

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 22 – NO. 2

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

NOVEMBER 30, 2023

## History Comes Alive At Wendell Depot



The Wendell Historical Society board of directors, at the group's new building. Clockwise from top left: Joseph Coll, Florence Blackbird, Pam Richardson, Joyce Flynn, Ed Hines, and Jacqueline Hunt. (Not pictured: Kristina Hartjens.)

By DONNA PETERSEN

**WENDELL** – So! The Wendell Depot neighborhood in Wendell: bustling with the railroad depot, the Athol-Orange Power Plant, Putnam's Store, Putnam's Dance Hall, the Post Office, and a cluster of homes on the Common (or the Square).

A happening place – if you were there about 100 years ago.

The railroad depot built in 1849 was torn down in 1942, the power plant was dismantled, and the Putnam Store complex burned down, as did a few houses. Today, the lonely former post office – itself a former house – and a few other houses remain.

But change is afoot! The recently formed Wendell Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has big plans for

this “all-but-forgotten” section of town. It was a few motivated Wendell history buffs who formed the Society and saw the shuttered Post Office and imagined it transformed into a place to showcase Wendell's currently scattered historical artifacts and materials, and to offer educational opportunities.

I spoke with Ed Hines, president of the Society's board of directors and a former music teacher who came out of retirement to work on the project. Sitting in his old Wendell home, he spoke enthusiastically about the plans for the Society. He knew that others shared his interest and love of the town's history, and when the Wendell Depot building with a post office on one side and a luncheonette on the other came up for sale, the vision started to become reality.

see **HISTORY** page A8

## Legislators Introduce Bill For Statewide Disaster Fund

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**BOSTON** – Inspired by the severe flooding that left their constituents with impassable roads, ruined crops, and millions of dollars in property damage this summer, state senator Jo Comerford and representative Natalie Blais filed a bill that would establish the state's first-ever disaster relief fund.

Passing this bill would establish a \$250 million fund under the direction of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to respond to natural and manmade disasters. MEMA would make decisions on how to best respond to disasters and distribute funds to municipalities, nonprofits, businesses, and citizens.

“This is in their wheelhouse,” Comerford said of MEMA. “They help communities identify disaster related costs, they help communities apply for federal disaster relief, and now they will be able to pull all of the related agencies together as needed.”

Comerford and Blais hosted a press conference on November 14 with constituents impacted by the floods, who expressed their support for the proposed legislation.

see **DISASTER** page A6

## Early Focus on Housing In ‘Visions’ for Farren Lot

By JEFF SINGLETON

**MONTAGUE CITY** – “What's going to happen with the Farren property?” is a question often heard around Montague these days. The historic hospital has been nearly completely demolished, the land has been cleared, and two key environmental evaluations have revealed no hidden hazardous materials. It appears that the 8-acre property will soon be gifted to the town.

Town planner Maureen Pollock met with the selectboard on November 20 to help answer this question, reporting on the progress of a reuse study by the engineering firm Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB), funded by the Massachusetts Hous-

ing Partnership's Complete Neighborhoods Initiative.

The firm's latest findings were reported at a “Re-envisioning the Farren Property” public meeting at the Great Falls Discovery Center on November 8. “We had a great turnout – we had over 70 residents in attendance, many who live in Montague City,” said Pollock. “There were a lot of great ideas put forward and we learned a lot.” A recording of the session is available online via Montague Community Television, and notes can be found on the planning department website.

The November 8 session began with a presentation by VHB consultants Luke Mitchell and Jennifer see **FARREN** page A7



The view of the Farren Care Center property, from what had been the main entrance, on November 20. “The cleanup work will continue into December with final filling, grading, seeding and property transfer(s) taking place,” Ed Gregory reports.

ERVING SELECTBOARD

## New Proposal For Affordable Housing Units On Care Drive

By KEITH WATERS

The Erving selectboard had a lot of meetings the night of Monday, November 27. To wit: a joint meeting with the town's Senior Housing Commission, a joint meeting with the planning board, and three executive sessions related to salary negotiations, in addition to its regular agenda.

The meeting with the Senior Housing Commission (SHC) took the bulk of the public time. The SHC consists of seven members, including former selectboard member William Bembury. It had released a request for proposals for housing on the town-owned Care Drive lot next to the senior and community center and the library.

Rural Development Inc. (RDI) of Turners Falls, the development arm of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, submitted the only proposal, and the SHC liked it very much. Selectboard member James Loynd recused himself from the discussion, citing a potential conflict of interest.

RDI's proposal consists of 18 one-bedroom units, restricted for see **ERVING** page A2

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Six-Town Idea Taken Seriously By Montague Town Officials

By JEFF SINGLETON

“I feel strongly that if we can build this, more students will want to come here,” Montague selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said last week, responding to a report on the proposed consolidation of the Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley school districts. “That's been proven by other districts. It may seem idealistic, but I think we just need to keep working.”

Kuklewicz also serves as chair of the Franklin County Technical School Committee.

The Montague selectboard and town administrator reacted favorably to the report, which estimated the financial impact of consolidation. The data were presented by the Abrahams Group consulting firm to the Six Town Regional Planning Board (STRPB) on November 14, and reported back to Montague on November 20 by Dorinda Bell-Up, a finance committee member and one of the town's representatives on the STRPB.

According to Bell-Up, the report found that consolidation would save nearly \$317,000 in central office see **MONTAGUE** page A5

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

## Fix Rattlesnake Gutter Road for Vehicle Traffic? Some Say Yeah

By GEORGE BRACE

Residents attending Leverett's November 21 selectboard meeting suggested addressing erosion damage and maintenance concerns on Rattlesnake Gutter Road by repairing and reopening the section closed to vehicle traffic, an alternative to an earlier proposal to discontinue the road's status as a “county road” and turn it into a trail. The selectboard also held a property tax classification hearing and addressed ongoing dog issues.

Closed to vehicle traffic for over 20 years after severe flooding damage, a section of Rattlesnake Gutter has served since that time as a popular hiking trail through the Rattlesnake Gutter Conservation Area, though it remains a county road. A fresh washout last summer brought renewed attention to addressing the road's maintenance.

Members of the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust (RGT), which manages conservation land abutting the road, put forth the idea of “discontinuing” the county-road status, which they believed might open up grant funding to pay for the repair and see **LEVERETT** page A4

## High School Sports Week: Fall's Final Cleats Hung Up



Franklin Tech quarterback Gabe Tomasi keeps a close eye on Tri-County's Anthony Lum in the Small School Vocational semifinal game on November 18.

By MATT ROBINSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – Last week marked the conclusion of the 2023 fall high school sports season. The Franklin Tech Football Eagles were eliminated from the Small Vocational School semifinals by the Tri-County Cougars, but they bounced back on Turkey Day with a win against the Smith Vocational Vikings.

While the Tech footballers have hung up their cleats for the final time this season, the Turners Falls cheer-

leaders will not get much of a rest before they exchange their outdoor gear for their courtside uniforms.

Tri-County 39 – FCTS 0

On Saturday, November 18, the Eagles were toppled out of the Vocational playoffs by the Tri-County RTV Blue Cougars of Franklin, Mass. The fifth-seeded Cougars used their size advantage to drive down the field for three touchdowns, which is not very many over four see **SPORTS** page A6

### Oh No Not Henry Kissinger

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# The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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

## The Policies

These two months have been a strange time for local news, with the world transfixed by a brutal, hyperlocal war thousands of miles away. The Gaza Strip is about the size and shape of Northfield, Gill, Erving, Montague, Sunderland, and Leverett stuck together, only with 2,355,000 more people, and according to the United Nations about 1,700,000 of them have now been internally displaced – i.e., everyone is south of Turnpike Road.

The situation is allegedly more complicated than that, and there is not too much the *Montague Reporter* can offer that is helpful. Two of our members of Congress are in a tiny minority calling for a ceasefire. As of press time a temporary truce is holding, with ongoing prisoner swaps. Closer to home, three Palestinian-American students were shot this week in Vermont; we were relieved to hear all three survived, though one may be permanently

paralyzed. It can happen here.

One thing we *can* do is highlight the work of our colleagues. This Thursday the Israeli journalist Yuval Abraham published a lengthy investigative piece in the Tel Aviv-based +972 *Magazine* outlining in detail the Israeli Defense Forces' policies in the current campaign, based on interviews with seven intelligence sources. It is a must-read.

That piece can be chased with Ken Klippenstein's article last Saturday in *The Intercept* on the Biden administration's recent request to remove all restrictions on Israel's access to US weapons stockpiles.

Here are the links....

[www.tinyurl.com/972investigation](http://www.tinyurl.com/972investigation)  
[www.tinyurl.com/USstockpiles](http://www.tinyurl.com/USstockpiles)



### ERVING from page A1

ages 62 and above, and six two-bedroom and two three-bedroom units of multi-generational housing. All of the units would have income caps, and so would be considered affordable housing.

Bembury said he talked about the project with state senator Jo Comerford at the recent French King Bridge safety barrier dedication, and that Comerford "indicated... [to] let her know what we needed, and that she would be working with Susannah Whippas as well, so the two are both on board."

If all goes well, the project could be completed in five years. The plan combines a range of grant funding and other sources of investment to make construction possible with little town money.

The selectboard had a number of questions for RDI, and the SHC agreed to bring back answers when possible for continued discussion at an upcoming selectboard meeting.

A number of town boards and commissions will need to be fully staffed for the senior housing project to move through its approval process. One was filled at Monday's meeting, as Joe Newton was approved for membership on the planning board. The zoning board of appeals is currently short two members.

### Other Business

The selectboard had previously asked Tighe & Bond to elaborate on the increased expense of state-mandated PFAS monitoring

at the Maple Avenue landfill. Costs for 2024 are about \$21,000, up from about \$13,000 in 2023.

Selectboard member Scott Bastarache said he was disappointed in the firm's response, but ended up making the motion to approve the new contract, which was approved. Bastarache asked that they be more transparent about their costs in the future.

The town needs some new street lamps on Lillians Way, and it will get solar-powered ones.

Erving has found a possible candidate for a new police officer: Brandon David Garvey, last employed as a police officer by the town of Greenfield from July to October 2023. Police chief Robert Holst noted that Garvey has "an extensive background in firearms, and that's an area that we do lack in our department, having somebody with the knowledge of an armorer."

Loynd, who was part of Garvey's first interview team for the town, said he highly recommended him.

According to the schedule there are two more selectboard meetings in the calendar year, December 11 and December 25. The board agreed they would not meet on December 25, but would possibly meet on December 18.

Business licenses expire at the end of the calendar year, and will need to be dealt with. Calls have also been put out for applications to the school committee and the recreation commission, and hopefully some will be presented for review.



Toby Graves works in research and development at Mayhew Steel for a couple days every other week to make tooling for machines at the company. Here he is seen checking the specs on some specialty grinding.

## Letters to the Editors

### A Downtown Beacon

Nestled on 7th Street in Turners Falls, the Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church stands as a beacon of compassion, hope, and love. Regardless of the weather – be it rain or shine – every Monday, without exception, an incredibly dedicated team of volunteers welcomes individuals, families, and neighbors to partake in the warmth of a free meal with a friendly smile and no questions asked. In conjunction with the Franklin County Community Meals Program, this free hot meal site offers solace to those facing the challenges of hunger and food insecurity, a problem an estimated one in every eight households faces.

Week after week, these volunteers selflessly cook, prepare, and distribute upwards of over 200 meals. In addition to the hot meals, attendees have also been greeted with a display of empathy in the form of sizable grocery bags, clothing, toiletries, and even gift cards to Food City.

**Jared Britt  
Bernardston  
Volunteer & Parishioner**

### 'Mending' Meaning

When Robert Frost wrote, "Good fences make good neighbors," he wasn't expressing his own opinion; he was quoting a neighbor of his, and criticizing his neighbor's mentality. He went on to write that he'd like to express to that neighbor, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall, that wants it down."

This line is one of the most backwards-quoted lines in literary history, used endlessly to suggest that Frost was saying the opposite of

In a world that often feels uncertain and shrouded in darkness, the Our Lady of Peace meal site emerges as a source of unwavering light. The dedication of these volunteers serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the power of community. Their commitment to providing not just meals but also essential resources is a gesture that deserves widespread recognition.

I believe that shedding light on this remarkable initiative will not only honor the dedication of these tireless volunteers but also inspire others to engage in acts of kindness within their communities. By amplifying this story, we have the opportunity to celebrate the goodness that exists in our community and encourage a ripple effect of compassion and love.

### Shame

What was the Tax Collector in Gill thinking when he released a list of property owners' names to the Gill newsletter as "tax delinquents?" We thank Chip Ainsworth for drawing attention to this display of small-town bullying [November 9, *The Gill Newsletter's 'List of Shame,'* Page A3].

This was the first time the Newsletter has been used to shame residents publicly. "This 'list of shame' is meant to embarrass these homeowners into paying," Greenfield activist Al Norman said. "It's a throwback to public stocks and pillories for debtors. Why didn't they meet with the property owners and discuss repayment options?"

Gill resident Cliff Hatch summed it up: "In one sentence I don't think it's the greatest idea...I know some of these people and they don't have a lot of money."

Six months ago, the United States Supreme Court ruled that taking home equity beyond what is owed is unconstitutional.

Instead of shaming people publicly, tax collectors should be publishing the list of tax exemptions and state rebates available to families who are struggling to keep up with their bills. Let's help our neighbors, not harass them.

A phone call from the tax collector to these families offering them a flexible repayment plan might be more appropriate, especially as we enter the holiday season.

**Joan Marie Jackson  
Mitch Speight  
Greenfield**

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No paper the fourth week of November,  
or the final week of December.

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Our Special **Wrapping Paper Edition** came out last week, and it looks amazing! We think you'll love the designs by seven local artists, and the money from sales of the wrapping paper goes into our general fund to help keep us going. The Special Wrapping Paper Edition sells for \$5 a set, or five sets for \$20.

You can buy them online at [montaguereporter.org](http://montaguereporter.org) and at these locations: in Greenfield at Green Fields Market, the LAVA Center, and Federal Street Books; in Gill at the Upinngil Farm Store; at the Wendell Country Store, the Leverett Village Coop, Leverett Crafts & Arts, and the Montague Village Store; and in Turners Falls at Food City, Unnameable Books, the Stash House, and our own office at 177 Avenue A.

Woodsy wanderers, take notice: **shotgun season** started on November 27 and runs through December 9, so take extra precautions and wear orange or other bright clothing in the woods! Hunting days start half an hour before sunrise and end half an hour after sunset. Talking loudly or whistling to let hunters know of your presence is also recommended.

Advice about **putting your gardens to bed for the winter** can be found in the recent Seeds of Solidarity Farm newsletter. The organization shares instructions including a video on using the cardboard method to mulch perennials and annuals for a weed-free spring start. Learn more and sign up to receive e-newsletters at [seedsofsolidarity.org](http://seedsofsolidarity.org).

The **Village of Lake Pleasant Tea & Crumpet Society** at Thompson Temple is an open mic "primarily for artists and craftists and photographers and writers and readers of prose and poetry" from 6:30 to 8 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. The fourth Thursday this month was a holiday, so there's one tonight, November 30.

If you'd like to get involved, David James is the contact person; his number is (413) 367-2480 and his landline has voicemail. His email is [dijames3@valinet.com](mailto:dijames3@valinet.com).

Every month, **Sadie's Bikes** on Canal Street in Turners Falls hosts a "vending machine takeover" event. This Friday, December 1 the shop's candy vending machines will be loaded with prizes handmade by artist Fay Strongin. The public is invited for seltzer, snacks, socializing, and little art prizes from 5 to 8 p.m.

**Unnameable Books** in Turners Falls announces that they are now open seven days a week, and their collection of new and used books at 66 Avenue A continues to grow. They have been holding regular poetry readings, and this week's offering at 6 p.m. on Friday, December 1 features Justin Marks, Elle Longpre, and Hunter Larson.

Follow them on Facebook at "Unnameable Books Turners Falls"

or join their email list by writing to [unnameablebooks.falls@gmail.com](mailto:unnameablebooks.falls@gmail.com).

