

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 22 – NO.4

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1.50

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 14, 2023

Juggler Meadow Estate Developer: No Details Until After Feasibility Study

By JEFF SINGLETON

LEVERETT – “We have set a world record in attendance at a planning board meeting,” said Leverett planning board chair Tom Ewing as he opened the board’s

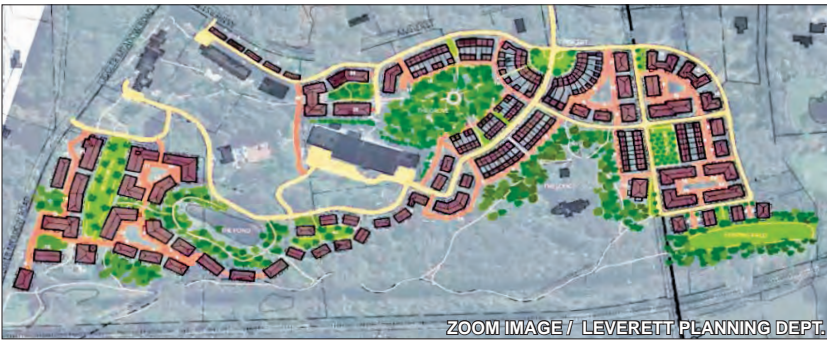
meeting at the town’s elementary school gym. The event Wednesday evening was a hybrid meeting, with over 100 residents in attendance “in person” and nearly an equal number participating virtually over Zoom, which rejected attendees

once 100 had joined.

All the excitement was over a proposal to construct a large housing development – potentially with a significant amount of “affordable housing” – on the Juggler Meadow Road estate of the former owner of Yankee Candle Michael Kittredge. The estate has now been passed on to his son, Michael Kittredge III, and is the largest taxpayer in Leverett. It contains a large mansion and guest house, a nine-hole golf course, a performance stage, an indoor tennis court, a three-lane bowling alley, and an indoor water park.

It is now completely empty.

This point was made repeatedly see MEADOW page A8



Slides shown at Wednesday’s meeting illustrated a “vision” in which the estate’s existing structures would be surrounded by hundreds of units of new housing.

Cleaning Solution Found In School Milk Cartons



SYNA KATSOLIS PHOTO

After students discovered a suspicious solution in their chocolate milk containers, the Gill-Montague district pulled the entire batch and sounded a statewide alarm.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

TURNERS FALLS – One Turners Falls High School student reported feeling ill on Friday after drinking a sanitizing solution that had been sealed inside his chocolate milk carton.

First responders from the Turners Falls fire department, nurses from Baystate Franklin Medical Center, and technicians from the state’s Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Division were called to the school shortly after 10 a.m. Friday morning. The hazmat team tested a sample of the watery,

cloudy, astringent solution and found it to be mostly water, mixed with common food service cleaning chemicals.

“What was the most challenging and frustrating part of this was it took several hours to get a response from Hood,” Gill-Montague superintendent Brian Beck told school committee members at their Tuesday meeting. “We don’t want to see this happen again.”

A mistake made at the HP Hood dairy company’s packaging facility in Agawam, according to the company, resulted in some cartons being see MILK page A6

SANTA WATCH



EDITE CUNHA PHOTO

Above: Adoring throngs beset Santa last Friday at Spinner Park. The holiday despot, who had agreed to attend the It’s A Wonderful Night downtown event, was transported to and from the park by emergency first responders.

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Residential Taxpayers Hit By FirstLight Loss of Value

By KATIE NOLAN

Erving’s 2024 residential property tax rate will increase by 15% over last year.

The selectboard approved a 65% “minimum residential factor” (MRF) at the town’s tax classification hearing at its meeting Monday night. The residential rate will increase by \$1.22 to \$9.22 per thousand dollars of property value.

The split tax rate shifts the tax burden away from residential property owners to commercial or industrial property owners. Under the MRF, owners of commercial and see ERVING page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Officials Freeze Trash Price, But Open to School Merger

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard recommended Monday night that the committee studying a possible consolidation of the Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley regional school districts move forward to draft a regional agreement to be considered by the two districts’ member towns. The agreement would combine the schools at the middle and high school levels, but also impact the governance of elementary schools in the towns.

The towns represented on the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board (STRPB) – Gill and Montague plus Northfield, Bernardston, Leyden, and Warwick – have been meeting since 2019 to review research by consultants on the pros and cons of consolidation, and to

decide whether to propose a regional agreement to member towns.

Town administrator Steve Ellis said Montague had received a memo last week from the STRPB stating that the state grant funding the study process includes money for technical assistance to develop a regional agreement. That grant expires in June. The STRPB asked for “feedback” from local boards by email, by phone, or at an in-person meeting before December 28.

The selectboard reviewed the calendar for a good time to invite STRPB members to discuss a regional agreement.

Selectboard member Matt Lord said he thought that if the STRPB had money to develop a draft agreement, “that’s great,” but he felt the STRPB was not specific about

see MONTAGUE page A7

High School Sports Week Winter Means Basketball

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – On Thursday, December 7, Pearl Harbor Day, the annual Eagles Basketball Holiday Classic tipped off, marking the opening of the 2023-24 winter sports season. The Franklin Tech boys played aggressively but had some difficulty finding the hoop, but the Tech girls came out of the starting blocks hard and strong.

The Turners boys also returned to the basketball court, and have had similar results to the Tech boys, dropping their first two contests. The Turners girls, sadly, did not field a varsity team this year.

Also, the rules have changed! Among the many rule changes in high school basketball this year are the foul bonuses.

Until this year, if a team committed seven fouls in a half, the

opposing team went to the line. If they hit the first shot, they would get a second chance – called a “one-and-one.” If the foul count increased to 10 in a half, the shooter was granted two shots.

This year, the fouls are calculated by quarters. If a team commits five in a quarter, the other team gets two shots. The “one-and-one” has been eliminated.

The Turners Falls swim team also started out on the right leg, with both the boys’ and girls’ teams defeating Monson and Chicopee.

Boys’ Basketball

St. Mary 60 – FCTS 25
Mt. Everett 62 – FCTS 27
Lenox 76 – TFHS 32
Pioneer 74 – TFHS 26

Last Thursday and Friday, December 7 and 8, Tech hosted their see SPORTS page A4



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Turners Falls’ Alex Quezada drives the baseline past Lenox defender Jon Reimbolt as the Thunder hosted the Millionaires for the season opener. The visitors won, 76 to 32.

Very Newspaperly, On Purpose.

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The Montague Reporter

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 August 2002

Vox Populi...

During the "humanitarian pause," the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research was able to conduct a survey of 750 West Bank residents and 481 residents of the Gaza, 250 of the latter in refugee shelters. You may have seen the top-level headlines: "Poll shows Palestinians back Oct. 7 attack on Israel" (*Reuters*); "72% back October 7 atrocities (*The Times of Israel*). But students of the current moment – whatever their sympathies – should look more closely, as the data is more illuminating:

- 43% think the top priority should be a Palestinian state and a return to pre-1967 lines, while 36% want to prioritize refugees' right of return within the 1948 Green Line. Since September the 20% who feel this is best won by negotiation held firm, but support for peaceful re-

sistance went from 24% to 13%, armed struggle from 53% to 63%.

- 78% think attacking civilians is a war crime. 10% believe Hamas has committed war crimes in the current war, and 95% believe Israel has. Only 7% said they believed Hamas committed atrocities against civilians on October 7. And 81% said they believed the October 7 offensive was a "response" to the raids this year at the Al-Aqsa Mosque (the Temple Mount) by Israeli settlers under IDF supervision.

- Primary support for Hamas tripled on the West Bank, from 12% to 44%, in three months.

- 64% of Gaza Strip residents said a family member had been killed or injured during the current war. While 52% say Israel is most to blame for the war, 26% blame the United States of America.



Heather Ashley Wight sells dried floral wreaths at her Blossom and Seed booth at the holiday craft fair in the Wendell town hall last weekend. Wight grew up right next door, and remembers vending painted rocks at the craft fair when she was seven years old! She is now a professional gardener, and her main business is called Heather Gardens.

Letters to the Editors

Storing Power From the 'Grid'

There have been various comments around battery storage and solar systems and the "grid."

The grid is a structure that ties together all sources of electricity and users of electricity. It is in itself neither "green" nor otherwise. It is, however, for most of us – all who do not choose to live "off grid" – totally essential to our access to electricity.

It provides a way to share the production of electricity across all sources – ranging from my own dribble of electricity I add to the

grid from my little solar array up to major generation sources such as Cabot Station.

Storage systems for electricity are an essential component of non-carbon generation solutions as we try to move away from fossil-fuel power sources.

At one time the only options for electricity storage were pumped storage, such as the Northfield project, or other similar techniques. Now battery banks are a far more versatile and efficient (and argu-

ably much more environmentally friendly) technique. They do need to be sited where they can connect with the grid.

Some – maybe all? – of the current utility-scale battery modules include fire suppression systems. I would think that communities would be able to make that aspect a requirement of any battery system installed in a community.

George Drake
Leverett

Not In Our Names: Contact Representatives

Last week, Palestinians called for a global general strike on December 11 to pressure world leaders to demand a ceasefire. On this day they urged people to refrain from going to work or school, shopping, and using their bank, and instead to attend rallies, post about Gaza, and call their representatives.

In solidarity with this action, I ask that you call our representatives and demand an immediate deescalation and ceasefire in Gaza. Call and email every day that you can until an end to this genocide is achieved.

1. Call Senator Markey. Boston phone number: (617) 565-8519; Springfield phone number: (413) 785-4610. Call both numbers.

2. Call Senator Warren. Boston phone number: (617) 565-3170; Springfield phone number: (413) 788-2690. Call both numbers.

3. Call Representative Jim McGovern to demand that he sign H.

Res. 786, which calls for an immediate deescalation and ceasefire. Washington, DC phone number: (202) 225-6101; Northampton phone number: (413) 341-8700. Call both numbers.

4. Go to *WhiteHouse.gov* to email President Biden and demand he call for immediate deescalation and ceasefire. Further, demand he stop sending money and weapons to Israel.

5. Call Governor Healey, (617) 725-4005, and email her. Seventeen Governors, including Governor Healey, signed a letter stating approval for additional support to Israel. Let the governor know you do not support this, and ask her to put out a statement for an immediate ceasefire.

Ceasefire now. Free Palestine.

Casey Wait
Turners Falls

CORRECTION:

In last week's Gill-Montague school committee notes (*Schools Bracing for Slow Growth*, Page A7) we quoted high school para-librarian Tabatha Martinelli, who testified about her low earnings and urged the committee to settle the district's Unit C contract, mistakenly identifying her as a "part-time" employee.

"I work full time at the school and I have a second job on weekends," she tells us. "I have to have multiple jobs to make ends meet.... I work 32.5 hours per week, which for GMRSD is full time. I think it's vital for the community to know why it's essential to pay us a living wage."

Our sincere apologies to Ms. Martinelli, and to our readers, for the error. We also notice now that we misspelled her name as "Tabitha," and apologize for that one too. We are always happy to set the record straight.

– Eds.

MONTAGUE REPORTER



ON THE ROAD

Montague native Jeffrey Webster, on the set of *On Golden Pond* last month at the Community Performance & Arts Center in Green Valley, Arizona. Jeff was cast in the leading role of Norman Thayer, Jr. for seven performances. They needed a prop newspaper local audiences wouldn't recognize, and Jeff volunteered copies of the Reporter. Here he is with our October 19 edition. "The play is set in Maine and – surprisingly – this production happened to feature three desert-dwelling actors who are New England natives," he writes.

Going somewhere? Take us with you!

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Published weekly on Thursdays.

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

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The People's Medicine Project will be at Franklin Community Coop's 170 Main Street storefront in Greenfield tonight, Thursday December 14, from 5 to 7 p.m. for a **winter community medicine-making party**. They will be making large batches of fire cider and other herbal remedies to stock their apothecary for the winter, and to provide herbal remedies to folks receiving care at their clinics. Find out more at tinyurl.com/170pmp.

This is the last weekend for **Light Up the Fairgrounds** in Greenfield. The light displays may be viewed from 5 to 8 p.m. on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday with a \$5 suggested donation per car.

Horse wagon rides through the lights will be available on Friday and Saturday at \$7 per person, with tickets sold ahead of time at fcf.ticketleap.com/lufg.

Noted jazz musician Stephen Merriman will be in **concert at the Leverett Village Coop** this Friday, December 15 at 6 p.m. for pizza night. No cover charge.

Another **holiday artisan market** is happening this Saturday, December 16 from 12 to 4 p.m. at the Greenfield High School. There will be music, tasty treats from Stone Soup Café, activities for kids, and local handmade crafts, including jewelry, pottery, soaps, and paintings.

At 4 p.m., attend the Pioneer Valley Symphony's annual **sing-along Holiday Pops concert** in the auditorium. Tickets are \$15 to \$35, sliding scale, and \$5 for youth and college and trade school students. Learn more and RSVP at pvsoc.org.

The Heartbeat Collective at the Montague Retreat Center on Ripley Road invites folks to their fourth annual **Winter Solstice Bonfire with Kotoko Brass** this Saturday, December 16. The event opens with yoga in the Great Hall led by Cat Tween at 3 p.m., with live music by Peter Leonard, followed by tree decorating, mulled cider, fire spinning, and drumming and dancing around a bonfire. West African drum and brass band Kotoko Brass performs inside at 9:30 p.m.

Kids under 15 are free, and it is a substance-free event. Tickets are available at heartbeatcollective.org.

Jess Marsh at Hired Hands Signs is opening her sign-painting studio to the public this Saturday, December 16 from 4 to 8 p.m. Look for the big green doors at 34 Third Street in downtown Turners Falls and head in to meet Jess, paint a peace poster, play vintage arcade games, peruse original paintings and merchandise for sale, and enjoy refreshments.

A **Winter Solstice Storytelling and Songfest** celebration will be held Saturday, December 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the First Congregational Church in Ashfield. This is the 39th annual evening of storytelling and music to drive the cold winter away on the (almost) longest night of the year.

Performers include special guests Larry Spotted Crow Mann and One Part Luck, as well as David Arfa, Sonny Crawford and Emily Gopen, Christy Grecsek, Yosl Kurland and Aaron Bousel, Rob Peck, Sarah Pirtle, John Porcino, ReBekka Tippens, Tim Van Egmond, and Rochelle Wildfong.

Doors open at 6 p.m., and a Zoom link will also be available.

For reservations or Zoom info, email dancing_story@yahoo.com or call (413) 624-5140. There's a suggested donation of \$12 to \$20 for adults and \$5 to \$10 for children, with contributions to benefit The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, the Ohketeau Cultural Center, and the UN High Commission for Refugees. Non-perishable food items and clothing donations will be taken for the Franklin County Survival Center as well.

The next CinemaStorm at the Shea Theater is this Saturday, December 16 at 7:30 p.m. It will be a **"Lost in LA" double feature** of *The Big Lebowski* (1998) and *The Long Goodbye* (1973). "Dress in your finest bathrobe or Pendleton sweater cuz it's a Lebowski pajama party!" the organizers write. Admission is free. Doors open at 7 p.m., with snacks and drinks for sale in the lobby (including the Dude's signature "Caucasian"), and the usual trivia game with prizes before the show.

