steer the beast a bit more in that direction."

Wiancko is originally from California and spent most of her adult life in Brooklyn. The transition to western Massachusetts allowed her to stay "within striking distance" of the city, and offered an

aura of potential. "We didn't move to this area for any specific job," she says, "or any specific teaching position or institutional reason. There was a certain feeling about Franklin County that felt special and warm, and felt full of possibility – a place where growth and building something from scratch seems viable."

Creating Community

Antenna Cloud Farm is rooted in an intention to use music "as a see ANTENNA page B4

High School Sports: Dedication Time

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – This week the Franklin Tech and Turners Falls softball teams advanced in the Pioneer Valley Western Mass tournament, but the baseball teams fared a little worse. The co-op tennis teams also faced their last match of the season, and the softball field at Turners Falls was christened with a familiar name.

Last Friday, May 19, hundreds of alumni, fans, and former players witnessed the varsity softball field's dedication to Charles Gehringer "Gary" Mullins. According to athletic director Adam Graves, the school committee had to amend a rule because Coach Mullins is still alive and winning. Prior to this, sports complexes at the school could only be named posthumously.

Three former players spoke during the presentation. Although they mentioned "Mr. M.'s" sports influence, they spoke more about the life lessons they learned during their tenure at Turners Falls High, and the influence Coach Mullins had on them as young ladies.

Mullins, who has won 10 state championships, 22 Western Mass titles, and more than 700 games, humbly accepted the praise, but spread the credit to his fellow coaches and especially the players.

Good for you Mr. M! You've made us all proud.

Tennis

TFHS 4 – Chicopee 1; Chicopee 3 – TFHS 2

The Turners/Tech co-op tennis teams kicked off the post-season at 4 p.m. Monday with a dual consolation see SPORTS page B4



DAVID HOIT PHOTO

Holly Hicks, Thunder tennis player and Franklin Tech senior, follows through on her return shot during her doubles match against Renaissance School at Turners Falls High School on Senior Day, May 16. Turners defeated the Renaissance School 4-1 and finished their season with an additional 4-1 win over Chicopee High School on Monday.

Pet of the Week



“BENJI”

Are you looking for a loyal and loving companion to brighten up your days? Look no further, because Benji, a delightful 10-year-old Shih Tzu, is eagerly awaiting his forever home. With his endearing personality and heartwarming presence, Benji is sure to bring joy and happiness.

Described by his previous owners as smart, affectionate, and friendly, Benji is a pup who thrives

on love and attention. Nothing makes him happier than playing with his people and being showered with affection.

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.



Your Phone's Accessibility Features: Not Just for Disabilities

By RYNE HAGER

TURNERS FALLS – The phone in your pocket has evolved beyond any resemblance to Alexander Graham Bell's original invention. The name isn't even accurate to its primary functions, for many (if not most) of the people that own one. It's a pocket-sized, super-powerful computer that links you with every bit of data the world has to offer, paired with its own set of Swiss-army-like features like media playback, photo and video capture, mapping, and communication – much more than just a *phone*. And nestled among those feature lists for many models are plenty of accessibility features that even those without disabilities can find useful.

For example, though I'm not hard of hearing myself, I often watch video content with subtitles enabled. This is primarily because I like to watch movies at night at a low volume – trends in cinema over recent years have frustratingly encouraged deafening range if you want to be able to understand dialogue. But subtitles for some types of content aren't always available.

If you watch from a recent-model phone, odds are that it can transcribe voice in real time for on-demand subtitles. Names might vary, but on most Android phones this feature is called “Live Caption” and it goes by the near-identical “Live Captions” name on iPhones. In either case, the feature lives in your Accessibility section of the Settings menu, and it may offer options to limit it to certain apps or media sources, but the functionality is about the same: on-device AI language models are able to listen to audio as it is played back, detect sources of dialogue, and transcribe

them into written word that can be overlaid on the current content – instant subtitles, in other words.

If you're watching a video from a source that doesn't offer subtitles, in a video or phone call, or when playing back your own recordings, it can be pretty handy.

If you wish you could extend that same functionality outside the confines of your phone to the world around you, you can. Live Captions on iPhone both supports on-device audio sources and can pull from your microphone. On Android devices this functionality is usually broken out into a separate feature called Live Transcribe. In either case, your phone can transcribe words spoken around you into text you can read.

Google Pixels further offer real-time translation capability on top of that, and other Android devices and iPhones support slower, but still functional, translation systems.

The accessibility tools available extend far beyond just transcribing audio. Google's Lookout app can use computer vision models and your phone's camera to read real-world text for you, such as food labels, mail, currency, and documents, and can describe what is in an image or the world around you – no glasses necessary. Similar third-party apps are available on iPhones.

You can even combine built-in features for camera-based text recognition and text-to-speech for related functionality, though Apple plans on rolling out a similar “Point and Speak” feature later this year. Relatedly, Apple is also working on a new feature that will let your phone create a voice model that sounds like you for text-to-voice speech in audio and video calls. (Google Pixels has a similar feature as part of Live Caption since last year, but it doesn't use

your own voice.)

