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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

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OPPORTUNITIES

Reinvigorated Pep Band Snags Thunderbirds Gig



FINNERTY PHOTO

The Turners Falls High School pep band riffs on the White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army" during Tuesday's home basketball game.

By HUGH FINNERTY

TURNERS FALLS – Harsh weather conditions could not shake the Turners Falls faithful Tuesday night as the boys' varsity basketball team squared off against Franklin Tech. Inside the gym, different elements were having an effect on spectators, in the form of the Turners pep band and choir, led by music director Alyssa Comeau.

As tip-off neared, Comeau's chorus dove into the national anthem. And as the boys team jumped out to an early lead, the pep band infused constant energy into the proceedings, treating the packed house to renditions of sports favorites like

Van Halen's "Jump."

The Turners Falls Music Program (TFMP) has been gathering momentum in all the right ways. "The rapid growth of the music program stems from a need for expression and a love of the arts, which is something our school has valued since I've been here," Comeau, energetic in her own right, tells the Reporter. The Turners band and choir's performance at basketball games is just one piece of their performance schedule.

"We had our first big concerts [at Turners Falls High School]," says Comeau, "and because our concerts and pep band did so well,

see **BAND** page A8

High School Sports Week: Thunder Boys Gain Steam

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – After taking a couple of weeks off during the holidays, we've decided to give a brief update on the winter sports season so far.

In boys' basketball, the Turners Thunder seem to have reversed course, and are currently riding a two-game winning streak. The Franklin Tech boys continue to struggle to get their first victory. After getting trounced by Greenfield, they had difficulty hitting the hoop

against Turners in the Coaches vs. Cancer tournament.

The Tech girls' varsity team was unable to participate in Coaches vs. Cancer because Turners does not have a varsity team to oppose them. While the Tech varsity girls have won four straight games, their JV team quietly defeated the Turners JVs 28-15.

The Turners Falls hybrid swim teams hosted Ludlow last Tuesday, with both squads coming up short. And Tech's wrestling team, which

see **SPORTS** page A6



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Turners Falls' Alex Quezada drives to the lane as the Thunder kept the Hampden Charter School of Science Wolves at bay with a 54-52 home win on Wednesday.

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

State Ignores Montague Vote To Relinquish Civil Service

By JEFF SINGLETON

Montague's first selectboard meeting of the new year was long and loaded with dry, complex topics, ranging from a presentation on the current year's federal community development block grants to detailed mapping of downtown streetscape improvements being funded by a Congressional earmark to appointments to the town's energy and cable advisory committees.

The meeting was dominated by planning for two upcoming meetings – a "special" town meeting (STM) on March 14, and the annual town meeting (ATM) on May 4. The board approved deadlines for submitting articles to each: February 7 for the STM, and March 14 for the ATM. Discussion focused on the board's need to make recommendations about the town operating budget and capital spending plan by the end of this month.

Assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey presented a list of

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Some Talk of A Four-Town Regional Fire Department

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard began 2024 with some good news at their relatively short January 3 meeting. Project manager Phil Delorey said Wendell will get \$200,000 more in Chapter 90 road money because of the Massachusetts Fair Share Amendment.

The type of project that money can be spent on is limited, and the town has to spend the money first and then get reimbursed. The bad news is that prices are up, and money may not be used to replace money already spent – the twin repairs on the Mormon Hollow Road culvert, for example – but paving is allowed, and Delorey said there are enough allowable projects that the town needs.

Delorey said he thought the highway budget had earmarked \$100,000 for paving this year, and that a town meeting vote is needed to put that into the regular highway budget, but treasurer Carolyn Manley checked the 2023 article and the finance committee's budget sheet and said a vote is not necessary.

Fire Merger?

Selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato said the Leverett fire department is applying for a grant to study

see **WENDELL** page A5

Airport Turns to USDA For Help with Deer Hazard



MURTISHAW PHOTO

With no hunting and little fencing, the airport is a sanctuary – which is a problem.

By CHARLOTTE MURTISHAW

TURNERS FALLS – Several years after the Turners Falls municipal airport initiated efforts to address wildlife presence, airport manager Bryan Camden says the overpopulation of deer remains a cause of concern "almost daily" at the airfield.

White-tailed deer are considered one of the top wildlife hazards by the Federal Aviation Administration and US Department of Agriculture (USDA), as a runway collision – known as a "deer strike" – can result in serious injury as well as costly equipment damage. According to a recent joint report from the two agencies, 1,018 of 1,237 white-tailed deer strikes be-

tween 1990 and 2022 caused over \$62 million in damages to aircraft and one fatality.

"I'd say in a seven-day week, we have deer issues five out of seven days," Camden said of the local problem. Since he became airport manager in 2017, he estimates there have been somewhere between 11 and 15 near-misses, increasing in frequency during the past few years.

Wildlife issues have been top-of-mind for airport personnel for a while. The airport hired the consulting firm Stantec to conduct a wildlife hazard assessment from April 2020 to March 2021, and to author a subsequent wildlife management plan, which it completed in 2022.

see **DEER** page A4

Town Continues to Perfect New Winter Parking Rules



REPORTER STAFF PHOTO

An FRTA plow truck clears a bus lane on Third Street on Sunday evening.

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – "We discussed that this morning," town administrator Steve Ellis said at the Montague selectboard's Monday night meeting. "The protocols were not as tight as they needed to be."

"I think, because of the new process we're still learning what's going to work for everybody," said public works superintendent Tom Bergeron.

The first snow of the winter has arrived, and with it a good deal of confusion over the parking policy during snow emergencies in downtown Turners Falls. Unlike the rest

of Montague, where on-street parking is prohibited between 1 to 5 a.m. from December 1 until April 1, on-street overnight winter parking has been allowed since last year in downtown Turners except during "declared winter emergencies."

During these emergencies, downtown residents must remove their cars from streets between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., but may park in one of six town parking lots – or in a special zone on the south side of L Street between Fifth and Prospect streets. But the cars need to be removed from the lots for snow removal at some point soon after the

see **PARKING** page A5

Time Cast A Spell On You, But You Won't Forget Us

Four Letters to the Editors.....	A2-A3	A Sick Friend At Wit's End.....	B2
Local Briefs.....	A3	Montague Police Log Highlights.....	B3
Ainsworth At Large: High Drama.....	A4	Movie Review: Monstrous Things.....	B5
Erving Selectboard Highlights.....	A5	Exhibits Listing.....	B5
10, 20, and 150 Years Ago This Week.....	A7	Montague Cryptojam.....	B5
Food Trees, Part Deux: Nuts Redux.....	B1	Our Monthly Poetry Page.....	B6
Heartfelt: Trouble Also Going Nuts.....	B1	Arts & Entertainment Calendar.....	B7
West Along The River, Way Into The Snow.....	B1	Four Artisanal Small-Batch Comics.....	B7



The Montague Reporter

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August 2002

Pope Weighs In

"Here, in your presence, I cannot fail to reiterate my deep concern regarding the events taking place in Palestine and Israel. All of us remain shocked by the October 7 attack on the Israeli people, in which great numbers of innocent persons were horribly wounded, tortured, and murdered, and many taken hostage. I renew my condemnation of this act and of every instance of terrorism and extremism. This is not the way to resolve disputes between peoples; those disputes are only aggravated and cause suffering for everyone. Indeed, the attack provoked a strong Israeli military response in Gaza that has led to the death of tens of thousands of Palestinians, mainly civilians, including many young people and children, and has caused an exceptionally grave humanitarian crisis and inconceivable suffering.