**Mr. Drag is back in Turners Falls** for a holiday show at the Shea Theater from 7:30 to 9 p.m. this Friday and Saturday, December 1 and 2. The "traditionally untraditional" holiday variety show is in its seventh year, and features Jane Williams of Northampton, Kat Adler of Greenfield, Emily Pritchard of Amherst, Lori Holmes Clark of Deerfield, and Joe Dulude II of Providence, Rhode Island. Dulude lived for several years in the Valley, and is best known for his makeup designs for Broadway, TV shows, and movies.

"What happens when Mr. Drag comes back to visit his sisters for the holiday season only to find out that their whole world has been turned upside down into a strange and bizarre alternate reality?" the description from Eggtooth Productions reads. "Only a slew of song and dance will help him make sense of it all... and of course a few to several martinis."

**Santa Claus** will pay a visit to the Turners Falls branch of Greenfield Savings Bank this Saturday, December 2. Starting at 10 a.m., Santa will be ready to greet eager youngsters with their Christmas list and wishes. Parents can take their own photos.

"Santa hopes to take off in his sleigh to other stops, leaving at 11:30," the bank notes. "However, Santa has assured us he will stay if the crowd warrants."

The Carnegie Library will hold a **Used Book Sale** on Saturday, December 2 with fiction, paperbacks, kids' books, DVDs, CDs, and audiobooks from hundreds of recent donations. They are offering a holiday special of one free book for every visitor. Stop by between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Paul Richmond of Wendell wrote to announce a special **Holiday Celebration Reading** at Gateway City Arts in Holyoke this Sunday, December 3. This is an all-day celebration and hangout, with readings, book sales, food, and prizes. Richmond is scheduling eight writers every hour in five-minute slots, with 15-minute breaks each hour for the audience to get food, buy books, and schmooze. Free tables are available for vendors. Find out more at [humanerrorpublishing.com](http://humanerrorpublishing.com).

Northfield Mount Hermon School will **celebrate the winter holiday season with Vespers** this Sunday, December 3, at 3:30 and 7 p.m. Held in the school's Memorial Chapel, the Vespers are open to the community free of charge, though registration is required as space is limited. Sign up to attend at [together.nmhschool.org/register/vespers2023](http://together.nmhschool.org/register/vespers2023).

A reception with refreshments will be held between the two performances, from 5 to 6:30 p.m., in Bolger House, a short distance from the chapel. Vespers, an NMH

tradition dating back to the 1930s, showcases the talents of student musicians and singers.

Em Ayres will give a **free grant-writing workshop for artists** and creative individuals at the Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity in Florence next Tuesday, December 5 at 5 p.m. Ayres will support participants in the ins and outs of the application process, communication strategy, and materials organizing to apply for the MassCultural Council's Grant for Creative Individuals. These awards are unrestricted grants of \$5,000 to artists, culture-bearers, and creative practitioners.

Attendees should bring a laptop, or at least a smartphone. Reach out to Ayres for questions and support at [eyres413@gmail.com](mailto:eyres413@gmail.com).

**Nice and Easy walks** are scheduled from 1 to 2 p.m. on four Fridays, December 8, 15, 22, and 29, along the Canalside Rail Trail or downtown Turners Falls. These walks are geared for seniors, but open to all who seek to join others for some fresh air and exercise. Enjoy natural and local history highlights along the way. Dress for the weather with sturdy footwear, bring water, and meet at the main entrance of the Discovery Center.

The Carnegie Library in Turners Falls offers "**Letters to Santa Kits**" for children, who are invited to color in and fill out letters and envelopes to Santa, then place them in the special mailbox at Spinner Park on Avenue A.

The annual **It's a Wonderful Night In Turners Falls** event returns next Friday, December 8 from 4 to 8 p.m. Santa arrives at Spinner Park on Avenue A at Fourth Street at 6:30 p.m. to pick up letters from his special mailbox and to greet children. Enjoy the *Welcome Yule* production (see article, page B8) at the Shea Theater at 7:30 p.m.

You can make a winter bird feeder at the Great Falls Discovery Center, and shop for handmade gifts at the Brick House Pop-Up Shop at 24 Third Street – the *Reporter* will be selling copies of our special Wrapping Paper Edition there – and shops along Avenue A and Third Street will stay open until 8 p.m.

Downtown Millers Falls will hold **Millers Falls Magic**, an afternoon of crafting and gift-buying specials, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, December 9.

There will be a free Holiday Wreath Making workshop from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Millers Falls Library, Element Brewery will hold a Pop-Up Shop from 2 to 6 p.m., and special gift sales will be held at Rustic Romance, the Pub General Holiday Pop-Up, and Eldritch Goods.

Música Franklin will give their second annual **Holiday Cheer Benefit Concert** on Saturday, December 9 from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church in Greenfield. The concert features the music of Nat King Cole, seasonal carols, and Klezmer and Yiddish folk music. Local artists include Orice Jenkins, Khaloymes, and Música Franklin students. Tickets are available for a suggested donation of \$25, online at [givebutter.com/Musica-Franklin](http://givebutter.com/Musica-Franklin) and at the door. Proceeds go to the after-school program.

The **Montague Common Hall Open Mic** takes place monthly, every second Saturday evening from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Veteran songwriter-guitarist Paul Kaplan will be the featured performer on December 9. Kaplan has been an enthusiastic participant in the folk music world since the late 1960s. His involvement with the singer-songwriter movement was sparked by his early love of the songs of Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, and Tom Paxton.

Open mic performers fill the rest of the evening with music, poetry, and stories. The event is free, with donations welcomed.

The **Nolumbeka Project** is looking to hire a bookkeeper for five hours a month. The volunteer-led nonprofit creates educational programs and hosts Indigenous presenters sharing their culture and histories at annual gatherings, while working to protect and preserve the land. Find out more at [nolumbekaproject.org](http://nolumbekaproject.org) about the organization, the job, and volunteer opportunities, or contact them at [nolumbekaproject@gmail.com](mailto:nolumbekaproject@gmail.com).

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

**WANTED:**  
One garaged parking space in or near Turners Falls for the winter season, rate negotiable.  
Please call or text: (617) 396-4156.

Memorial Hall Theater  
**POTHOLE PICTURES**  
December 1 & 2 at 7:30 p.m.  
**MOONRISE KINGDOM**  
Wes Anderson's 2012 color-drenched, cinematic adventure story about imagination, innocence and true love.  
Music at 7 p.m.: Friday, Whistlestop Saturday, the frost heaves & haies  
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**We want to hear from you!**  
The Town of Montague is building a Digital Equity Plan to ensure that all its residents have fair and equal access to digital technologies—including the internet, computers, and mobile phones—as well as the skills and knowledge to effectively use them. Learn more at <https://www.montague-ma.gov/p/1532/>.

**Together, we can achieve internet for all.**

Join us for our first public meeting, either in person or via Zoom.

**Wednesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> 6-8 p.m.**  
Montague Town Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting room  
1 Avenue A  
Light refreshments will be served; please RSVP: <https://bit.ly/montaguedigitalequityRSVP>  
To join via Zoom: <https://bit.ly/montaguedigitalequity>

This project has been funded by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program, with assistance from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.  
Contact: Ted Harvey at [tharvey@frcog.org](mailto:tharvey@frcog.org), or 413-774-3167 x165

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**LEVERETT** from page A1

replacement of culverts and retaining walls to prevent further erosion.

At the November 21 meeting, resident Silas Ball said he "kind of understood that side of things," but suggested that before permanently closing the road to vehicles and defining it as a trail, the idea of repairing and reopening it should be "thoroughly looked into." He asked the selectboard's help in exploring the idea.

Ball, a member of the comprehensive planning committee, said that "travel-ability" and "accessibility" were "big topics" of discussion at committee meetings, and argued that along with more convenient travel, reopening Rattlesnake Gutter Road might present a "rare opportunity" to create an ADA-accessible scenic recreation area, few of which exist in Leverett.

Ball said that the road had once been a convenient route between North Leverett and the center of town, and its closure had likely resulted in decreased use of the Leverett Post Office, with some North and East Leverett residents finding it easier to travel to post offices in nearby towns. He added that he had heard a number of people speculate that the closure may have negatively affected the Leverett Village Co-op, located at the road's northern end.

Fellow comprehensive planning committee member Tim Shores said that he was "intrigued" by Ball's suggestion, and that the topic had

gotten "some traction" at committee meetings, adding that the issue may come up for discussion at the group's next meeting on December 6. Shores also noted that he had done some quick personal data analysis and thought he would have bought at least 250 peanut butter brownies at the Co-op in the last five years if the road was open.

Ball said he agreed with RGT members that the highway department was the best choice for maintaining the road, and said that when it was maintained it was no bigger problem than some of the other one-lane roads in town. He said there are currently 10 such roads in town, and approximately 10 one-lane bridges, and while problems occasionally crop up, safe passage is not a major issue.

Resident Ben Eddy said that at the time the decision was made to close the road to vehicle traffic rather than repair it, Leverett was in the process of dealing with new school and safety complex construction, and the highway department was smaller and less well-equipped than it is now.

Both Eddy and Ball said they thought there had been an intention to repair and reopen it someday, but said Eddy, "You put something off for a year, you blink, and 20 years have gone by."

Selectboard chair Tom Hankinson said he believed that if repair and maintenance was going to require investing an enormous amount of

money and "changing the character of that which is so precious to the town," more research was needed. He also said he believed the eventual decision should be made by town meeting, not the selectboard.

Members of the RGT are expected to continue the discussion at the December 5 selectboard meeting.

#### Tax Hearing

Following the board of assessors' recommendation and past practice, the selectboard agreed to set a single rate for residential, commercial, industrial, and personal property taxes for FY'24. Associate assessor Adam Hemingway estimated the new rate to be \$15.40 per \$1,000, down from \$16.02 per \$1,000 in FY'23.

Hemingway said the decrease was due partly to an increase in property values, but that new growth and a modest overall town budget increase of 1.5% over the prior year also contributed. The total property tax levy of \$6,060,287 for FY'24, he said, was based on a total valuation of taxable properties in Leverett of \$393,515,297.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said she hoped tax bills would be mailed out on December 11.

#### Dog Show

"Frankly, I'm frustrated," said Hankinson, in suggesting that an *ad hoc* dog bylaw review committee be formed to look into whether the town has all the tools it needs to

deal with dog complaints.

Hankinson cited two ongoing, unresolved, dog complaints the board has been dealing with, suggesting that they could be used as "case studies" by the committee. Hankinson said the tools currently at the town's disposal to adjudicate complaints would leave the dog owners in both cases "very dissatisfied."

Board member Melissa Colbert said she thought such a review would do no harm and may result in updates, but suspected the board may "still not get a satisfactory resolution." She reiterated the board's belief that filling the vacant dog officer position would be helpful by providing "presence" and "accountability."

Board member Patricia Duffy agreed with Colbert's call to increase efforts to hire a dog officer, and added that increasing the position's salary and getting creative in advertising for a candidate would be helpful. She also said she agreed with Hankinson's thoughts, noting that the board's current enforcement tools "become drastic fast... cost the town money... and are really problematic."

McGinnis said that Leverett has followed state law in dealing with dog issues, but could adopt a provision called "non-criminal disposition" at annual town meeting which allows the town to enforce local bylaws through a clerk magistrate rather than a criminal process.

#### NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

## Game of Thrones: Sewer Users Gaining Power

By KATE SAVAGE

Around 20 Gill residents gathered Monday evening for a 12-minute special town meeting, where they unanimously approved all articles. Prior to that, the selectboard met to consider grants and mull over future regionalization plans.

In the brief town meeting, residents approved a new agreement for payments *in lieu* of taxes (PILOT) with the company Kearsarge Energy, which owns a solar array on Main Road. After reportedly lengthy negotiations and litigation, Kearsarge signaled a willingness to sign an agreement that is similar to the terms of the array's original PILOT, with some clarifications.

"We've consistently taken the position that these numbers are picking up right where the current old agreement left off for this year," said town administrator Ray Purington.

However, this might not be the final word on the matter. "What I learned today," said Purington, "is Kearsarge is happy with the *form* of the agreement - meaning the wording - but they would like to still talk about the numbers." If the finalized agreement is different, it will have to come back to town meeting for authorization.

The residents in attendance also voted to expand the sewer commission beyond the three elected members - who are also the selectboard members - to include two appointed members, with preference given to individuals who use Gill's sewer, which only operates in the Riverside neighborhood.

The notes accompanying the motion state that expansion is hoped to give the sewer commission a "closer connection to the community it serves," and that the additional members will be able to help with research and grant applications to improve the 40-year-old sewer system.

The question of expanding the sewer commission must also be included on the town election ballot next May in order to receive final approval.

#### Ambulance, Police Regions

During Monday's selectboard meeting, chair Randy Crochier reported that ambulance service costs were likely to increase in the year ahead.

Gill currently pays Northfield EMS \$15,000 a year for regional ambulance service. Crochier said he expected that number to increase to \$25,000 next year.

"The one thing I feared when we joined with them was that they hadn't calculated their costs as well as they could have," said Crochier. "It's quite obvious that all member towns need to pay more."

Crochier is part of a regional emergency medical services task force, which is applying for grants to keep costs lower. But he said he still expects the cost to rise even higher in future years, stating that other towns in the area pay \$60,000 to \$100,000 a year for regular coverage.

Purington said that \$25,000 was around what the town paid for ambulance service back in the 1990s.

The board also discussed the possibility of regionalizing police services. "The model just doesn't work," said Crochier. "We can't afford 26 police chiefs in Franklin County, all doing the same administrative work."

However, Crochier also noted that regionalization isn't necessarily a money-saving measure. "It's about ensuring you have professional services," he said.

"It's a picture that many towns are facing," said police chief Christopher Redmond, who has worked in the department for over 30 years. Redmond said that recent police reform legislation has made it more difficult to hire part-time police officers. While the Gill department used to have up to 10 part-time officers, it now only has three, and two of those have yet to complete all the newly-required training.

"With the requirement of them having to do full training, there's not a lot of incentive to be part-time," added selectboard member Greg Snedeker.

Redmond noted this could cause shortages during "resource-intensive" events, or when officers were injured or on vacation.

The board will invite a representative from the UMass Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management to its next meeting to discuss grant programs that help towns understand the possibilities of police service regionalization.


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**MONTAGUE** from page A1

expenses, but would require raising staff salaries by nearly \$202,000. It predicted transportation cost increases would be negligible, with only one new bus driver needed, though travel times for students would increase.

The main wild card was the cost of staff health insurance, with an increase of nearly \$411,000 if Gill-Montague's plan is adopted by the new district and a decrease of nearly \$379,000 if it uses Pioneer's plan, in which the district pays a lower share.

Bell-Up noted that several estimates, particularly the administrative savings, were challenged at the November 14 session. The total budget of the new district, if the Gill-Montague health plan is used, was estimated at just under \$39.4 million.

Much of the report focused on various ways to split the costs among member towns. Variables include whether Warwick, which recently left Pioneer, would join the new district and whether to divide costs using a "statutory method," which begins with required town contributions based on wealth and then factors in enrollment, or various "alternative methods" based on wealth or enrollment alone.

Both Bell-Up and town administrator Steve Ellis warned the alternative methods would create problems as they would require annual ratification by every member town.

"I'm the guy who suggested the different methodologies," said Mike Naughton, a former Montague finance committee chair and until recently a member of the STRPB. "I think that the non-statutory assessments were a waste of time."

"Obviously affordability is a factor for everyone," he added. "But I think equity or fairness should also be a factor."

"We need real incentives from the state," said Ellis. "Are there real and meaningful regionalization incentives that are guaranteed?"

The next steps are for the STRPB to decide whether to recommend school consolidation to the towns, and if so, to draft a regional agreement.

Kuklewicz asked if this agreement would be sent to town selectboards. Ellis said he believed the decision to join a new district was not a "general-election decision, but a town-meeting decision," with town meetings in each potential member town required to ratify the agreement.

**Tax Rate Status Quo**

The selectboard voted to continue the town's "split tax rate" policy, with a higher rate for commercial, industrial, and personal property (CIP) than residential. The board discussed the core calculations at its November 20 meeting – the amount of taxes needed to fund the current fiscal year budget, and various options for the "split" – and reached a decision November 27.