Pretty much all phones also offer voice controls, allowing you to do everything from launch apps, navigate menus, and even “tap” around the screen by voice. It's called “Voice Access” on Android and “Voice Control” on iPhones. This is one spot where Apple is ahead of Google, as I find the company's Voice Control system much easier to use. (On the other hand, Google Assistant is years ahead of Siri in terms of functionality, which can also have an impact on voice controls, and Google's Pixel-exclusive real-time voice typing is the very best.)

I've barely scratched the surface of the accessibility-related features available to you on your smartphone, and I strongly encourage you to dig through the menus to see what sort of options are available. Technology's biggest benefit is how much easier it can make our lives, and tools like these can make a big difference in usability.

Whether you are disabled or not, these tweaks can ease the frustrations of poking at a tiny screen. And, whatever you think of the dangers of AI, many of these features only work thanks to machine learning, voice and image recognition systems, and large language models. With AI at the current forefront of computing, expect to see a huge proliferation in accessibility features in the coming years that make your phone – and other devices – even easier to use as we slowly realize the dream of ambient computing.

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

Senior Center Activities MAY 29 TO JUNE 2

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.

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 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 5/29

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

Tuesday 5/30

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

Wednesday 5/31

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

Thursday 6/1

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

Friday 6/2

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

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. For more information please call 863-9357.

Monday 5/29

Closed for Memorial Day

Tuesday 5/30

9:30 a.m. Tuesday Morning
Knitters

1 p.m. CPR Class

3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 5/31

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
4:15 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 6/1

9 a.m. Chair Yoga
10:30 a.m. Brown Bag
1 p.m. Cards & Games

Friday 6/2

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
2 p.m. By the Seat of Your Dance
3:30 p.m. Mindfulness Meditation

TV REVIEW

Amazon Prime's Citadel

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – It seems these days quite a few TV shows are only available online for people to see. Amazon Prime has a spy TV show called *Citadel*. I am not what you would call a fan of these types of shows and movies, but I can see that people like them because of the mystery involved in the storyline. You know, “stay tuned to see what happens next with this.”

I know of Priyanka Chopra's work. For some time, she was on a show on ABC called *Quantico*, involving the FBI and its agents. So this is not exactly her first time doing this type of show as an actor; I believe *Quantico* was more or less like *Citadel*.

In *Citadel*, Chopra's character is named Nadia Sinh, and her partner is called Mason Kane, played by Richard Madden. They are at a spy agency called Citadel. There is an explosion, and then we see an associate sometime later try and get these two back together to stop a threat called Manticore.

From the first episode, it is made to seem that Nadia and Mason lose their memory on their mission due to the explosion, but it is shown later that is not what

caused that. Also, the first episode has people thinking Kane is the only one from Citadel still standing, but a flashback shows that is not what has happened.

I won't say who ends up getting their memory back after the second episode, but we are treated to seeing how things are between these two once one remembers everything and one doesn't. (Despite this, that individual is still very able to be a very good spy.) The associate I mentioned, who went about trying to fetch them, will still be around; he has learned from the enemy who betrayed Citadel.

That seems like a good part of the mystery that comes with these types of shows. Both of these actors seem to perform in this show well physically. In the preview for this season, they appear to be doing their own stunts.

I wonder how these new dynamics I mentioned will work, or not work, as the storyline goes on. I know that with this type of spy show we can always expect some twists and turns. That is something to expect with a spy show. You can find out what those are on Amazon Prime, which will have a new episode up each week.

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WEST ALONG from page B1

That rain hit the parched earth and hot asphalt. It ran down the rooftops, the gulleys and gutters, soaking everything including the mountains of rhododendrons at the edge of the garden. The poor bushes had their tongues hanging out for want of rain.

And now, this Sunday morning after Saturday's rain, all is a vibrant green, and once again I can report that the sun-shot cherry leaves are throwing their shadows down upon my notebook page and steaming cup of coffee. All is back to being right again and fresh. The local wood thrush sings from deep in the dripping woods, challenging even the mythical nightingale with his virtuoso New World arias.

The catbird, up since 4 a.m., continues his ceaseless squeaking mimicry; the rosebreast warbles his thoughtful and modest song, as if singing to himself.

But it's not the wood thrush, the rosebreast, the catbird, or even the oriole that I'm lamenting. They're here, and make their presence felt.

It's the birds I don't see anymore. That's the problem with growing up and growing old. The things you fondly remember are often just that: memories of some golden time when things were different than they are now.

What I miss most, in this month of May, in these modern times, is the wave of woodland warblers. Here in New England, we were favored in times past by a myriad of diminutive, fly-by-night birds of paradise, flashing, bejeweled and ephemeral. May's waves of wood warblers were legendary.

If they came through this year, I must have missed them, as I have in several recent and past springtimes. Where are those warblers? Where

are the cerulean, the bay-breasted, the Cape May, the Blackburnian, the magnolia, the black-throated green, the Wilson's, the parula?