"To all the parties involved I renew my appeal for a ceasefire on every front, including Lebanon, and the immediate liberation of all the hostages held in Gaza. I ask that the Palestinian people receive humanitarian aid, and that hospitals, schools, and places of worship receive all necessary protection.

"It is my hope that the international community will pursue with determination the solution of two states, one Israeli and one Palestinian, as well as an internationally guaranteed special status for the City of Jerusalem, so that Israelis and Palestinians may finally live in peace and security....

"[W]e find an increasingly lacerated world, but even more, millions of persons – men, women, fathers, mothers, children – whose faces are for the most part unknown to us, and frequently overlooked.

"Moreover, modern wars no longer take place only on clearly defined battlefields, nor do they involve soldiers alone. In a context where it appears that the distinction between military and civil targets is no longer respected, there is no conflict that does not end up in some way indiscriminately striking the civilian population. The events in Ukraine and Gaza are clear proof of this. We must not forget that grave violations of international humanitarian law are war crimes, and that it is not sufficient to point them out, but also necessary to prevent them. Consequently, there is a need for greater effort on the part of the international community to defend and implement humanitarian law,

which seems to be the only way to ensure the defence of human dignity in situations of warfare.

"At the beginning of this year, the exhortation of the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* seems especially timely: 'On the question of warfare, there are various international conventions, signed by many countries, aimed at rendering military action and its consequences less inhuman... These agreements must be honoured; indeed public authorities and specialists in these matters must do all in their power to improve these conventions and thus bring about a better and more effective curbing of the savagery of war.' Even when exercising the right of legitimate defence, it is essential to adhere to a proportionate use of force.

"Perhaps we need to realize more clearly that civilian victims are not 'collateral damage,' but men and women, with names and surnames, who lose their lives. They are children who are orphaned and deprived of their future. They are individuals who suffer from hunger, thirst and cold, or are mutilated as an effect of the power of modern explosives. Were we to be able to look each of them in the eye, call them by name, and learn something of their personal history, we would see war for what it is: nothing other than an immense tragedy, a 'useless slaughter,' one that offends the dignity of every person on this earth.

"Wars, nonetheless, are able to continue thanks to the enormous stock of available weapons. There is need to pursue a policy of disarmament, since it is illusory to think that weapons have deterrent value. The contrary is true: the availability of weapons encourages their use and increases their production. Weapons create mistrust and divert resources. How many lives could be saved with the resources that today are misdirected to weaponry? Would it not be better to invest those resources in the pursuit of genuine global security? The challenges of our time transcend borders, as we see from the variety of crises – of food, the environment, the economy and health care – that have marked the beginning of the century. Here I reiterate my proposal that a global fund be established to finally eliminate hunger and to promote a sustainable development of the entire planet."

Pope Francis
Monday, January 8, 2024



Phil George, assistant custodian at the Leverett Elementary School, wipes down a table in the school lunchroom.

Letters to the Editors

Fostering Urban-Rural Connection

As far away as it seems, the summer sun will be here before we know it, and so will an incredible opportunity to make a difference in a child's life.

The Fresh Air Fund, an esteemed nonprofit organization founded in 1877, provides this opportunity by connecting children living in New York City with "friendly town" families for a week brimming with summer fun. By hosting a child, families provide an unforgettable experience filled with laughter, exploration, and friendship.

My family has happily hosted the same child for several years and it has been a wonderful experience for all of us. And as a local Fresh Air Chairperson, I write to urge folks in our community to consider becoming hosts. Buses are scheduled to stop in our area for two 1-week visits this July.

Embrace the opportunity to open your home and heart and introduce a new friend to our beautiful Pioneer Valley. Your generosity can truly change a life and create an impact that lasts a lifetime.

If you're interested in opening your home for one week this summer to a child, please visit FreshAir.org for information or to apply. Let's come together and make this summer extraordinary for a bus filled with new city friends.

Judy Bennett
Greenfield

A Human's Trepidation

I read "Artificial Intelligence & Intellectual Property" (*Science Page*, January 4) with trepidation. I hope you will tread into the murky waters of AI-generated content with extreme caution. There's an irony in using AI to write a story about a newspaper suing a company for illegally using its content to train the very AI used in writing the story.

Does the *Montague Reporter* have a policy regarding the use of AI-generated content? If so, and it chooses to use it, will you always inform readers how much was AI written, as this article does (though

likely tongue in cheek)?

Then I hope the day never comes when you decide your Writers' Fund is unnecessary and you resort to AI for all your "journalistic" needs. That will be a sad day, indeed. Note that the effort by OpenAI to form license agreements with publishers (including the *New York Times*) started before the lawsuit, not after. I also hope you noticed the glitches in the DALL-E image.

Marny Ashburne
New Salem

Flipped on Gutter After Chiefs' Letter

When I originally heard about the desire of the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust to permanently discontinue Rattlesnake Gutter as a town road, I was completely in favor of this. I love walking my dog on the Gutter.

I held this opinion before I was made aware of the letter written by our fire and police chiefs, who voiced their opinions opposing a permanent discontinuance. Sadly, the Leverett selectboard did not seem to give the opinion of our respected and knowledgeable safety professionals much weight before they voted to petition FRCOG to permanently discontinue the road.

(There seems to be some confusion as to whether the selectboard now petitions FRCOG for this permanent discontinuance, or if this needs to be a town meeting vote.)

As a Leverett resident, specifical-

ly North Leverett, and as someone who cares about my fellow neighbors here and in Wendell, I am curious as to why the Leverett selectboard was so determined to discontinue Rattlesnake Gutter as a town road. Is the safety of those of us in North Leverett and Wendell not a concern for our selectboard... none of whom live in North Leverett, by the way.

Getting to a fire sooner could mean the difference between saving the life of someone trapped and not saving that life. Getting to a domestic violence call five minutes sooner means the victim doesn't have to endure five more minutes of abuse. Apparently in Leverett, hiking is a priority over the safety of our residents and neighbors.

Maureen Ippolito
North Leverett

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PHONE: (413) 863-8666

EMAIL:

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

The Montague Libraries have **snowshoes you can borrow!** Check them out of the "Library of Things" at the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls.

LOOT Found + Made on Avenue A in Turners has the **Northfield Château sculpture by Jack Nelson** on view in their front window. This is a ceramic replica of the immense 99-room estate built on Highland Avenue in Northfield in 1903 and demolished in 1963.

Diemand Farm in Wendell offers a cup of **complimentary Dean's Beans coffee, hot tea, or hot chocolate** during the month of January. "We started this tradition several years ago during an exceptionally frigid January as a way to express our gratitude to our valued customers," they explain.

Looky Here, a community arts space on Chapman Street in Greenfield, has a lot of events on their schedule including a screening of *Free Spirits*, the **documentary about the Renaissance Community commune**, this Friday, January 12 at 6 p.m., and a clothing swap on Saturday, January 20.

Free Spirits was written and directed by former communitarian Bruce Geisler, and shows many scenes in Turners Falls, where the community bought up disused downtown buildings and ran several businesses, some of which are still operating as private enterprises since the breakup of the commune.

Admission to the screening is \$10. To view the schedule, visit lookyhereregreenfield.com.

The Montague Public Libraries and the Great Falls Discovery Center are holding a free **"Let's Play Library" Bluey Party** this Saturday, January 13 at the Discovery Center. Drop in from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for crafts and activities related to the popular children's character.

The United Church of Bernardston's monthly **Second Saturday Roast Beef Supper** falls this Saturday, January 13, with seatings at 5 and 6:15 p.m. The notice promises "a delicious roast beef meal, complete with freshly mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetable and rolls, and freshly baked pie for dessert for only \$15." Call (413) 648-9306 to reserve seats or take-out meals.