Assessor Karen Tonelli estimated the necessary property tax levy at \$21,909,934, an increase of 6.4%. This represents the amount appropriated by town meeting minus other revenue sources such as grant and state aid. It also amounts to an increase of 2.5% plus "new growth," the so-called levy limit allowed under 1981's Proposition 2½ property tax laws, minus a certain amount of "excess capacity" town officials had agreed to hold back from taxing this year.

Tonelli said most of the new growth came from significant increases in residential valuations, upgrades to Eversource's electrical system, and increases in the FirstLight hydropower company's property valuation, particularly at Cabot Station.

The board was given a long list of options for splitting the rate, ranging from a factor of 1, making all rates identical, to 1.48, with a residential rate nearly half of CIP. It approved a factor of 1.3, identical to the previous year, producing rates of \$15.70 per thousand dollars of residential value and \$24.01 for CIP. Tonelli estimated that this would make the average single-family tax bill \$4,238, up \$209 from last year.

The board voted not to provide exemptions for open space, "principal residence," or businesses with 10 employees or fewer. Tonelli said the town has little private open space and few vacation homes, and that the small-business exemption would benefit landlords rather than the businesses themselves.

According to town accountant Carolyn Olsen, Montague first adopted a split rate in fiscal year 1983, based on state legislation passed in 1978, and has maintained one ever since.

**Road Safety**

The board unanimously approved a new Traffic Enforcement Policy at the request of police chief Chris Williams. "During conversations this fall about the issues we have in town, it came up that we didn't have an actual enforcement policy," Williams explained, adding that the language was based on a policy in Deerfield and that it had been reviewed by the officers' union and town counsel.

The policy includes priorities for monitoring specific locations, devices for measuring speed, and enforcement options available when a violation is detected. One section deals with state and federal legislators – they cannot be arrested when traveling to or from a session – and the treatment of foreign diplomats, consular officials, and military personnel.

"I like the fact that it talks about enforcement as an educational tool," said Kuklewicz. "Some towns look at it as a revenue-generator, some people think."

Williams said that Montague has never used traffic enforcement to generate revenue, and that "sometimes the conversation on the side of the road helps people to slow down."

Town planner Maureen Pollock discussed the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT)'s response to Montague's request that it "look at" the dangerous intersection of Route 63 and North Leverett Road. "Well, they're looking at it," she said, adding that she had met with MassDOT officials and that the agency is hoping to start work on improvements to the intersection, after a public-input process, in FY'28.

The board approved an additional \$28,567 for the Montague City Road flooding remediation project, allowing contractor Davenport Trucking to install socks filled with hay ("straw waddles"), a silk fence, and matting to stabilize disturbed soils.

Showing a picture of water in a deepened trench along the road, assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey said it had been created by moving brush, but that Davenport would begin moving soil from it in the coming weeks. Ramsey said a "healthy amount" remained in the

project's contingency fund to cover the change order.

**Getting Online**

Pollock reported on the development of a "Digital Equity Plan," which she defined as improved access to high-speed internet, affordable technology, and "digital literacy." A grant-funded project already underway to "help us understand what our needs are," she said, will help Montague secure further funding. The planning department will hold public input sessions and focus groups with the assistance of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

At Ellis's request the board approved an agreement with Verizon about internet "hot spot" devices that residents can check out from the Carnegie Library for a defined time period. The agreement reduces the cost of these popular items, allowing the department to purchase more, and enables the library to disable devices not returned on time.

**Paperwork Help**

The board executed a \$76,900 agreement with the engineering firm Wright-Pierce for "regulatory compliance assistance," primarily involving reporting to state and federal environmental agencies on the town sewer and the period releases of mixed stormwater and wastewater into the Connecticut River. "The level and extent of detail that is being required... is well in excess of anything we have been presented with historically," said Ellis.

Ellis also announced that the Community Engineering Corps, a nationwide network of engineers who assist communities with projects on a *pro bono* basis, has agreed to help staff understand the town's response to a notice of non-compliance involving the sewer system.

**Town Staff**

Ellis gave an update on the wage and classification study for town employees being conducted by the UMass Collins Center. All town employees have completed questionnaires about their job descriptions, and the next step will be for the consultants to interview employees individually.

Acting as personnel board, the board approved a new staffing plan for the treasurer's office, proposed by treasurer Eileen Seymour, that involves replacing a full-time employee lost to the clerk's office with a part-time worker and outsourcing the mailing of bills to a private company. Seymour said this will reduce her department's budget by 6.23%. Seymour plans to fill the part-time position in January with additional hours for selectboard administrative assistant Angie Amidon.

The board also approved the creation of a part-time sexton position for the town cemeteries. Cemetery commission member Judith Lorei said the sexton would receive a "per-event," or per-burial, payment for "working with the families to coordinate burials, and selling plots." Burials primarily take place at the Highland Cemetery in Millers Falls, the town's current "active cemetery" in Lorei's words.

Both staffing changes must go before the finance committee next, as part of the FY'25 budget process. Without taking a formal vote, the selectboard also agreed to lend the cemetery commission support within its own office at town hall, including electronic filing space.

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**Other Business**

Assistant town planner Suzanne LoManto asked the board to "save the date" of September 22, 2024 for the second annual antique car show on First Street and at Unity Park. She said the initial event held this September went "without a hitch," with approximately 150 cars and a "ton of people" despite bad weather.

The board signed a contract with the New England Foundation for the Arts to train town employees to encourage public art, and to provide \$15,000 to artists selected by the town through a "Call for Temporary Public Art." They also approved an agreement with the Massachusetts Cultural Council allowing the libraries to spend \$2,500 earmarked for the Falls Fest, which was canceled, on an event next spring organized with the local performance art group Exploded View.

The board approved a "request for assembly" for the annual Santa Parade, hosted by the Montague

Center fire department, on Saturday, December 16. The parade will begin at 2 p.m. at the fire station, stopping at the Montague Center common and then traveling to Rutters Park in Lake Pleasant, West Main Street in Millers Falls, and the former Farren bus stop in Montague City before ending at 3 p.m. at Unity Park in Turners Falls.

The board approved a payment of \$1,275 to the Berkshire Design Group for bidding oversight on the Hillcrest School playground project.

Ellis announced that the state will soon "roll out" an economic development plan, and that although its final contents are "embargoed at this point, so I'll hold off on suggesting anything before I see it," he has been invited to speak at the rollout press conference from a rural perspective.

A separate "rural and small-town site readiness" event involving local and state officials and including grant announcements, Ellis said, will take place at the Shea Theater at noon on December 5.



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**DISASTER** from page A1

Deerfield selectboard chair Carolyn Shores Ness emphasized the severe flood risk in her community, which will only worsen as climate change progresses. “Geographically, Deerfield is at the bottom of a bowl,” Shores Ness said. “We have been historically and will be at risk for flooding, despite our best efforts to prepare for these events.... We need consistent, reliable, and prompt fiscal help when these storms occur.”

Conway selectboard chair Phil Kantor said parts of his town saw eight inches of rain in 20 minutes, earning the National Weather Service’s designation as the rainiest “city” in North America. The town is still struggling to repair its infrastructure after the July 21 storm.

“Spending money in deficit... is tightrope walking without a safety net,” said Kantor. “We sorely need this bill. We are enthusiastically in favor of it.”

Massachusetts is one of just two states that do not keep funds dedicated to disaster response, according to a study by the National Association of State Budget Officers. In the past the state has relied on “rainy day” funds and supplemental appropriations to respond to crises, as many others do. Massachusetts is also in the minority of states that do not give explicit “transfer authority” to state leaders to move funds between agencies quickly to respond to disasters.

“As we learned from the recent flooding in

July and August, as we’ve learned from tornadoes, from massive fires and even gas explosions in the Commonwealth, we know that the best time to prepare for a disaster is before one strikes,” Blais said.

The bill, as filed in both the House and the Senate, is titled “An Act Creating A State Disaster Relief Fund for Emergency Management.” It has been referred to the Joint Committee on Emergency Preparedness and Management, but no hearings are yet scheduled as the legislature is not in formal session. The bill’s co-sponsors include 21 state representatives and 11 senators.

“This is not your traditional bill launch, because Rep. Blais and I don’t think this is a traditional bill,” Comerford said. “Late-filed bills can take some time, but I think because both the House and Senate submitted this quickly – and with this many co-sponsors – it is a hopeful signal of shared recognition of this bill’s importance.”

The initial \$250 million for the fund would come from capital gains tax revenue that would otherwise have gone into general stabilization.

“We think this is an appropriate use of this money, and it would be sustained over time through this same revenue stream,” Comerford said.

**The Public-Private Patch**

As the cost of responding to disasters increases, the federal government is urging

states to build their capacity to respond, according to a Pew Charitable Trusts report. At a meeting of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)’s National Advisory Council in 2019, then-acting Administrator Peter Gaynor said federal spending on natural disasters was “unsustainable.”

After this summer’s floods, MEMA declined to apply to FEMA for a federal disaster declaration; director Dawn Brantley explained to local towns that because the flooding was caused by three separate storms spaced five to six days apart, the federal agency would be unlikely to recognize it as a single disaster, and the floods’ total economic impact was unlikely to meet the federal threshold.

“Without the President making a federal disaster declaration, those federal funds are not made available to assist our communities, so with that in mind that is how we came to introduce this legislation,” Blais said.

Lacking a dedicated disaster fund, the state has been turning to private partnerships to mobilize aid. Governor Maura Healey initially responded to the summer floods by announcing the creation of a charitable fund, the Farm Resiliency Fund, through the United Way of Central Massachusetts. According to the organization’s website, the fund is meant not only to relieve farmers who lost their crops this summer, but also to provide “long-term potential to respond to how climate is affecting our farms.” Though the Farm Resiliency Fund raised

over \$3 million this summer, the total damage to farms in western and central Massachusetts was estimated to be at least \$15 million. Comerford and Blais were among the legislators who pushed for supplemental appropriations that are expected to bring \$20 million in aid to the affected farms, and \$15 million to municipalities damaged by flooding.

United Way of the Hampshire & Franklin Region executive director Geoff Naunheim said that United Way affiliates nationwide have been playing an increasing role in coordinating government aid during emergencies.

“The United Way is able to get money out of the door faster than government organizations are,” Naunheim told the *Reporter*. “We’re able to act as a great conduit for emergency funds, because we’re able to distribute them quickly... and we’re also on the ground, so we know all the partners doing the work.”

The United Way is an international network that raises money for other organizations focused on human welfare. With over 1,800 affiliates and a combined revenue of \$5.2 billion in 2021, it is one of the largest charities in the world. United Way affiliates receive funds from private donors as well as state and federal governments, which they disburse, sometimes after collecting an administrative fee, to other organizations that provide aid directly.

“The joke with the United Way is if you’ve seen one United Way, you’ve seen one United

see **DISASTER** next page

**SPORTS** from page A1

quarters of play. But the Cats’ giant defense also forced Tech to cede three additional touchdowns to make the final score 39-zip.

“They should check their players for steroids,” one of the regulars quipped. “They’re all over six feet,” someone else remarked as the teams warmed up. “One of their linemen is six-six!” another home fan marveled. (To be fair, only the Cougars’ line was oversized. Their secondary was about the same size as the Tech players.)

Tri-County implemented an interesting defensive formation. Their linemen didn’t get into three-point stances, and they didn’t line up nose-to-nose with the Tech players. They stood a few feet away from scrimmage in a sprinter’s bullet stance. And as soon as the ball was hiked, they crashed into the Tech players.

This game plan kept the Eagles from mounting any sustained drives. Josiah Little, who only needed 31 yards to break the 1,000-yard barrier, was consistently hit behind the line of scrimmage. Little, who relies more on his speed than on his size, was unable to break into the secondary, and was limited to only 19 yards on the ground. This left Tech needing to throw the ball, but Gabriel Tomasi could only complete two passes before he was knocked out of the game in the first half.

This stifling attack forced Franklin to pin all their hopes on their defense. After all, sometimes quick beats big.

Tech stopped Tri-County on their first possession, and on the Cougars’ second drive the Eagles almost made two picks. But the Cougars retained possession and drove the ball into the end zone, and Franklin went into the second quarter trailing 7-0.

Tri scored again in the second off a keeper and a throw to the flats. The teams battled it out for the next 10-plus minutes, but at the end of the first half, Tomasi was hit hard in the chest. He would not return for the rest of the game.

Though down by a manageable 14 points, Tech was forced to play without their starting QB. One of the key turning points occurred in the third quarter. With the score



DAVID HOIT PHOTO

Eagles QB Gabe Tomasi hands off to running back Josiah Little (at right) as Franklin Tech’s offensive line controls the Vikings. Tech soared to a 42-6 win over the Smith Vocational Vikings on Thanksgiving Day in Turners Falls.

still 14-0, the Birds forced a fourth down, and the Cougars went for it. A long gain gave Tri the first down and another throw to the flats put them ahead 20-0.

This would be their last offensive touchdown of the season. Tech’s defense kept the Cats in check for the rest of the game, but Tri scored three defensive TDs. Coach Joe Gamache, who never gives up, called a series of strategic timeouts at the end of the game. Although his team was down 33 points, he wanted to give his offense one more chance to score. It worked – Tech got the ball back with seconds left on the clock – but it was unfortunately intercepted for a pick-six to make the final 39-0.

Before he was injured, Tomasi made two completions, ran four times for 12 yards, and booted a punt. Tyler Yetter and Maxon Brunette filled in for him under center; Yetter made one completion for nine yards and one carry for six, and knocked away two passes. Brunette ran back four kickoffs, totaling 38 yards, got in on seven tackles, and threw an interception.

Jet Bastarache had one carry for

two yards, one reception for 12, and recovered a fumble. Little carried the ball 17 times, but could only gain 19 yards. William Ainsworth made one reception for 10 yards, while Tucker Hicks gained five yards on his catch. On special teams, Nolyn Stafford kicked off once for 22 yards and punted four times for 123.

Tech’s defense played strong against a much bigger foe. Zaydrien Alamed returned an interception for five yards and disrupted two passes; Landen Hardy made 10 total tackles, three behind the line of scrimmage; Shaun Turner caused a fumble; Camryn Laster knocked away two passes; and Wyatt Whitman recovered a fumble.

Although the loss eliminated Tech from the Voc playoffs, they still had one more contest on their dance card.

**FCTS 42 – Smith 6**

On Thanksgiving morning, the Smith Vocational Black Vikings descended on the town for their annual Turkey Day mash-up with Franklin Tech. The Vikings are an excellent team, progressing in the Vocation-

al playoffs and sporting a winning record. But last Thursday they were no match for the Eagles’ high-flying gridiron machine.

Franklin forced a fumble on Smith’s opening drive, and the Birds were off to the races. It took two carries for Little to finally break the millennium mark, and a couple more plays for Tomasi to break into the end zone on a one-yard keeper. He hit Ethan Smarr for the 2-pointer to give Tech an 8-0 lead with 7:24 to go in the first.

On their next possession the Vikes tried to keep their drive alive by using all four downs, but Tech stopped them in their tracks. The Eagles got the ball back, and Tomasi scored again on the last play of the first quarter to increase their lead to 14-0.

Tech’s third touchdown of the morning came off a hook-and-lateral play, and with 7:24 left in the first half, Franklin was leading 20-0. At the end of the half Tomasi threw a TD pass to Ainsworth, and he walked in the extra point himself to give Franklin a 28-0 lead.

“I hope they score at least once,”

one of the Eagles’ mothers said at halftime. “I hate to see such a one-sided game, especially for the Smith seniors.”

She got her wish on the Vikings’ first drive of the second half. The extra point was rejected, but the Smith boys were on the scoreboard.

Tech matched that score, and then some. Cameren Candelaria scored Franklin’s fifth TD of the morning off another Tomasi completion, and after a TD run by Little, Candelaria put the cherry on the Thanksgiving Day Pie with a two-point conversion.

Tomasi, named MaxPreps offensive player of the game, went 19-for-30 for 274 passing yards. He threw three touchdowns and three interceptions, and scored a 2-pointer. On the ground he gained 12 yards, scored two touchdowns, and ran in an extra point.