For sure, there are the resident redstarts, yellowthroats, and yellow warblers, maybe a chestnut-sided here and there. But many of the jewels of our New England woodlands and hedges have avoided me, for years now. Maybe it's just me?

Maybe it's the erratic nature of the seasons upon us, maybe the warbler waves have been backed up on the flyway at Chesapeake Bay, low atmospheric pressure keeping them in place until the stationary front breaks and the rush north is on? Maybe they just stream through this place and don't linger here?

And yet even the skies seem empty. The dozens upon dozens of the swallow clan – the bank and barn swallows, the cliff and tree swallows – have not yet swarmed over the flowing river's surface in May migration, hunting the ephemeral May flies, the early mosquitoes. Chimney swifts still streak and swirl over the rooftops of the village of Millers Falls, but the nighthawks have forsaken us for years.

I'm still waiting for the spring's first green heron, the bittern, the lovely solitary sandpiper.

I'd better not be disappointed. Let's hope they're out there somewhere, maybe in some parallel dimension, some alternate reality, some other woodland just over the horizon to the north.

Maybe it's worse than we think: there's lots of just plain bad weather, a changing climate; there's habitat loss, the avian flu, the loss of insects, the loss of biodiversity.

And then again, maybe it's just me. But I do miss the birds I used to see.



assemblage by Tom Swetland. Reception on Saturday, June 3, 3 to 6 p.m. Through June.

Leverett Library: *Anne White*. Paintings and more. Through June.

Wendell Library: *Watercolor Landscapes*. New paintings by Christine Teixeira. Through June 30.

Montague Center Library: *Mt. Toby Paintings*, by Kate Spencer. Through July 14, with a reception on June 5 from 5 to 7 p.m.

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

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *Seeing Things in a New Light*, art and craft by member artists. Through May.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *Regional Photography Show* by New England photographers. Through July 2. Reception this Thursday, May 25 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Jewish Community of Amherst: *The Art of Collage*, mixed-media collage by Micha Archer. Through July 28.

Burnett Gallery, Jones Library, Amherst: *Watercolors by Nancy Emond*. June 1 through June 30. Reception on June 18, 3 to 4:30 p.m.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Roots*, abstract paintings by Tom Morton. Through May 27.

Club George, Northampton: *Spirit Hall*, soft sculpture cre-

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

AirTag Aids Recovery of Stolen Bikes; Butt Dial; Borrowed Nozzle; Cocaine Deer; Camaro Burnouts

Monday, 5/15

7:43 a.m. Caller from New Street states that while she was walking her dog on leash, a loose dog from Grand Avenue came charging at her dog and attacked it. A teenager from the house where the dog lives came out and pulled the dog off of her dog and brought it inside. Animal control officer notified and responding.

9:54 a.m. Employee from Ja'Duke reports that a purse was stolen from a vehicle there this morning; they have video footage of the incident. Report taken.

8:05 p.m. Caller states that a late-model orange Camaro is driving around town going 70 to 80 mph, and is concerned that the driver is going to hit someone. Referred to an officer.

Tuesday, 5/16

4:58 p.m. 911 caller reporting two-vehicle accident at Old Northfield and Lake Pleasant Roads. Female party is injured; fluid on the ground. Call conference with Shelburne Control. Officer advises two ambulances needed, and tow needed for both vehicles.

9:10 p.m. Caller states that vehicles have been driving through the Bridge Street area at high speed over the last hour. Officer advises light traffic, no speeding, no events in area.

10:54 p.m. Caller states that a male is actively breaking into a car across Third Street from her house. Officers out on foot. Suspect reported to have gone up the hill between Third and Fourth Streets. Report taken.

11:21 p.m. 911 caller from Bridge Street states that his cat is stuck in his wall. Info given to Shelburne Control.

Wednesday, 5/17

8:18 a.m. Caller came to department to make a report as his car was broken into on Third Street last night.

8:46 a.m. Caller states his garage on Third Street was broken into last night and items were stolen. Officer advises a bicycle was stolen and it has an AirTag in it. Actively pinging in the area of the bike path/Power Street bridge. Second male party calling in stating his e-bicycle was stolen out of the garage as well. Officer advises all units on foot

searching G Street area. Both bikes recovered.

9:18 a.m. Caller states that this morning he witnessed a 1940s yellow truck with black fenders stop on the side of Walnut Street and take an assessor's sign from someone's lawn. Wants on record.

11:26 a.m. Party into station to make a complaint about people drag racing every night from 5 p.m. to midnight or 2 a.m. in the area of Bridge Street, East Main Street, and West Main Street. States sometimes it's people leaving the pub and other times it's people passing by, but it's happening every day, and on several occasions people have almost been hit or accidents have almost occurred. Would like area monitored.

1:39 p.m. Caller reporting a shoplifting incident that just occurred at Connecticut River Liquor and Wine; female party with pink/purple hair took a bottle of Svedka vodka. Caller states she has incident on video. Caller called back advising suspect is on Avenue A right now near the Shea. Investigated.