The **Leverett Village Co-op holiday fair** is this Sunday, December 17 from 2 to 5 p.m. Highlights include crafts for children; book signings by local authors Claire Hopley and Ellen Evert Hopman, who have several holiday-themed titles; Fairy Hair weavings and Fire Cider tastings. The Co-op, located at 180 Rattlesnake Gutter Road, will also serve hot mulled cider and cocoa with mini-marshmallows, and a selection of holiday baked goodies.

There'll be a **French/Breton jam session** at the Great Falls Discovery Center this Sunday, December 17 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. This is an informal group of musicians gathering to play traditional dance music from France and Brittany, commonly known as *bal folk*, and not a performance but a coming together of musically-minded friends. The event is free and the public is invited to come and go at will.

Ever heard of **Unsilent Night**? It's a joyful and weird holiday tradition, a walking street parade playing an ambient composition by Phil Kline,

written to be heard outdoors in the month of December. Each participant downloads one of four tracks of music and brings a speaker or boombox, and then all press "play" at the same moment and walk slowly on a predetermined route for 40 minutes. The fact that the participants play different parts simultaneously helps create the piece's special sound.

There will be an Unsilent Night in Greenfield this Sunday, December 17. You'll need to download one of the four tracks in advance and come with something to amplify music, like a Bluetooth speaker connected to your phone or MP3 player or a portable boombox. Details on how to participate are at unsilentnight.com/participate.html and the tracks can be downloaded at soundcloud.com/unsilentnight/tracks. Meet at Court Square at 6 p.m.

Next Tuesday, December 19, the Brick House is extending its Spanish-English gathering to include a **community potluck** from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Families and other community members are welcome to attend – you don't have to participate in learning another language to take part – and are encouraged to bring their favorite holiday food. There will be board games on hand for those interested in playing.

The Brick House is at 24 Third Street in Turners Falls. For more information, contact Stacey at slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org or (413) 800-2496.

The Montague Center library's Author Series continues with **Stories of Light** from 6 to 7 p.m. next Wednesday, December 20. "We will have seven local authors sharing short essays, poems, and songs in celebration of light on the shortest day of the year," organizers write. "The reading will be followed by a solstice celebration on the common. Bring your own lantern or candle and join in the singing!"

The seven readers are Jan Atamian, Jannie Dziadzio, Tamara Kaplan, Jacki Odes-Gillett, E. C. Piper, Jeanne Weintraub-Mason, and Rebecca Weiss. Refreshments will be provided.

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Live ducks from Duckworld Rescue and Sanctuary, at the Ripley Farm in Montague, will visit Greenfield Garden Cinema from noon to 7 p.m. next Saturday, December 23, in conjunction with the screening of *Migration*.

The storyline for this animated feature is this: "After a migrating duck family alights on their pond with thrilling tales of far-flung places, the Mallard family embarks on a family road trip, via New York City, to tropical Jamaica."

Don't forget to **spread some holiday cheer** amongst the folks who bring their services to your door such as your mail and newspaper carriers, trash and recycling pickup workers, and others. Now is a great time to show your appreciation for their year-round labors by giving them a tip!

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

OPED

LED Street Lights Are Coming to Montague Center. But Are the Village's Streets 'Too Dark?'

By BRUCE WATSON

MONTAGUE – As winter darkness descends, bright news is on the horizon in Montague Center. Within a few weeks, if all goes as planned, all 82 street lights in the district will be converted to low-cost, directional LEDs. Residents will notice little difference in overall illumination, but the brightest part of the conversion will come in lower electricity costs, lower tax rates for lighting, and less glare in our night skies.

When completed, the conversion will give Montague Center the same LED lights now seen on the streets of several local communities, including Turners Falls, Millers Falls, and Erving. Each LED light will project its radiance in a conical glow aimed at the street, rather than the wide-ranging blare of the current "light bombs."

The new lights will be installed by Pine Ridge Technologies, a North Reading-based firm that has done dozens of LED conversion projects in New England.

The conversion will not cost local taxpayers a cent. The entire project is fully funded by a \$61,400 grant from Green Communities, a division of the state Department of Ener-

gy Resources. Assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey wrote the grant last spring in consultation with George Woodbury, whose LightSmart Energy has served as a consultant on the project. It was awarded in September.

According to Woodbury, the new lights will result in substantial savings to the district. Last year the district paid \$12,187 to Eversource for operation and maintenance of 82 lights. Total electricity usage was about 25,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh). Woodbury expects the LEDs to reduce electricity usage, and costs, by 74%.

Ramsey estimates savings of \$6,762 in the first year, but Woodbury predicts further savings due to LEDs' reliability. Current lights, Woodbury said, last an average of six years, while LEDs have a 20-year lifespan and a 10-year warranty. Fewer than 1% of LEDs will need replacement per year, compared with the current 18% replacement rate.

Saving money is nice. No one will argue with that. But money is not the reason I decided to join the Montague Center Lighting Committee and push for this conversion. More important to me, and for many residents with whom I have spoken, are the issues of energy savings and light pollution.

We in Montague Center are lucky. From our backyards, many of us can see the Milky Way overhead. More than half the world's residents, gazing into light polluted skies, see only a few stars, or a few dozen amidst a foggy glow of urban light. But even if Montague Center is just a small dot on a floodlit planet, our LED conversion will reduce our contribution to light pollution, and reduce our carbon footprint. Our electricity usage, Woodbury predicts, should drop from 25,000 kWh to under 7,000.

But are the streets of Montague Center too dark? We on the lighting committee have fielded several complaints to this effect. These have arisen since some two dozen lights were removed in 2021, before any of the current committee took our positions. Although the removal only occurred after public hearings and police input on safety concerns, residents have come to subsequent meetings asking for the restoration of several lights.

We have complied with some of these requests. We have also polled residents of both North Street and Union Street to see whether these concerns were widely shared.

North Street residents voted for the status quo – no new lights. Union Street was equally divided on the issue of "one or two new lights"

versus "no new lights." Pending further input, no new lights have been added there, although one broken light was recently replaced.

We acknowledge all concerns about "dark streets," and will consider future requests to replace lights that were removed. We do not expect the LED conversion to change the lumen level of our streets.

However... We read every day of hardships around the planet brought on by global warming. Wildfires, floods, sizzling temperatures. Many experts say the next several years are critical for our future, demanding sacrifice, lifestyle changes, and policy initiatives to fight global warming. In light of this, no pun intended, it seems to us that slightly darker streets are a very small price to pay for doing our part in the worldwide effort to reduce both light pollution and the devastating effects of a steadily warming planet.

So as winter darkness descends, we hope that Montague Center residents will welcome the bright news, and the new LED lights. We expect them to be shining by mid-February.

Bruce Watson is the clerk of the Montague Center lighting committee.

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SPORTS from page A1

annual Holiday Classic. In the opener on Thursday, the Franklin boys took on the Golden Saints of St. Mary. It was a hard-fought, aggressive game, with each defense disrupting the other team's offense.

The defenses were so intense that neither team could sink a bucket in the first three minutes. Tech scored first on a 1-pointer, and the Saints hit a foul shot themselves to tie it. Halfway through the first stanza, though, the Saints went up 3-1, and it was all downhill for the Eagles from there. Gold went on a run and when Tech finally hit their next foul shot, the score was 16-2.

The Saints increased that lead to 25-2 in the second quarter, and though Tech hit a couple more shots, they were trailing 29-7 at the half. Tech attempted to trade baskets with Gold in the third, but the lead was too wide. In the final quarter both teams sent in their reserves.

The Tech boys played the Mount Everett Blue Eagles the next night in the tournament's consolation game. Franklin got into a hole early, and although they again began trading baskets, they couldn't narrow the gap. In the fourth quarter, with Franklin down 50-25, both coaches emptied their benches.

Cam Candelaria (8 points) and Josiah Little (7) led Tech, with Dylon Cullen (3), Ben Dodge, Gabe Mota, Nodyn Stafford, and Alex Knapp (2 each), and Jack Gancarz (1) helping out.

On Monday, the Turners Falls varsity team tipped off at home against the Lenox Maroon Millionaires. Thunder came out on fire, going for steals and grabbing rebounds. At the beginning of the second quarter, they were on top 10-7.

"I hope they can keep up the intensity," one of the mothers said. But they couldn't - a mixture of giveaways, takeaways, and great shooting caused the Millionaires to go on a 9-0 rip. By the time the buzzer sounded, they were up 28-15. In the second half, Lenox got hot, putting up 48 points to take the game 76-32.

Nine different players scored for Blue: Jackson Cogswell (9), Brandon Truesdale and Alex Quezada (6), Joey Mosca (3), Cameron Burnett, Dylon Richardson, and Kainen Stevens (2 each), and Caden Williams Senethavisouk and Brody Girard (1 each).

On Tuesday the Boys' Thunder lost to the Pioneer Black Panthers, 74-26, up in Northfield. In this game Pioneer's offense took control early, scoring 24 points in the first quarter and 22 in the second. After three periods, with the score 60-26, the Cats went on the prowl, holding Blue to zero points in the final quarter.

Truesdale led Thunder this time with 16 points, followed by Cogswell (5), Williams Senethavisouk (3), and Richardson (2).

This Thursday, the boys travel to Athol to take on the Red Bears.



Turners' Dylon Richardson dishes a pass, flanked by Lenox defenders Shaler Larmon and Brendan Ward, as the Thunder hosted the Millionaires on Monday.

Girls' Basketball

FCTS 40 - St. Mary 21

FCTS 45 - Mt. Greylock 27

FCTS 57 - Ludlow 31

Later in the evening of Thursday, December 7, the Tech girls got some revenge on St. Mary. While it had taken the boys more than three minutes to score their first point, the girls scored in the first four seconds.

The Lady Birds methodically built up a lead, and by halftime they were up by double, 26-13. The third quarter was pretty even, with both teams posting eight points to make the score 34-21 going into the final stanza. In the fourth, Tech played keep-away, holding the Saints to zero points while adding six more of their own.

Hannah Gilbert scored nine points in the win, and Lea Chapman netted seven, pulling down seven rebounds and blocking two shots. Kyra Goodell ended with six points, Cordelia Guerin and Lilianna Inman had five each, and Kaitlin Trudeau and Brayleigh Burgh (3 each) and Jenna Petrowicz (2) helped out.

In the championship game Friday night, the Eagles faced the Red Mounties of Mount Greylock. The Mounties, who had dismantled Mount Everett 51-23 in the first round, put up some points, but inside work by Chapman and Gilbert's outside shooting doomed Red to second place.

Greylock put up 18 points in the first half, but it wasn't enough - at the break, the Eagles were up 29-18. In the second half Franklin slowed the game down, holding the Greys to just nine points while posting 16 of their own to finish the game with a 45-27 win and taking home the Holiday Classic Trophy.

Chapman scored 20 points in the victory and

made 18 rebounds, and Gilbert hit two 3-pointers on her way to 17. Trudeau and Goodell (3 each) and Guerin (2) accounted for the rest of the points.

On Tuesday the Lady Birds kept their unbeaten streak alive by taming the Ludlow Lions, 57-31. Tech set the pace, jumping out to a 13-8 lead in the first quarter, but it was the second period that decided the game. The Birds' D held the Lions to just two points while their transition offense scored 15.

The offenses took over in the third, with Tech netting 20 points and the Cats 12. With the game pretty much decided, each team scored nine points in the last period to make the final score 57-31.

Chapman scored most of her 19 points inside, adding one from the foul line. She also snatched 20 rebounds. Gilbert sank seven foul shots, hit a 3, and got six points inside the arc for 16. Guerin also hit double figures with 12 points, with Goodell (4) and Trinity Doane, Lindsey Taylor, and Trudeau (2 each) contributing to the win.

The Eagles had little time to rest - on Wednesday night they headed down to Springfield to challenge the Springfield Renaissance. The stats on that game came in after print time.

Swimming

TFHS 85 - Monson 80

TFHS 64 - Monson 34

TFHS 85 - Chicopee 67

TFHS 61 - Chicopee 20

Both Turners Falls High School swim teams have quietly advanced to 2-0 by winning their first two road games.

On Friday the swimmers traveled down to Monson, where they defeated the Mustangs in both contests.

In the girls' meet, Blue Thunder won the 200-yard melody relay race (Sophia McComb and Rose, Ava, and Alice Fortin); diving (Sigrid Calhoun, 98.2); the 100-yard fly (Ainslee Flynn at 1:23.66); and the 100-yard breaststroke (Madi Liimatainen at 1:24.66). But it was the second- and third-place finishes that edged Blue over the Mustangs by five points, 85-80.

In the boys' contest, Turners took first in the 200-yard melody relay (Matthew Sibley, Cody McDonough, Liam Bliss, and Tyler Galenski, at 2:18.76); the 200-yard freestyle (Bliss at 2:24.90); the 50-yard freestyle (Bliss at 26.25); the 100-yard fly (Connor Glennon at 1:43.63); the 100-yard freestyle (Sibley at 1:21.58); the 500-yard freestyle (McDonough at 7:49.83); and the 200-yard freestyle relay (Sibley, Galenski, McDonough, and Bliss, at 2:09.40).

On Tuesday, the Girls in Blue defeated the Chicopee Pacers 85-67, while the boys outpaced them 61-20 to extend both streaks to two wins.

The swim squads travel south this Friday to take on the Holyoke Purple Knights.



"The flood mitigation project currently underway along the east side of Montague City Road stretches for about 150 yards north-south, and is nearly halfway complete," writes Ed Gregory, who took the above photograph Sunday morning. "This should remediate the nagging road-soaking problem that has plagued travelers in past times."


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ERVING from page A1

industrial property, primarily the Northfield Mountain Project, a hydroelectric pumped-storage facility owned by FirstLight Power, will pay 88% of property taxes owed to the town. The commercial and industrial rate will increase by \$2.20 to \$15.34 per thousand dollars of value.

“The tax rate this year is significantly more than last year – more than 2.5%, obviously,” commented selectboard chair Jacob Smith. “Knowing the [tax] override didn’t go through, I’m sure everyone’s first question is, why such a drastic change?”

Assessors’ chair Daniel Hammock replied, “Changes in the appraised value [of the Northfield Mountain Project] affected the tax rate.” Hammock explained that for large commercial properties, the state Appellate Tax Board prefers appraisals using an “income” approach. When interest rates are low, business expenses decrease and income increases; income for the Mountain Project has decreased, because high interest rates have increased the cost of borrowing.

Principal assessor Jacqueline Boyden said the valuation of the Mountain Project has “ebbed and flowed” since 1999, when the town began appraising the property, but that this year there was a “significant” drop in value – \$147 million. About \$115 million in the decrease

was allocated to Erving, and the rest to Northfield.

“So, the value of the tax burden has to get shifted to other portions of the town,” selectboard member Scott Bastarache concluded.

The board approved exemptions from the commercial tax rate to eight qualifying small businesses in Erving.

Hammock said tax bills will be sent out in January.

Replacement & Reconstruction

Weston & Sampson project manager Bill Storti presented an overview of the plans for replacing a stone wall on Bridge Road and reconstructing Maple Avenue. The plans, which outline removal of the stone wall, installation of a segmental block retaining wall, construction of drainage structures such as catch basins, a manhole, a stormwater treatment system, and dry wells, roadway reconstruction, and post-construction restoration of surfaces, will be used to solicit bids from contractors.