Tomasi’s 19 completions were split among six different receivers. Candelaria made six receptions for 115 yards and scored a touchdown and a 2-pointer. Smarr made four catches for 68 yards and scored on a two-point conversion; Ainsworth had four receptions for 45 yards and a touchdown; Hicks grabbed three catches for 30 yards and a touchdown. Nathan Sabolevski made one reception for eight yards, and carried the ball once for one.

Little, who had only needed 12 yards to get into four-digit territory, gained 205 on the ground and scored a touchdown. His lone completion was for a loss, so his total yards were reduced to 199.

Yetter, who threw the ball once, snatched an interception and knocked away two passes; Bastarache made three carries for five yards; Brunette ran once for seven yards, and on defense, he disrupted a pass.

Hardy, MaxPreps’ defensive player of the game, made 11 tackles and kicked off seven times for 146 yards. Laster knocked away two passes, Alamed recovered a fumble, Whitman recovered a fumble and tipped a pass, and Stafford made an interception and caused a fumble.

With the win, Franklin Tech holds onto the coveted Turkey Bowl trophy for at least one more year.



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**DISASTER** from previous page

Way,” Naunheim said. “We’re all very different.”

In response to the ongoing emergency shelter crisis, Governor Healey also announced a \$5 million grant program to be administered by the United Way of Massachusetts Bay to provide more emergency shelters. The funds are meant for community-based organizations, faith-based groups, and volunteer organizations to open short-term overnight shelter sites.

Naunheim said the United Way of the Hampshire and Franklin Region has not received any of these funds, but they could help other organizations apply for them. “We are working with ServiceNet to figure out ways to support folks at the Days Inn in Greenfield,” Naunheim said. “We support emergency shelter providers and emergency shelters, but we don’t specifically provide emergency shelter.”

“We will always need strategic private interests, and really importantly, community-based organizations, to show up in times of crisis and need,” Comerford told the *Reporter* when asked about the state’s practice of partnering with United Way groups for emergency response. “There’s not ever going to be enough money for the state to fully compensate an individual, or municipality, or business or a nonprofit after a disaster.”



**Montague Community Television News**

**Relive the Magic**

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Six Town Regionalization Planning Board met on November 14 at the Gill Town Hall. MCTV’S recording is available on our Vimeo page, along with recent GMRSC, Montague and Gill selectboard, and Gill special town meetings. More shows from the Shea have been uploaded, including a Halloween performance by Misty Blues dressed as Ghostbusters and an officially costumed performance by the Kiss cover band Kisstory.

All community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 9 and featured on our Vimeo page. If you have ideas for films, MCTV can assist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for checkout, and filming and editing assistance can be provided. If you’re looking for more ways to get involved, consider joining the MCTV Board. To stop in for a meeting, even just to check the vibe, email [infomontaguetv@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguetv@gmail.com) for the Zoom link.

Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or [infomontaguetv@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguetv@gmail.com), follow us on Facebook, find us on Instagram @montaguecommunitytv, and find videos at [montaguetv.org](http://montaguetv.org).

**FARREN** from page A1

Nelson. Nelson reviewed the context of the Farren site, including its role as a “gateway” to Turners Falls, the neighborhood’s existing housing mix, its environmental surroundings including close proximity to the Connecticut River, the power canal, and wetlands, access to transportation including the bus route between Greenfield and Orange, and the current zoning of the parcels.

Mitchell presented more data, making a case for a need for more affordable housing in the area, and reviewed input from three meetings with “stakeholders” last spring and a previous public session in August. He then read a “vision statement” for the site that VHB synthesized from this material.

The statement calls for “a dense, mixed-use hub that unites the surrounding community and that unlocks new housing and economic opportunities in Montague.” VHB said this would meet the needs of all residents, “regardless of age and income,” and would “showcase Montague City’s commitment to public health, arts and culture, and natural resources.”

Mitchell then presented two potential concepts for the property – one with residential buildings surrounding a recreation center and large village green, and an “urban blocks” configuration with ground-level “Restaurant/Retail” space along Montague City Road and residential buildings elsewhere on the lot. Low-, medium-, and high-density designs were provided for both concepts, spanning a range from 20 to 165 housing units.

The meeting then broke into three discussion groups, with VHB staff moderating each and taking notes. According to the planning department website, all three groups largely supported residential development but also favored commercial uses, such as small coffee shops and medical businesses. There was a diversity of opinion about high-density housing, with some attendees concerned about traffic congestion and others supporting medium- to high-density designs to meet housing needs.

One attendee expressed concern about the construction of a “big box store” while another opposed an “absentee landlord” for the residential property. Several discussed connections with the nearby bike path.

When the meeting reconvened, Mitchell briefly outlined the next steps in the process. VHB, which is currently conducting a market

study, will issue a report in the coming months making final recommendations. The property is currently zoned as Central Business, which does not allow for the type of ground-level residential development featured in all of the designs presented by VHB, and Mitchell warned that the town would need to consider rezoning.

He also said the town should consider “different kinds of financial incentives to sweeten the pot for developers” and selling the parcel or parcels through a request-for-proposals bidding process in order to retain public control over development. “You can build in requirements for the future development of the site so that it accomplishes the goals that you want,” he explained.

One recent example of a property sold by Montague through a bidding process and land development agreement (LDA) is the town’s former highway garage at 100 Avenue A. At the same selectboard meeting where Pollock reported on the Montague City Village Center project, the board approved the completion of an LDA with Nova Real Estate, LLC for the renovation of the garage.

Peter Chilton, the manager of Nova Real Estate and co-owner of Nova Motorcycles on Second Street, reviewed 18 tasks required under the agreement including a new alarm system, a paint job, a new roof, handicapped-accessible toilets, LED lighting, and an upgrade of the electrical system so it can be connected with a solar array, due for construction next spring. Current tenants include building contractors, a car repair business, and two furniture companies.

Assistant town planner Walter Ramsey said he had confirmed the building upgrades on a visit accompanied by the town building inspector and the deputy Turners Falls fire chief. The selectboard approved the certificate of completion, which will be filed at the registry of deeds.

At the end of the November 20 meeting Pollock said she hoped to present VHB’s final report on the Farren site to the planning board and selectboard in February.

“That’s good,” said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz. “Somebody called me up and said ‘Well, it looks like they’ve got plans already done, set up for it,’ and I said that it is very early in the process, many more to go – and we don’t even actually have possession of the property yet!”



**NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD**

**Town Weighs Battery Intervention**

By JOSH HEINEMANN

On the evening of November 15, former member Dan Keller Zoomed into the Wendell selectboard’s meeting to urge the board to make Wendell an intervenor in the Department of Public Utilities (DPU)’s permitting process for New Leaf Energy’s proposed 100-megawatt lithium battery storage project.

Keller gave two main reasons. First, the batteries would sit on 11 acres, clearcut from an area of forested land in town considered critical habitat. Each battery unit would sit on a paved pad, and the facility would be illuminated, need air conditioning, and be surrounded by an eight-foot-tall concrete sound-mitigating wall, with that wall surrounded by a security fence.

Second, Keller argued, while battery storage is billed as a link to make intermittent wind or solar electricity available when it is needed, New Leaf’s project would not be directly associated with either; it would take electricity from the grid when it is cheap, far from where it is generated, and discharge it when it is expensive.

At the 2022 annual town meeting, Wendell citizens approved a zoning bylaw that would prohibit standalone battery projects. That bylaw was not accepted by the state attorney general.

At the same time as the selectboard was meeting, citizens, mostly from Wendell, were gathered at the Wendell meetinghouse under the moniker “No Assaultin’ Battery” to develop strategies for opposing the New Leaf project, or at least having some control over it.

Greenfield “sprawlbuster” Al Norman offered advice, caution, and information about lithium fires. He warned that the effort would be expensive for a group of volunteers, or a small town. New Leaf – a spinoff of Borrego LLC, acting as Wendell Energy Storage 1, LLC – has more money than the town, he said.

Norman also warned that lithium batteries sometimes catch fire, and that these fires spread faster than normal house, car, or wildland fires; they release toxic gases that stay close to the ground where they can poison firefighters, he explained, and a hazmat team is required to control them.

Keller told the selectboard he did not know how long it would take the nearest hazmat team to reach Wendell. He cautioned that the opportunity for the town to intervene is short, and that the process may be expensive – “tens of thousands, even up to \$100,000” – but he argued that the alternative is to let the project go through as described by New Leaf’s 400-page application without any town input.

As a private group, No Assaultin’ Battery may also become a recognized intervenor, but as it is not a town, it may not appeal a decision. Keller said the town of Carver attempted to intervene in a similar project, but the DPU overruled its objection.

Before he left, Keller said he missed seeing everyone. “I don’t think there is any other town around that can match this level of teamwork and cooperation,” he said.

Selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato said she did not think New Leaf had done any more outreach than send the town the 400-page application. (A copy is at the library.) She said she would consult with the planning board, conservation commission, and Bill Stubblefield, a Leverett resident and advocate for forest integrity.

DiDonato also suggested the town contact state senator Jo Comerford about questions Wendell had sent to the Massachusetts Emergency Management agency about the project that had not yet been answered.

Town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad said he would call town counsel the following day to learn the process, deadline, and cost for the town becoming an official intervenor.

**Bridge Split, Water Bids**

Phil Delorey, the town’s project manager, said Gill Engineering is approved for design work on the Farley Road bridge between Erving and Wendell, but that the company does not want to bill each town separately. Erving town administrator Brian Smith is happy to let Wendell administer the design phase, Delorey is willing to do that work, and the company is willing to receive a check from each town.

Wendell has experience sharing expenses with New Salem on the

PFAS mitigation at Swift River School, and had a good experience with Gill Engineering with the design of the Kentfield Road bridge replacement.

Johnson-Mussad reported that Wendell’s present water operator, Housatonic Water Works, changed its intention about no longer serving the town and put in a bid to do the work full-time: \$150 per month, plus \$30 per month for testing.

Whitewater Water and Wastewater Solutions, the water operator at Swift River School, had not yet returned Johnson-Mussad’s call. He said that Housatonic’s offer was *à la carte*.

Selectboard member Gillian Budine said she was concerned that she did not know what is required of the town. The board postponed a decision on the contract to wait for more bids.

**Mechanical Reproduction**

Johnson-Mussad has also been pursuing options to replace or fix the photocopier at the town office building, which he said still works, but is “limping along.” Though Baker Office Supply closed its Greenfield shop, its office-machine department is still in operation, and quoted the town \$3,200 for a new machine expected to last ten years.

A second vendor said that machine would be more than Wendell needs, and that designs are changing so quickly that a small essential part breaking could put the whole machine out of service.

Johnson-Mussad said he thought the decision of renting or leasing a machine might benefit from the finance committee’s input, but selectboard member Paul Doud said he figured three years of renting would be the cost of a new machine.

Treasurer Carolyn Manley added that the cost of toner can vary considerably. Baker appears to be the only outfit willing to travel to Wendell for service.

**Other Business**

The selectboard appointed Beth Leeland to the website committee and accepted the library’s declaration of reportedly outdated computer equipment as surplus property. Johnson-Mussad said the equipment had no cash value, and it will go to

WRATS electronic recycling.

Citizens Tom Mangan and Shawn Jarrett, who have been advocating for the restoration of container redemption at the WRATS, came for a good part of the meeting without taking much time to speak.

Mangan objected to wording of the minutes of the November 1 meeting. Selectboard recording secretary Cynthia Bolling agreed to change it to say the board had asked the pair to consider questioning the legality of two proposals sent to the state ethics commission. Mangan agreed to assist the WRATS assistant with paperwork, if asked, about the ethics application.

At the annual town meeting in May, Wendell residents voted to allow non-US citizens to vote in town elections, and to serve on elected and appointed boards. A

home-rule petition reflecting this policy has been languishing in the state legislature. Senator Comerford’s office has asked to review the wording of the article.

The board agreed not to meet November 29, a fifth Wednesday this month, and to meet the following Wednesday, December 6.

**And Then**

On November 21 Timothy Vreeland, an environmental analyst in the drinking water division of the state Bureau of Water Resources, sent Wendell an official email stating that the water emergency at Swift River School has been terminated. The school must submit a report on the emergency response within 30 days of getting the email. Students, faculty, staff, and visitors can now safely drink the water at school.

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Wendell Depot Station, built in 1849 and demolished in 1942.

**HISTORY** from page A1

The woman who ran the small post office and luncheonette, Anny Hartjens, retired in 2012, and the post office closed operations in 2019. When Anny died in 2022, her daughter Kristina Hartjens put the building on the market and held an estate sale. Hines asked Kristina to hold onto any Wendell historical materials from the estate, and when he went to the sale he saw that the building had potential for a location for a historical organization.

Things happened quickly after that. Hines and fellow board member Pam Richardson went to look at the building. It was old and would need a lot of work. "I decided this building needs a lot of love," Hines told me. "Most contractors wouldn't go near it!"

A building tour was scheduled with local Wendell contractor Alistair MacMartin, and Hines said they "decided that we could do something here – it had good bones, and the fundamentals were good." He and Richardson concluded it would work for the town's first Historical Society. They quickly formed a team and, with real estate agent Jennifer Gross, made an offer on the building; the \$45,000 deal closed in July 2023.

"We worked it as a team effort," Hines said with a smile. The Society's new board of directors named Hines as president and Richardson as director, with Joyce Flynn, Jackie Hunt, Joseph Coll, and Florrie Blackbird holding other duties.

A historical society is different

from a town's historical commission. A commission is a part of the town government, and is subject to town funding and rules; there is no fundraising; any monies have to come from a town meeting warrant. But the independent Wendell Historical Society can raise funds, get donations, and be, well, independent.

And fundraising is what this Society has been doing since that July 2023 building purchase!

"The good people of Wendell, as well as former residents – over 100 folks – and businesses have chipped in," Hines explained. The list of businesses include Greenfield Savings Bank, Pete's Tire Barn, Hamshaw Lumber, Stamell Stringed Instruments in Amherst, John's Paint Store, Sparky's Tree Service, and, as always, Dean's Beans. The newly revived Wendell Full Moon Coffeehouse dedicated proceeds from its first concert of the season to the cause. Fundraising will be ongoing.

On the Society website the group's stated mission is "to establish a permanent home for the preservation of the history of Wendell. Our goal is to make that history available to the public in conventional and innovative ways." Hines told me that the group's work is for the benefit of the town and the surrounding area. Offerings will include enrichment programs, including a One Room Schoolhouse program, genealogy research, and small classes taught by professionals.

Besides access to these resources, there will be a gift shop with cre-

ations by local artists, concerts, and events, Hines said, adding that the deed to the building requires that there be a retail component on site.

The renovations are ongoing. I asked Hines about the energy and heating sources for the building. "We'll have an oil burner, and a few mini-splits and humidity controls," was the reply.

I asked if volunteers were needed to do some of the finish work on the building. "Always and always!" he answered. "Archival work is especially needed!" It has not been decided yet whether the store will be staffed by volunteers.

And what if someone has something they believe may be of interest to the Society? Donate "anything and everything!," Hines exclaimed. He retrieved a brick he found in the basement of the building; through some sleuthing, he found it was from a brick company in New Hampshire that had perhaps traveled down the railway line to Wendell.

"What excites me is the history of that area," he said of Wendell Depot. "Love this town!" Donated objects need not be from Wendell to be included, as long as they are deemed suitable by the Society.

The board of directors expects the building to be completely renovated sometime in 2024. The old post office side of the building, which will become the museum, will likely open a bit sooner than the store.

The Wendell Historical Society will be open year round at 466 Wendell Depot Road. Hines said he feels "we are at an advantage in location: on the Millers River, just off the Mohawk Trail/Route 2 and the old rail line." So maybe Wendell Depot can be a happening place once again!

*If you have some artifacts, materials, or information to share, or wish to donate funds, volunteer, or just learn more about the project, go to [wendellhistoricalsociety.org](http://wendellhistoricalsociety.org) or email [info@wendellhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@wendellhistoricalsociety.org). The group is also on Facebook as "Wendell Historical Society – MA." Donations can be mailed to the Wendell Historical Society at PO Box 941, Wendell, MA 01379.*



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IMAGES COURTESY OF THE WENDELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The interior of the store before it was purchased by the Historical Society (left) and one month after (right).