1:55 p.m. Caller reporting two-car accident near Scotty's; states both parties are out of their vehicles. Tow requested. Officer following operator of one vehicle home; needs to speak with her husband. Investigated.

4:40 p.m. 911 caller states that he "butt-dialed" by accident; no emergency. He is at Franklin County Technical School for senior night.

Thursday, 5/18

1:09 a.m. 911 caller requesting ambulance for a customer who came into Nouria with facial injuries; customer states he was kicked in the eye. Officer states customer matches description of male who was breaking into vehicles last night. Male states he was kicked in the face by someone who accused him of breaking into cars last night. Services rendered.

12:20 p.m. Neighbor on N Street reporting that two small dogs are coming out of a window and walking around on a small rooftop area. Caller concerned for their safety. ACO notified.

7:35 p.m. Caller from Highland School Apartments states that a male party is

parked out back and has a metal detector; he is going around to people's cars, and he is also digging holes. Officer made contact with male party; he is looking for and picking up nails in the area. Caller called back stating she doesn't agree with the officer telling the male it is OK to do that, as it is not public property. She feels very violated that the PD would allow a stranger to be walking around the building with a metal detector.

7:47 p.m. 911 caller states he had a little run-in with people in a vehicle; kind of a road rage incident where a male in the car was making gun gestures at him out the window. Vehicle parked at Sheffield Elementary School at this time. Officer advises vehicle gone on arrival; looks like there was a baseball game going on that is now over.

8:50 p.m. 911 caller from Chestnut Street reports she can hear people screaming over and over again saying "No" and "Oh my God." Caller not sure where screams are coming from. Officer spoke to caller and another couple who stated that it sounded like it was coming from Maple Street. Officer located parties; grandmother and granddaughter; granddaughter was upset.

Friday, 5/19

8:52 a.m. Caller from High Street reporting a silver Mazda parked in the area with a gas nozzle from a gas pump hanging out of it. Contact made with owner/operator. He admitted to pumping gas last night at Nouria. Officer checked Nouria, and they have a pump handle missing. Report taken.

12:51 p.m. Officer came upon a two-car accident that had just occurred at Avenue A and Second Street. Airbag deployment; fluids in road. Rau's requested to tow both vehicles. No injuries reported. Report taken.

4:34 p.m. Caller from N Street states that her neighbor is not supposed to have any dogs and she has two new pitbull mixes. Information passed to ACO.

6:28 p.m. Caller states that his neighbor on Turners Falls Road leaves his house around 10 a.m. to go to the package store and comes back and drinks all day, then leaves again around 3 to 3:30 p.m. with an open container. Caller concerned about kids and cyclists on the road with him driving; requesting officer to keep eye out around those times.

6:54 p.m. Caller states that a male is playing with himself in front of kids in the Fifth Street alley. Older male with white hair, khaki pants, and a light blue plaid shirt. Officer spoke

to caller; suspect may have taken off towards Fifth Street near the Survival Center. Unable to locate.

7:46 p.m. Caller from Taylor Hill Road reports that a dog, described as a massive, light and dark brown Boxer mix, was loose near Taylor Heights and she had to throw rocks at it to get it to go away. Units unable to locate dog.

11:16 p.m. Caller from Eagle Creek Renewable Energy reports that their building has been getting broken into recently and advises that someone is in the building now. Units checked building; unable to locate anyone inside. Unsecured basement door was found and resecured. No further issues.

Saturday, 5/20

3:25 a.m. Caller from East Main Street advises that two vehicles are going up and down Main Street at a high rate of speed. One of the vehicles is an orange Camaro. Referred to an officer.

9 a.m. 911 caller states that a deer ran into the side of her car while they were driving on Third Street and did some damage. Other callers report the deer on Avenue A running into the road and headbutting buildings and windows. Deer headed up Seventh and L Streets. Officers will be on lookout.

6:44 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street reports that a green sedan is blocking in other cars, including hers, and she needs to get out to go to the store and get her child's medication. Officer clear; vehicle has been moved.

7:46 p.m. Officer requesting DPW bring barricades to shut down Walnut Street at Turnpike Road; states the center point of Montague City Road is completely flooded.

9:20 p.m. Officer flagged down by someone advising of an unoccupied vehicle parked in one of the lanes at Greenfield Savings Bank. Dispatch spoke with registered owner, who stated that the car is disabled and she will get it out tomorrow due to the pouring rain tonight.

Sunday, 5/21

2:56 a.m. Multiple 911 and business line calls advising of an orange Camaro or Charger that goes through the center of Millers Falls and Montague loudly and does burnouts. Callers state it seems the vehicle sometimes does a few loops through town before leaving. Officer in area unable to locate vehicle. Multiple additional calls reporting vehicle back in area. One caller provided a plate number that matches an orange Camaro; states he has seen vehicle parked in front of the pub. Units advised.

ations by Jacqueline Strauss aka Jezaclear. Through June 10.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: *tender fortress*, an installation by Jae Southerland inviting viewers to explore dreams and memories within a fortress of tulle. May 28, 29, and 31 from 2 to 5 p.m. Special "dark mode" viewing Tuesday, May 30, from 7:30 to 9 p.m.