Lee Wicks, author of the *Elder Connect* column and various feature articles in this paper, will read from a work-in-progress next Wednesday, January 17 at 6 p.m. at the Montague Center Library, part of the library's Local Author Series. The reading is free, with refreshments provided. She will read from a memoir, to be titled *A Five Dog Marriage*, about aging, long marriage, and dog love.

The Cancer Connection offers a free online seminar with Page Brody about the **basics of cancer genetics** next Wednesday, January 17 at 7 p.m. Learn how your family history may help healthcare providers understand if genetic testing can help determine your hereditary cancer risk.

The seminar is open to all; register at (413) 586-1642 x107.

Learn about **"Fierce Females: Women in Art"** during a free Zoom presentation by Jane O'Neil next Wednesday, January 17 at 7 p.m., courtesy of the Greenfield Public Library. O'Neil will present on the lives, careers, and works of several major women artists from the Renaissance to the 20th century. Register at tinyurl.com/fierce-females to receive the link.

The next **winter farmers market** in Greenfield will be held next Saturday, January 20 at the Greenfield Public Library. Along with fresh vegetables, prepared foods, and crafts, there will be live acoustic music in the periodical lounge, story times, and other events for the whole family to enjoy. Most vendors accept debit cards, credit cards, Venmo, and/or SNAP, but please note that some are cash only. The next dates for the winter farmers market are February 17 and March 16.

A concert and workshop of **Klezmer and Balkan music** is scheduled for next Saturday, January 20 at 7:30 p.m. at Montague Center Common Hall. The performers are Orkestar Banitsa and Myrtle Street Klezmer; both play music from Eastern Europe, but Banitsa plays traditional music of the Balkans, while Myrtle Street plays Ashkenazi Jewish dance music.

The evening begins with a workshop at 7 p.m., in which participants will learn to play a song that appears in both bands' repertoires. The concert starts with Orkestar Banitsa at 7:30, followed by Myrtle Street Klezmer at 8:30. For a grand finale, both bands will perform together with workshop participants.

The suggested donation is \$15 to \$20, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds. Kids get in for free. For more information, contact Jesse Olsen Bay at tangledmusic@gmail.com or visit klezmer.com.

Heat pumps, also known as mini-splits, are a wonderful alternative to oil or gas heating and they provide air conditioning. Come to

get the latest information about them from Bart Bales at noon on Sunday, January 17 at the Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew, 8 Church Street in Greenfield, as part of the church's Environmental Sunday series.

Bales is an engineer who specializes in green heating and cooling systems. Massachusetts offers generous support for installing them in addition to federal tax credits. Attendees should enter through the front doors on Federal Street and bring a bag lunch. Contact ejmail127@gmail.com for more information.

The next **Dementia Friends Info Session** will take place on Tuesday, January 23 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Wendell Senior Center or by Zoom.

"Learn a little more about dementia – what it is and isn't, how to more skillfully interact with someone who has memory or language loss, what each of us might offer to support a caregiver," reads the description in this month's Village Neighbors newsletter. All are welcome to take part to learn how to best communicate with someone with language loss due to dementia, plus some activity suggestions.

Call Nancy at (978) 544-6760 for more information, and RSVP to membership@villageneighbors.org to obtain a Zoom link.

Discuss your **concerns about affordable housing** during an informal talk organized by the Franklin Community Coop on Wednesday, January 24 at 6:30 p.m. in the Coop's community space at 170 Main Street, Greenfield.

RSVP to communications@franklincommunity.coop.

Jim Morelly returns to the Millers River Environmental Center in Athol for a **presentation on Black Bears** on Sunday, January 28, at 1:30 p.m. He will show pictures and anecdotes from his experience observing and photographing black bears in the Quabbin Region. Contact Dave@atholbirdclub.org with any questions.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Dianne Ellis Gives Notice; Montague Seat Opens Up

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Pupil services director Dianne Ellis has given the regional school district notice of her departure at the end of June, superintendent Brian Beck announced at Tuesday's school committee meeting.

"She'll be wrapping up on June 30," Beck said, adding that he and Ellis had worked together for seven years across two school districts. "I'm sad at the prospect of losing her from what I feel is a very, very strong administrative team."

The school committee, which oversees the position, approved a plan to appoint a hiring committee including Ellis's administrative assistant, an education team leader, a counselor, a school committee member, one staff member who supports English language learners, one or two building administrators, a special

ed and a general ed teacher, parents of a special ed elementary and secondary schoolers, and the community outreach coordinator if she is interested. Beck would join the hiring committee in its first round.

Also announced Tuesday was the resignation of Montague member Janice Katsoulis. Montague residents interesting in volunteering to fill the seat until May are invited to submit letters of interest to Beck's office by January 29, for appointment the next night.

Most of the meeting was dedicated to a presentation on the preliminary FY'25 budget; the school committee will meet January 23 to review it line by line, hopefully after state aid figures are announced, and again on January 30 to vote on it.

Both will be held in person at Turners Falls High School unless there is inclement weather, in which case they will be held via Zoom.

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Another Letter to the Editors
Race Took Village

On Monday, January 1, Montague Parks & Recreation held our Annual Sawmill River 10K Run in Montague Center. Approximately 108 runners from throughout the entire region participated in this major fundraising event, which supports our Sponsor-A-Child Scholarship Program.

The race would not have been possible without the investment of time, energy, resources, and funding from many within our fine community. We would like to thank A.H. Rist Insurance Co., Marathon Sports, Greenfield Savings Bank, and Turn It Up Music for their generous financial support, as well as the Montague Common Hall, the Sugarloaf Mountain Athletic Club, and the First Congregational Church of Montague Center for their services.

As many of you know, volunteer

assistance is essential to the success of an event of this magnitude. Therefore, considerable appreciation goes out to the Montague Parks & Recreation Commissioners, the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club, the Montague Department of Public Works, Montague Police, and many other volunteers who spent a good portion of their New Year's Day helping us out during registration, along the race route, and at the finish line.

Finally, we would like to thank the runners who participated in the Sawmill Run. We appreciate your support of MPRD programs, and look forward to seeing you again on January 1st of 2025!

Sincerely,
Jon Dobosz, CPRP
Director of Parks & Recreation
Montague

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DEER from page A1

Stantec's plan recommended completing a perimeter fence around the airfield to keep deer and other large mammals clear of the runway, but due to a prohibitively high price tag, the airport first tried implementing other deterrents.

One such tactic is retooling the habitat, cultivating a mix of native grasslands and pine barrens on the airport land to make the area less attractive to deer. According to Camden, while the landscaping efforts helped, deer presence has remained significant.

In some cases, airport staff will use loud noises such as a car horn to try to clear deer from the runway. Additionally, many tenant pilots have implemented "missed landings" – flying low over the airport before actually landing – in an attempt to scare the deer off.

"Unfortunately," Camden said, "in our experience, we've found they tend to regroup within an hour and go back to the same area."

After these methods proved less efficacious than hoped, airport management decided to use lethal control measures.

"Cutting down the population is the last resort," Camden said. "No one really wants to do that, but when one solution fails, you have to move on down the line to the next one, because of the liability."

The Turners Falls airport first contracted the regional USDA Wildlife Management Services for assistance in November 2022, and renewed the yearly agreement this December to continue the services, which cost the airport \$5,225 in the first year.