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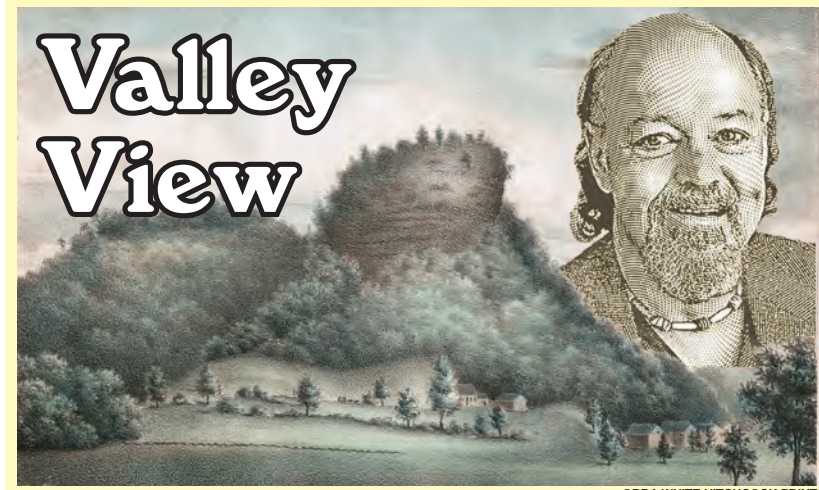
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Above: Part of the bell collection at Leverett Elementary School, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Durant in 1983.



## Valley View

By GARY SANDERSON

**GREENFIELD** – It was 10 a.m., the Sunday before Thanksgiving, rays of blinding sunlight penetrating naked hardwoods from the source low in a partly cloudy southeastern sky.

I was parked beside a strong metal gate barring the south end of a long-ago discontinued county road born as in Indian trail. There I had reluctantly agreed to meet three members of a local town historical society and a couple from a neighboring town – three women, two men – and lead them to a hidden, Native American upland ceremonial complex I discovered more than a decade ago.

With the sun to guide me through dense forest, a compass in my pocket (just in case), and a cold southern breeze to keep us refreshed on our uphill trek of a mile or more, I was confident I could find our objects of interest – a balanced rock and ancient stone structure with a spring hole in between. Including the circuitous route I intended to hike back to our vehicles, I'd estimate a round trip of three miles or more.

Buried high and deep in vast forest I used to hunt and explore, I found the site more than 10 years ago, when it immediately became the topic of *Native Insight*, a weekly local-history column I wrote for the *Greenfield Recorder*. Accompanying that piece were alluring photos of the balanced rock and, better still, the associated man-made stone structure even Indians had forgotten. I did not photograph the spring hole bubbling up from a ravine because I had known it for years as a watering hole and didn't view it as remarkable.

The photos created a stir, eliciting email queries from untrained curiosity seekers and credentialed Native American scholars alike. They all wanted to learn more about the site, and were disappointed by my stubborn unwillingness to pinpoint its location, a refusal I still honor. In my mind, some places should remain secret, especially spiritual Native American sites.

Though I had known the balanced rock since stumbling in awe

upon it as a teenage deer hunter, the stone structure was new and very exciting. I made my discovery soon after reading *Manitou: The Sacred Landscape of New England's Native Civilization*, a classic by Byron Dix and James Mavor. I suspected I'd find something up there, and my hunch immediately bore succulent fruit.

Since that day of discovery my goal has been to preserve and protect a potential treasure trove, which is not a function of newspaper publicity unless presented through a cryptic vein. So, I have kept the location of this sacred hunter-gatherer shrine under wraps, despite yearning to find an expert I could trust to respect confidentiality while aging and analyzing it. My own layman's belief is that the manmade feature dates back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century at a minimum, and perhaps millennia earlier. Thus, my protective vow.

My first objective was to figure out what purpose the stone structure had served, situated on a ridgetop knoll with a panoramic view. Facing south with a slight eastern lean, it looked like a throne, framed by heavy rectangular armrest stones on two sides and backed by a remarkably intact, yet potentially tenuous, four-foot cairn steeping to the heavens.

But what was it? That was my dilemma, and back then Native American study was relatively new to me.

To find answers I searched the Internet for an email address at which I could query expert James Gage, who with his mother Mary has published a lot of material about Native American stone structures in the Northeast. I was confident he would offer insight, if not positively identify what I had found.

Gage knew precisely what he was looking at. His immediate response identified it as a Native American prayer seat in a remarkable state of preservation. He opined that it must be hidden away from beaten paths to remain in such extraordinary condition. Even its cairn was miraculously intact. His observations, coupled with the site's location high and

see **VALLEY VIEW** page B4

## EXHIBIT Breaking the Stigma of Recovery

By MO SCHWEIGER

**GREENFIELD** – A photorealistic portrait of a rooster, a quilt of interlocking hearts, and a taxidermied duck are just a few of the works of art on display at The Recover Project's exhibition at Artspace Greenfield, *C.R.E.A.T.E: Creativity in Recovery Expressed Artistically Through Our Experience*. The show opened on November 17 and features work done primarily by Recover Project peers who are members of the Project's Art Guild, a cohort of community members supporting each other in their recovery from addiction through art.

"There's so much work that goes into recovery: to have joy in recovery is what makes it all worth it," volunteer peer leader and exhibition co-coordinator Kemah Wilson tells the *Reporter*. "I have had art shows before and I remember my first one. I want other people to experience that feeling too."

Wilson is the leader of the Art Guild of the Recover Project and has two sets of photographs included in the Artspace exhibition. "A lot of people in recovery don't know how to socialize – the Art Guild has really helped with my isolation," she says, reflecting on the ways that the organization has helped "empower and encourage" her throughout her recovery. "There is no judgment; we're all just peers who want to stay in recovery, and help the next person get into recovery."

Artspace became involved with the project after members of the Franklin County Opioid Task Force learned about the Art Guild and reached out to its leaders. The ongoing community-building work of the Guild coupled with the volume of art being created through its programming made this show a natural fit for the space, says Artspace office manager Jillian Henry. "We try our best to reach out to other community organizations, as well as host folks who may have never had a show before," she told the *Reporter*, emphasizing the importance



Beautiful Decay, mixed-media sculpture by Shannon Guin.

of showcasing work by artists with a diversity of backgrounds in the space.

"What's important about this is how much art in our community is made as a way to learn and grow, like therapy. To show someone else's experiences in the gallery, so that visitors can see how people use art to process, is important to us," Henry elaborated.

Shannon Guin, a recovery coach supervisor whose

see **RECOVERY** page B5



## Coastal Mississippi: White sands and fun, father and son.

**SOUTH DEERFIELD** – Last week we spent time in a part of the world that I bet few of my Massachusetts readers have seen: Mississippi's beautiful white sand coast. The area between Bay St. Louis and Pascagoula is famous for many

things, including 42 contiguous miles of beach, fancy big-name casinos, fun small towns with one-story homes, unique boutiques, and funky dives. The most significant towns here are Gulfport and Biloxi, with Ocean Springs, Pass Christian, Bay

St. Louis, Long Beach, and some smaller towns comprising the remaining 62-mile-long Gulf coast.

I travel about once a month, but this domestic trip was a massive bonus: I brought along my 39-year-old son, Sam, to take in the sights and act as my navigator on the trip. Spending five days together, sharing the drives, the meals, and the activities, made this trip special to me. I think I talked with Sam more than I've ever spoken with him in the past ten years. I feel your pain, people who only see their adult children a few times a year.

We flew into Gulfport, Mississippi. The city has a population of about 77,000, and the airport is a breeze, even easier to get in and out of than my beloved home

see **TRAVELS** page B5



Route 90 connects all of Coastal Mississippi.



# Pet of the Week



## “ERNIE”

“Rawr! I have the spirit of a lion in my heart, and it makes me want to roam and hunt. Do you appreciate a hunter? I need more adventure and activity than an indoor cat. If I am not allowed outdoors, then I will get into trouble. If you want to add a feisty feline with a lot of personality, spunk and adventure to your life, then I’m the one for you!”

With his baby blue eyes, Ernie is handsome, handsome, handsome. He has a deep connection with the outdoors. We feel he would do best

as an indoor-outdoor cat.

We also suspect that Ernie may be deaf. Staff will be happy to discuss his condition further with you.

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

Want your pet featured? Email a photo and information about them to [jae@montaguereporter.org](mailto:jae@montaguereporter.org).

## Senior Center Activities DECEMBER 4 THROUGH 8

### WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Jonathan von Ranson at (978) 544-3758.

### ERVING

Open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 am to 3 p.m. Daily snacks and coffee. Fitness room and pool table open.

Nurse and blood pressure clinic is the first Tuesday of each month, Second Tuesday is Toe Nail Clip. Veterans’ Services are the first Wednesday of each month. First Thursday is Brown Bag pick-up.

### Monday 12/4

9 a.m. Interval Workout  
10 a.m. Seated Dance  
12 p.m. Pitch Card Group

### Tuesday 12/5

9 a.m. Good For U Workout  
10 a.m. Line Dancing  
11 a.m. Social Stringers

### Wednesday 12/6

9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning  
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics  
11:30 a.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo

### Thursday 12/7

9 a.m. Barre Fusion  
10 a.m. Pilates Flow

### Friday 12/8

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

### GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Cen-

ter, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Lunch available Tuesday through Thursday. For more information please call 863-9357.

### Monday 12/4

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
1 p.m. Kitchen Club  
5 p.m. Death Cafe  
**Tuesday 12/5**  
9 a.m. Chair Yoga  
10 a.m. Zumba Lite  
3 p.m. Tai Chi  
**Wednesday 12/6**  
9 a.m. VA Agent  
9:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo  
4:15 p.m. Mat Yoga  
**Thursday 12/7**  
9 a.m. MSW Help  
by appointment  
1 p.m. Pitch  
1 p.m. Five Crowns  
**Friday 12/8**  
10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
2 p.m. Chair Dance

### LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held on Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom. Foot care clinic is held monthly.

For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 2, or [coa@leverett.ma.us](mailto:coa@leverett.ma.us).

## DECEMBER LIBRARY LISTING

### Montague Public Libraries

Turners Falls: Carnegie (413) 863-3214  
Montague Center (413) 367-2852  
Millers Falls (413) 659-3801

Erving Public Library (413) 423-3348

Gill: Slate Library (413) 863-2591

Leverett Public Library (413) 548-9220

Northfield: Dickinson Library (413) 498-2455

Wendell Free Library (978) 544-3559

### MONTAGUE

**Multiple days: Art Exhibit.** “Moonlight magic,” illustrations by Jeanne Weintraub-Mason. Montague Center.

**Multiple days: Grab & Go Bags.** Science: shadow puppet. Craft: pasta necklace. Free kits at all branches while supplies last.

**Friday, December 1: Letters to Santa.** Free kits at Carnegie while supplies last. Return your letter by December 8.

**Saturday, December 2: Used Book Sale.** Fiction, paperbacks, kids’ books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks. Hundreds of recent donations. Carnegie, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Saturdays, December 2, 9, and 30: Saturday Story Time.** Jump-start early literacy for preschoolers. Carnegie, 10 a.m.

**Every Wednesday: LEGO at the Library.** Carnegie, 3 to 4:30 p.m.

**Every Thursday: Playgroup.** Guided and free play for preschoolers, older siblings welcome. Carnegie, 10 a.m.

**Thursdays, December 7 and 21: Great Stories Club** for teens. Free books, snacks. Brick House, 3 p.m.

**Saturday, December 9: Wreath Making Workshop.** Millers Falls, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

**Monday, December 11: Friends of MPL Meeting.** All welcome. Email [vgatvalley@gmail.com](mailto:vgatvalley@gmail.com) for more info. Carnegie, 5:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, December 12: Community Forum Online.** Love the Montague Libraries? Join us to discuss the future of the Carnegie. We are applying for state funding to expand the Carnegie building or build a new library in downtown Turners Falls. Register at [montaguepubliclibraries.org](http://montaguepubliclibraries.org). Zoom, 6 to 7 p.m.

**Wednesday, December 13: Community Forum In-Person.** Presentation followed by reception, chat with library director and trustees. Refreshments. Discovery Center, 6 to 8 p.m.

**Wednesday, December 13: Orienteering with Zeke.** For ages 8 to 10. Meet outside Discovery Center, noon to 4 p.m. Rain date December 16.

**Thursday, December 14: Hot Chocolate Social.** Millers Falls, 3 to 4 p.m.

**Saturday, December 16: Make a Gingerbread House.** For children of all ages and their caregivers. Supplies provided: empty milk cartons, graham crackers, and candies. Discovery

Center, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, December 20: Author Series.** Stories of Light, multiple readers. Refreshments provided. Montague Center, 6 p.m.

### ERVING

**All Month: Art Exhibit,** photography by Phyllis Stone.

**Every Wednesday: After-school Activities.** Ages 5 to 11. 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

**Sunday, December 10: Friends’ Puzzle Swap.** All ages, no puzzle required. 1 to 3 p.m.

**Sunday, December 10: Genealogy Drop-in Help.** 1 to 3 p.m.

**Sunday, December 17: Friends’ Craft Day.** Materials provided, RSVP req’d, 1 p.m.

**Sunday, December 17: Art Exhibit Reception,** Phyllis Stone photography. 2 to 3:30 p.m.

**Thursday, December 21: Forest Health Lecture Series,** Nicole Keleher on causes of local deforestation. 5:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, December 27: All-Abilities Social: BINGO.** Food provided. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Thursday, December 28: All-Abilities Social: BINGO.** Food provided. 5 to 7 p.m.

**Thursday, December 28: Book Club Year-End Party.** Door prizes, light refreshments. 5:30 p.m.

### LEVERETT

**All Month: Art Exhibit,** photographs by Annie Tiberio.

**Every Saturday: Tai Chi.** Free classes, all welcome. Intermediate to advanced 10 a.m., beginners 11 a.m.

**Every Monday and Wednesday: Online Qigong.** Free, all welcome. See [leverettlibrary.org](http://leverettlibrary.org) or email [CommunityQigong@gmail.com](mailto:CommunityQigong@gmail.com) for info. 10:30 a.m.

**Every Wednesday: Playgroup,** for children ages 0 to 5 and their caregivers. See [leverettlibrary.org](http://leverettlibrary.org) or email [budine@erving.org](mailto:budine@erving.org) for info. 10:30 a.m.

**Every Thursday: Play Mahjongg.** Beginners welcome. 1:15 to 3:30 p.m.

**Saturday, December 9: Book Talk.** Christian McEwen reads from her new book *In Praise of Listening*. 1 p.m.

### NORTHFIELD

**Every Tuesday: Drop-in Knitting.** Join fellow knitters and crocheters to chat and share projects. 6 to 8 p.m.

**Every Wednesday: Musical Storytime.** Lively, enriching, and multicultural. For ages 1 to 5 and their caregivers. 10 a.m.

**Saturday, December 2: Perspectives from Richardson Overlook.** Local poet bg Thurston; naturalists Sam and Barbara Richardson. 1 to 3 p.m.

**Wednesday, December 6: Readers’ Choice.** Nita Prose, *The Maid*. Pick up a copy at the library. 10 a.m.

**Thursday, December 7: Spice Club pickup starts.** Stop in for a sample and suggested recipes while supplies last; look for a new spice every month.

**Saturday, December 2: Puzzle Swap.** Dozens of puzzles for kids and adults. For info, email [friendsofdmi01360@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofdmi01360@gmail.com). 10 to 11:30 a.m.

**Wednesday, December 13: Readings Group.** Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*. Pick up a copy at the library. 3 p.m.

**Thursday, December 14: Environmental Awareness Group.** Essays: *The World as We Knew It: Dispatches from a Changing Climate*. Pick up a copy at the library. 6:30 p.m.

**Thursday, December 14: Environmental Awareness Group.** Essays: *The World as We Knew It: Dispatches from a Changing Climate*. Pick up a copy at the library. 6:30 p.m.