Anchor House of Artists, Northampton: *Larry Slezak*, new work in sculpture and paintings. *Andrew Magee*, large oil pastels. Through May.

Gallery in the Woods, Brattleboro: *William H. Hays*, reduction woodcut and linocut prints. Through June. Reception during Art Walk next Friday, June 2, from 5 to 8 p.m.

EXHIBITS

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Visions of the Connecticut River Valley*, work from regional artists featuring the nature of the river. Through June 30.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Crapo Tarot*. Tarot cards designed by Trish Crapo. Reception with three-card readings on Sunday, June 11 from 3 to 5 p.m.

Barnes Gallery, Leverett Crafts and Arts: *Engaging Nature*, over 140 pieces by the Amherst Plain Air Society. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Kestrel Land Trust. Through May.

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

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: *Mike and Ike's*, work by Kyle Compton-Burch, Timothy Glover, Aubree Guilbault, and August Etzel. Through June 2.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *What I Took With Me*, work by Nina Nabizadeh, Cima Khademi, Yasamin Zamanieh, and Leila Rahnama. Through May 31.

TELOS Gallery, Greenfield: *Anja Schütz and Paul Teeling*, fine art photography.

170 Main Street, Greenfield: *Peter Monroe*, fine art photography. Make an appointment to view the exhibit by emailing estherwasmydog@yahoo.com. Through July.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *The Sky is Falling*, mixed media and

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ANTENNA from page B1

catalyst for societal change and community resilience,” as described on the festival’s website. Wiancko explains how the lineup reflects that intention.

“It’s my biggest passion to support other artists who are using their practice and their talents to actually make the world a bit of a better place,” she says.

For royal hartigan, drummer and bandleader of jazz quartet blood drum spirit, which will perform in the July 1 Music Walk, ACF is “a physical space, a psychological space, and an artistic space where people can get together and explore untraditional ideas.” In their music, blood drum spirit fuses jazz with Asian, South Asian, and West African influences. The band’s goal, hartigan says, is “to create a space where people can see and realize their humanity and get to a higher consciousness.”

He links that intention of building connection to the festival’s ethos, characterizing ACF as the “antithesis and an immunization against profit-driven mainstream pop, or whatever you want to call the artistic festival stages with helicopters and fog machines. [Wiancko is] focusing on the essence of creativity, the humanity of it, and doing it with an egalitarian approach. Close to the people. This is exactly what we’re about.”

In her teaching experience, Wiancko says she frequently encountered questions from students she felt “institutions are not set up to answer.” These included how to establish a music career in the 21st century, how to have a holistic life in music, and how to consider one’s wellness or mental health alongside creation and performance.

“What is a way of being in the industry that is more community-minded, and less based on competitive structures?” Wiancko reflects. “How do we make art in a way that supports each other and supports the community, and that is mindful about the kind of healing society needs and the kind of healing live performance and music can bring to our communities? I believe we’re in service of the communities we live in and play for.”

Inspiring Audiences

While their specific approaches may differ, the artists on the bill for Antenna Cloud Farm this season are unified in their aim to deliver transporting experiences.

Maeve Gilchrist, a Brooklyn-based harper and composer participating in this year’s ACF artist residency, will be working on new material to share with audiences. Gilchrist was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, and her background includes traditional Irish and Scottish music. She traveled to the United States to study jazz and improvisation at Berklee, steeping in the breadth and diversity of Boston and New York’s music scenes. She and Wiancko are both members of the Silkroad Ensemble.

Gilchrist uses her instrument – the Celtic lever harp – to explore a variety of genres, from orchestral or folk settings to electronics.

“The beautiful thing about composing is you can curate the influences however you like,” she says.

Gilchrist will join ACF with guitarist and frequent collaborator Kyle Sanna, who is adept at both contemporary improvisation and traditional Irish backing style. “He can speak to both sides of my musicality,” Gilchrist says.

Gilchrist also addresses the physicality of the instrument and the connections therein.

“I enjoy the proximity that I have with my body when I’m playing the harp,” she says. “There is no doubt a connection between the vibrations that are made and that I’m feeling. I’m pregnant right now, and I think a lot about it because I’ve been touring so much this spring and I think, ‘Gosh, this baby has heard a lot of music’ – and not just heard a lot of music, but *felt* a lot of music, because it’s right there by the soundboard.”

Lasting Resonances

Steph Davis, who recently graduated from Boston Conservatory with a master’s in music and marimba performance, says that they are “centering Black dignity” in their musical practice.

“When you come to my performance



SUBMITTED PHOTO

ACF blends musical performances, artist residencies, and educational and community events throughout Franklin County.

you’re going to hear Black music,” they explain. “Black people in the audience are going to be able to come to a performance and see themselves sonically represented in the music that I offer. The practice centers Africanity, and acknowledges and celebrates that the marimba is an African instrument – it’s always surprising when people don’t know that.”

Davis, who will perform twice at ACF’s indoor space on July 29, says they eagerly anticipate playing a venue in which “a hierarchy between performer and audience is dispelled.”