Bridge Road runs from Route 2 to the Farley Iron Bridge, which crosses the Millers River to Farley Road in Wendell. Storti said the road will be closed for approximately five months while construction is occurring.

The board decided to spend more time reviewing the plans, and to reconsider the project at their

December 18 meeting.

Other Business

Brian McHugh, director of community development for Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, told the board the town’s current Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which originated in 2021, was winding down. The program provides grants to income-eligible Erving, Warwick, and Northfield residents for bringing their homes up to code.

McHugh said 11 units had been completed, 20 units were in progress, and five were in the construction phase. He asked the board to grant an extension to complete the projects until June 2024.

The board voted to approve the extension.

In a review of the draft personnel policy manual, the board discussed at length how to award town staff benefit hours for bereavement or parental leave, given that employees may have normal working shifts of six, eight, or ten hours per day. They also discussed how to calculate overtime hours in a week in which the employee has taken vacation or personal paid leave.

The board asked town administrator Bryan Smith to revise sections of the draft policy manual for discussion at the next meeting, which will be held December 18.

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NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

‘Our District Is a Public Good’

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – “The towns of Montague and Gill really do support our budget very well,” district business manager Joanne Blier told the school committee Tuesday night at its second in-person meeting in three and a half years. “Between the two towns, the [state-mandated] minimum contribution adds up to about \$7 million. Our two towns are paying closer to \$13 million.”

The state, meanwhile, requires districts to send a budget to their towns by February 1, but often announces its own aid commitments at the last minute. The committee agreed to shift its January meeting schedule to January 9, 23, and 30, with the last two on Zoom to avoid the risk of snow cancellation.

Blier reported that the low bid on a five-year collaborative school bus contract put out by all the districts in the county was once again from F.M. Kuzmeskus, again with a 12% hike.

The district treasurer has stepped down, and Blier said she would like to hire Ryan Mailloux, who serves as treasurer to a number of other area towns and districts. He is requesting an annual salary of \$15,000 for what Blier described as eight to 10 hours a week of mostly remote work, up \$3,000 from the previous treasurer.

“I don’t think we’re going to find somebody [else] with the qualifications, at that few hours,” Blier said. The committee approved the hire.

Paraprofessionals, admin assistants, and IT staff have been negotiating a contract since the spring, and several members and supporters spoke during public comment time.

Hillcrest therapeutic program para Nicole Day, a lifelong resident and 47-year-old mother of two who has met “lifetime friends” in the district, said she is now “working with a tear in my shoulder, which I re-

ceived while working, and an empty bank account.” “With the increase in everyday living expenses, I cannot afford to go out for surgery on the injury I received at work,” she said. “I love my job and the community I serve, and I do not want to be forced to leave my job for a livable wage.”

Union president Heidi Schmidt said paras were the district’s “least paid” staff and “do some of the hardest and most critical work in our district.” “It looks like we’re getting very close to a contract to bring back to our membership,” she said, adding that she hoped a new contract would help the district fill its numerous paraprofessional vacancies.

Adjustment counselor Joseph Katz expressed sympathy for the committee. “Insufficient funding per pupil is the heart of the challenges facing rural school districts,” he said, encouraging support for S.2388, “An Act to provide a sustainable future for rural schools,” introduced by senator Jo Comerford. “The investments we are making will not return dividends in terms of profits,” he said. “Our district is a public good... The return on investment will be seen in a community better equipped to respond to challenges and successes with care, dignity, and joy.”

This was echoed later by Bill Tomb, Gill’s representative to the board studying the feasibility of creating a new district with the towns in the Pioneer Valley district. “It was very easy for my group, the education subcommittee, to come to our conclusions about the enhancements that could be achieved,” Tomb said. “The more students you have, the more flexibility you have, the greater your course offerings will be.”

But though some in Pioneer’s member towns support the idea, Tomb said, the district itself has not been “collaborative,” as it is “trying to stay independent.” After several

years of study, the planning board is now considering whether to send an agreement for a new district to the towns. “It’s important that people get engaged,” Tomb said. “If any town votes it down, then it’s a dead horse.”

Directors of teaching and learning Jeanne Powers and pupil services Dianne Ellis discussed efforts to curb absenteeism, a “statewide and nationwide problem.”

“There’s no solution that works for anyone,” said Ellis after a long slog through the data, “other than really engaging with our families and students to try to address and understand what some of the barriers are.” She said the ongoing pandemic may be “one factor.” “We are still kind of in this early quasi-post-pandemic mindset,” she said, and parents may be opting to keep children home if they have “sniffles” in order to avoid their being sent home midday.

Superintendent Brian Beck announced this year’s winner of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents’ Award for Academic Excellence: senior Syna Katsoulis, the student representative to the school committee. He read a terrifyingly long litany of accomplishments qualifying Katsoulis for the award, and predicted that her “exceptional legacy of leadership, kindness, and caring for others” will “serve her well” at Smith College.

After discussing recent technical delays in fixing and re-filling the Turners Falls High School pool, Beck mentioned that the district is in an “initial phase” of discussions with the YMCA for shared use of the pool. Such a partnership, he said, may provide new opportunities including lifeguard certification classes and even a youth swimming program for elementary schoolers.

The committee’s next meeting is next Tuesday, December 19, a week early due to the Christian holidays.

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Pursuant to 33 U.S.C. 1341 and M.G.L. c. 21 §§ 26 - 53 and 33 U.S.C. 1341 and M.G.L. c. 21 §43”, notice is given of a 401 Water Quality Certification application for fill and dredge associated with the proposed bridge replacement of **Bridge No. M-28-026 in the Town of Montague, MA**, by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation - Highway Division, Ten Park Plaza, Room 7360, Boston, MA 02116. The existing bridge is structurally deficient. The proposed project will include a variety of repairs to the bridge superstructure and substructure. Additional information may be obtained from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation - Highway Division at the above address, Attention Courtney Walker or by emailing courtney.l.walker@dot.state.ma.us.

Written comments should be sent to MassDEP Wetlands Program, Attention Heidi Davis, 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114 or heidi.davis@mass.gov within 21 days of this notice.

Any group of ten persons, any aggrieved person, or any governmental body or private organization with a mandate to protect the environment who submits written comments may appeal the Department’s Certification. Failure to submit written comments before the end of the public comment period may result in the waiver of any right to an adjudicatory hearing.

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MILK from page A1

filled with the cleaning solution, either completely or mixed with the milk. According to vice president of communications Lynne Bohan, the company has voluntarily recalled all 8-ounce cartons of fat-free chocolate milk with an expiration date of December 19.

"This issue does not impact any other Hood products," Bohan told the *Reporter*. "Our investigation found that a very limited number of cartons were impacted by an inadvertent entry of potable drinking water and residual elements from a sanitation cycle due to manual error."

At least three students in Turners Falls consumed some of the solution, according to Montague health director Ryan Paxton. The students were evaluated on site and none were found to need immediate medical attention. The school notified all families of the incident, and eventually HP Hood provided a list of the specific chemicals used in the cleaning process.

"Should anyone have any personal questions or concerns, we always recommend contacting one's physician," Bohan said. "The residual elements were part of cleaning materials that are approved for use in food processing systems during standard operation, which are then normally purged from the system prior to filling cartons with milk."

The company distributes 8-ounce milk cartons primarily to schools, hospitals, and other large institutions, she reported.

Soon after the situation was under control in Montague, Beck said, he worked quickly to inform other school districts of the potential con-

tamination before lunchtime. No other schools in Franklin or Hampshire counties had milk with the same expiration date, according to Beck, and no other schools reported a similar issue. The nonprofit Collaborative for Educational Services helped communicate the threat to superintendents across the state.

"These items would have had to be consumed in large quantities for there to be a medically concerning level of toxicity," Beck said at Tuesday night's school committee meeting.

"What are we doing to evaluate our relationship with Hood?" asked school committee member Cristina Marcalow of Gill. "As the distributor, they've provided toxic chemicals instead of milk."

Beck said that the US Department of Agriculture contracts with HP Hood to provide dairy products to the district, and that he was unsure whether the school administration has any influence over those contracts.

"That's part of a conversation that we need to begin, depending on what they provide us with in terms of responsiveness with regard to their investigation and assurances going forward," Beck said. "We look forward to hearing back from Hood on the results of their investigation."


The state Department of Public Health is also investigating the incident, according to Paxton. Last year similar incidents occurred in Camden, New Jersey and Boston public schools involving milk cartons containing similar cleaning agents, provided by Guida's Dairy and Garelick Farms respectively.

Following the New Jersey incident, in which dozens of students were hospitalized after consuming a sanitizing agent, a group of parents filed a class-action lawsuit and the state issued an emergency recall of all milk from the brand. The milk was traced to a New Britain, Connecticut facility.

Weeks later, tainted milk was discovered at three Boston elementary schools before any students drank it. The contamination, again attributed to sanitizer diluted in water, was traced to a Franklin, Massachusetts plant, according to NBC Boston.

As a precaution, all cartons included in the same shipment as the tainted milk were removed from the Gill-Montague school district. Samples from the tainted cartons were sent back to HP Hood to assist in the company's internal investigation.

HP Hood sells milk and ice cream in the United States and beyond, generating an annual revenue of about \$3.5 billion dollars, according to *Forbes*. The Agawam facility, the largest of the company's four milk plants, was built in 1960 and processes about 40 million gallons of milk per year. MassLive reported this year that the company has invested tens of millions of dollars over the last decade in new equipment and physical improvements at the facility.

"We are grateful for the cooperation of the folks at Turners Falls High School who assisted us with the investigation," Bohan told the *Reporter* on Wednesday. "Corrective actions have been implemented to avoid this occurrence in the future." 

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

DinoFest Returns!

GREENFIELD – Piti Theatre and the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association (PVMA) continue engaging all ages with our region's stories at the seventh annual Great Greenfield DinoFest this Saturday, December 16.

Blending local history and performance, DinoFest 2023 features a screening and reception for Piti's short documentary *The Princes of Deerfield* at the Greenfield Garden Cinema at 10:30 a.m., followed by the improv show "Story Wizards: Dino Drama" at the Greenfield Library at 12:30 p.m. with a reception at noon.

For the older crowd, performance artist Christopher Janke will be at LAVA Center at 7 p.m. with *The Everlasting Gobstopper*, with a post-show presentation by GCC professor emeritus Richard Little about armored mud balls in the Connecticut River Valley. Admission is free, and Professor Little will have mud balls on view starting at 6:30 p.m.

The Princes of Deerfield, recommended for ages 7 and up, tells the tale of Abijah and Lucy Prince and a group of children from Deerfield in the 1770s. Lucy is considered the first African-American poet, and we know she was popular among Deerfield children due to her storytelling abilities. It was filmed on location in Charlemont, and includes an original song by Northampton singer-songwriter Carrie Ferguson and Piti's Jonathan Mirin.

Princes will also be livestreamed on Zoom with a question-and-answer period on Sunday at 7:30 p.m. Register for the Zoom event at pico.org/dino. The final film will premiere next spring.

In Piti's latest family show, "Story Wizards: Dino Drama," recommended for ages 5 and up, the audience creates and performs the story along with Piti's actors. In this special version Piti will ask for dino-themed characters and places.

The Everlasting Gobstopper, Chris Janke's roughly 30-minute sculptural performance about the Connecticut River, lollipops, and deep time, is said to be "appropriate for all brave ages," and includes a conceptual "gift bag for the future." Professor Little's short presentation about armored mud balls is recommended for ages 10 and up.

DinoFest was launched in 2017 by the PVMA and Piti after discussions about how to bring local dinosaur history to life. It is indebted to Dexter Marsh, a day laborer who noticed what looked like bird footprints in the flagstone from Montague he was using to lay sidewalk near Greenfield town hall in 1835 – seven years before the word "dinosaur" was invented – and James Deane, the first person to treat these strange impressions as objects of scientific interest. They piqued the interest of Amherst professor Edward Hitchcock, who became the first scientist to study dinosaur tracks and interpret their meaning.

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Town Agrees to Lawyer Up, Hopes Lawyers Up For It

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Former selectboard member Dan Keller made a return Zoom appearance to the Wendell selectboard's December 6 meeting, using the public comment time to tell board members that the unofficial but growing group No Assault & Batteries (NAB) was creating a petition for a January special town meeting to vote on an ordinance that would restrict or prohibit large stand-alone battery storage installations in Wendell, like the one proposed by New Leaf Energy.

Keller also urged the town to take the first steps toward becoming an official intervenor in the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) process of reviewing New Leaf's proposal. His reasons had not changed from the previous meeting: he said the proposed site is inappropriate, and that lithium batteries can be dangerous.

Speaking as a concerned citizen, open space committee member Ray DiDonato said he was glad to follow Keller and agreed that the proposed site, close to the headwaters of Whetstone Brook, is inappropriate. The larger problem, he said, is governor Healey's effort to reduce Massachusetts' contribution to CO₂ emissions, which he said sacrifices the open space and forests in small western Massachusetts towns to meet the electricity demands of heavily populated cities and towns in the east. DiDonato said that he felt this emphasis does not properly address climate change, and that it is not progressive.

Keller said the initial steps for becoming an intervenor are not expensive or complex. Later steps of intervention can get involved and expensive, he said, but the first step would be to get Wendell's "foot in the door" and show New Leaf that its path forward will have obstacles.

The DPU has not yet opened New Leaf's application. Keller said area "sprawlbuster"

Al Norman had told him the town's early opposition to the proposal may even direct New Leaf's efforts elsewhere, possibly to a more appropriate location. He also said NAB would be able to contribute to the cost of intervening if that gets expensive.

Town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad said Wendell town counsel David Doneski, knows how to start the intervenor process, but that even his whole law firm, Kopelman & Paige PC, might not have the expertise to lead an entire intervention process.

Nina Keller suggested that Doneski contact Megan Sheehan, the lawyer that represented Carver in that town's failed attempt to intervene against a large battery project in that town.

Johnson-Mussad said the primary reason to hold a special town meeting would be to create an ordinance, as opposed to the solar bylaw passed at the 2022 annual town meeting, which was struck down by the state attorney general.

The board passed a motion authorizing staff to work with Doneski to prepare a petition for intervening so that it will be ready when New Leaf's proposal comes under consideration.

Responsiveness

Johnson-Mussad said his contact with other town administrators gave him the impression that everyone has been having trouble getting timely response from legal counsel. He added that Doneski seems to be responding faster than he had been to Wendell's requests and questions.

He said he had looked for, but did not find, any contract with Kopelman & Paige. Laurie DiDonato suggested creating and distributing a request for quotes from law firms, asking for a three-year contract with some stipulation on response time.

Board member Gillian Budine said just doing that might spur Kopelman to up their game.

Public Safety

When fire chief Joe Cuneo became 65 years old in October, his insurance changed so that if a cardiac incident puts him out of service, insurance will pay his medical expenses but not his salary. Wendell and New Salem, which also employs him as fire chief, would have to make those payments. Treasurer Carolyn Manley said the situation is just something the selectboard and finance committee should be aware of.