Since the beginning of the contract, according to USDA district supervisor Tim Cozine, wildlife officers have "depredated" one coyote and 14 deer from the airfield over the course of 10 visits, largely around dusk or early evening, when the crepuscular deer are most likely to congregate.

Cozine, whose district covers Massachusetts,



Stantec's 2022 "Wildlife Hazard Assessment" report included this trail camera photo, dated December 26, 2020, of white-tailed deer crossing the airport's runway.

Connecticut, and Rhode Island, said that the deer are shot, and the carcasses are then "donated or given to individuals for consumption at the direction of the Massachusetts Environmental Police."

Multiple attempts this week to reach state environmental police representatives to learn how, and to whom, the carcasses are distributed were unsuccessful as of press time.

Unfortunately for the deer, the original recommendation – completing the perimeter fence – appears to be a pipe dream in the short term. In July 2021, a project estimate for the remaining 8,250 feet of fence rang in at \$1,856,250, a sum that Camden said he expects to increase as

the cost of materials continues to balloon. (For comparison, the airport's entire FY'24 budget, including debt service, is \$426,965.)

While the airport received funding from the town's general operating budget for decades, it became self-sustaining in 2021 after the purchase of Pioneer Aviation, an adjacent property that added new revenue streams. Even with the hope of some state and federal assistance, Camden expressed doubts that any serious effort to address the fence would take off until at least 2028.

Camden stressed his desire for anyone with questions or concerns around the wildlife management procedures to reach out to the airport directly.



AT LARGE

Catfights, Headhunting, Expansion, Explosion

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – Anyone who's ever considered running for a selectboard seat should tune into Bernardston-Northfield Cable TV's replay of the back-and-forth between Barbara "Bee" Jacque and Heath Cummings and Sarah Kerns at town hall on Tuesday night.

This condensed version starts with Cummings trying to explain to Jacque why it's taken longer than she expected to rework the fire department's policies and procedures.

"If we had another hour we probably would've gotten it done," said Cummings, "but [fire chief] Skip [Dunnell] had a dinner he had to go to."

"This particular task is taking months!" said Jacque. "I trust you two, and I trust the work..."

"You look unhappy," said Cummings. "You gotta listen to what I'm saying before you react."

"I am. I'm just listening," replied Jacque.

"Well, *this* isn't listening," Cummings said as he mimicked Jacque's posture. "It's reacting to something I haven't even finished saying yet."

"My reaction is, we've been at this for quite some time and you said you'd have something done for this meeting... This task has been taking months. I am living in a state of hope," [long pause] "but also in a state of, this must get done and stick to a timeline."

Kerns interjected: "It feels like you're having a differential reaction. It feels like you're reacting differently than you are to other [tasks]."

Miffed, perturbed, or whatever, Jacque shot back: "You don't get to talk about my feelings. Or my reactions."

"It's not right for someone who wasn't at the meeting to pass judgment," said Kerns. "We are trustworthy. We are elected. We are adults. We showed up and did the job, and we anticipate completion."

Board chair Alex Meisner and Bernie Boudreau had stayed out of it. "I was hoping we wouldn't have to spend an ungodly amount of time talking about this, but it needs to be done," said Meisner. "Bernie?"

Boudreau looked at Kerns and Cummings and said, "I just want it right. You're doing it right. Take as long as you want – you have my backing."

Jacque was without her tag-team partner, town administrator Andrea Llamas, who's on vacation. Whether Cummings and Kerns are stalling or Jacque is micromanaging, Boudreau was the voice of reason. Get it right no matter how long it takes, because what's the rush?

PVRS Stocks Its Roster

Patricia Kinsella continues to impress as the Pioneer Valley Regional School superintendent.

Last month Diana Bonneville announced she was resigning as the superintendent of the Hampshire Regional School District. Her resignation came after the teachers' union accused her of financial mismanagement – which she has denied. Kinsella was able to poach a pair of Bonneville's senior administrators: Kate Messmer to be the



The School Street Bridge over the Mill River is closed "for evaluation and repair."

director of teaching and learning, and Nancy Parlakulas to be director of student services.

"I hired them last spring, and they are wonderful additions to Pioneer," said Kinsella.

Water Under Troubled Bridges

The town website reports that the School Street Bridge is closed "for evaluation and repair." No specific reason is given, but a quick glance underneath the bridge reveals rust-eroded support beams that could cave under weight.

The bridge over the Mill River between Main Street and Birnam Road will be closed to cars, cyclists, and pedestrians until it's repaired, and that could be a while.

Meanwhile the last time the Schell Bridge advisory committee met was in March, and its meeting minutes haven't been posted for

six years.

"There are two Schell Bridge groups," explained Barb Richardson. "One is the official town committee, which has more or less ceased to exist, and the second group is the Friends of Schell Bridge, a non-profit, volunteer organization that does not post minutes to the public. That's the group I work with."

"The town has submitted an application for a federal grant called 'Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods.' This would fill the [money] gap left after the 2021 bids exceeded the MassDOT estimates and the project was put on hold. The town will learn about the grant in late February or early March."

Sewer Commission Seeks Help

A special town meeting is scheduled for January 24 to approve expanding the sewer commission.

"We're struggling to keep up with all the work," said commissioner Karen Boudreau. "Expanding the commission from three to five members would help us tackle more tasks, and we want to put that before the voters."

The meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the Pioneer Valley Regional School auditorium.

Wendell Resists Battery

It seems odd that Wendell, which voted 484-105 for Joe Biden, would agree to have a 105-MW power storage station installed, but the fight has just begun. Several townsfolk have formed No Assault & Battery United and plan to fight the utility-scale battery energy supply storage facility.

The effort is reminiscent of when Northfield residents stopped Kinder Morgan from putting a gas pipeline and compressor station through town.


A petition calls on Governor Maura Healey to put a hold on the licensing of these lithium-ion powered battery storage systems in the aftermath of numerous battery fires in New York and elsewhere.

They are ubiquitous and dangerous and can be found in anything from smartphones to vacuum cleaners. Indeed, after one teenager's skateboard burst into flames, his mother told Fox Business, "I feel like I bought my son a bomb for his birthday."

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

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WENDELL from page A1

the feasibility of regionalizing with the Wendell, New Salem, and Shutesbury fire departments.

DiDonato said she didn't think it looked like a good idea for Wendell, but that as a member of the public safety planning committee (PSPC), whose job is to find a replacement when Wendell and New Salem fire chief Joe Cuneo retires, she would be discussing the proposal at that committee's January 10 meeting.

Selectboard member Gillian Budine said the study will take firefighters' time, but might be helpful to see the towns' options. The study is slated to be finished within 12 months of its start and it has not started yet.

The selectboard members agreed to hold off on deciding whether to support the study until DiDonato gets the PSPC's consensus.

Winter Special

A special town meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 31, and its warrant will have to be posted at the start of the selectboard's January 17 meeting. Town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad said he is soliciting articles from departments so they can be added to the two already planned.

The article needing prompt attention would, if passed, pay the Swift River School transportation bill. A second article is being submitted by the citizens' group that opposes the large battery project proposed by New Leaf Energy.

Projects

Delorey said it has been a quiet time. Test wells around the old landfill had been sampled, but he had not seen results yet. Capping the landfill

has used all the earmarked money, and more is still needed to finish the project. Before any work was done, the land sloped down from the site, and more fill is needed. The state called for a 3:1 slope, but Delorey is asking if it may be changed to 2:1 to save fill and keep the project back from the property line.

He suggested using the rear of the lot for Wendell's woodbank.