**Saturday, December 16: Online: Boston Tea Party, 250 Years Later.** What problems were brewing; how to trace genealogy from this era. To register and receive Zoom link email [dmemlib@gmail.com](mailto:dmemlib@gmail.com). 2 p.m.

### WENDELL

**Every Friday: LEGO club.** 4 to 5 p.m.

**Every Saturday: StoryCraft.** Picture book read-aloud and connected craft. Story at 10:30 a.m., drop in til 2:30 for the craft.

**Every Sunday: Yoga.** All levels, pay what you can. 10 a.m.

**Every Tuesday: Art Group.** 5 p.m.

**Every Wednesday: Matinee Movie.** 4 p.m.

**Friday, December 8: Home-school Hangout.** 10:30 a.m.

**Friday, December 8: Office Hours** with state rep. Aaron Saunders. 2 p.m.

**Saturday, December 9: Decorate a Gingerbread Cookie** baked by Diemand Farms. Registration req’d. 10:30 a.m. to noon.

**Tuesday, December 12: Make a Hand-Felted Gift.** Wet and needle felting for all ages. 4 to 6 p.m.

**Tuesday, December 12: Tech time,** by appt., 4:30 p.m.

**Saturday, December 16: Meet Boulder the Therapy Dog.** 1 p.m.

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# EXHIBITS

**Rendezvous, Turners Falls:** *Lisa Beskin*, underwater photography. Through December.

**Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls:** *Junior Duck Stamps*. See the top youth entries for the 2023 Junior Duck Stamp competition. This statewide art contest, for students from kindergarten to high school, highlights the importance of preserving wetland habitats and the delights of wildlife. Make your own duck stamp at the investigation station in the Great Hall. December 6 through January 16.

**LOOT, Turners Falls:** *Paintings and Prints* by Amy Chilton. Colorful geometric paintings and fine art prints. Through February.

**Artspace Greenfield:** *Creativity in Recovery Expressed Artistically Through Our Experience (C.R.E.A.T.E.)*. Artwork and writing by the Recover Project's Peer Mentor Group. Through December 23. (See article, Page B1.)

**LAVA Center, Greenfield:** *Fourth Annual Community Art Show*, through December. *Climate Crisis Photography Exhibit*, photos taken in the Connecticut River Valley and the hill towns, through December.

**Leverett Crafts & Arts Center, Leverett:** *Holiday Store and Open Studios*. Mudpie potters

and resident artists plus work from a few "local friends." First two weekends in December.

**Gallery A3, Amherst:** *Small Wonders*, small-scale works by members of the gallery, through December 30. Opening reception next Thursday, December 7 at 5 p.m.

**A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton:** *Microworks 23*. Extra-small works by over 120 artists who have shown at the gallery over the past 40-plus years. Through December 22. Reception next Friday, December 8, from 5 to 8 p.m.

**Art in the Hall, Shelburne Falls:** *The Antique Future*, Christin Couture's long, narrow, surreal landscape paintings in battered vintage frames. Through December. By appointment at [redtidebluefire@gmail.com](mailto:redtidebluefire@gmail.com).

**Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls:** *Peace, Joy, and Art*, group show by member artists. Through January.

**Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls:** *On the Land*, paintings by Charles Malzenski, and *Bright Suspensions*, window hangings and mobiles by George Reynolds. Through December.

**D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield:** *As They Saw It: Women Artists Then and Now*, over 60 works by women artists spanning three centuries. Through January 14.



## EVENT REPORT

# How to Ruin the Holidays

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

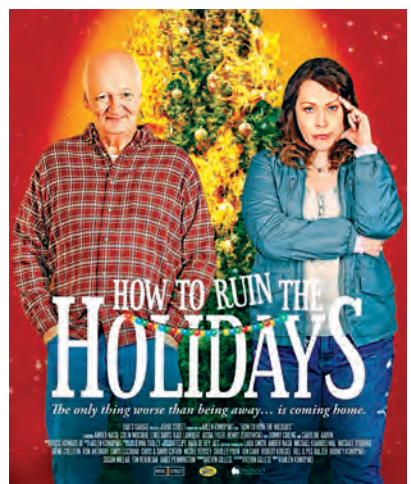
**GREENFIELD** – I am not what you would call a huge fan of comedies. But I have liked the question-and-answer sessions with movies that the Greenfield Garden Cinema has done in the past. So one on November 12, a screening of the movie *How to Ruin the Holidays* with Nikki Stier Justice, an indie studio executive connected to the film, made me interested.

*How to Ruin the Holidays* is about a comedian, played by Amber Nash, hesitantly returning home to deal with her eccentric family for the holidays. Amber ends up having to make a life-changing decision involving her special needs brother.

At this point in the film, she is frustrated with her career, which hasn't gone anywhere great, and at times she finds her family equally frustrating. Her father, played by Colin Mochrie, is the most frustrating out of the three members of her family to her, I believe. She seems to have all-right relationships with her brother and sister.

This film was all right to see. There are even a couple of sweet moments in it. One moment in the film reminded me of a scene out of *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.

The Q&A ended up turning into an exclusive interview for me with Nikki Stier Justice, whose official title is Head of Distribution for Buffalo 8, an independent studio which produced the film. I got tons of questions answered by her.



"I helped start the distribution arm of the company in 2021," she said. "My husband brought me the movie. He is an executive producer on it. I thought it was really funny, but I loved the message of acceptance."

As for more background on the movie, she said "the writer entered a writing contest with the script of this movie." It took over a year to raise the money for it. It was inspired by the writer's relationship with his brother. "He was a semifinalist for the Los Angeles International Screenplay Award concerning the screenplay," she told me. Five theaters have screened the movie so far. A quote appeared at the beginning saying "At Christmastime, all roads lead home." I believe that connects with a struggling comedian going home to her family for Christmas.

I won't say what the family goes through in this film. But in the end, Amber's comedy career seems to be going all right, and the siblings are all right too.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

# Gaggle of Turkeys; Connecticut Plates; Fish Alarm; Elevator Trap; Asbestos Suspected; Silver Chain Gone; Two Unhappy Customers; Free Brown Leather Couch

**Monday, 11/13**

11:19 a.m. Greenfield PD advising of a disabled vehicle on the Turners Falls side of the General Pierce Bridge. White Bronco with New Hampshire plate.

Driver of vehicle outside directing traffic. Officer requesting Rau's; back right tire completely off. Rau's unavailable. Koch's available; 30 to 45 minute ETA. Goly's en route.

12:31 p.m. Caller states that someone drove over a manhole cover on Turnpike Road. DPW advised. DPW fixed. Six additional phone calls reporting manhole cover has come off again. DPW advised.

12:39 p.m. Walk-in stated that his mother went to Food City at 9:30 a.m. and didn't return home. Officers attempting to locate. Contact made. Son will drive her car home.

1:15 p.m. Vehicle repossessed from Franklin County Technical School; being stored in Springfield.

2:24 p.m. Caller states that someone hit her car at Newton and Franklin Streets then drove away. Report taken.

**Tuesday, 11/14**

6:56 a.m. Burglar alarm at Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center. Keyholder has reset already.

7:34 a.m. Chief Williams assisting with a motor vehicle accident at the intersection on the Gill side of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Chief providing courtesy transport to Tech School.

10:24 a.m. Walk-in has video footage of vandalism inside his business (Third Street Laundry). Officer will review footage and follow up.

2:25 p.m. Walk-in reporting a gaggle of turkeys running around in the road, along with a goose, at Turnpike Road and Walnut Street. Area checked; no wild turkeys in the roads.

7:36 p.m. A 33-year-old Montague woman was arrested on a straight warrant.

9:03 p.m. Caller from Randall Road states that she came home to find a car parked in her driveway that does not belong to them or their neighbors. Car has Connecticut plates. Officer advises that the neighbor has a guest over.

10:02 p.m. Caller stated that two male parties have been asked to leave the premises at Nouria and are unwilling. Referred to an officer.

11:52 p.m. 911 caller from L Street states his upstairs neighbors are fighting, yelling at each other, and it sounds like it's physical. States it happens a lot and his grandparents can't

sleep. Advised of complaint. Not as reported: the building echoes, and everyone was laughing and talking upon officer's arrival.

**Wednesday, 11/15**

7:58 a.m. Shelburne Control advising of a hit and run accident near Industrial Boulevard; a school bus with no passengers was struck by another vehicle. Vehicle that struck bus turned around and came back to the scene; was speaking with bus driver upon officers' arrival. Report taken.

7:33 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road states she was notified of a skunk in her garage and she is not able to get home from work until after 11 p.m. Referred to an officer.

8:22 p.m. Report of threatening/harassment by neighbor on Montague Avenue. Caller wants incident on record for now.

9:37 p.m. Caller states that he was walking past a building on Third Street and heard two kids scream and then a loud noise. The front and back doors are now open. He believes that no one is living there. Officers confirmed front door is ajar. Building checked; no one inside; unable to gain entry upstairs. Officers secured doors as best as possible.

**Thursday, 11/16**  
6:52 a.m. Received business line call from male party who states that he is a fish biologist at the Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center and accidentally set off the alarms. Shortly after this call, the alarm company called requesting dispatch for an alarm. Alarm company called back advising to cancel response.

7:31 a.m. 911 caller states that a silver Van Pool bus was driving at a high rate of speed with kids on board on Millers Falls Road. Unable to locate.

11:56 a.m. Walk-in from Senn Excavating states that one of their company trucks was vandalized overnight. Report taken.  
1:22 p.m. Caller concerned about two women who are going door to door on Third Street looking for people who speak Spanish. Parties looking for someone named Carlos. They were advised of the complaint and moved along.  
2:45 p.m. 911 caller from K Street reporting that a female was just attacked by a dog and was bitten. Her own dog was also bitten. PD responding; ambulance started by Shelburne Control. TFFD received signed patient refusal for transport. Victim's girlfriend called in to check on status of dog's rabies vac-

cine. States victim brought her dog to the vet, where they put it down, and the vet suggested she get a rabies vaccine. Advised officer was verbally told that the dog was up to date; we do not have records at this time. Greenfield PD advising dog is not registered with them. Contacted by BFMC ER staff looking for dog's vaccine status. Again advised we do not have records. Report taken.  
8:54 p.m. 911 caller from Millers Falls Road reporting motorcycle accident in front of her house. Has happened before; male party will take off prior to officer's arrival. Caller states an EMT lives next door and is attempting to block the road. Negative injuries at this time. Motorcycle gone on arrival.

9:18 p.m. Caller from Third Street states his neighbor is accusing him of touching her door and her thermostat. They share a porch at the residence. On record at this time per landlord request.

**Friday, 11/17**

7:28 a.m. 911 caller stuck in elevator at Northeast Foundation for Children; none of the buttons are working; door won't open. FD responding.

11:52 a.m. Caller states that a man is blowing leaves from the sidewalk next to St. Kaz into the road, creating a travel hazard. Male party advised of complaint and has agreed to clean up the leaves.

1:22 p.m. Report of minor motor vehicle accident in Franklin Area Survival Center parking lot. Investigated.

1:55 p.m. Montague animal inspector requesting to speak with an officer about the quarantine of an animal on K Street. Instructions and paperwork served in hand.

2:51 p.m. Caller from Maple Street concerned about a neighboring property where caller believes they are throwing asbestos into the backyard and the dust is going everywhere. Officer requesting board of health be notified as well as town building department. Building inspector aware. He will contact resources needed as well.

5:11 p.m. Two-car accident at Route 63 and Gunn Road. No injuries, no fluids. Both vehicles still on scene. Citation issued.

**Saturday, 11/18**

2:45 a.m. 911 caller from Green Pond Road states that a female party took his expensive silver chain, along with his house keys and street bike keys, earlier in the night around 1:22 a.m. Officer attempting to make contact with involved female party. Report taken.

**Sunday, 11/19**

1:27 a.m. Walk-in states that they just drove into town from Montague Center and there is a dead deer in the middle of the road. They are concerned it might cause an accident. Deer located and pulled off the side of the road. Can wait until tomorrow and have day shift call DPW to pick it up.

11:17 a.m. Unhappy customer came into Turners Falls Pizza House to complain, started yelling, and then went outside and kicked an employee's car. Suspect Mirandized. Owner of Pizza House informed of trespassing options. Video footage obtained. Summons issued for malicious destruction of property worth over \$1,200.

**Monday, 11/20**

12:41 p.m. Officer flagged down at Seventh Street and Avenue A by a woman who stated that she was just threatened with a knife by a male party. Party took a statement form; does not want officer to speak to other person at this time. Advised of options.

**Tuesday, 11/21**

3:27 p.m. 911 caller states that there is a lot of smoke coming from a house on Turners Falls Road about a half mile south of Hatchery Road. Shelburne Control advised.

5:34 p.m. TFFD on scene at Wentworth Congregate Housing for a fire alarm activation. Control advises that someone pulled the master fire alarm because they wanted to speak to an officer. Officer advises that the involved male party locked himself out of his apartment and his cell phone is inside, which is why he pulled the alarm.

Building manager contacted; will be sending someone over to unlock the door.  
9:16 p.m. Officer requesting DPW come out and treat roads. DPW advised.

9:21 a.m. First of several reports of accidents: vehicle off road on Unity Street; car into guardrail on Greenfield Road; single-car accident at Greenfield and Randall Roads; second accident at same location while officer was on scene; vehicle into telephone pole on North Leverett Road.

**Wednesday, 11/22**

6:24 a.m. Shelburne Control advises they received several calls in regard to poor road conditions where MassDOT takes care of the roads. MassDOT advised of road conditions.

11:46 a.m. Caller states that her car was hit by another car while pumping gas at Nouria. Report taken.

10:14 p.m. 911 caller reporting threatening and harassment from parties  
see MPD next page

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## The Montague Reporter Podcast

### MPD from page B3

in Bernardston. Caller transferred to Shelburne Control to advise.

#### Thursday, 11/23

12:06 a.m. 911 caller from Green Pond Road states she heard a vehicle hit a deer in front of her house. Officer checked area: vehicle gone on arrival; deer located across street from house. Message left for DPW.

10:33 a.m. 911 caller reporting they were just in a motor vehicle accident at Millers Falls Road and Industrial Boulevard. Officer requesting tow for both vehicles.

4:25 p.m. Caller states there is a stray dog on the bridge on the bike path; dog is malnourished with no tags and no collar. Black dog with long legs. Officer requesting animal control officer; ACO off due to holiday. Officer transporting dog to VESH in South Deerfield. VESH will

take the dog.

#### Friday, 11/24

8:49 a.m. Caller from South High Street has noticed a green tarp by the walking path in the woods behind her apartment; she is unsure if someone is living under it. Officer reports tarp is secured to three trees with a rope as a canopy. Water and debris have collapsed the canopy, allowing it to hang to the ground. No one is living in or around the canopy. Caller advised.

12:21 p.m. Caller states that someone dumped a brown leather couch about 40 feet into the woods off the side of Plains Road. Message left for DPW.

1:19 p.m. 911 call reporting three-car accident on Federal Street. No injuries or fluids. Report taken.

4:04 p.m. A 32-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on two default warrants.

#### Saturday, 11/25

12:24 a.m. Caller reporting a missing dog,

"Gracie," a yellow lab with a multi-color collar with a box on it for the invisible fence. Caller is out driving around the Wentworth Avenue area at slow speeds if we get calls about a suspicious car in the area.

10:26 a.m. Caller from Rastallis Street would like officer to review footage of two men trying to break into their garage overnight. Nothing taken, destroyed, or damaged. Report taken.

#### Sunday, 11/26

11:56 a.m. 911 caller from Connecticut River Liquor and Wine states that there is a male party in a green hoodie threatening her with a stick and breaking things in the store. A 45-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested and charged with vandalizing property; disorderly conduct; assault with a dangerous weapon; and resisting arrest.



**VALLEY VIEW** from page B1 deep in upland forest, only intensified my internal vow to secrecy. I offered to show him the site but he politely declined, saying it was too far from his Massachusetts home on the North Shore.