Budine said it might be a reason to hurry the process of finding Cuneo's replacement. DiDonato said she would bring the issue up at the public safety planning committee meeting on December 13.

Manley said now might be a good time to require an annual physical for the chief, as well as for firefighters.

Project Updates

Town project manager Phil Delorey said the tree at the library is down, the stump disposed of, and the spot ready for loam and seeding in spring.

He said test wells have been drilled around the former landfill, and reports from them should be available soon. The former landfill turned out to be larger than was thought, so the site will require \$60,000 to \$80,000 more in fill for the 3:1 slope than the plans call for. Delorey said he intends to bargain for a 2:1 slope.

The replacement culvert under Mormon Hollow Road is working as it should. Delorey said town counsel told him that the size of Wendell's extra spending on two rounds of repairs, \$84,000 plus \$76,000, is small on the scale of major construction projects. The expense of trying to recover the extra money Wendell paid from either the contractor or the engineer may be more than the town gets back.

DiDonato suggested mediation, and may help from the Franklin Regional Council

of Governments (FRCOG), which had helped with the initial procurement.

Board members decided that the letter of understanding between Wendell and Erving to split the cost of design work by Gill Engineering for repairs on the Farley Road bridge did not need any legal refinement. Wendell will administer the project, and each town will pay half the \$31,000 design cost.

Warwick sent Manley an account of Kevin Bickford's work on the Warwick road crew. Wendell will allow three years of creditable time for his Warwick work to be added to the time he works in Wendell towards his Wendell retirement, vacation time, and sick days.

Other Business

Wendell received a notice from the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) stating the department's intention to buy 75 acres off Montague Road for conservation and recreation, as an addition to the state forest. DCR also intends to cut some limbs and dead red pines on the south side of Montague Road.


DiDonato announced that solar panels have now been installed and connected at the highway garage. Delorey turned the switch on. Knollwood Energy will serve as the broker for Wendell's renewable energy credits (RECs), under a three-year contract that will pay Wendell \$27 per million kilowatt-hours, with Knollwood taking 7% as its fee. The energy committee intends to thank Bill Ashley, who paid for the panels and installation.

The board accepted Delorey's request to change the town parking ban to read that a parked vehicle's closest edge, not just its tires, must be at least four feet from the road edge. The change is intended to make plowing snow safer.

The selectboard appointed Jesse Eisenheim to the website committee.

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MONTAGUE from page A1

“what type of guidance they are looking for.” “Yes, go ahead,” he said. “I don’t need to talk to you, but if there is something specific you are looking for, please let me know what that is!”

“I agree,” said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz. “My thought is that we send a message [supporting] moving forward with the regional agreement, and invite them to a meeting in January.” Kuklewicz said the goal of consolidation was not to save money, but to improve education, which might “help to grow the district. It’s not sustainable the way it is.”

Without taking a formal vote, all three board members nodded in agreement.

Sticker Freeze

The board decided not to raise trash sticker prices this year after a detailed presentation by Ellis of sticker revenues over the past decade, and how much of the town’s cost of trash and recycling hauling they have covered. Montague will change its pickup service to Casella Waste Management in the upcoming year, and the cost is expected to increase significantly.

Ellis’s data showed that the “uncovered cost” – the total cost of trash and recycling pickup, minus the revenue from trash stickers – averaged 46% over the past decade. He said the total cost next fiscal year under Casella was expected to jump by over \$90,000, which would increase the uncovered cost to nearly 60%.

Maintaining the historic share covered by stickers, at least for next year, would require an increase from \$3 for a single bag to \$4. Administrative assistant Wendy Bogusz reported that trash sticker prices were last raised in October 2007, and barrel stickers in January 2008.

Selectboard member Chris Boutwell said that he was hesitant to raise sticker prices by \$1, “especially with our elderly population,” but that he would consider an increase of 50 cents this year and perhaps another 50 cents “a year or two down the road.”

Town treasurer Eileen Seymour argued against phasing in a trash sticker increase slowly because it would create complexities for sticker vendors and for her department, which must account for these revenues. “It’s been 15 years since we’ve raised rates,” she said. “If we’re going to do it, let’s just bite the bullet and do the dollar instead of going back in two years and having to re-communicate all over again.”

Lord said he was unsure if raising the rates would encourage more recycling, or just encourage residents to “find other ways to throw it away.”

Kuklewicz said he would “hate” to raise the sticker fee if it causes this problem, but noted that residents would be paying for the cost increase “one way or another” through taxation. Costs not covered by sticker sales are funded by the “Solid Waste” line item, number 433 in the public works department budget, according to town accountant Carolyn Olsen.

In the end of the board, without a formal vote, decided to “leave it at the three dollars for this year and revisit it next year,” in Kuklewicz’s words.

Modes of Development

Ellis reviewed a 66-page state

“Economic Development Plan” recently issued by Governor Maura Healey’s office. Ellis, who serves on the Economic Development Planning Council, which developed the plan, stressed its recommendations focusing on rural communities. He said that “the rural perspective was able to penetrate and influence most deeply” in the sections dealing with housing, transportation, and other public infrastructure.

“We caught more traction in the discussion of infrastructure, more specifically,” he said, noting that some towns in Franklin County have problems similar to those of the state’s so-called “Gateway Cities,” such as Holyoke and Springfield, albeit on a smaller scale.

Aesthetic Efforts

The board responded to a request by town planner Maureen Pollock and assistant planner and RiverCulture director Suzanne Lomanto to allocate American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for a mural on the northeast side of the Shea Theater.

It turned out that the board had already voted to approve \$22,450 in ARPA money for that project, but it raised the allocation to \$25,000 to partially make up for a rejected state grant request.

The board approved another mural, or sign, at the intersection of Greenfield Road and the Canalside Rail Trail bike path, at the request of Clean Water Facility (CWF) superintendent Chelsey Little.

The sign features a design by local artist Mary Chicoine, showing the historic railroad bridge on which the bike path crosses the Connecticut River, flanked on one side by leaves representing the “ecosystem” and on the other side by sections of the treatment plant. It would sit near the entrance to the CWF on property owned by the state Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Clean Water Facility

The selectboard, wearing their sewer commissioner hats, heard a number of other updates and requests from Little, including seven requests from homeowners to abate their sewer bills for the first half of the current fiscal year. Little recommended that the board only abate two of the bills, but adjust three others so their next bills would be lower.

The two sewer bills each household receives in a given fiscal year, in this case for July through December 2023 and January through June 2024, are calculated based on its recorded water usage the previous winter, in this case October 2022 into early April 2023.

Little reported on the latest monthly testing data required to meet the state and federal permit to send treated water into the Connecticut River. “Everything looks great, no issues,” she said. “Treatment’s been great.”

The FY’25 CWF budget was quickly reviewed by the board, which set a date in March for a sewer commission “retreat.”

The board voted to declare three of four pieces of CWF equipment as “surplus,” to be sold at auction. A “shaker,” which shakes stones and other objects out of dirt to make usable loam, will be transferred instead to the public works department.

The bulk of Little’s time was spent reviewing a report by the engineering firm Wright-Pierce on the

HVAC system in the lower building at the treatment plant, called the operations building. Little had previously expressed concerns over the safety of CWF staff working in that location, with a boiler and heating and cooling system that are, according to the report, “in poor condition and prone to failure.”

The board had already voted to install a reconditioned boiler, and the new report evaluates a range of options for the HVAC system. Little has recommended that the staff work space be moved to another building, potentially the structure currently behind town hall used by the public works department, which could be moved to the CWF.

Little said the options range from a minimum of \$872,000, to bring the HVAC system up to code, to \$1.5 million “to get everything back to where it needs to be.”

She said she did not think it made sense to spend the higher amount “when we’re looking at doing a long-term upgrade at that end of the facility.” “It makes more sense to stabilize things,” she said, and “move staff and all movable equipment out of that building.”

Board members, who felt they did not have a complete report showing the estimates Little cited, agreed to revisit the issue next month.

Other Business

Assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey reviewed capital requests and a timeline for considering them. The town has so far received 12 proposals for FY’25, totaling approximately \$1.7 million. Ramsey said two of the projects – the purchase of a skid steer, a small tractor with tracks instead of wheels, and a culvert replacement on Ferry Road – may need to come before a special town meeting this winter to be funded this fiscal year instead.

Ramsey reported that Collins Construction of Fall River has been hired to upgrade the drainage pond below the town’s capped burn dump on Sandy Lane, and that erosion control dug into the stream along Montague City Road held up well during a recent storm.

Finally, Ramsey updated the board on the town’s cable license, currently held by Comcast under a contract that will expire in August 2025. He said a “crucial first step for the board is to reinvigorate the cable advisory committee” (CAC), which oversees an annual review of the local-access television station and assists in negotiations with the cable company. The CAC currently has only two of five members, he said.

The selectboard endorsed a letter of support for a Comcast application to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute for a grant to help close the town’s “broadband infrastructure gap” by helping residents who do not have access to cable.

The board also voted to accept a \$500,000 Parklands Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant from the state for the Montague Center Playscape Improvement project, and approved the purchase of a 2023 Kubota Tractor for \$40,917 with money from the public works discretionary fund.

At the request of the Montague Historical Society member Ed Gregory, it authorized the transfer of demolition design documents for the former Farren Care Center to the Society’s archives.

The next board meeting will be held next Monday, December 18.



LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on December 12, 2013: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Family Fights Off Rabid Fox

In Millers Falls, a rabid fox full of porcupine quills surprised Lynne Heath in her car, chased her around her yard, then forced itself inside the house. Husky/malamute Boo Boo, who was up to date on his vaccinations, bit the fox but couldn’t get a grip. While Lynne and Brian Heath, Jr. managed to barricade themselves in separate rooms, the fox terrorized a second dog and scared three cats into escaping outside. Brian Heath, Sr. stunned the fox with 10-pound weights and finally did it in with a shovel.

Public health director Gina McNeely said this is the first local case

of rabies since 2011: “It’s a good reminder for all of us – rabies does pop up now and again.” The town advises residents to avoid contact with wild animals, alive or dead, to wear gloves if contact with one is necessary, and to call the police, who will dispatch an animal control officer, if a sick animal is spotted.

A Hire for Fire?

Members of the Leverett fire department study committee met with the selectboard on Tuesday to discuss implementing its principal recommendation: to hire a full-time firefighter, trained as an EMT.

Five senior members and officers of the call fire department are all at or near retirement, while the aging population is making it difficult to recruit new firefighters.

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on December 11, 2003: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

A Second Lease On Half-Life?

Vermont Yankee has a new owner with a plan to increase production at the aging reactor.

Striking a \$20 million deal with Vermont’s Department of Public Service, Entergy – the Louisiana-based corporation that bought the Vernon plant for \$180 million a year ago – appears poised to implement one of the largest power upgrades in the country.

The proposal, which would exceed the reactor’s original design rating of 540 megawatts to 650, faces hearings before the Vermont Public Service Board next month.

“We’ve replaced many components and systems over the years to

keep this a state-of-the-art plant,” said Entergy spokesman Robert Williams. Others are skeptical.

Democracy Needs Journalists

Wesley Blixt, a scrivener by trade for 20 years, taught his first workshop for hopeful journalists at the Montague Reporter. He challenged them to take the work of community journalism seriously. “A participatory democracy cannot survive without it,” he said. “You don’t need a license to publish a newspaper. You are upholding the basic first amendment rights this country was founded on.”

Blixt was fulfilling his sentence of 10 hours of community service for expressing his freedom of speech as a protestor at the gates of Westover Air Force base at the onset of the most recent Gulf debacle.

150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on December 10, 1873: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

Local Matters

The Pulp Mill is running again. Chas. Johnson will complete the gravel roof of the Keith Mill stock room to-morrow.

A drive of logs which the Lumber Co. bought at Brattleboro is on the way down.

The ice crop has been retarded by the genial showers and generous sun although the harvest will be no later.

Geo. O. Peabody is doing a good thing for the place in pushing the building of the Colle block along this winter, while the times are hard.

The Reporter job office is now fully prepared to give work promptly. We have added paper and card cutting machines, new type, etc., and turn out nothing but first-class work.

Thirty or forty of the young men of the place collected at the

house of P. Bardwell last evening, and presented him with an elegant and costly wolf robe.

At the meeting of the fire district on the 2nd, four persons were admitted members of the fire department, and the foreman of the company presented the Chief Engineer with a long list of articles in which the company stand in need, which it was resolved to procure as soon as the district comes in possession of some money.

On Saturday evening the river was fairly black with skaters, and on Monday they skated to and fro to the fitful, glimmering flames of a half dozen bonfires. On Monday three boys skated into the open water, and for a few minutes the undertaking business showed signs of revival. One boy, David Wait, was saved only by the cool presence of mind displayed by Julien Holmes in skating to the edge of the ice, pulling off his overcoat and, holding on by a sleeve, throwing it to the boy just as he was going below the surface.



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MEADOW from page A1

at Wednesday's meeting by Joshua Wallack, a Florida-based real estate developer and nightclub owner hired to manage the redevelopment of the estate and negotiate with the towns of Leverett and Amherst and their residents.

Wallack told the crowd that his family owned a second home in the Berkshires, which he has visited frequently, making him familiar with the small-town culture of western Massachusetts. He said that he first visited the Kittredge estate in November 2022 and had "never seen anything like it in my life."

"Every time I walked through it," Wallack said, "it broke my heart that families and children would not be able to enjoy this place."

The housing project suddenly became public when it appeared on the agenda for a planning board last week, and was the subject of articles in the *Hampshire Gazette* and this newspaper. Virtually no details on the project were available at that first meeting, however, leading to much speculation on the project's scope and its potential impact on local infrastructure and schools.

A number of posts on the Leverett Connects email listserv since the first meeting have speculated that the housing envisioned on the property could double the town's population, which according to the

2020 Census is 1,865.

Wallack repeatedly refused on Wednesday night to respond to such speculation, pointing to a "feasibility study" to be completed in February that would flesh out the numbers. Instead he spent nearly 40 minutes articulating his vision, complete with slides that appeared to be produced by an architect or graphic designer, of a development that maintains virtually all the elements of the Kittredge estate but surrounds them with two- and three-story mixed-income housing.

This would make the estate's amenities available to residents in different income brackets, he argued, in a region desperately in need of more housing. "The property is yearning to have children running through it," he said.

The lack of details seemed to frustrate some members of the planning board. One member asked who would carry out the proposed study, what its criteria would be for "feasibility," and whether the town would have input.

Wallack said that "Richard Ellis" – presumably CBRE Group, which became the world's largest commercial real estate services firm after Coldwell Banker acquired Richard Ellis International in 1998 – would undertake the study, which would look at a variety of options for the property, and that there would be

time for public input, at least when the study is completed. He said its goal would be to "get down to the absolute facts."

Wallack was also asked how a developer for the project would be chosen. He said there would be a competitive request for proposals to find a company with significant capitalization and equity so that "there will be no funny business."

Planning board member Molly Daniel, noting that "everyone is hungry for specifics," asked whether the developers would pay for "additional studies" commissioned by the town of the proposed project's impact.

Wallack said he would be willing to consider "additional studies." "We're interested in dealing with the facts," he said.