“I hope that there’s something about the stripped-back feeling of the absolute space,” they say. “You’re just listening to, essentially, wood and resonators in a space, and what emotion that can bring to an intimate space is what I’m hoping to explore.”

This closeness between the musicians and listeners also has cultural resonances. “I’m thinking about a lot of West African musical traditions, where music is a communal activity, where the distinction between performer and audience is not clear,” they say. “In many western classical cases, and many popular music cases, that’s not the case.”

Davis’s creative work is supported by in-depth cultural research. They refer to the ACF Experimental Institute, which they attended in 2022, as “a laboratory model of ‘What does musical excellence look like?’ and really exploring that question within the context of decolonization of curriculum and practice and liberation.”

One thing they have experimented with is whether to explicitly name the political context of their performances or leave space for interpretation. “That sometimes results in moments where the audience teaches me,” they say. “Sometimes the narrative gets expanded.”

“Antenna Cloud Farm does a beautiful job of this idea of small parts being integral to the whole,” Davis says, reflecting on the festival’s overall approach. “Everything they do, from the programming to the food to the larger festival. It all starts with liberation and it seeps out. It creates a pattern that continues.”

Antenna Cloud Farm runs July 1 to August 26 with events in Turners Falls, Gill, and Greenfield. Tickets are available at antennacloudfarm.com.



SPORTS from page B1

match against the maroon Chicopee Pacers. I didn’t receive the girls’ stats, but Arbiter posted that the Blue Ladies won 4-1.

In the boys’ contest, Mike Boyle and Noah Kolodziej won first and second singles to give Blue a 2-0 edge, but Patrick Andrews (third singles), John Carmichael and Vaughn LaValley (first doubles), and Edward Walsh and Max Briere (second doubles) dropped their matches to give the Pacers a 3-2 win.

Coach Steve Touloumtzis said he is pleased with the progress his squad has made this year, and is happy that for the first time in years he has a full roster. And, with two seventh-graders and a sixth-grader on the team, the future is wide open.



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Softball coach Gary Mullins spread the credit at last Friday’s dedication ceremony.

Softball

FCTS 3 – Drury 2
TFHS 12 – Pioneer 0

Then, at 4:10 p.m., the Class C fourth-ranked Franklin Tech Softball Eagles beat the Blue Devils of Drury 3-2 at Nancy Gifford Field. It took the whole game to notch the win. “But this is what you expect in the playoffs,” coach Joe Gamache told his players after the game.

And what a game! Neither team could cross the plate in the early innings, though both put runners in scoring position. Tech broke the goose egg in the bottom of the third, when Kaitlin Trudeau drew a walk and Lillian Ross batted her home. The Devils reciprocated immediately, tying it up in the top of the fourth

with a triple and a home-plate steal.

Franklin reclaimed the lead in the home fifth on a leadoff homer by Trudeau, and Drury came right back in the sixth with another home plate steal to even it at 2 apiece.

In the seventh, Tech came to bat with the score still tied at 2. The Eagles put runners on base, as they had throughout the game. With the bases loaded and no outs, Kendra Campbell shot a grounder to third. Instead of throwing it home to get the lead runner, the third baseman threw it to first to get Campbell. The run counted, and Franklin Tech advanced in the playoffs.

In the circle, Hannah Gilbert let up four hits, gave three bases on balls, and struck out an amazing 14 batters. At the plate, Trudeau had three hits, scored twice, and hit a home run, while Gilbert had two hits including a double and she scored a run.

The Eagles cross the river on Friday to take on the top-ranked Greenfield Green Wave.

After the game, several of us trekked to Gary Mullins Field to watch the Class D matchup between the Turners Falls Blue Thunder and the Pioneer Black Panthers.

For all intents and purposes, the game was decided in the first inning when Madison Liimatainen scored the first run. Blue added four more in the second off two walks, a Liimatainen double, and a Holly Meyers RBI.

The bats were quiet until the sixth, when Powertown mounted a rally. There was talk on the sidelines about the mercy rule in the playoffs as Turners piled on more runs. According to Graves, the rule was in effect in this round, and when Turners scored their 12th run, the umps sent the players to their respective dugouts and called the game.

Liimatainen threw a six-inning no-hitter, hitting one batter, walking two, and matching Gilbert’s 14 strikeouts. At the plate, she drove in four runs off two doubles and a single.

Meyers also had three hits, with a double and two registered RBIs. Cady Wozniak, Janelle Massey, Madisyn Dietz, and Addison Talbot had base hits for Turners, and Marilyn Abarua and Mia Marigiano both scored runs.

This Thursday, May 25, the Blue Ladies host the Mt. Everett Eagles in the Class D semifinal.

Baseball

Ware 10 – TFHS 3
Easthampton 3 – FCTS 1

While the ladies were hosting softball games, the Turners Falls Baseball Thunder were in Ware, attempting to knock off the third-place Indians. We were getting updates at the softball game: last we heard, Blue was only down 7-3, but Ware would shut Powertown out in the later innings to win it 10-3.