Because of its south-south-east orientation, Gage thought the secluded throne may have been constructed for Native holy men performing shamanic summer-solstice-sunrise ritual. Though I accepted this interpretation at the time, and still believe it could have been a solstice seat, further research has led me to believe it may have been multi-functional in the Native American spiritual realm.

Perhaps its deep history dates back to the first Indigenous people to permanently settle our valley. Habitational customs found them changing residence among seasonal camps and villages focused on hunting/fishing/gathering and growing. Before thick forest covered our uplands, open tundra would have supported vast patches of lowbush blueberries for annual harvest and celebration. Perhaps the genesis of this site began with feasts and ceremonies celebrating bountiful berry harvests.

Then, as epochs passed and towering forests attracted upland game, the site may have become important fall hunting ground where the seat was occupied during harvest celebrations. Likewise, it could have been used during random visits by shaman seeking isolation chambers for vision quests, or male adolescents enduring spirit quests in seclusion. Yes, of course, solstice and/or equinox celebrations are possibilities as well.

The sad reality is that we will likely never know exactly what went on in this special place. I don't



SANDERSON PHOTO

The stone formation in a 2012 photo.

believe it was built by Boy Scouts, deer hunters, picnickers, or geocaching fanatics of the modern era. That just doesn't fit.

So why, you wonder, did I recently violate my solemn pledge to secrecy by showing it in recent weeks to a group of people I didn't know – and thus couldn't trust – including two perfect strangers? Have I not endangered the site?


Truth be told, I did indeed get cold feet coming down the stretch, and almost pulled out at the last minute upon learning that the aforementioned couple from a neighboring town would join us. When I raised alarm, I was assured that this man and woman could be trusted as dedicated protectors of Native American sites. Time will tell. I rolled the dice. I hope I didn't blunder.

I had previously shown the site to only three people, all of whom I knew could never find it without me. Times have changed. Most people, including some who accompanied me on our Sunday hike, carry cell

phones with GPS capabilities. With that in hand, wanderers have little fear of big woods.

That said, I guess it was time to pass the torch. I'm now 70 and, limping from athletic injuries, not what I once was physically. How many more times will my battered knees carry me to that high, lonesome hardwood ridge of whispering winds? How many more times do I want to hike there?

Hopefully the torch I passed won't ignite a destructive blast. I'd hate to be responsible for erasing another important window into our fertile valley's Indigenous people. Even more disturbing is the potentiality that the Pagan site could become associated with Christian evils and dubbed "Devil's Throne."

Such a Christian name would bother even a man like me from the tumultuous Sixties, who to this day still cranks up the volume to deafening decibels whenever Jerry Garcia sings "a friend of the Devil is a friend of mine." 



## Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

**SOUTH HADLEY** – As someone with a uterus who has recently turned 51, I am most definitely in the throes of perimenopause, with menopause in visible sight. Since this can eventually be a bewildering time for half of the population, I thought I'd share a bit of what I have experienced, as well as some resources and strategies for navigating this strange change of life.

Menopause technically happens when someone who menstruated has not had their period for twelve months. The average age for this is 51. What isn't as well-known is that once someone enters menopause, they are now technically in menopause for the rest of their life. Perimenopause is the two- to ten-year time period leading up to menopause, around ages 45 to 55, when folks may experience irregular menstruation and a host of 30 to 40 other "symptoms."

Two excellent recent books dive deeply into what is known thus far about menopause, as well as possible management techniques. *Hot and Bothered: What No One Tells You About Menopause* (2023) is a new book by journalist Jancee Dunn, who turned her investigative powers to menopause as she entered this time for herself. *Menopause*

*Boot Camp: Optimize Your Health, Empower Your Self, and Flourish as You Age* (2022) by Suzanne Gilbert-Lenz and Marjorie Korn is another excellent source.

The most well-known "symptoms" – symptoms is in quotes as these experiences are actually a normal part of a regular biological aging change – can include elements like hot flashes, weight gain (or gains and losses), brain fog, and increased mood variability.

I myself have only had a few hot flashes, which seemed to occur during an extremely stressful time. My hot flashes haven't felt so much like a "flash" but more like a steadily increasing "wave" of heat that lasts a few minutes, then gradually subsides.

Some people report having hot flashes the rest of their lives, so if these are bothersome, it may be worth investigating some solutions. Dunn recommends this free technique for managing hot flashes: practice "paced deep breathing" of about six or seven breaths a minute, along with positive self-talk such as "this will pass, I can handle this," and possibly sleeping "commando-style" if hot flashes show up while sleeping.

Perimenopause folks can notice

increased irritability before menstruation, or even occurring before menstruation would normally occur. But because periods can become irregular in perimenopause, some may go a few months between periods, yet still have some PMS-type symptoms in between. I can attest to this, as I have experienced what can only be described as chemical irritability and existential angst, which can go away just as mysteriously as it arises – without a period to mark it. Dunn recommends, based on research, that rebalancing household duties more equitably may help reduce some irritability.

Some of the other 30 or 40 "symptoms" that folks can experience include new aches and joint pain, brain fog, gravelly voices (due to Post-Menopausal Vocal Syndrome), physical sensations akin to bugs crawling on one's skin, thinning hair or hair loss, dry skin and other skin changes, depression, and urinary incontinence.

For my own hair thinning I have noticed that using Rogaine and Biotin regularly has been helpful, though it hasn't completely restored my hair to its previous semi-lustrousness. I also have noticed that my skin sensitivity has completely changed, and I can erupt in a red

face with just a drop of tequila or the wrong face product.

As far as the sexual health side of menopause, a local nurse practitioner and sex educator Evelyn Resh notes that 40% to 60% of post-menopausal folks experience atrophic vaginal symptoms. Resh has seen symptoms such as labial fusion, or even instances in which "labia minora completely vanish." Many folks don't report these changes and may not receive a gynecology appointment as often as they did earlier in life, missing opportunities to bring it up to health professionals.

Perimenopause can bring many difficult symptoms, including vaginal dryness or changes. According to the North American Menopause Society, 45% of postmenopausal folks find sex painful. There are many possible solutions to help maintain vaginal elasticity and comfort. Most of the solutions involved topical creams or suppositories that contain estrogen or other vitamins. Using a vibrator regularly helps maintain orgasmic quality and elasticity. As someone who actively practices what I write here, I have not noticed any significant changes in my own comfort.

For people who want to regain comfortable vaginal intercourse, using non-latex dilators, with professional instructions, can also help. Other strategies that can help vaginas and vulvas feel comfortable again include oral estrogen, DHEA

hormone inserts, laser therapy, CBD suppositories, and perhaps even Botox injected into bladder walls to reduce the urgency to urinate.

Please contact menopause specialists to develop a strategy for your own personal vaginal health.

For overall menopause health, according to Dunn, becoming or remaining physically active (averaging 30 minutes a day of cardio), ingesting 1,200 milligrams of calcium, and reducing or eliminating alcohol and nicotine can go a long way to help adjust to this new stage of life.

Many folks in menopause note that no longer having to worry about periods or pregnancy is incredibly stress-relieving, and in fact, can correlate with a new "Postmenopausal Zest" regarding sexual activity and life in general. While I am feeling a tad bit sad about eventually saying goodbye to my menses – and an unhappy hello to thinner hair and more sensitive skin – I am looking forward to not worrying about whether I need to carry pads with me.

*Stephanie Baird, LMHC is an OWL Facilitator, an EMDR consultant and psychotherapist, certified in Advancing Clinical Excellence in Sexuality (ACES), the author of EMDR Therapy and Sexual Health: A Clinician's Guide (2023), and encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health. She welcomes feedback and suggestions at sexmatters@montaguereporter.org.*

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**RECOVERY** from page B1

piece *Beautiful Decay* is featured in the show, expressed a similar sentiment, saying that she is grateful to Artspace for allowing the Project to showcase the work of Art Guild peers. "Art helps break down barriers, and the stigma of recovery," she tells the *Reporter*.

"This was a great opportunity to get out of my comfort zone artistically," Guin says about *Beautiful Decay*. The diorama is composed of local flora and fauna that Guin ethically sourced and pieced together. "I built it out of a bunch of little pieces that mean a lot to me to show that there is beauty in death," she says of the assemblage.

While all of the art in the exhibition was created by artists in recovery, the subject matter of the works varies. The show includes art of many themes and forms, includ-

*At right, from left to right: World War II Devotion, mixed media by Melinda Bragdon; Unreachable, acrylic on canvas by Hector Torres, Sr.; Alan/Island, mixed media by Dylan McGale; Acrylic Paint Pour Ladder, mixed media by Patrick Bucier; Aw Man, digital illustration on paper by Emma Sadowski; Untitled Painting 1 + 2 and Twilight Zone, acrylic on canvas by Torres; Reaching Up, photography series by Kemah Wilson.*

ing photographs about the changing seasons (*Reaching Up*, a photo series by Kemah Wilson), abstract art (*Twilight Zone* by Hector Torres, Sr.), and pottery (*Pottery Series* by Tara Kuzmeskus).

The Recover Project is a peer-led organization founded in 2003 whose guiding principle is that "people can and do recover from alcohol and drug addiction, and that competence and wisdom reside in those with lived experience." The Project, one of 10 recovery support centers funded by the state Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, offers a wide variety of programming to help build community and lift up individuals in recovery.

The Project's therapeutic offerings include daily meetings for anyone in recovery, one-on-one recovery coaching, and a grief circle. The organization also offers social activities like the Art Guild, including yoga, a garden-



SCHWEIGER PHOTOS



Pottery Series by Tara Kuzmeskus.

ing club, and a Dungeons & Dragons group, based on the idea that being in community with others is a pathway to recovery.

Liz Kaczor, a member of the Art Guild whose collages are featured in the exhibition, says that seeing her art on the walls of a gallery is "very satisfying and uplifting." Kaczor explained that being involved in the Guild and in touch with her community has improved her anxiety. "I feel wonderful that the people at the

Recover Project have really valued me as an individual and an artist," she shares.

The C.R.E.A.T.E. exhibition will be on view at Artspace, at 15 Mill Street in Greenfield, through December 23. Artspace's hours can be found at [artspacegreenfield.org](http://artspacegreenfield.org).

For more information about The Recover Project, visit [recoverproject.org](http://recoverproject.org).



**TRAVELS** from page B1

airport, BDL. Soon we were driving our rental car into the driveway of Huck's Cove, one of the funkier little eateries I've ever seen.

New Englanders can't imagine a place like this, with its worn, ramshackle exteriors, many crazy signs and banners, and behind the sprawling shack, the bayou with docks for boaters to come and dine. The food was not memorable, but the atmosphere sure was! Signs on the pier reminded us there is a \$2,000 fine for feeding the wild alligators.

Next, we'd get a chance to get a little closer to these giant reptiles when we met up with a man driving an airboat, just like in the old 1960s *Flipper* TV series. We were soon zipping over water and grass into a narrow channel of the Mississippi bayou. Our driver told us that the water was shallow because the region had had about one-third as much rain as usual this summer, which exposed the cypress trees' roots far more than in other years.

We learned that the outfit that offers these airboat tours, Gulf Coast Gator Ranch and Tours, also has a congregation of about 250 alligators, most of whom have names and distinct personalities. On our visit the alligators had just eaten their weekly dinner, so nearly every one was asleep in the mud when we walked by them on a walkway above the water.

**Ocean Springs**

Our accommodations for the first few nights were in the charming little town of Ocean Springs, population 18,000, famous for sprawling live oak with Spanish moss hanging down, little houses, and not nearly the number of chain restaurants you'd expect. No, here it's mom and pops all the way. Strong coffee from a tiny café called Bright Eyed Brew Company, run by Ryan Reaux, was an eye-opening treat before we enjoyed breakfast at Buzzy's Breakfast Downtown. One of my favorite things about the Deep South are grits and biscuits... we enjoyed plenty of them here and throughout our five-day trip, as well as plenty of seafood in many forms.

We stayed at two hotels without

**WEBSITES**

Find out more about the region  
[CoastalMississippi.com](http://CoastalMississippi.com)

Ocean Springs  
[OceanSprings.com](http://OceanSprings.com)

Gulfport  
[Gulfport.com](http://Gulfport.com)

a check-in desk, lobby, or any staff on the premises. They sent us the key code, and we checked into both the Beatnik Hotel in Ocean Springs and Hotel Whiskey in Pass Christian without meeting a soul. Forget about having your bed made or assistance in person; this is how so many of the hotels I stay in these days operate.

The people in Coastal Mississippi are excited about the revival of passenger rail service from Amtrak. Starting this year, barring any more complications, the new Mardi Gras Service route will operate from New Orleans to Memphis; the tracks run beside Route 90 along the Gulf, providing service to Bay St. Louis, Gulfport, Biloxi, and Pascagoula. This will mean residents here can take a train and, in 58 minutes, be in the Big Easy. It's a train with a helluva ocean view!

**The Fruit of the Sea**

The biggest catch on the coast here is Gulf shrimp. Locals say these are sweeter because they are harvested from saltwater, unlike much of the shrimp in the rest of the world grown in freshwater tanks. We discovered all the details about how shrimp are caught and harvested when we joined Captain Michael Moore on a Biloxi Shrimping trip, trawling just a few hundred yards off the coast.

We watched as the long net was put into the water, forced to drag the bottom by two steel plates. They brought the catch up and filled a little aquarium with what they took out of the net: tiny squid, whole shrimp (including their long tails), and some small fish. They took each one out and gave us the details of how they live and what they eat.

It was fascinating, and the two men cracked many jokes while ed-

ucating us about the shrimp business. Moore's side project is also interesting - he's raising baby oysters in a series of tanks so they can be grown in the waters of the Gulf.

Later that day it was time for a bit of culture, and for this we drove back to Ocean Springs to the Walter Anderson Museum of Art. Anderson, who lived from 1903 to 1965, was a fascinating artist; he painted pottery, spent much of his time painting alone on the barrier islands off the coast, and was a prolific artist. His style of folk art is captivating, and his work with his brothers, who ran Shearwater Pottery, is also outstanding. The Anderson Museum also has a room that resembles the late artist's studio, including paint-crusted walls.

Coastal Mississippi has an impressive event that brings over 10,000 classic cars to the region every October. It's called Cruisin' the Coast, one of the most significant car events of its kind, and it has been growing impressively since it first began 29 years ago.

Woody Bailey, Jr., a lifelong resident here, is the man behind this impressive event. The rule is that the classic cars must be 1989 or older, and the car owners travel all around the coast, making stops and getting stamps in their Cruisin' the Coast passports to win prizes and show off their beloved vehicles.

I met Woody at the bar of a beautiful old-time restaurant in Gulfport, the Half Shell Oyster House, and the first thing I did was order a dozen raw ones to slurp down. There is no seafood quite as satisfying as a freshly shucked oyster!

**A Massive Miniature**

There is so much more to do down here! We found the perfect rainy day to hang out when we visited an awe-inspiring attraction that just opened in June, the brainchild of two brothers who built dozens of Mississippi's Domino's Pizza shops. Glenn and Richard Mueller's childhood love was model trains, so they built "TrainTastic." A massive building in Gulfport houses one of the world's most extensive setups of model trains, from size G scale down to the tiny N scale trains.



Baby oysters being raised to be planted in envelopes in the Gulf.



TrainTastic has a dazzling huge display of model trains, and trains kids can ride.

The fun aspect of this massive train layout is that it's modeled precisely like the coast of Mississippi, with every store, park, and landmark faithfully included. Visitors push green buttons along the track to make little men lift miniature weights in a gym, and have bicycles spin around a park.

It's charming, and it goes on forever. Outside the buildings is a train big enough for kids to ride, and there is even a room here where kids can put together their own model train layouts using stacks of track, locomotives, and freight cars!

There is more, so much more, to see and enjoy here. From a new Mississippi Aviation Museum to

a Marine Mammal Rescue center, where you can touch dolphins and sea lions, to historic sites like the former home of the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, called Beauvoir. It used to be "the Secret Coast." It's no wonder that 14 million visitors enjoy this coast throughout the year - and now you know about it, too.

Max Hartshorne, a local travel editor, writes about traveling around our region and a little beyond. Max is the editor of *GoNOMAD Travel* and hosts the short-form *GoNOMAD Travel Podcast*, which you can hear at [anchor.fm/max-hartshorne](http://anchor.fm/max-hartshorne).