The vision described by Wallack did not seem to have impressed residents during the public input segment of the meeting, which lasted over an hour. A number of speakers cited research which they said suggests that tax revenue from such a project would be eclipsed by increased costs for infrastructure and public services.

A number of attendees, posting on the Zoom chat or lining up at a microphone in the gym, criticized Wallack for not understanding the configuration of Leverett schools after he suggested that increased enrollment from the project at both the elementary and high school levels could be handled by students attending Amherst schools. It was pointed out that while Leverett's middle and high school students are already in the Amherst-Pelham district, the town funds its own elementary school, so students at that level going to Amherst would count as school-choice losses.

One longtime resident of Juggler Meadow Road said the pictures Wallack had shown "look like a condo in Florida. This is Leverett – our Juggler Meadow Road. That property used to be the meadow."

Another critic, repeating the view that the project would double the population of the town, said that new residents could then pack the town meeting and vote for projects benefiting the development.

Alice Feldman of Shutesbury Road requested that Wallack "dream of a better use" for the property by "giving it in reparations to Native folks."

"Thank you, and I'll take it to heart," responded Wallack.

Tip of the week ...

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Joshua Wallack's slide presentation on Wednesday included an artist's rendering of just one section of an imagined massive housing development on the Kittredge estate (top), as well as some visual examples of its proposed aesthetic conditions (bottom).

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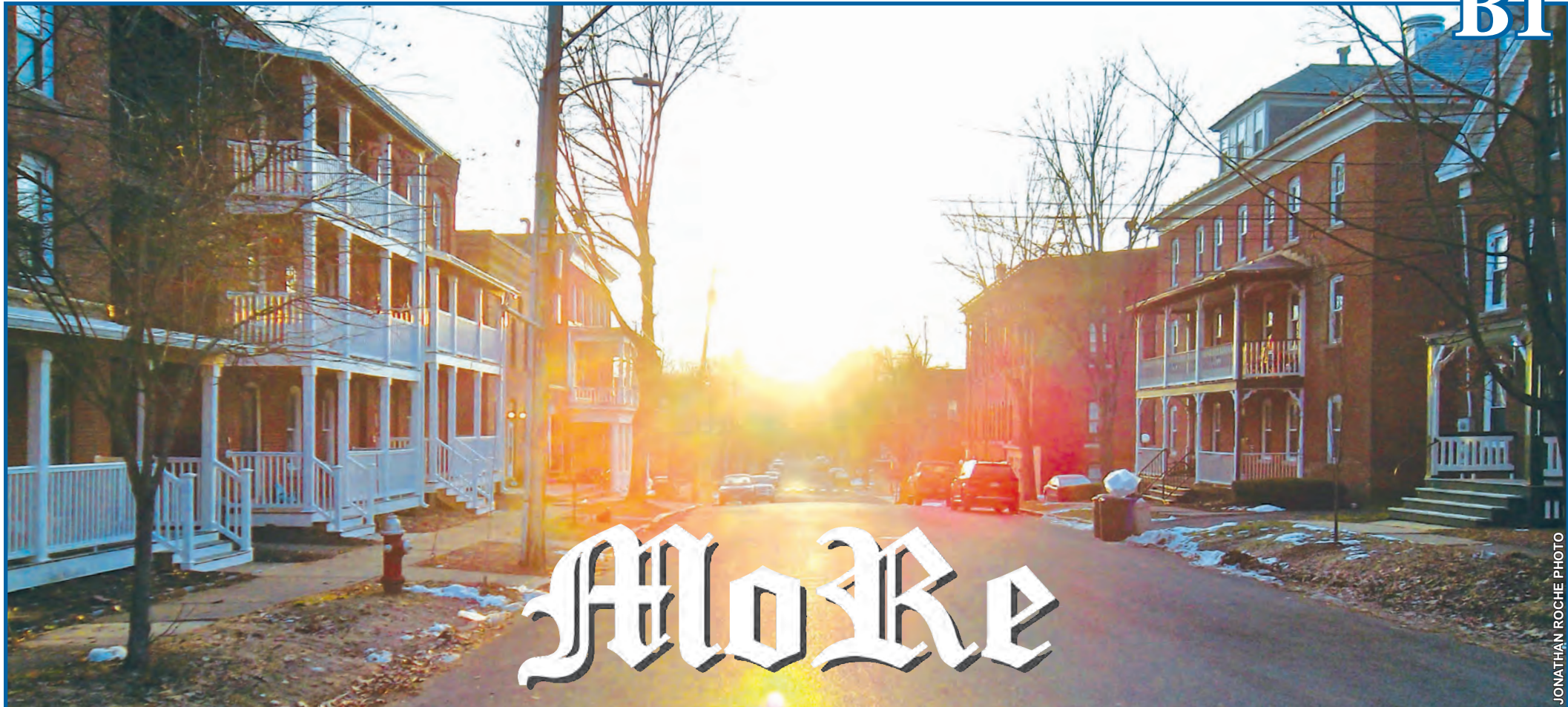


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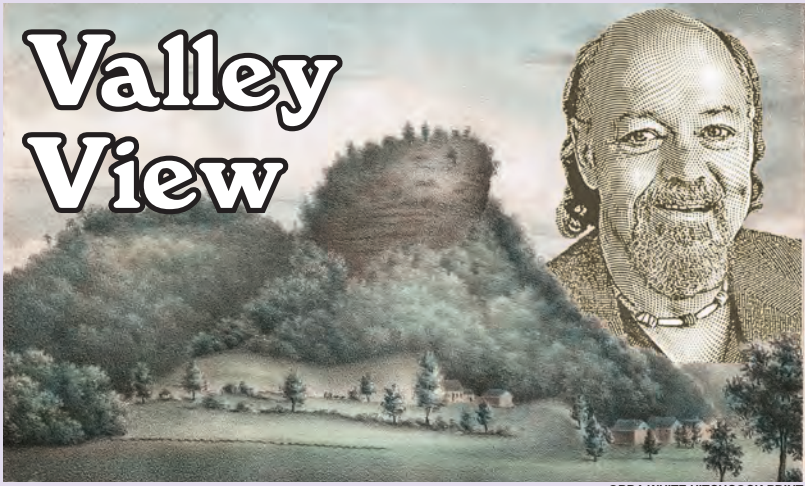
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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

DECEMBER 14, 2023

Above: "I live on Third Street and, noticing the changing angle of the sun on the road, wondered if the Turners Falls street grid aligns with the winter solstice sunrise," writes Jonathan Roche, who took this photo on December 22, 2022. "I found that it does."



ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

G.W. Mark Canvas Captures Ewers' Dog

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Greenfield tradesman and folk artist George Washington Mark was well-known about town and in surrounding communities as an eccentric house, sign, furniture, carriage, and sleigh painter, not to mention a flamboyant downtown character, between 1817 and 1879, when he died in his 84th year.

Born in 1795 in Charlestown, New Hampshire, Mark was said to have spent time on a schooner before arriving in Greenfield at the age of 22 and liberally using the newspaper to advertise his painting skills.

Soon he wed Mary Ann Skinner (1798-1860) of Gill, about whom little is known, including the place and date of her wedding. Her February 15, 1860 cancer death must have been a long, exhausting ordeal. When it was over, her appreciative husband thanked community assistance in a newspaper posting that began: "To the Ladies of all the Religious Societies in this place, I owe a debt of gratitude which can only be repaid to you in God's Heavenly Kingdom. For the long and constant kindness you have bestowed on us in the last distressing sickness of my partner."

Otherwise, Mary Ann (Skinner) Mark's passing went without public notice in the local newspaper. No death notice or obituary.

Some five months later Mark remarried, taking as his second and final wife the widow Mary Diana (Torrey) Ball, whose second

husband, Frederick Augustus Ball, passed in 1856. Her first husband, Amos Temple, died in 1849. She outlived Mark by seven years, died in Sunderland, and is buried in Deerfield's Laurel Hill Cemetery.

I first learned of Mark in 1997, soon after moving into my current upper Greenfield Meadows home – a National Register of Historic Places dwelling with outbuildings and a rich stagecoach-tavern history. The introduction came from an impeccable source: now-retired Historic Deerfield architectural conservator William Flynt. Pointing out the grain-painted doors gracing many rooms, but particularly the figured-maple examples in the formal upstairs bedrooms, Flynt identified them as the work of Mark and cautioned me to take special care not to ding them with furniture, vacuums, brooms, or luggage. They were rare examples of masterful Mark's finest *faux*-painting.

Now, due to an exciting recent development, the story gets better. Much better.

In this, my 26th year at Old Tavern Farm, a dark, oil-on-canvas, sporting-art portrait of an alert hound resting on a hunting jacket and chaps was brought to my attention. The dog's front paws cover a double-barreled shotgun's receiver and hammers as the gun lies across in front, with a tunneling background framed by pines. I was immediately attracted to the 19th-century painting, recognizing it as primitive or folk art.

A local woman brought the painting to my attention because, she said, it had come to her father in 1948 as a gift from a well-known spinster who then owned my home. Helen Gerrett – known by neighbors as the "Mayor of the Meadows" because of her bossy, protective neighborhood ways – told the recipient, a bank colleague, that the painting was hanging in the old tavern when her grandfather, Elijah Worthington Smith, bought the place in 1857. She wanted her friend, an avid bird hunter and outdoorsman, to have the sporting art for his recently purchased Halifax, Vermont hunting camp.

see **VALLEY VIEW** page B8



The dog's likely owner, tavernkeeper Henry A. Ewers, circa 1865.

COURTESY OF THE GREENFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INTERVIEW

'Become Familiar with the Spirits that Live There'

By GEORGE BRACE

LEVERETT – A town committee is currently studying the question of whether Leverett should accept a 147-acre gift of land from retired forester Bruce Spencer for the purpose of creating a "town forest."

Spencer, a former Leverett resident, was the first forester employed to manage the Quabbin forest district. Over a 40-year career he rose to become a respected figure in the forestry world. The parcel of land in North Leverett he wishes to donate is a personal project he began with his brother in the early 1970s, and has managed since that time.

Spencer kindly sat down for an interview to tell the *Reporter* a little about the land, his work, and his views on nature and conservation. He had a lot to say, and the interview has been abridged significantly, reordered, and edited for clarity.

MR: *First, just a little bit of biography. I'd read that you were district manager for the Quabbin?*

BS: I was the chief forester for the Quabbin. I started working there in 1965 and worked for 41 years, my whole professional career. I was the only forester there when I started, but we added several more as time went on. I retired in 2006.

I'd owned this lot with a friend of mine since 1973, and I bought him out somewhere around when I retired.

MR: *Did you go to school for forestry?*

BS: I did. I started off at Springfield College, but then for some reason that isn't worth mentioning, I really wanted to be a forester, so I transferred to UMass and ended up getting both my bachelor's and master's degrees at UMass in forestry and in the watershed management in the forest, the role that forestry can play in watersheds.

I graduated in '64 and got my master's a few years later, and then started right in 1965, as I said, working in the Quabbin.

MR: *When did you start managing this land?*

BS: We started right off back in the early 1970s. This lot and others were owned by a sawmill man. He had died, and they were basically auctioning off all his woodlots, and this was one of them. A friend who was also a forester and I bid on them, and this is one of the lots that we managed to purchase.

I had another job – this was just a hobby for us. Once every 10 years we would cut some timber here. It



Bruce Spencer at the gate to the Two Brothers Woodlot.

BRACE PHOTO

wasn't a big, involved process.

It was a mature stand of mostly, especially this lower section, pine, oak, and hemlock. Soon after that we started cutting some of the over-mature trees to help pay for the woodlot, and regenerated into younger age classes.

When we first started, there wasn't a problem getting regeneration. All the plants that wanted to grow here could grow. Can't do that now – the deer won't let us grow these oaks. The deer population has gotten pretty serious, to the point that we can't get the diversity of trees that have always been here – and oak is an important one, because its acorns feed about everything that flies or walks around this woodlot.

MR: *Did you have an idea, coming in, of what you wanted to do?*

BS: I always had an idea, and that's somewhat part of the controversy with some members of the town – they've walked this lot and observed a lot of valuable timber, and they could see that it could really make some money for the town, it could be a so-called "working forest." But my goal wasn't really to make money: it was to have a diverse, healthy, stand of trees of all sizes, right up to the largest that can grow here.

I do have some trees over three feet in diameter here right now, and have no intentions of cutting them,

they're in good condition. The goal was to just maintain a healthy, diverse, forest ecosystem. That means that you never cut any trees that are doing well – you just take out the trees that aren't performing, and give the better trees more resources.

The result is that it's an attractive place to take a walk. A lot of people that have been here realize that it's a very beautiful forest, and that was my goal. There's some real old-growth hemlock down by the river there that's probably approaching 270 years of age. I've got different things, vernal pools, old-growth...

Most of the uses we're talking about are wintertime: cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hunting and hiking, fishing the Sawmill River as a trout stream. Trapping is important down there, because we've had [beavers] wanting to come in and build ponds in old-growth hemlock stands. It's never been posted.

For people that like to watch birds and stuff, there's lots of wildlife here. I've seen just about everything.

MR: *Those are all uses that have been happening, and that you hope would continue?*

BS: Oh, I think so. All my skid trails have been kept free of slash, so they're easily walkable. And the lot is broken up: even going up the hill there are terraces, there are some valleys, there is a lot of see **TOWN FOREST** page B4

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

‘PRINCESS’

Princess is a Jack Russell-pug mix, and if you adopt her, you can decide what fun name that breed deserves! She's not a puggle (a pug/beagle) – could she be a Pugjack? A Pugell? A Jackugell?

Either way, Princess's mix is a fun party! She can be nervous when she first meets people, but once she warms up, she is energetic and very playful. She would love a home with a yard to run around in.

Princess has never been around

other dogs or cats and is a rough player, so she may be too much for younger kids.

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

Want your pet featured? Email a photo and information about them to jae@montaguereporter.org.



By LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE – If it seems strange to be writing about a lost dog in a column about elders, read on, because this is really a story about community, love, and possible miracles.

On November 6 Boris, a fourteen-year-old Great Pyrenees, wandered away from the man who was caring for him in Colrain. His age, hearing loss, partial blindness, and arthritis made him vulnerable, just like human elders.

My heart broke for him and his owners. I read and share all posts about missing dogs, especially those that come from the Franklin County Regional Shelter in Turners Falls, but this one particularly tugged at my heart, because Boris looks exactly like my dog Ziggy. Yes, *that* Ziggy, the one who drove me crazy as a puppy and now claims a big piece of my heart.

I joined an online chat group to keep track of the search for Boris. The first Facebook post was intended to enlist a small group of friends to help search. The page now has a thousand followers, old, young, and in between.

Some people are praying for his safe return, some are burning sage and sending healing energy out to the universe, some are out in their hunting gear, a few are flying drones, a medium is communicating with Boris, but most are staying home like me, unable to do anything more than follow the constant notifications while staying out of the way of those who know the terrain.

Colrain is beautiful but challenging, filled with sloping hillsides and ravines and deep woods; a hard place for a lame dog to navigate. Boris takes medication for his arthritis. How far could he get on those old hips before he stumbled and couldn't get up? I would like to have joined the search, but knew I couldn't handle the terrain, either.