Other Business

Only one person – Su Hoyle, formerly of Wendell and still living nearby – applied to be the assistant to the town coordinator. Hoyle, who arrived a few minutes before her scheduled time, said she comes to town regularly to tend horses, enjoys computer work and challenges, and can work in the office or remotely.

The selectboard agreed to check her references and get back to her.

They approved a letter supporting an Erving grant request for a feasibility study for a scenic walking and bicycling trail on the north side of Bear Mountain. The trail would connect Farley with Wendell Depot. (Two bustling town centers.)

With Laurie DiDonato recusing herself, the board accepted a deed from her and Ray DiDonato for a small strip of land next to the box culvert that allows Locke Village Road to pass over the stream that drains McAvoy's Pond. Owning that strip will allow Wendell to perform necessary maintenance on the dam and spillway.

The board accepted a \$10,000 donation from the Friends of the Wendell Library for library use, and granted Jesse Davis a permit to have more than two unregistered vehicles on his property.



NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Staff Salaries, Road Layouts, Housekeeping Slated for STM

By **KATIE NOLAN**

At the Erving selectboard meeting Monday night, town clerk Richard Newton swore in new Erving police officer Brandon Garvey. Garvey formerly worked for the Greenfield police department.

The board and finance committee reviewed the draft warrant for a special town meeting to be held January 31. If passed, the draft articles would:

- Accept road layouts for Bridge Street and Maple Avenue;
- Revise the salaries of the town clerk, tax collector, and treasurer;
- Transfer national opioid settlement funds into the town's "opioid settlement stabilization" account;

• Move \$231,000 in unspent funds from completed capital projects into capital stabilization;

• Appropriate \$75,000 from the public works dry storage project funds to buy a modular office space for public works staff;

• Aggregate the unspent maintenance and security funds for the former International Paper and Usher mills into a single fund; and

• Authorize the school committee to sign a five-year contract with F.M. Kuzmeskus for school transportation.

The board and fin com will finalize the warrant when they meet jointly this Thursday, January 11.

The selectboard ratified the agreement with town administra-

tor Bryan Smith, and extended his contract until June 30, 2026. The board also ratified a renewed collective bargaining agreement with wastewater and water department employees.

The board reviewed a draft town policy on flags, banners, and signs on governmental flagpoles, buildings, and properties and draft personnel policies. The policies will be reviewed again at future meetings.

The board appointed Holly Fitzpatrick to the zoning board of appeals.

Hearings on the fiscal year 2025 budget will begin January 11. The board discussed limiting the amount of time for presentations from town departments.

PARKING from page A1

emergency is declared. Currently, signs on the lots state they need to be cleared of cars the night following the end of the declared emergency.

But how are Turners Falls residents warned of the emergency – and do the lots actually get cleared the night after it ends?

A *Montague Reporter* investigation noted that while last Saturday night's snow emergency had been posted on the town Facebook page and transmitted via the CodeRED notification system, it did not appear on the town website, as required under the regulations that appear on that site.

The *Reporter* also found that although the announcement said the emergency would end at 6 a.m. on Sunday, flashing blue lights on Avenue A, installed to alert residents of the emergency, were still flashing at 9:33 p.m. that night, when the declared emergency was over and those parking in town lots would soon need to remove their cars.

Chris Janke, co-owner of the Rendezvous restaurant and an apartment building which sit next to a town parking lot on Third Street, said he was approached by a tenant asking where she could park during the snow emergency, and when the lot needed to be cleared for snow removal. He found that the sign on the lot said that snow would be cleared "the



REPORTER STAFF PHOTO
According to town officials, the signs installed just last year in the municipal lots warning of overnight towing and plowing should not be paid any attention as they are no longer truthful.

evening a declared winter emergency is lifted," and that "violators would be towed at owner's expense."

Janke left a message with the assistant town administrator, Walter Ramsey, Sunday night asking whether this was in fact the policy, since he was under the impression that lots were often being cleared of snow during the daytime, and that residents and business owners had not been adequately informed of these regulations.

According to Janke, Ramsey called him

back the next morning to say that the signage in the lots did not reflect the latest town policy. Lots might be cleared at other times of the day, he reportedly told him, with car owners alerted by flashing lights placed on sawhorses at the parking areas. (Bergeron also noted the lights on the sawhorses at that evening's selectboard meeting). Ramsey also suggested that cars left in the lots would not be towed at this time.

Until the winter of 2022-23 on-street parking at night was prohibited in all of Montague between December 1 and April 1 from 1 to 5 a.m. Those restrictions remain outside of downtown Turners Falls, an area which is defined on a map which can be found on the town website, which includes the Patch neighborhood.

Separate winter parking regulations for the downtown neighborhoods were the result of a 2022 study by the planning firm Stantec, which was contracted partly in response to complaints that there was insufficient parking for businesses and residents in the downtown area.

The researchers found that "parking occupancy at peak periods falls well below industry standards for availability," and that existing parking "can accommodate future growth." But the report also warned that "overnight winter parking policies are a matter of frustration for residents," and called

for the town to "modify overnight winter parking policy." The study also recommended that the town "clearly and robustly communicate policies to residents."

In response to the study, a new set of winter policies was approved by the selectboard in the fall of 2022 and implemented that winter. But the town has had limited experience with the new process because, as Bergeron told the board Monday night, it was such a mild winter that parking lots did not need to be cleared.

Bergeron also reported that no one was towed for violating the parking ban that previous weekend. "I think there was some confusion with downtown parking yesterday or last night," he said. "It's just hard to communicate sometimes in the middle of the day. I guess I'll have to make an official 'the snow is over' announcement at the end of the storms."

Bergeron told the *Reporter* that the emergency declarations will be posted on the town website.

"I think if we all work together, that's the best approach," said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz.

"It's a confusing policy," Janke told the *Reporter*. "I need a flyer explaining it for my tenants, customers, and employees. But I appreciate the efforts of the town to clarify it, and to quickly reach out to those most affected."



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Items may be viewed at the Public Safety Complex, 95 Montague Road, by contacting the Fire Dept. during the day at (413) 548-9225. Payment by certified check or money order required. Item to be removed within one week of notice of award.

Sealed bids with "2006 Ford Cutvan Ambulance" printed clearly on the envelope will be accepted by the Selectboard at P.O. Box 300, Leverett, MA 01054 until January 29, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. when they will be opened and publicly read. A signed non-collusion form must accompany every bid. Sale to be awarded separately by the Selectboard to the highest bidder for each item.

The Town of Leverett reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

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The Town of Leverett wishes to receive bids for a 1994 Ford F Super Duty Turbo Diesel, 4WD, 12,772 miles, 5 speed manual. Condition as is with no guarantee expressed or implied.

Items may be viewed at the Public Safety Complex, 95 Montague Road, by contacting the Fire Dept. during the day at (413) 548-9225. Payment by certified check or money order required. Item to be removed within one week of notice of award.

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LEGAL ADVERTISEMENT TOWN OF MONTAGUE, MA

The following outlines a Scope of the Service Tasks for which the consultant will perform for the **Avenue A Streetscape Design Project - Phase IV component of the Town's FY 2022.23 Community Development Block Grant Program funded by the U. S. Department of HUD.** The basic objective of the Consultant's efforts will be to design and prepare bid ready plans and specifications for the project. The fixed fee amount for the scope of service tasks as outlined below is **\$70,800.00.**

The Town of Montague reserves the right to continue with the selected engineer/architect for additional services. These services may include bidding and construction oversight. These services may be extended by contract with a negotiated fee for service.