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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](mailto:spanish@montaguereporter.org).



## OPINIÓN

# Argentina: el triunfo del populismo de Milei.

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

**GREENFIELD** – El pasado 19 de noviembre se celebraron elecciones presidenciales en Argentina en las que el candidato libertario ultraconservador, Javier Milei, fue el ganador. Milei se presentó a las elecciones con un partido creado por él, llamado La Libertad Avanza. La otra opción de los votantes para la presidencia del país era el peronista, Sergio Massa. Milei jurará su cargo el próximo 10 de diciembre y ya los países vecinos con el resto de Latinoamérica observan perplejos la llegada al poder de este ultraderechista y polémico personaje.

Milei es un economista de profesión que ha ganado las elecciones en la segunda vuelta, siendo el candidato más votado en los últimos años con el 55,69 % de los votos. Aun así, necesitará el apoyo de la derecha tradicional (PRO) para gobernar, ya que solo tiene un 10 % de los senadores y un 15 % en el congreso de diputados.

Durante la primera vuelta sus declaraciones incendiaron cada día los periódicos debido a lo controvertido de sus afirmaciones, aunque en la segunda vuelta intentó ponerse un disfraz de político serio e intentó dar marcha atrás en muchas de ellas. Es decir, *donde dije digo, digo Diego*.

La situación económica de Argentina en los últimos años es la de un país sumergido en una grave crisis económica, un nivel altísimo de pobreza, y grandes deudas con diferentes organismos internacionales. Milei prometió en su campaña que eliminaría la idea de un gobierno paternalista, que fue el modelo que el peronismo implantó en estos últimos años.

Milei se presentaba en los mítines políticos con una sierra eléctrica como símbolo de los recortes sociales que prometía a sus fanáticos. Entre estos ya ha dicho en sus primeras declaraciones como presidente entrante que va a eliminar las ayudas sociales y recortar las pensiones por jubilación. Otra de sus medidas económicas es la dolarización, una medida que ya adoptaron antes con diferente fortuna en Panamá, Ecuador y la República de El Salvador.

Milei dijo en un debate televisado que el peso argentino no valía ni como excremento. Su propuesta de dolarizar la economía significa que la moneda oficial será el dólar estadounidense y no el peso argentino. No es la primera vez que esta medida económica se impone en Argentina. En 2001, el entonces presidente Carlos Menem decidió convertir los pesos en dólares para paliar la altísima inflación de aquellos años. La medida no tuvo el efecto esperado y provocó el llamado “corralito”, una de las mayores crisis económicas de Argentina.

ha decidido cerrar el ministerio y ya ha declarado que el mejor sistema de salud y el mejor sistema educativo son los privados. Así mismo ha dicho que declarará ilegal el aborto que se despenalizó en Argentina en el año 2020.

Otra de sus polémicas declaraciones es la que tiene que ver con la negación de los crímenes cometidos por la dictadura militar argentina. Milei declaró que se trató de una guerra y que en la guerra se cometen ciertos errores. Victoria Villarruel, que será su vicepresidenta, dijo que cuando llegasen al

que luchaba contra el poder militar.

Otras de las propuestas de La Libertad Avanza es eliminar las libertades conseguidas hasta ahora por el colectivo LGTBIQ+, y eliminar la educación sexual del currículo educativo.

Milei también abogó en su campaña por la venta legal de órganos humanos, la libertad para comprar y llevar armas de fuego en público, y a la venta legalizada de bebés. Al ver la controversia que estos eslóganes provocaron en la opinión pública, los negó en la segunda vuelta.

¿Y cómo un personaje de este calibre ha llegado al poder?

Milei es un populista que prometió grandes y drásticas medidas, pero nunca concretó cómo las iba a llevar a cabo. El electorado argentino de 2023 está compuesto de votantes enfadados con los sucesivos gobiernos que no fueron capaces de solucionar una grave crisis de más de 20 años y que les toca directamente a sus bolsillos, a sus ahorros y que conlleva la imposibilidad del ciudadano medio de llegar a fin de mes a pesar de muchos sacrificios. Un electorado enfadado con unos gobernantes que se han cruzado de brazos ante una violencia en las calles cada vez más frecuente y una pobreza que formaba parte del paisaje de cada día. En el momento de las elecciones la inflación en Argentina superaba el 140% y las cifras de pobreza más del 40%.

Los jóvenes votantes se sintieron especialmente atraídos por un candidato que renegaba de los políticos tradicionales y que se jactaba de su poca experiencia política en sus publicaciones de Instagram y TikTok.

Muchos de los votantes no votaron a favor de Milei, sino en contra de Massa. La mayoría de los votantes veían en él simplemente una continuidad de la misma historia que llevaban sufriendo por treinta años. El lema de campaña de Massa fue “*Viene la Argentina que estábamos esperando*”. Un lema que encerraba una contradicción en sí misma y que hacía aún menos confiable este candidato que ya era el peor valorado de la democracia argentina.

El populista Milei, como Trump, prometió un cambio a su electorado, aunque no tenga ni idea de cómo lo llevará a cabo, pero supuso una espe-

ranza para los ya desencantados de todo. Otra semejanza entre Trump y Milei es que ambos hicieron sus pinitos en el mundo del espectáculo y la televisión. Milei ya era conocido en Argentina por sus intervenciones como polemista en programas de televisión en los que se vanagloriaba de ser un experto en sexo tántrico, de hablar con su perro muerto, de tener varios perros todos clonados, y en su campaña ha denunciado elecciones manipuladas sin aportar nunca ninguna prueba de ello o incluso que el cambio climático es una mentira creada por los socialistas.

La diferencia principal entre Trump y Milei está en la política de emigración. Milei propone una total libertad migratoria, una idea muy lejana a la del expresidente Trump.

La victoria de Milei se celebró en las calles de Buenos Aires como si Argentina hubiera vuelto a ganar el Mundial de Fútbol. Durante su mandato Milei deberá enfrentarse con una grave crisis económica y una deuda con el FMI de 44.000 millones de dólares. Los analistas internacionales no creen que la dolarización vaya a ser un cambio positivo debido al bajo cambio del peso argentino. La otra difícil situación a la que se enfrenta Milei es su reducido número de diputados y senadores en las dos cámaras, lo que va a hacer difícil sacar adelante cualquier proyecto de ley a no ser que pacte con la derecha tradicional.

La victoria de Milei representa una nueva corriente que recorre Latinoamérica y el mundo con la llegada al poder de una derecha nueva. Su discurso es el típico del populismo: La clase política es la causante de todos los problemas del país y debemos cortar radicalmente con la idea de ese estado paternalista para recuperar la libertad del ciudadano. El nuevo presidente argentino representa para todos los que le han votado una esperanza casi religiosa, como si Milei fuera una especie de Mesías capaz de salvar al país y liberarlo de todos sus males creados por los políticos al uso.

Una nueva idea de libertad que atrae y da miedo por igual, y no es coincidencia que Javier Milei cerrase su primer discurso tras haber sido elegido presidente con esta frase: “*Viva la libertad, carajo.*”



Respecto al comercio exterior, las propuestas siguen sus convicciones neoliberales acerca de que el estado no debe intervenir y debe ser una cuestión de empresas privadas. Aun así, en uno de los debates dijo que rompería relaciones con Brasil y China, los grades socios económicos internacionales, y luego se desdijo de lo dicho.

En diferentes ocasiones, estas polémicas situaciones ocurrieron en los debates televisados. Una de sus más polémicas declaraciones fue cuando llamó enviado del Maligno y zurdo asqueroso al actual pontífice, el papa Francisco, que además es argentino.

Respecto a Educación y Salud,

darían un nuevo uso al hasta ahora conocido como Museo de la Memoria. Este lugar fue la antigua sede de la ESMA, el gran centro de tortura durante la dictadura de las Juntas Militares. Allí se cometieron atrocidades contra los derechos humanos: los detenidos eran torturados y asesinados y había una clínica clandestina donde las detenidas embarazadas daban a luz y los bebés eran entregados a familias afines al régimen militar.

Villarruel además quiere cancelar las causas todavía pendientes de los delitos cometidos por la dictadura y pide una revisión de la historia de la dictadura y se tengan en cuenta las víctimas de la guerrilla

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# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



looking forward...

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

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30**

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Rebecca AI, Pucca Mucca, Katarina Mazur & Stella Silbert, Boring Man, ZBS.FM, Liz O'Brien*. \$ 7 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Twisted Pine, Beau Sasser Trio*. \$ 8 p.m.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1**

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Drew Paton*. No cover. 6:30 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Todd Lescarbeau and Friends*. No cover. 7 p.m.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Montague Square Dance*. By donation. 7 p.m.

Jones Library, Amherst: *Valley Gals, Film & Gender, Billy, Robbery, Bad Card, Compress*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Eggtooth Presents: A Drag for the Holidays*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Kendra Morris, Dollflower, DJ Whale Tail*. \$ 8 p.m.

Hanover Theater, Worcester: *Indigo Girls*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Kendra Morris*. \$ 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Haley Heynderickx, Max Garcia Conover, LéPonds*. \$ 8 p.m.

Daily Operation, Easthampton: *Armand Hammer, M. Sayyid*. \$ 8 p.m.

The O's, Sunderland: *Subjct 5, Popo2004, DJ Lucas*. \$ 8 p.m.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2**

Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Rosie Porter*. No cover. 5 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Rock201*. No cover. 7 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *John Scofield Trio*. \$ 7 p.m.

Gateway City Arts, Holyoke: *Meat for Tea feat. Rebecca Schrader, Rev. Dan and the Dirty Catechism, Hot Dirt*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Eggtooth Presents: A Drag for the Holidays*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *She Said*. \$ 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Keturah Allgood, Bradford Carson, Neal Sabol*. \$ 8 p.m.

Everything Must Go, Northampton: *Retail Simps, Emily Robb, Red Herrings, Sunburned Hand of the Man*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Dave Thomas & the Frosty Five, DJ Corey*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3**

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Valley Tea Dance*. \$ 2 p.m.

JJ's Tavern, Florence: *Edict, Bent, Choke Out, Hollow Teeth*. \$ 4 p.m.

Institute for the Musical Arts, Goshen: *Robin Holcomb*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6**

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Venison Whirled, Kryssi B., Sam Hadge, A. Louis*. \$ 7 p.m.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Ryan Davis & the Roadhouse Band, Loculus, A.P.I.E., Sunburned Hand of the Man*. \$ 7 p.m.

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

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7**

The Drake, Amherst: *Horse Jumper of Love, Strange Mangers, Sapien Joyride*. \$ 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Rage Honey, Magick Lantern, Silvie's Okay*. \$ 8 p.m.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8**

Leverett Village Co-Op: *Little House Blues*. No cover. 6 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence:

*Tony Trischka, Tim Eriksen & Friends*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Lui Collins and Anand Nayak*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Eleanor Levine Band, Sasha K.A. Trio, Niagara Moon*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Odie Leigh, King Strang*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Boys from '69*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9**

Turners Falls High School, Turners Falls: *Montague Community Band Holiday Concert*. \$ 2 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: The Performance Project presents *Mother Tongue*. \$ 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Kivimar, Black Axe, Draidoir, Cinderghast*. Benefit for Gaza Strip mutual aid. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Jake Blount*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Everything Must Go, Northampton: *Film & Gender, Letters of Marque, KO Queen, Target Scammers*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10**

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule*. \$ 2 p.m.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15**

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Sandy Bailey, Stefan Weiner*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Red Herrings, Gluebag, Silver Dagger, Flavour*. \$ 8 p.m.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16**

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Olivia Nied*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17**

The Clark, Williamstown: *Aaron Dilloway, Liz Durette*. \$ 5 p.m.

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 18**

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Editrix, Space Camp, Valley Gals, Sensor Ghost*. \$ 7 p.m.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21**

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Witch, Native Sun*. \$ 8 p.m.

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16**

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

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24**

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *An Evening With the Cowboy Junkies*. \$ 8 p.m.

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# PREVIEW

## Welcome Yule Lights Up the Shea

By GRANGER SMITH-MASSA

**TURNERS FALLS** – As the last light of the year fades, it is the perfect time to come together for songs, dancing, and stories, to drive the dark away. *Welcome Yule* aims to supply that experience during the upcoming performance at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls on December 8, 9 and 10. After a hiatus during the pandemic, the show continues its annual tradition of bringing the past to the future, of bringing out songs and stories not often heard or known in the modern holiday season, and most of all of helping to remind us all that the light and warmth of spring will slowly return after the turn of the year.

*Welcome Yule* began in the mid-1980s, organized by Rose Sheehan as a small performance involving just a few friends coming together to create a midwinter celebration inspired by the long history of winter celebrations in much of the world, particularly in the British Isles.

The beginnings were humble, with the performers drawn from the local Morris dancing teams and the show put on at the Blue Light

Coffee House in the basement of the Unitarian Church in Greenfield. Becoming a yearly tradition, it grew in scope and after a few years moved to the Shea Theater, and has been performed there most years since.

Always taking inspiration from history, much of the music in the show is drawn from pieces that are hundreds of years old, the stories frequently drawn from mythologies and fables, and costuming inspired by medieval clothing and a fairy tale aesthetic. Staple songs can include traditional wassails and carols, with dances stemming from Morris dancing and medieval dancing. The stories include a short, old style of play known as the Mummers' Play which is a humorous take on the balance of light and dark.

There is a sense of both community and tradition in *Welcome Yule*. Many members of the cast are returning members, involved in the show for many years, and some members have even brought in their children who have grown up with the show as a large part of their lives. Members come back both for the involvement in the community and friendship with the other members, as well as finding the show to be an important part of their own celebration of the holiday season.

Cast member Andrea Rogers expands on the importance of the show to her. "We are a close-knit community," she says, "and we are trying to sustain the tradition of people coming together in the dark time of the year, to support each other and bring joy to each other in the larger community." The sense of tradition and community extends to the audience as well: many members of the audience come to the show as part of their own holiday celebrations.

"It's a fun evening," says Andy Tarr, a cast member who has been involved in *Welcome Yule* since its beginning. "There's good music, you get to sing along on choruses if you want to, [and] there have been some people who have been coming for years and years and years."

Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic put the yearly show on a hiatus for the years of



SMITH-MASSA PHOTOS

Players at a rehearsal of *Welcome Yule*, from left to right: Andrea Rogers, Phyllis Roy, Bart Bales, Rita Reinke, Montserrat Archbald, and Geoffry Rogers.

2020 and 2021, and it tentatively restarted live in 2022. With this in mind, this year's creative co-directors, Hattie Adastra and Talon Loglisci, with additional writing input from Larkin Christie, are taking a back-to-basics approach. Shows from year to year can vary wildly due to a practice of rotating directors. Different directors will vary their approach, bringing in a particular story they want to follow and introducing songs that they find interesting.

However, since there has only been one other show since the onset of the pandemic, Adastra and Loglisci looked to create a feeling of familiarity in their show to ease everyone back into it. All of the songs are familiar to the cast, and even the art made for this year's advertising poster is inspired by the work done by Karen Gaudette for the posters of previous shows.

"This is not our first show since COVID, but it has felt a little bit disjointed, I think, since then," says Adastra. "So we wanted to return to our roots."

*Welcome Yule* aims to foster community and celebrate light in the darkest time of the year, bringing its own magic to the holiday season. Louise Doud, another member of the cast and a producer for the show, describes the homey, friendly feel the show tries to bring: "We are not professionals, we're people who love to sing and dance and put on silly plays, like the Mummers, and entertain our friends." The members of the show hope to bring that same feeling to the audience, creating a thread through history to the present day.

"This is its own tradition," says Emilie Campbell, who joined just this year as the show's stage director. "But I think for a lot of people it's a little bit of a breath of fresh air, something a little bit different."

*Welcome Yule* is scheduled at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls for December 8 and 9 at 7:30 p.m. and December 10 at 2 p.m. Children under 5 are free; youth under 18 and seniors, \$12; adults 18 to 64, \$15. Get tickets online at sheatheater.org.



Creative co-directors Talon Loglisci (left) and Hattie Adastra.

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