Notifications came in a distracting cascade of pings. Ping, I think I saw him. Ping, That's not him. Ping, A trail cam picked him up. Ping, No, that's a dog from a nearby farm. Ping, Could he be heading home? Should we be looking in another direction?

And on and on. I am touched that a thousand people have come together to relieve a bit of pain in this world. If the children in the bombings can't be saved, or people who are starving, if war seems inevitable and the political divide impossible to cross, maybe this one old dog can be found so that his owner can hold him, and he will not die alone. A lost dog has brought so many together with a single good-hearted goal.

Ping, The owner just asked all the followers to hold back and stay home. The trackers are coming. Stay away; hang posters instead.

So, they do. They collaborate, divide up the area and head out, a small army with staple guns in hand. As people have fallen in love with this giant dog, they've assumed a kind of ownership. They are talking about

his welcome home party.

The owner is grateful and also asking them to back off a little. A dog in survival mode won't be running into anyone's arms, not even hers. If he's found, Boris will be exhausted, hungry, and weak. He will go straight to the emergency vet.

She doesn't say, *he's mine*, but I suspect that she wants to. If Ziggy were lost and then found, I'd make a cave for us with blankets hanging over the dining room table, and we'd huddle there for days, only coming out for food and bathroom breaks.

And that brings me around to community. Ziggy did once wriggle out of his collar on a morning walk. He was tromping through flowerbeds, and enjoying the

chase, and then like magic, our neighbor crossed busy Main Street with a fistful of ham and calmly lured Ziggy back into captivity and acted like it was nothing when it meant everything, and my heart surged with gratitude for him and the small village where I live.

There have been expansive studies recently about social isolation among the elderly. It can lead to depression, dementia, and other health issues. It's being called a national health problem. I think we can help solve that here in Montague where people naturally want to help each other, like my kind neighbor.

When it's up and running, Montague Villages will foster connections and make it easy for people to ask for help or companionship and link them to existing services. There are more than I ever imagined.

Boris has revealed the goodness in people. There are American flags on some of the barns in the hill towns, and there are Black Lives Matter signs, too, and gardens with Buddha statues and rainbow banners and Tibetan prayer flags. In this remote section of western Massachusetts, a lame old dog is trying to survive or find comfort while dying, and people have put aside their differences and come together to help. Maybe we all simply needed Boris to remind us that people can be kind and generous.

I walk around Montague Center and look at the crèche in front of the church, remembering the year some kids stole all the figures. Most were returned or found. Maybe Boris is bedded down in a snug barn, safe and warm, waiting to be found.

I think of flying drones instead of reindeer and hope one will spot Boris so his family can bring him home. Menorahs remind us of lamps that burned when there was no oil, so maybe an old dog can survive in the woods for a month against all odds.

Hope resides in all the stories and most of all with each other. Peaceful Holidays to all, and keep Boris in your hearts.

MISSING DOG
November 6

Large, friendly Great Pyrenees that answers to Boris. He is old, almost deaf, probably scared, and exhausted.
Last seen Colrain / Shelburne Line
Any News or Sightings Call or Text:
413-695-1087

Many people came together to search for Boris when he became lost.

Senior Center Activities

DECEMBER 18 THROUGH 22

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.

Monday 12/18
9 a.m. Interval Workout
10 a.m. Seated Dance
12 p.m. Pitch Card Group

Tuesday 12/19
9 a.m. Good For U Workout
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringers

Wednesday 12/20
9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo

Thursday 12/21
9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow
12 p.m. **Santa's Brunch**
Holiday Music

Friday 12/22
9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

GILL and MONTAGUE
The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Lunch available Tuesday through Thursday. For more information please call 863-9357.

Monday 12/18
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Kitchen Club

Tuesday 12/19
9 a.m. Chair Yoga
9:30 a.m. Tuesday Knitters
10 a.m. Zumba Lite
11 a.m. Money Matters
12:30 p.m. Tech Help Drop In
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 12/20
9 a.m. VA Agent
9:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
11:45 a.m. Friends' Meeting
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
1 p.m. Food Pantry
4:15 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 12/21
9 a.m. MSW Help
(by appointment)

Friday 12/22
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Pizza Party
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.

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FILM REVIEW

Disney's *The Shepherd*

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – When I heard about a short film that was to stream on Disney Plus on December 1, I became really interested in seeing and reviewing it. It's called *The Shepherd*, and it is based on a short story by Fredrick Forsyth with the same name.

Sometimes when they make other versions of things from books or true stories, they do their own creative take of them. The short film ends up staying pretty true to the original short story. It could be called *A Christmas Ghost Story*, and it was a good one.

It features John Travolta as the Shepherd in the story. He's an actor whose work I am very familiar with. An actor by the name of Steven Mackintosh who I know of too is also in the film.

The story starts out in 1957, with a Royal Air Force pilot named Freddie appearing to luck out in being able to go home for Christmas Eve in his plane. It looks like clear weather for him, and a simple flight home. But that changes, as he gets fog rolling in and instrument failure in his plane.

At one point, Freddie says "Please get me out of this!" His prayer is answered in the form of John Travolta's character in an airplane guiding him down to a landing place with hand signals. (The hand signals be-



John Travolta not only played a pilot in this 39-minute holiday-themed film, but also served as an executive producer.

ing used by the pilots is one way this stays true to the book.)

A man is there to greet him at the landing place, which he explains is being used as a storage depot. He tells him about Travolta's character, and how he used to do what he did for Freddie during the war. He also mentions that he knew the man personally. He also comes out with some info that would show why this is a Christmas ghost story. The appearance of an old friend of this Shepherd also adds to it being a ghost story, even more than the mysterious pilot coming to the rescue.

I won't call them ghosts, but by the end of the film, if you saw what I saw, you would say that it appears that the Shepherd is still out there, being a shepherd for lost pilots, and that his friend is still helping him out with that.

This was a very cool story that was worth my time watching it.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

MR Can Confirm 3 A.M. Leaf Blowing on Avenue A; Attack at Social Club; Rental Scam; Assorted Crashes

Monday, 12/4

7:30 a.m. Amazon packages stolen from hallway at Highland School Apartments. \$293 value. Advised of options.

2:46 p.m. Caller from Second Street reports two males going door to door asking residents to take pictures of their Ever-source bills. Gone upon officer's arrival.

3:10 p.m. Party into station to make a report regarding a two-car accident that happened this morning on Third Street. Neither car exchanged information or called for police assistance. Party states she was going to be late for school. She later noticed damage on her car and wants insurance to be involved now. Party brought in picture of other vehicle. Report taken.

Tuesday, 12/5

6:45 a.m. 911 caller advises he is in the area of Green Pond Road and Federal Street with a vehicle that was involved in an accident and hit a stop sign. Caller advises no smoke, fire or fluids. Second caller reports single car accident with no smoke, fire or fluids. Shelburne Control contacted for FD, AMR. Officer requesting Rau's for tow; advises fluids leaking and operator request-

ing to be evaluated.

8:21 a.m. Shelburne Control advises over radio they received a 911 call from Sheffield Elementary School reporting active fire alarms. Second caller reporting alarms sounding inside building. Officer advises transformer smoking and on fire. Shelburne Control updated.

10:53 a.m. Caller from Powertown Apartments states there is a male in the hallway and he followed her downstairs and opened the door in front of her. Caller doesn't like his behavior.

Wednesday, 12/6

10:47 a.m. Caller from Keith Apartments states female party is slamming the doors and yelling and won't stop. Peace restored.

1:17 p.m. Caller states a package was delivered to her brother's house today that had a ripped Walgreens bag and a prescription bottle filled with Gabapentin in it and the same handwriting as the old PCA they used that said "field in Orange" – would like an officer to come look. Referred to an officer.

Thursday, 12/7

2:55 a.m. Caller reports being awoken by a male using a leaf blower on Avenue A. Second call reporting same complaint in area. DPW is

out with the street sweeper cleaning up leaves. Second caller called back stating the police just drove by and didn't stop anyone. Advised caller that it was the DPW. Caller states she doesn't think it is right that they do it at this hour. Caller was advised to call the town and complain. Caller continued to complain that the decibel level exceeds that permitted by the noise ordinance for this hour of the day. Third caller states leaf blowing has been going on for 45 minutes, woke the whole house up, and is scaring her animals. Advised caller the DPW is working in the area. Second caller called back stating they are still out there and it has been going on for over an hour. Requesting an officer go and enforce the noise ordinance because DPW should not be above the law. Officer responding back to the area. Officer spoke with DPW and was advised this used to happen around Pumpkifest time, but the festival didn't happen and therefore the cleanup needed to be done. They are now done with the leaf blowing for the night.

2:01 p.m. Caller states a dog was off leash and acting aggressive in the alley between Third and Fourth streets. Caller states they left a message for the animal control officer (ACO).

2:18 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states her dog was attacked. Tried calling ACO, no answer. Officer advised. Call printed for ACO.

5:52 p.m. 911 caller states that there is a vehicle off the roadway on the Lake Pleasant side of Old Northfield Road. Vehicle appears to have hit a tree. The vehicle door was open and there was a person standing next to it. Vehicle described as a red pickup or SUV. Rau's requested for tow. Officer advises that the vehicle is sitting on top of a water pipe and is unable to get towed out. Water department contacted. Rau's has the vehicle.

5:57 p.m. 911 caller from Hillside Avenue states she just got home to find the fire alarm going off and smoke coming from the basement. She got the pets out and is sitting in her car. Shelburne Control advised. Officer advises that TFFD is on scene, venting out some haze from the basement.

Friday, 12/8
8:15 a.m. Attempting to locate female on South Prospect Street for warrant arrest. A 31-year-old Millers Falls woman was arrested on a default warrant.
3:42 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that her neighbor's dog attacked her dog yesterday, and the neighbor is now harassing her child. Caller

stated that her child was outside and the neighbor said something to them. Advised of options.

Saturday, 12/9

12:09 a.m. 911 call from female party at St. Stanislaus advising a female party was attacked and currently is on the floor, and the other individual is currently outside the bar. While attempting to gain information, phone was passed to another female who advised the female who was attacked is OK and does not need an ambulance. Caller was providing information; however, noise level at location was too loud to allow dispatcher to copy down info. Officers arrived on scene; phone line disconnected. Officer requesting ambulance for female party, Shelburne Control contacted. Officer advises female party transported to FMC.
8:35 a.m. Panic alarm activation from town clerk's office. Accidental trip by custodian on premises.
9:05 a.m. Report of smoldering wood chips on the side of Long Plain Road. Shelburne Control advised.
10:55 a.m. Caller from West Mineral Road reports someone dumped carpet on her property overnight. Officer spoke with resident and will be speaking with someone at the airport to see if they would be willing to have the carpet removed, as it is on the property line.

12:14 p.m. 911 caller reports hearing gunshots coming from the area of Charter NEX. Officers checked area.
5:06 p.m. Walk-in from H Street reports being scammed out of \$1,100 for a house rental. Report taken.

9:59 p.m. Officer reports that the railroad gates on Lake Pleasant Road are remaining down with no train in the area. Pan Am notified.

Sunday, 12/10

7:26 a.m. Caller from Keith Apartments reports that a female party is yelling and throwing items inside and outside of the apartment. Officer advises situation mediated; no further issues.

12:17 p.m. Caller from Third Street reporting that his neighbor was being really loud at around 4 o'clock this morning. Caller states he was going to call at that time but the noise stopped before he did. Caller just wants this on record and will call if it happens again.

Monday, 12/11

2:04 a.m. Walk-in reports he has footage from his house on Millers Falls Road of people walking by vehicles he sells. Caller doesn't believe they broke into vehicles or took anything; just wants to report it. Officer advises he spoke to walk-in and advised him that officers would check the area overnight.



By CASEY WAIT

TURNERS FALLS – Dear readers, I've got to admit – it's been a really hard month. In the past three weeks, over 10 of my close friends have either gotten COVID-19 or been directly exposed to it. The layers of fear and anxiety I feel are many.

Firstly, I worry about the health of my friends. For most of them this was not their first go-around with the virus, which means their chance of developing Long COVID has increased. I fear many of them don't fully understand how much their lives would change if this were to happen.

I worry about contracting the virus myself. This would be my fifth time with COVID-19 and I'm frankly terrified of what another infection would do to my body. One of the things getting me through the difficult past months has been looking forward to my top surgery, scheduled for early February. I now worry that if I were to get COVID again before the operation, I would have to postpone it due to how long it's taken for me to recover from past infections. I don't know if I could handle the disappointment.

Since beginning chemotherapy to manage my autoimmune conditions earlier this fall, I've been deeply fortunate to have enormous support from friends. People have signed up to help me around the house and bring me meals. The past few weeks, the chemo side effects have

been especially brutal. First I developed an infection in my lymph nodes. Then I began to have severe muscle spasms and cramping all over my body. This week I've been dealing with strange nerve pain that has left big patches of my skin feeling as though they've been badly scalded, despite the skin itself looking normal.

Because so many people in my support circle either had COVID or were exposed to it, no one could come help me around the house or keep me company to distract me from the pain and discomfort. My quality of life took a pretty big hit, and so did my mental health.

All of these things are a direct consequence of our country's stubborn decision to act as though the pandemic is over. I have tried, over the past four years, to reserve my anger and frustration for those in power rather than for ordinary people. Ultimately, so much of the death and misery we have witnessed and experienced since 2020 could have been prevented if the government had responded to the pandemic proactively and prioritized support for those most vulnerable to negative health, social, and economic consequences wrought by the virus.

The government will always hold the majority of my ire. However, in recent months I have been heartbroken to see my own community refuse to face the reality of the continued pandemic. Even in the midst of this current outbreak, when more of my friends have COVID at one

time than in the entire pandemic, some friends seem to think it's not that big of a deal. They go out to bars and parties and seem to have accepted that their actions mean that people like me – *me! their friend!* – will be more isolated and vulnerable as a result.

I've even considered quitting this column. What's the point of writing this every month when some of my most dedicated and supportive readers don't seem to take my words seriously? Why waste my limited energy?

But here I am, continuing on, because I refuse to give up. The stakes are too high. According to the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, since the uptick in COVID cases in August, over 1,000 people a week have died of COVID-19. This is not acceptable.

Each of those people had full lives and people who loved them. I write for them, in their memory. Please take their deaths seriously – if you've lapsed in your COVID precautions, it's never too late to take them up again. There is a "COVID Resources" page on my website, caseywait.com, where you can find information on masks, tests, antivirals, and more. The People's CDC has wonderful guides for how to plan COVID-safe(r) holiday gatherings. The government has given up, but you don't have to. I urge you not to.

With love and rage,
Your Sick Friend

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TOWN FOREST from page B1

diversity in land forms.

This hill was also important to Native Americans, because there's all kinds of stone works up there... I wasn't aware of it until I started working here and I started finding some. There's a local person who's very knowledgeable, and she pointed many out.

MR: *This is all stone work done by Native Americans?*

BS: Yeah. There's different types. There's a lot of what they call "directional piles": they'll have a pile of stone, and then on top they'll put an arrow point – a big one – pointing in a certain direction, which meant something. There are also these, they have something to do with the spirits in the area: they'll pry up a piece of ledge and put a stone under it, and then put some other rocks on top of it. There's a lot of flat stones up on top of the hill, because of the way the ledge is.