Towards this goal, the consultant will be responsible for the following scope of service tasks in accordance with all Federal/State/Local laws and regulations, including but not limited to HUD regulations under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, applicable M.G.L. Chapter 149 requirements, as well as related Federal and State Labor Standards Provisions HUD form 4010; HUD Handbook 1344.1 Federal Labor Standards Compliance; Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 149, Section 27; and Massachusetts Department of Labor and Industries (Labor Laws); DavisBacon and Related Acts; the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act, Copeland "AntiKickback Act" and compliance with all applicable Federal/State/Local ADA requirements:

Based on the approved Final Conceptual Plan prepared by the Berkshire Design Group, the consultant will prepare draft and final sets of working drawings, technical specifications, and bid documents for solicitation of public bids. Final drawings shall contain the level of detail necessary to allow contractors accurate estimating.

Proposals should include the firm's qualifications and relevant work experience, particular reference should be made to state and/or federally funded projects, with the above mentioned type of project, a listing of all personnel who will be working on this project and their responsibilities and qualifications, a timetable for completion of the scope of services, documentation that the firm meets insurance requirements (Errors and Omissions Insurance, coverage to be equal to 10% of the construction costs with a minimum of \$250,000 and if the designer has a deductible to their policy, this deductible will be subject to approval by the Town of Montague). The complete list of evaluation criteria is available upon request.

Three (3) copies of the sealed technical proposal and one (1) sealed copy of a separate fixed price proposal for the AVENUE A STREETSCAPE DESIGN PROJECT - PHASE IV should be submitted in writing by 3:00 p.m. Thursday, February 1, 2024, to the Town of Montague, Selectboard Office, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, Massachusetts 01376 The envelope containing the non-price proposals shall be marked "AVENUE A STREETSCAPE DESIGN PROJECT - PHASE IV NON-PRICE PROPOSAL", and the price proposal shall be marked "AVENUE A STREETSCAPE DESIGN PROJECT - PHASE IV DESIGN PROJECT PRICE PROPOSAL."

For a copy of the Request for Proposal, please contact Brian P. McHugh by phone at (413) 223-5224 or by email at bmchugh@fcrhra.org.

A site walkthrough is not scheduled. Potential responders are welcome to review the project site on their own.

The Town of Montague reserves the right to reject all proposals in the interest of sound business practices. The Town of Montague is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer and encourages proposals from qualified minority owned, woman owned, and Section 3 businesses.

Montague Board of Selectmen 1/11/24

NOTICE OF FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT and NOTICE OF INTENT TO REQUEST RELEASE OF FUNDS TOWN OF MONTAGUE, MA

REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

On or about January 30, 2024 the Town of Montague will submit a request to Dept of Housing and Urban Development for the release of Community Project Funding Program funds under Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, (P.L. 117-328), to undertake the Avenue A Streetscape Improvement Project.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Town of Montague has determined that the project will have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) is not required. Additional project information is contained in the Environmental Review Record (ERR) on file at www.montague-ma.gov.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any individual, group, or agency may submit email comments on the ERR to WalterR@montague-ma.gov. All comments received by January 29, 2024 will be considered by the Town of Montague prior to authorizing submission of a request for release of funds. Comments should specify which Notice they are addressing.

ENVIRONMENTAL CERTIFICATION

The Town of Montague certifies to HUD that Walter Ramsey in his capacity as Environmental Officer consents to accept the jurisdiction of the Federal Courts if an action is brought to enforce responsibilities in relation to the environmental review process and that these responsibilities have been satisfied. HUD's approval of the certification satisfies its responsibilities under NEPA and related laws and authorities and allows the Town of Montague to use Program funds.

OBJECTIONS TO RELEASE OF FUNDS

HUD will accept objections to its release of fund and the Town of Montague's certification for a period of fifteen days following the anticipated submission date or its actual receipt of the request (whichever is later) only if they are on one of the following bases: (a) the certification was not executed by the Certifying Officer of the Town of Montague; (b) the Town of Montague has omitted a step or failed to make a decision or finding required by HUD regulations at 24 CFR part 58; (c) the grant recipient or other participants in the development process have committed funds, incurred costs or undertaken activities not authorized by 24 CFR Part 58 before approval of a release of funds by HUD or (d) another Federal agency acting pursuant to 40 CFR Part 1504 has submitted a written finding that the project is unsatisfactory from the standpoint of environmental quality. Objections must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the required procedures (24 CFR Part 58, Sec. 58.76) and shall be emailed to HUD at cpdrrjfbos@hud.gov. Potential objectors should contact HUD/State to verify the actual last day of the objection period.

Walter Ramsey
Montague Environmental Certifying Officer

SPORTS from page A1

is also made up of students from both schools, beat Smith Vocational off four pins and a close decision.

Boys' Basketball

Mount Greylock 52 – TFHS 47
Greenfield 80 – FCTS 45
TFHS 63 – Lee 56
TFHS 43 – FCTS 37 (JV)
TFHS 52 – FCTS 41
TFHS 54 – HCSE 52

The fate of Turners Falls varsity basketball may have reached a turning point back on December 21 when they hosted the Black Mounties of Mount Greylock. Although Blue did not beat Grey, they came back from a 19-2 deficit in the first quarter to go ahead 30-29 at half-time. They did this by adjusting to Greylock's smothering defense with bounce passes and spreading out their offense to prevent steals.

At the end of that game, there was a little displeasure in the gym as several calls unpopular with the home crowd allowed the visitors to eke out a 51-47 win.

Across Millers Falls Road, the Franklin Tech Eagles have been struggling. Last Thursday, January 4 they lost at home against Greenfield. Green came out on fire, scoring 24 points in the first quarter, and though the Eagles made a few charges, they could never dig into the lead, eventually dropping the contest 80-45.

Jack Gancarz (12), Tyler Lafountain (10), Dylon Cullen (8), Gabe Mota and Cam Candelaria (6 each), Alex Knapp (2), and Robert Belval (1) all scored points for Franklin.

So far in January, the Turners boys have put together two wins in a row. Last Thursday they went up to the Berkshires and defeated the Lee Wildcats 63-56. Blue overcame a four-point deficit in the first quarter to pull out to a single-point lead at the half. In the second half, Turners outscored the home team 38-32 to coast to a seven-point win, 63-56.

Branden Truesdell led Power-town with 33 points, followed by Jackson Cogswell (13), Dylon Richardson (6), Cameron Burnett and Caden Williams Senethavisouk (4 each), and Joey Mosca (3).

Turners kept their winning ways alive in the Coaches vs. Cancer tournament held on Tuesday at the home gym. The Thunder won 43-37 in the JV game, and in the varsity match, Turners took advantage of Tech's poor shooting to win 52-41.

On Wednesday they extended their win streak by outlasting the Wolves of Hampden Charter East.

It didn't start out that way: in the first quarter, the Wolves jumped out to an early 10-point lead. The Thunder kept pace, but were still down 16-8 after a quarter. In the second Powertown narrowed the gap to one point, though Hampden scored a 2-pointer at the buzzer to post a 26-23 lead at the half.

Turners' prospects seemed to dim in the third as the visitors jumped out to an 11-point lead with 2:11 left. But Blue began playing more aggressively, and by the time the buzzer sounded they were only down 39-37.

Both crowds became louder in the fourth, as the Wolves built a four-point lead. And then, at 5:48, Blue took their first lead since the game-opening score of 2-0. With 40.8 left in regulation and Turners desperately holding on to a 3-point lead, Hampden hit a three-pointer



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Turners' Branden Truesdell takes a shot against defender Jyaire Oates as the Thunder hosted the Hampden Charter School of Science on Wednesday.

and tied it at 50.