Though eliminated from the playoffs, the Boys in Blue travel to the Berkshires this Thursday to take on Mt. Everett while their softball teams battle it out back home.

On Tuesday, the Franklin Tech Baseball Eagles dropped a non-qualifier game in Easthampton, 3-1. Tech took an early lead in the first inning, but East scored two in the home half of the first, and added an insurance run in the sixth to give them the 3-1 win. Ty Sadoski and Nathaniel Fuess each got hits in the game, with Sadoski scoring the early run.

On Wednesday, the Eagles hosted the Mounties of Mount Greylock; unfortunately, we did not get the result as of press time.



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



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THURSDAY, MAY 25

Energy Park, Greenfield: *Rob Adams, Joe Graveline & Nina Gross, Katie Clarke & Larry LeBlanc*. Free. 6 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Bill Nace, Fujii|||ta*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MAY 26

StrangeCreek, Greenfield: *Bella's Bartok, The Machine, Pink Talking Fish, Adam Ezra Group*, more. \$. 1 p.m. See strange-creekcampout.com for info.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *No Lens*. Free. 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Cajun Two-Step and Country Karaoke Night with Les Taiauts, The Honky-Tonk Angels*. Free. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Brand New Luddites, Slob Drop, Trash Mammals, Dead Street Dreamers*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Hutghi's At The Nook, Westfield: *TM Schneider* (mems. Faust), *Marcia Bassett & Samara Lubelski Duo, Kryssi & Wednesday Duo*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 27

StrangeCreek, Greenfield: *Max Creek, Leon Trout, Start Making*

Sense, Bella's Bartok, more. \$. 9 a.m. See strange-creekcampout.com for info.

Lunder Center, Williamstown: *Samara Lubelski & Marcia Bassett, Wednesday & Kryssi*. Free. 5 p.m.

Hitchcock Brewing, Bernardston: *Rosie Porter & the Neon Moons*. Free. 6 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: *Shadow Twisters*. Free. 7 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *The Samples*. \$. 7 p.m.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Olivia Nied*. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, MAY 28

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Bridget St. John, David Nagler, Stella Kola*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Wishbone Zoe, Brittany Brideau, Frances Chang, Allegra Krieger*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, JUNE 1

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Justin Rowland*. Free. 9 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 2

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Drew Paton*. Free. 6:30 p.m. *AT and the Fantasy Suites, Bry-*

an Gillig, Shea Mowat. Free. 9:30 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene NH: *Winter-pills, Tiger Saw*. \$. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Paper City Picture Show, Douse the Glims, Hoonah*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: *Josh Levangie & Los Pistoleros*. Free. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JUNE 3

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

Unity Park, Turners Falls: *Unity Fest* feat. *Groove Prophet, Sam Mulligan, Dave Richardson*. Free. 2 p.m.

Peskeomskut Park, Turners Falls: *Freestone or Ooze* feat. *Ralph White, Allysen Callery, Low Radio, Frozen Corn, Junk Orbit, Donkey No No, Reticence*, many more. Continues at the Voo. Free. 2 p.m.

Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Rosie Porter & the Neon Moons*. Free. 5 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Baba Commandant and the Mandingo Band, Sunburned Hand of the Man*. \$. 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, JUNE 4

10 Forward, Greenfield: *DJs Do-*

lores, Aoife, Padel, Pinky Promise, outdoors, free, 5:30 p.m.; *pleasure coffin, ex-heir, blaq hammer*, indoors, \$. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Rocco Desgres, Michael Ontkean, Jess Beck*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

MONDAY, JUNE 5

Tree House Brewing, South Deerfield: *Deer Tick, Rafay Rashid*. \$. 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7

Montague Center Library: *Rosie Porter & the Neon Moons*. Free, outdoors. 6 p.m.

THURSDAY, JUNE 8

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Leo Kottke*. \$. 7 p.m.

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

FRIDAY, JUNE 9

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

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Start Making Sense*, Talking Heads tribute. \$. 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Jeanines, Luxor Rentals, OOF*. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Chris Goudreau, Anni Abigail, The Leafies You Gave Me, Aaron Noble & The Clones*. \$. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Liturg, HIRS Collective*. \$. 8 p.m.

looking forward...

SATURDAY, JUNE 10

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

THURSDAY, JUNE 15

Montague Village Store, Montague Center: *Big Destiny*. Free. 5:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Sarah Bernstein & Kid Millions, Gold Dust, Luxor Rentals*. 9 p.m.

FRIDAY, JUNE 16

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

SATURDAY, JUNE 24

Race Street Live, Holyoke: *Jungle Brothers, Edo-G, special guests*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 1

Downtown Turners Falls: Antenna Cloud Farm presents *Music Walk*, feat. *blood drum spirit, Aisha Burns, Lily-Rakia Chandler, Travis LaPlante*, more. Free. 2 p.m.