And I'm finding different places where they built stone seats and other structures that I don't have the faintest idea what they are for, but they were definitely made by humans. They're in areas that are very ledgy, with no soil, so it wasn't a place that people were doing any pasturing or anything. I don't think the top of the hill was ever even cleared for pasturing, because it was mostly ledge and not much soil.

And there's another important thing: there's a huge glacial erratic up on top of the hill. Back when there were no trees here, back after the glacier, the land was just there... It's a big boulder, probably 12 feet in diameter, sitting up there. They had importance. And there are these vision seats, these horseshoe-shaped stone structures where they used to go and sit to pray, or to seek a vision or something. They've been recognized over much of the country, and I have some up there. We can see they were disrupted by past logging.

MR: *"Sustainability" is on a lot of people's minds nowadays...*

BS: Right. Sustain the resource with, as Leopold said, "the important thing is to keep all of the parts," you know, and "all of the parts" are all of the trees that have always grown here, except in the last few decades.

MR: *Aldo Leopold?*

BS: Yeah. His writing is superb. He wrote well, I mean beautifully, he just had a way with words, and he was a good person. The *Sand County Almanac* is kind of a bible for a lot of people.

MR: *I was planning to ask if you have recommendations for people to read...*

BS: A friend of mine just published a book of poetry and essays, and several of the essays have to do with the forest and managing it. I took a sentence out of one of his essays in my management plan:

"To help a forest move in the direction it wants to go you need to become familiar with the spirits that live there, who make this place original and unique. Sit down. Be quiet. Watch. Listen. If you think you should intervene by cutting, temper the work with patience and caution. Accept chaos and randomness and your work will look natural."

The name of the book is *Pathfinder*, by Robert Love. I realized when I was reading his poems how he crafts them and you have to be a craftsperson of words – goodness, of how to put them together. His poetry reads easy, and is meaningful.

"Pathfinder" refers to a plant that grows in the understory and when you walk through it, you turn the leaves over and the leaves are white, so if you or an animal walk through this area you form a trail.

Bob and I have similar thoughts. I met him at a conference, and I visit him out in Montana whenever I have a chance. He's been mostly a logger, and basically a forester. He goes in and talks to landowners and finds out what their goals are, and then prescribes something that will give them their goals. He's a great guy.

He is good friends with another person that's worth reading – you've probably heard of Wendell Berry? He goes way back. One of his first books was *The Unsettling of Amer-*

ica... He's written many beautiful books since then, and I like them all.

MR: *Can you say a little something about what a "town forest" is?*

BS: Well, it really began when they were forming towns, and surveying the towns and developing them, and there was always some land that didn't get used, and so it was turned over to the towns as "town forests."

The town forest program has been around for a long time in New England. Some were just sold and developed, others were kept and kind of abandoned. Sometimes, like in New Salem, a lot of that town forest is part of the old poor farm. Most of them were managed, to a certain degree, because towns always are looking for some money. Some were logged over the years.

I think in many cases they're being more carefully managed today than they used to be, except for this problem with deer... I went to a town forest in Ashland – they were given land and they bought land to make it larger and it's important to the town. They engage the Boy Scouts to help build and maintain trails. They have bike trails that go through that connect with other town forests.

Down there the deer browsing is severe, it's a conundrum. It's 600 acres, and they don't think they can hunt it, it's surrounded by suburbia... Fish and Wildlife doesn't know what to do. They'll say "hunters," but you know, I was talking to hunters down in Ashland – you put hunters out there and deer will immediately go to the houses and hide and wait for you to go home, so it wouldn't work.

MR: *I was wondering if you could make a comment or two on generational change, and hunting. This is kind of an ongoing thing, in Leverett and elsewhere...*

BS: We have problems with deer in this state due to development, or lack of hunting, basically, even in rural areas where there's lots of forest and there are too many deer. This group that I hunt with down here has four or five different families, residents of North Leverett and Moore's Corner. It's been held together by this one man.

We're losing those groups, you know. He had three sons, luckily, and he got all of them involved in hunting, and they have friends, so we're lucky to have young men coming along. One of the guys brought his grandson. [Laughs.] To see this kid walking – it was so important to him to be part of this group, you know, striding out into the woods.

That's what it takes to build and sustain these groups: you include young kids early on with these activities, and all of the skills it takes, not only handling guns properly and shooting them but dressing the deer out in the woods and all of that stuff. That's kind of a bloody job, but you've got skilled people to show younger people how to do it well and efficiently, and not be hacking away at it.

There's a lot of skills involved in hunting, and it's physically demanding. Because, man, we hunt all of these hills around here, through mountain laurel and you name it, it's some tough country.

MR: *You think that it's important to pass down, not just for keeping the deer population in check, but something good for the people?*

BS: Well, it is. I mean, all these people, it's their protein for the whole year – they shoot enough deer that they share it. A bunch of families get all their protein right from local, good venison.

MR: *Is there any advice you want to give to the committee, or to the people of Leverett, assuming they accept the gift?*

BS: It's a big deal, for me and for the town. I've been to a couple of selectboard meetings and some of the selectpeople said, "Say down the road there's a push to say 'We have a lot of value out there, we need to cut some of those nice big trees,' and it would be something that you wouldn't be happy with."

I'd probably be gone by that time, so I said, "Well, you know, I trust the town. Hopefully any decisions like that would come before the town, and there's an honest



Bruce Spencer, next to a white pine.

discussion of what's going to happen, and the consequences: Is it still going to look like a forest when they're done?"

MR: *I asked the chairman of the selectboard what he would be interested in hearing more about, and he said he doesn't think people appreciate or understand the educational value of this forest.*

BS: One of the things I wanted to do was to list all of the different species of trees on this lot, because there are a lot of different ones, and I am finding some that surprise me myself, some rare species. [We could] have a list and see if people can find them, because most of them are within sight of the roads and paths that I've put in the forest.

My logging paths aren't like with the big equipment people use today, but people can walk side by side, you can really enjoy the forest and look around. I have an exceptional grove of big pine trees, and I'll make a little road into it so they can enjoy it.

Shelterwood-type cuttings, where you basically bring along the next forest in the understory, can be seen here. Trees really like to grow in shade – not deep shade, but they need some cover above them instead of just suddenly making a hole in the forest and expecting everything to come back nice. Plant succession is the most important thing really in the forest. Deer can short-circuit that by preventing different trees and plants from growing.

There's a wonderful spring on the lot, that the neighbor down here has the rights to use – he recognizes it as probably the best water he's ever drank. The watershed of that spring is this woodlot.

Some people want to call it the "working" forest, and I don't want to have that adjective in front of it. The forest takes care of itself... it has a lot to offer.

MR: *At the meetings – you're a well-known guy, and you've got a lot of gravitas – you were saying something about humility, and you didn't want a plaque or anything, but you said "Well maybe the 'Two Brothers' sign, leave it there."*

BS: I did get a hold of a nice cedar post, and I was thinking of putting one just after my shed. You can look in the woods, and you see the different age classes and the different species coming up there – that would be a good place just to put the "Two Brothers Woodlot" [sign], without any names on it or anything. Or it could say just "Leverett Town Forest, Two Brothers Woodlot."

MR: *I was curious about that name...*

BS: Yeah, that was my brother Hartley. We grew up together and he moved around a lot, but the last 11 years of his life he spent right in this area, and he used to work with me.

As young boys we had cranberries and we worked on cranberry bogs, and we worked in the woods, and he continued it... My own family was not interested in the same kinds of things I'm doing, my brother understood that.

We worked together a lot here, cutting firewood, and we did it at a pace that worked for him. He struggled with cancer for five or six years, and this was an important place for him. We both could feel... You get up on that hill, and all that stonework has a nice feel about it.

One time up on that hill there was a big boulder and it had a seam in it, and I was looking for a flat stone and I said "Gee, I could put my forks in there and probably pop off a nice stone," and I did. I hauled it down and I was going to use it. But then I went back to the site a year later and someone had come in and put these beautiful round stones with lichens on them, like they were healing up where that would have happened. It was in a thick part of regeneration. So I realized there are people who come up here, this hill means something to people, and I've never run into them.

At one point I saw all these piles of flat stones. I said "Wow, I can gather up some nice stones," and a friend of mine said "Yeah, I'll help you." And luckily, this woman came along and informed me [laughing] what they were, so luckily I never did – except that one stone that I took.

I think it's over here. I think before I leave I'll take it back.



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the
poetry
page

It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.

— William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno
Readers are invited to send poems to the
Montague Reporter at: 177 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376
or to: poetry@montaguereporter.org

December Poetry Page

How Dare I?

Do you think
you can just kiss my nose
anytime you like?
she would say
each time I kissed her nose
and
because it was one of our games
and games have rules
I would say
pretty much
yeah
which was her cue to remind me
that she knew Judo
which indeed she did
but
due to the disparity in our sizes
and logarithmic difference
in relative strength
I would respond
well
you better know two or three
of his best friends
too
and we would laugh
and hug and
I would kiss her nose again
and sometimes
even again after that
and now I would exchange
whatever vacant life I have left
to kiss her nose
and have her upbraid me
just one last time
do you think
you can just kiss my nose
anytime you like?
her brow furrowed
in mock outrage
above her glittering,
laughing eyes.

— G. Greene
Greenfield

My Mouth Is Kept Shut Now

My mouth is kept shut. Shut by whom?
I don't know. I can talk to nobody about it.
I cannot solve it. I cannot help.
I cannot comprehend it. I cannot contribute.
If I open my mouth everybody will have a nose (an opinion).
"No you don't get what's going on. Here's what's going on..."
"You're not remembering history..."
"This is ancient..."
"Here read this article..."
Thousands left danger to come here.
Thousands moved towards danger to live.
I cannot save anyone, caged, with my mouth kept shut.
Now my ears are shutting down.
Who is the "who" that did this? Did I do this to me?
Unresponsive to bells and missiles (every word a dog whistle).
I wonder, should I wonder who is doing this to me?
Everybody's ears are shuttered.
In recompense, eyes open wide to screens which do not fake the news.
No it is no movie.
I digest inhumanity over dinner.
Musclled men press together sweating and raging.
Small bodies wrapped in cloth, carried (like a Heisman trophy)
high through the streets and over men's heads
... are real?
They are coming to get somebody, anybody, or some or many bodies;
family living here sweating and raged.
Women defy, cry, wail and sputter with mouths open. Ears are shuttered.
When will the patriarchy schedule the playoff?
"Till human voices wake us and we drown."

— Edna French
Montague

Stoic

Epictetus said,
"You become what you give your attention to,"
so I am now
these grief-limned lines,
as I devote myself
to inscribing my pain,
even as it returns me
Nothing.

Not relief,
certainly,
for there has been little,
though the loss has evolved
to become less sharp,
less cutting than it once was,
when every breath
was a lungful of daggers.

These lonely years it's akin to
being trapped underwater,
too late to reach the surface in time
to get out of bed,
go on about the day,
collect the mail
or prepare a meal,
suffocating
for the lack of her breath.

— G. Greene
Greenfield

— Jonathan Skinner
Warwick, UK

Contributors' Notes

Jonathan Skinner founded and edited the journal *ecopoetics*. His poetry collections include *Chip Calls*, *Birds of Tift*, *Warblers*, and *Political Cactus Poems*. He teaches in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick.

Gary Greene is a Greenfield native and author of *Poems In A Time of Grief*. His work has appeared in the *Montague Reporter*, where he was the featured poet in January, 2021; *Oprelle Publications'* poetry anthology, 'Matter,' online at wittypartition.org; and in *Nine Mile Books & Literary Magazine*.

Edna French has lived in New England, and in the town of Montague, for years. Also a photographer, a recent focus included urban structures imprinted by human nature: "Town Without Pity" and "Town Without Pity (next door)." Professional success includes proposal writing and research for education, arts, and community health fundraising.



WRITING THE LAND

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IMAGE: DEER UNDER BEECH TREES IN WINTER (1853) BY HENDRIK GERRIT TEN CATE

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The Children's Page

YONERDOD ILLUSTRATION

A Lovelights Christmas

WORDS BY BEVERLY KETCH & PICTURES BY HANNAH BROOKMAN

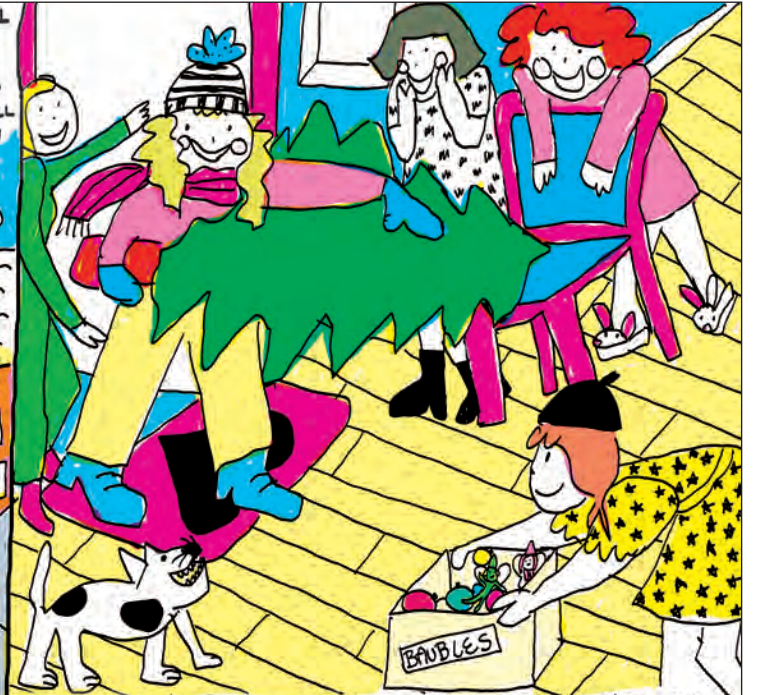


MANY FAMILIES IN THE WORLD PREPARE FOR A VERY EXCITING VISIT ON CHRISTMAS EVE, BUT FOR THE LOVELIGHTS, THEIR SPECIAL GUEST WAS NOT SANTA CLAUS!

EVERYONE WAS HOME FOR THE HOLIDAY AND ALL FIVE OF THE LOVELIGHT SISTERS WERE CLEANING THE HOUSE FROM TOP TO BOTTOM, SHOPPING FOR PRESENTS UP AND DOWN AVENUE A, AND HANGING UP EVERY WREATH, GARLAND, AND BOW THEY OWNED. ALL WAS DONE WITH A SKIP IN THEIR STEPS AND A SONG IN THEIR HEARTS.



CHELLA FOUND A NICE TOP HAT FOR MR HARBINGER (OH, HOW SHE HOPED IT WOULD FIT), AND ELDA SENT A HOMING PIGEON WITH A SPECIAL MESSAGE OF LOVE TO HER MERMAID FRIENDS WHO HAD DEPARTED TO SOUTHERN SEAS.



THE MAGIC HOUR NEARED AND VIOLA BURST THROUGH THE DOOR WITH THE TREE, SMILING IN HER HAT AND MITTENS AND WOUND UP IN SCARVES. THE WHOLE FAMILY HURRIED TO HELP MOVING FURNITURE AND BOXES OF ORNAMENTS. BUT LITTLE DID THEY KNOW THE FASCINATED FAIRIES, FLORA AND FAUNA, HAD FLOWN RIGHT INTO THE BOX OF BAUBLES.