With 24 ticks on the clock, Blue took the lead 52-50 but the Wolves tied it again with 7.2 seconds left. Powertown moved down the court quickly, but missed twice under the basket. Finally, with less than three seconds left, they hit the shot to nose ahead.

The Wolves got the ball with 2.5 seconds to play. They made one last desperation shot, but it fell short, and Blue took the contest 54-52.

Girls' Basketball

FCTS 28 – TFHS 15 (JV)

Since losing to Frontier back on December 19, the Franklin Tech girls have been on a hot streak, defeating Athol, Pioneer, Nashoba Valley and Ware. Although the Birds had to play a few games without star center Lea Chapman, Kaitlin Trudeau took over as the blocking artist, making it near-impossible to inbound while pulling down multiple rebounds.

Because Turners Falls does not have a varsity girls basketball team, the Franklin varsity had to sit out the Coaches vs. Cancer tournament while the JV girls beat Turners 28-15.

Swimming

Ludlow 54 – TFHS 31

Ludlow 52 – TFHS 42

The Turners Falls swim teams hosted the Ludlow Lions last Tuesday.

In the boys' meet, Thunder supplemented two first-place wins with several second- and third-place finishes. Matthew Sibley took first in the 500-yard freestyle with a time of 8:15.64 and finished third in the 100-yard breaststroke, while Liam Bliss won the 100-yard backstroke in 1:09.21 and finished second in the 200-yard freestyle (2:10.00).

In the other races, Connor Glenn finished second in the 200-yard individual medley with a time of

2:15.20. Tyler Galenski placed second in the 50-yard freestyle sprint (40.33) and third in the 100-yard freestyle (1:13.10), and Cody McDonough won second place in the 100-yard breaststroke (1:25.50) and finished fourth in the 100-yard freestyle (1:15.10). The 200-yard medley relay quartet of Bliss, McDonough, Glenn, and Sibley finished second with a time of 2:24.60 and in the 200-yard freestyle relay, McDonough, Sibley, Galenski, and Bliss placed second in 1:09.21.

In the girls' lanes, Turners secured three first-place wins. Sophia McComb, Ava Fortin, Sylvie DiBartolomeo, and Avery Heathwaite won the 200-yard medley relay in 2:16.74, Ainslee Flynn won the 100-yard butterfly in 2:24.16, and Heathwaite took first in the 100-yard breaststroke (1:28.39) while finishing third in the 200-yard freestyle. (1:03.56).

The team's second-place finishes included Fortin in the 200-yard freestyle (2:12.34), Madi Limatainen in the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyles (28.30 and 1:01.57), DiBartolomeo in the 500-yard freestyle (6:12.13), and McComb in the 100-yard backstroke (1:12.25).

Both squads get back in the pool next Tuesday the 16th against Monson.

Wrestling

FCTS 45 – Smith Voc 24

On Tuesday, January 9, the Franklin Tech Wrestling Eagles out-grappled the Smith Vocational Vikings 45-24. Conner Herzig, Madix Whitman, Travis Eastman, and Dillon Laffond all pinned their opponents, while Wyatt Whitman won a 12-11 decision to cement the team's victory.

The wrestlers had little time to rest. At press time on Wednesday, they were headed to Orange to face the Mahar Senators.



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MONTAGUE from page A1

possible capital projects, which are generally sent to town meeting as standalone articles rather than in the operating budget. The 11 main proposals totaled just over \$1.4 million, with the most costly being the rehabilitation of the Montague Center sewer pump station (\$283,800) and the reconstruction of the parking lot behind town hall (\$275,000).

Others scheduled for the ATM included \$150,000 for a feasibility study for a main branch library in Turners Falls and \$100,000 for new sidewalks and pavement at Hillcrest Elementary School.

A project to replace a culvert on Ferry Road (\$222,800) was placed on the STM warrant due to the need to start work in the spring, as was the purchase of a multi-purpose skid steer for the public works department (\$90,000).

The selectboard did not vote on the list. Ramsey said the next step would be for the capital improvements and finance committees to review it at a joint meeting this Wednesday.

Town administrator Steve Ellis reviewed the plan for developing Montague's FY'25 operating budget. The "general fund" budget – not including assessments from two school districts, the Clean Water Facility budget, the airport budget, or capital articles – is coming in at just over \$12.4 million. The goal is for the board to make final recommendations on January 27 for departments under its jurisdiction.

The board spent a good deal of time debating funding for town-operated electric charging stations, a small line item of under \$10,000. Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz has objected to the idea of the town subsidizing the cost.

"The day that I can vote not to fund it, I will vote not to fund it," Kuklewicz said. "Nobody's going to Cumberland Farms to help me with my gas...."

Another major topic of conversation was the allocation of costs between the public works department and Clean Water Facility, particularly for sewer repairs and for a proposed new laborer to assist the new lead collection system operator, who monitors the town's sewers and storm drains.

In a related development, Ellis reported that the town has applied for a grant from the state Clean Water Trust Fund to fund a study of the treatment plant's vulnerability to stormwater, as required by new federal regulation. The fund would reimburse \$75,000 of the potential \$125,000 cost, but town meeting must first appropriate the full amount. Without taking a formal vote, the board approved putting this appropriation on the STM warrant.

Civil Service

In other town meeting-related news, Ellis updated the board on the progress of town meeting's 2022 request to the legislature for special legislation to remove Montague's police department from the state civil service system. He said the legislature "has failed to, and does not appear that it will imminently, take up special legislation."

Ellis said that town counsel had done historical research and discovered that when town meeting approved joining the system in 1932, the legislature does not seem to have voted on the issue then, either. "We effectively entered civil ser-

vice through what we understand is kind of a defective process," Ellis said. He suggested that the board could put an article on the STM agenda to leave civil service: "You get in the way you get out." The board unanimously approved putting such a motion on the warrant.

"We effectively entered the civil service through what we understand is kind of a defective process.... You get in the way you get out."

Steve Ellis, Montague town administrator

Ellis also asked the board to rescind a vote it took on December 18 to pay reserve police officers at the same hourly rate as regular officers. He said the vote had been "premature," as town meeting needs to first revise the pay schedule for such officers.

The board rescinded its December vote, and the change will appear on the STM agenda.

Public Works

Ramsey announced that the "cap repair" at the town's former burn dump had been completed a day before the December 30 deadline required by the state Department of Environmental Protection. He shared pictures of the repair, which upgraded a basin that collects water running off the capped dump, upon which sits a solar array.

Ramsey also shared design plans for an upcoming round of streetscape improvements, running from Third Street to the Discovery Center on the northwest side of Avenue A and on the southeast side of the Avenue directly in front of town hall.

The improvements, which are being funded under a federal earmark, include new brickwork on sidewalks, the rehabilitation of planters, and new traffic lights near the intersection of Avenue A and Third Street.

The board authorized the public works department to participate in a regional highway bidding process facilitated by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

It accepted a report of an inspection of the town transfer station by Franklin County Solid Waste Management District director Jan Ameen. Public works superintendent Tom Bergeron said the only problem she had found was an out-of-date fire extinguisher, which has since been replaced.

Block Grants

Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority presented an outline of the next federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application, which the housing authority administers for the town. Programs funded under the annual block grant include housing rehab loans to low-income residents, public facilities and infrastructure projects, social service agencies, and planning projects.

McHugh did not project a total amount for the grant, which has not been set, but told the *Reporter* that "they can get up to \$950,000." The application, due March 25, will require a public hearing. The board

did not take a vote.

The board approved the final report for the most recently ended CDBG round, and authorized paying \$936 to the Berkshire Design Group for overseeing the Hillcrest Elementary School playground renovation project.