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: Flywheel presents *Sensor Ghost, Perennial*. \$. 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, JULY 18

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

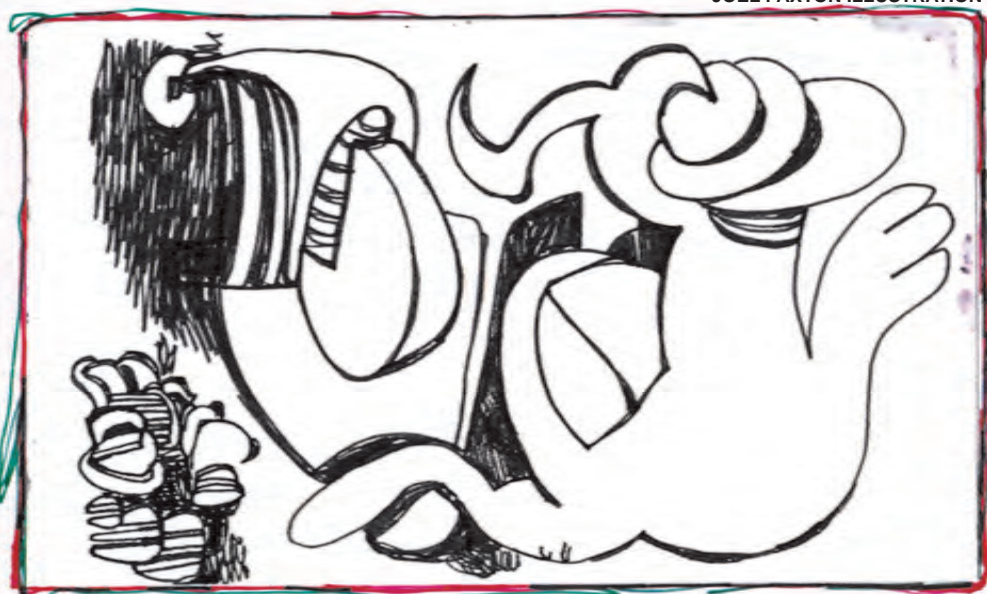
SATURDAY, JULY 22

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Guerilla Toss, Roost.World, Carinae*. \$. 8 p.m.



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MOVIE REVIEW

Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret (2023)

By REBECCA TIPPENS



COLRAIN – Director Kelly Fremon Craig has brought us a charmer of a film in *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* based on Judy Blume's 1970 novel of the same name. It's playing at Greenfield Garden Cinemas and Hadley's Cinemark through at least Wednesday, May 31. It could be leaving those theaters afterwards, and at present there are no streaming options.

This is the coming-of-age story of preteen Margaret Bloom who, just as she is about to enter middle school, is told that her parents will be moving to New Jersey to accommodate her father's new job. Having grown up in New York City, nearly next door to her beloved and quintessential NYC-theater-going Jewish grandmother (played by Kathy Bates), she is devastated.

Arriving in her new suburban manicured-lawn neighborhood, Margaret, played by the delightful Abby Ryder Fortson, is immediately snapped up by Nancy, a girl her age. Nancy invites her to join her secret club, consisting of two other girls, that Nancy "chairs."

Together they share questions, misinformation, and secrets about "developing": underarm and pubic hairs, breasts, and menstruation. Yes, what girl among us did not mull with friends these mysteries in sleepovers

and locked bathroom stalls? But how many have seen this vital concern and process portrayed in film, not to mention portrayed with such kind realism and an evolving consciousness that leads to growth? Mistruths come to be understood, and in-girl friendships are exchanged for ones based on true connection.

Throughout the film, Margaret whispers prayers that are really questions, or hopes, as in "please God, do not let New Jersey be too bad." We also follow Margaret's studied journey to come to a spiritual understanding of her own, separate from that of her parents and her grandmother.

It is lovely that this journey of hers is portrayed as part of her coming of age. Those sexual and religious questions are rarely presented together, though it is likely

that those issues and concerns have overlapped for most of us. Margaret's quest is framed by the fact that her mother was raised as a Baptist and was essentially disowned when she married Margaret's Jewish father. Margaret prods her mother as to why she doesn't know her mom's parents, and her mother haltingly shares the story. We eventually learn that this imposed separation was a wise disassociation.

Yet the decision to become anti-religious, like her parents, is a separate matter altogether. Margaret, prodded by a kind teacher, explores the various religions of her friends on her search to explore her own spirituality. Her parents support her exploration. Indeed, you come to especially love her mom, Barbara, played brilliantly by Rachel McAdams. I wish every person could have a mother as kind and wise as she.

An interesting counter-theme is Barbara's own journey to find her place as an artist and parent within their new suburban environment. Both she and her daughter evolve to find their own pathways, counter to the community's social demands – a subtle but lovely co-trajectory.

I entered the theater somewhat on a whim, curious though not expecting much, and left wishing everyone – especially those with children – could see this film, taking children along if possible. The film could be leaving theaters soon, so get to the theater now, as it is not yet available to stream! You will leave the theater remembering your own coming of age and feeling grateful for the charm of this particular story.

Be grateful that we can see this film locally because the book and film have both been banned in other areas throughout the country, largely because it mentions menstruation. *Grrrrrrr.*

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