AS NOVELLA REACHED IN TO PICK UP THE SPECIAL STAR FOR THE TREE TOP, THE FAIRIES GAVE HER SUCH A START THAT SHE DROPPED IT! IT SHATTERED EVERYWHERE. SHEEPSHLY, THEY FLEW OUT OF THE BOX.

EVERYONE FELL SUDDENLY SILENT, LEAVING JUST THE SOUND OF THE FESTIVE MUSIC FROM THE RECORD PLAYER, WHICH NOW FELT A LITTLE OUT OF PLACE. THE SPARKLING FAMILY HEIRLOOM WAS IN 1000 PIECES. EVERYTHING ELSE WAS PERFECT, AND THEIR SPECIAL GUEST WAS ABOUT TO ARRIVE.



OH DEAR! WELL, WE'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.



FLORA, FAUNA, AND NOVELLA ALL LOOKED SO DISTRESSED. THERE WASN'T MUCH TIME. THE SISTERS SET THE TABLE AND CHEERED UP A BIT AT THE SIGHT OF THE POTPIES, POTATOES, PEAS, PEARL ONIONS, AND PARSLEY.



THE DOORBELL RANG AND THEY ALL RAN OVER BREATHLESSLY, OPENING THE DOOR WIDE. THERE ON THE STEP WAS THEIR DEAR AND DEVOTED FRIEND, WHO THEY GOT TO SEE BUT ONCE A YEAR, MRS. CLAUS!! SHE GAVE EACH OF THEM A BIG HUG AND THEY CRIED HAPPY TEARS SEEING HER KIND FACE AND ROSY CHEEKS.



NOW TO SEE YOUR WONDERFUL TREE!

MRS. CLAUS STEPPED IN TO THE LIVING ROOM, AND AS SHE LOOKED UP TO THE TOP OF THE TREE SHE GASPED. FLORA AND FAUNA WERE HOVERING AT THE TREE TOP! HOW PERFECT AND SWEET THEY LOOKED AT THE TOP OF THE SPARKLING TREE. EVERYONE STARED SPELLBOUND AT THE PRETTY SIGHT FOR SOME TIME.



SITTING DOWN TO DINNER, MRS. CLAUS AND ALL THE LOVELIGHT SISTERS JOINED HANDS. "THANK YOU," SAID MRS. CLAUS. "HOW I LOVE YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR FAIRY FRIENDS!"

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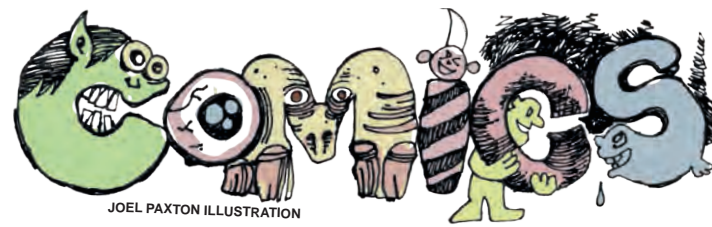
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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *The Give*. No cover. 7 p.m.
 Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: Screening, *The Lady Eve* (1941), with Abdul Baki, piano, before the movie. \$. 7 p.m.

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

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *TapRoots, Mal Maiz*. \$. 8 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Holiday Sparkle Spectacular* with DJs Tishhh, Blondie Vernetta, Professor Kaos. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed: *Chris Goudreau, Toney Batey, The Maladaptive, the frost heaves & haies*. \$. 8 p.m.

Everything Must Go, Northampton: *Prawn, Van Vreeland, Ruby Lou*. \$. 8 p.m.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *HardCar, Ezy P, Mesmir*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16

Montague Retreat Center, Montague: *Winter Solstice Bonfire with Kotoko Brass*. \$. All day / music at 9 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Mad'Atter*. No cover. 7 p.m.
 Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *CinemaStorm* double feature: *The Big Lebowski* (1998) and *The Long Goodbye* (1973). Free. 7 p.m.

Mt. Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Eveline MacDougall with Fiery Hope*. \$. 7 p.m.

Pushkin Gallery, Greenfield: *Looky Here Masquerade Gala* feat. *Flaming Dragons of Middle Earth Tribute, Shea Mowat, Loculus Collective*. Benefit with art auction. \$. 7 p.m.

Progression Brewing Company, Northampton: *The Claudia Malibu*. No cover. 7 p.m.

Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: Screening, *The Lady Eve*

(1941), with *Robert Markey*, sitar, before the movie. \$. 7 p.m.
 Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Jeopardy, PWRUP, Slob Drop, Bent*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Next Stage Arts, Putney, VT: *Livingston Taylor, Karla Bonoff*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Red Cross, Northampton: *Rong, Nite Office, Blood Blood Blood, Ian St. George Band*. \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Kimaya Diggs & Friends Holiday Show*. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Shantyman, Allovous, Soulkeys*. \$. 8 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Sophia Subbaya Vastek, John Davis*. \$. 8 p.m.

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

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Myrtle Street Klezmer*. \$. 10:30 a.m.
 The Clark, Williamstown: *Aaron Dilloway, Liz Durette*. \$. 5 p.m.

Downtown Greenfield: *Phil Kline's Unsilent Night*. (See Local Briefs, Page A3.) Free. 6 p.m.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 18

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

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wes Brown and Friends*. No cover. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Sweetback Sisters' Country Christmas Sing-Along Spectacular*. \$. 7 p.m.

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

Hawks & Reed: *Jabbawaukee, Dead tribute*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *The Valley Moonstompers Society, Bill Carbone*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Happy Valley Gas Juglers*. No cover. 9 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Mosquinha, Owen Manure, La Boca Del Lobo, Evander Curbelo*. \$. 8 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: *Wildcat O'Halloran*. No cover. 8 p.m.
 Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Screening, *Gremlins* (1984), with *Synthesizer Santa* before the movie. \$. 8 p.m.

The O's Music Bar, Sunderland: *Gloons, Brujo*. \$. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23

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

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Princess Kikou, Allouette Bateau*. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed: *Seth Glier's Holiday Sing-A-Long*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *The Niels Holiday Show*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Dr. Strangelove & the Rockettes, The Maladaptive, Padded Waltz, Mike Martin*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29

10 Forward, Greenfield: *2-Step Night, Live Country Karaoke*. \$. 7 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Shokazoba New World Funkestra, Kae Sharp*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Progression Brewing, Northampton: *Lich King, Problem With Dragons, PWRUP*. \$. 8 p.m.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Melissa Ferrick*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club: *Fortified Blues Band*. No cover. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 30

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Pre-New Year's Eve Dance Party with Video DJ Ryan Short*. No cover. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Wolfman Jack, Jatoba*. \$. 8 p.m.

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

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Space Camp, Mal Devisa*. \$. 8 p.m.

Race Street Live, Holyoke: *Enter the Haggis*. \$. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bella's Bartok, Robber Robber*. \$. 9 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31

First Night, Northampton (22 venues): *Soul Magnets, Pangeans, Taproots, Lexi Weege & JJ Slater, Mal Devisa, Padded Waltz, The Fawns, Mary Lambert, Aisha Burns, Spouse, ReBelle, The Greys, Thistle, Ian St. George Band, Film & Gender, Gaslight Tinkers, The Niels, Masala Jazz, Ciarra Fragale, Lonesome Brothers, Vimana, bobbie, The Leafies You Gave Me, Carrie Ferguson, Wildcat O'Halloran, Expandable Brass Band, Original Cowards, Ray Mason, Rocking Puppies, Father Hotep, Loculus & Magick Lantern, Appalachian Still, Hedgewitch, Pamela Means, and MANY more.* See firstlightnorthampton.org. Starts at 1 p.m.

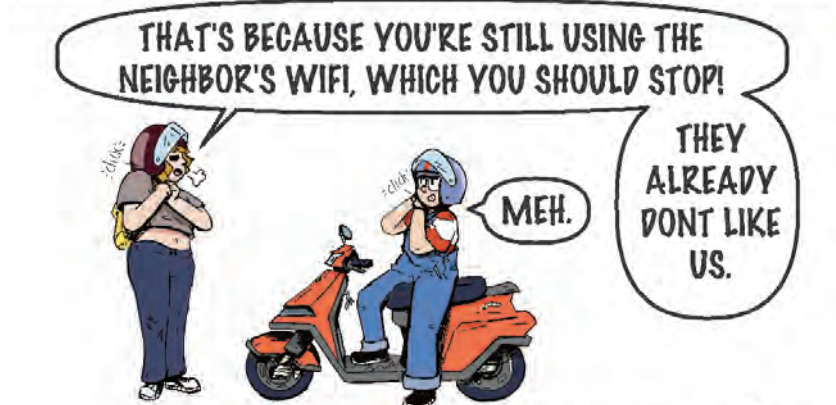
Race Street Live, Holyoke: *Enter the Haggis*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *NRBQ, LuxDeluxe*. \$. 9 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bella's Bartok, Goldsetter*. \$. 9 p.m.



Carolyn Clark



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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 entries for the 2023 Junior Duck Stamp competition. This statewide contest, for students from kindergarten to high school, highlights the importance of preserving wetland habitat. Make your own duck stamp at the investigation station in the Great Hall. Through January 16.

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

Artspace, Greenfield: *CREATE: Creativity in Recovery Expressed Artistically Through Our Experience*. Art and writing by the Recover Project's Peer Mentor Group. Through December 23.

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.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Quilt Show*, textile works by Emily Carris and Rae Heller. Opening reception Friday, December 29, from 5 to 8 p.m.; closing reception Friday, January 26 from 5 to 8 p.m.

Erving Library, Erving: *Patterns and Reflections*, photographs by Phyllis Stone. Through December 28. Reception this Sunday, December 17 at 2 p.m.

Northfield Mount Hermon Rhodes Arts Center, Gill: *Borrowed Light*, sculptures, prints, ceramics, and photographs by Anna Hepler. Through December 14; reopens after school break

January 7 to 18.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Small Wonders*, small-scale works by members of the gallery, through December 30.

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.

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 redtide-bluefire@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.

PULP Gallery, Holyoke: *North-east Deconstructed*, 18 artists showcase their journal pages, through January 7.

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. *A Gathering: Works from Contemporary Black American Ceramic Artists*, through March 24.

Springfield Science Museum, Springfield: *Ways of My Ancestors: We Are Nipmuc. We Are the Freshwater People*. New installation celebrating the diverse culture of the Nipmuc, featuring photography by Scott Strong Hawk Foster and Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines, Jr. Through February 25.

VALLEY VIEW from page B1

The Greenfield man accepted his unsigned, unframed gift and promptly hung it above the camp fireplace, where it remained for more than 30 years. In 1980, getting old, he passed it on to a daughter who died recently and passed it on to her only sibling, the sister who brought it to my attention – igniting an exciting discovery mission that ended with what I am confident is a near-certain George Washington Mark attribution.

The first suggestion that G.W. Mark may have been the artist came from a friend and neighbor who is a sophisticated Americana collector. He was vaguely familiar with Greenfield's only primitive painter after flying cross-country from San Francisco to attend the 1990 Williams College art exhibit, *Between the Rivers: Itinerant Painters from the Connecticut to the Hudson*. There, at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, he got a close look at the famous Mark painting *Chasing the Squirrel*, embedding the Greenfield artist in memory.

"Maybe that Greenfield folk artist who rarely signed his work painted it," my friend speculated upon viewing the sporting canvas.

When I was stymied by the reference, he insisted that I knew who he was talking about. "The same guy who painted the doors in your house."

Yes. Of course. George Washington Mark. The chase was on.

I immediately searched the Internet for information about folk artist G.W. Mark, and discovered that little is still known about the man, his wives, his grave or his art, much of which, whereabouts unknown, is indeed unsigned. Yet there are stylistic "signatures," rudimentary details like trees and branches, fences and horse-drawn farm equipment, and tunneling landscapes, that are repeated in his few known works. The dog painting definitely displays some of those characteristics.

My next question was, when did the painting come to my Meadows home? Most logical, I surmised, was around 1841, when Hollister B. Thayer opened his Upper Meadows tavern following five years of expensive "improvements" – including a flagstone-floored front porch, an upstairs spring-floor ballroom, a G.W. Mark tavern sign, and an assortment of Mark's distinctive interior grain-painting. Perhaps Thayer was a hunter and Mark gifted him the painting as a housewarming gift.

Then close inspection of the painting's stretchers suggested a date closer to 1860 than 1840. It wasn't the patina that spoke loudest but, instead, the mitered corners. Had it been an 1840 canvas, an expert opined, the stretchers would most likely have been joined in straight lines.

Hmmm? Could it be that the tavern's final keeper, blacksmith Henry A. Ewers, was the painting's first owner? He bought the place from Thayer in 1849 and operated the tavern through challenging temperance times until 1857. Maybe he was a hunter and Mark's friend.

Bingo!

Everything started to fall nicely into place, despite a few interesting pieces of the puzzle that may have lapsed beyond the point of reassembly. That said, we know Mark and Ewers knew each other as fellow Greenfield fence-viewers in the 1850s, and we also know that Mark's first wife, Mary Ann Skinner, is buried in Ewers' North Meadows Cemetery plot down the road from the tavern.

The reason why Mark's wife is buried next to Ewers' mother, Lucy Gould Mark, in the Ewers family plot may



This oil painting of a hunter's bound came to the author's attention this year.

never be ascertained. It could be related to the fact that Lucy Ewers and Mary Ann Mark, a generation younger, are both said to have come from Williamstown. Could it have been that young Mary Ann Skinner's mother was Lucy's relative or friend, died young, and was taken in by the Ewers farm family of Gill? Such "adoptions" were not uncommon back then. If so, she would have been Henry A. Ewers' step-sister, and, seven years older, of a perfect age to keep an eye on young Henry.

Finally, get a load of this one. We now can say for sure that adult blacksmith/wheelwright/tavernkeeper Henry A. Ewers did indeed own a spirited dog in the 1850s. We know because of a story that went viral after it appeared in the *Greenfield Gazette and Courier* on July 27, 1857. The tale was still being told three years later in a Wisconsin newspaper! It went like this (including my own correction of Ewers' misspelled Wisconsin destination):

A Fast Dog – Henry A. Ewers of this town left on Friday for Aztalan, Wis., where he has purchased a farm. He owned a small dog which he gave to Henry Briggs before he left. The dog followed Mr. Ewers to the depot in this town and upon the cars leaving followed on after, overtaking them at South Deerfield before they left that station. The distance run by the dog was eight miles and the time occupied 22 minutes, or over 20 miles per hour. Mr. Ewers concluded that such a faithful friend was not to be parted with lightly, and took the dog into the cars with him for Wisconsin.

Too bad the Greenfield scribe neglected to give the name of a spirited pet undoubtedly known by many tavern guests and neighbors long before the days of dog licenses and leash laws. Trust me, George Washington Mark knew the dog's name, and the newspaper story about this animal he had painted in the not-too-distant past probably didn't surprise him one bit.

Ewers returned home to Greenfield some years later. He died in 1867 and is buried in the North Meadows Cemetery, next to his wife Sally, his mother Lucy, and Mary Ann (Skinner) Mark.

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