Licenses and Contracts

Ellis gave a brief update on FirstLight Power's application to renew its federal licenses to operate the Turners Falls dam and canal and Northfield Mountain pumped-storage station.

He said the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) had asked FirstLight to provide the estimated total cost of recreational improvements Montague was proposing, and that the company gave an estimate of roughly \$1.7 million. "It was very interesting to see their numbers," he said.

Ellis said the agency's questions may be delaying a move to the next stage of the process, in which Massachusetts will be asked to evaluate the impact of a proposed new license on water quality.

Ellis said the state has now established a process for towns to create a "special revenue fund account" for revenues obtained from national opioid settlements. He said the town may now move these funds from a stabilization account created by town meeting into a reserve account under the selectboard's control, similar to the one that holds rental revenues from the town-owned Colle Opera House.

He recounted "ongoing conversations" about ambulance service between town officials and representatives of the Montague Center and Turners Falls fire departments. The Turners department provides Montague with ambulance services, but American Medical Response (AMR) of Greenfield provides advanced life support services; Ellis said there has not been a formal contract with AMR.

Ellis asked if a board member would like to participate in these conversations, and Kuklewicz volunteered.

Other Business

Ellis was approved to represent Montague at the upcoming annual meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Association. At his request, the board also approved an increase in travel business meals reimbursement for town staff to \$15 for breakfast, \$20 for lunch, and \$30 for dinner. Ellis said he had checked the rates with those recommended by the federal government.

A change-of-manager request for the bar at the St. Kazimierz Society on Avenue A was approved, as was a 2024 entertainment license for Brick & Feather Brewery on Eleventh Street. The board approved an entertainment license request from Música Franklin, an after-school program providing lessons on stringed instruments to Franklin County youth, for a public concert at Unity Park on May 11.

Kristi Bodin was appointed to the cable advisory committee, and David Dempsey to the energy committee.

The board retired into an executive session to discuss strategy for collective bargaining with the New England Police Benevolent Association. Its next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 16.



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

Here's the way it was on January 9, 2014: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Climate-Friendly Dwelling Deemed Illegal

At a Wendell Climate Change forum, Susan and Jonathan von Ranson told about 30 citizens how they have been trying for five years to legally finish and move into a "simple living" apartment attached to their barn. It would have a composting toilet, masonry wood stove, water from a hand pump, and no electricity.

The von Ransons say this will make their lives safer and healthier; state law says these conditions are illegal because they endanger health or safety. Rather than a variance, the couple is pushing for state regulations that allow "a legal, dignified, simple way to live."

An owner-occupied "simple living" option would protect renters and appeal to people who want to live off the grid.

Top Job Goes to Chief Hastings

Gill police chief David Hastings was elected to a two-year term as president of the 111-town Western Massachusetts Police Chiefs' Association. Selectboard member Randy Crochier said it had been a long time since a Franklin County chief was chosen for the job.

"It's a big honor," said selectboard member Ann Banash.

Asked about crimes related to drugs, Hastings said, "It's county-wide. We're right off the Route 2 / I-91 corridors, major drug routes between New York and Boston. They think, 'These small towns don't have the number of officers,' so they set up drug houses in our communities."

20 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 8, 2004: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Tightening Belts in Montague

Montague's efforts to level-fund or cut an additional 10% from each department is taking on an air of triage planning for the victims of a slow-motion disaster.

Since losing her fulltime clerk to last year's budget cuts, town accountant Carolyn Olsen has been processing the town's payroll, paying the town's bills, and keeping the ledgers singlehandedly. "I'm running around like a one-armed

paper hanger," she said.

She did admit she had allowed for inflation by budgeting \$2.00 for staples and an extra 75¢ for the rising cost of the calendar she requires to get her job done.

Erving: Water Shut-Offs Loom

At Erving's Monday night selectboard meeting, Bert Dubay and Andy Tessier looked at the list with visible disappointment. According to treasurer Margaret Sullivan, twenty-three households are delinquent on their water bills. They represent nearly 10% of water users, and owe the town over \$5,000.

150 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 7, 1874: News from the Turners Falls Reporter's archive.

Local Matters

Capital crust for coasting.

We had some splendid pickarel from the river on Monday.

Social Mite Society this evening, at Mrs. Bartlett's. Come all.

The Cutlery will be run upon six day's time hereafter, instead of four.

The New Year's party at Schuler Hall was a perfect success – so far as a good time was concerned.

The friends of Mrs. Seth J. Stone will be pleased to learn that she is improving. She has been very sick with erysipelas.

Franklin Field, Esq., has fitted up with all the modern improvements in machinery for farm use, a water wheel drives his feed cutter.

The Montague Paper Company are running night and day. They have two years' orders ahead. How is that for hard times?

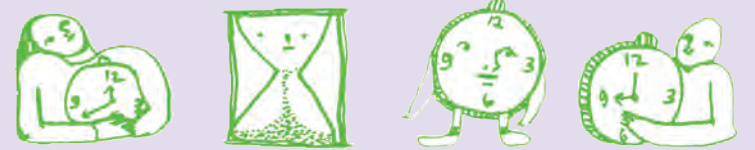
J.B. Marsh has removed his bakery and eating house from Second street to Pfefferle's building on Fourth street.

At the meeting of the County Commissioners today, the petition of Mr. Stoughton and others for a bridge to Riverside was dismissed.

Work on Colle block has been resumed, and will be pressed with vigor. The happiest man in town Monday morning was Geo. O. Peabody, the contractor, when he found the snow all out of his way and his large force able to resume operations.

The first annual ball of the Alva Crocker Steam Fire Engine Company takes place at Schuler Hall on the 16th of the present month. The affair is in good hands and will be a most enjoyable occasion. Tickets, admitting a gentleman and two ladies, \$1.50. Including supper, \$3.00.

There are a couple of young men in this town who should have a little more respect for themselves and endeavor not to mar the enjoyment of others. On Wednesday evening last, while the ball was in progress at Schuler Hall, a couple of drunken loafers tried to create a disturbance by standing in the doorway and using profane and insulting language to all who passed in or out.



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FINNERTY PHOTO

In the last two years the high school music program has swelled from fewer than 10 to well over 100 participants.

BAND from page A1

we got invited to perform at Ja'Duke's Boulevard Bash this fall. We had our own fall festival, we're performing at pep band games, we're going to the Springfield Thunderbirds, and actually, we're looking at playing at a WNBA game in Connecticut!"

The TFMP will have both its band and choir in action this coming Monday, January 15, when the Springfield Thunderbirds hockey team takes on the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins at 3:05 p.m. at Springfield's Mass-Mutual Center. The students hope to bring the community with them.

"For every ticket we sell, we get \$10 into the music program," Comeau says. "That gives us the opportunity to go on field trips, purchase new instruments, and gain supplies."

Fundraising is a necessity for TFMP. More and more students have become interested in the program as positive sentiment for the group swells. Due to the number of students joining the ranks – from fewer than 10 to well over 100 – the program initiated an instrument drive last spring as their demand outpaced the supplies. The students' eagerness was reciprocated by the community in the form of more than 100 donated instruments.

"We reached out through Western Mass News to ask people to donate

unused instruments," says senior guitarist Noah DeLorenzo. "We had a lack because of the growth."

"Just having her there saying 'You got this, you can do it, I believe in you,' just being there with the energy, helps a lot."

Cody McDonough, band president

Band president Cody McDonough, a senior, said that even within the scope of his final year of the TFMP he has noticed a growth in the band's fanbase as it racks up an impressive number of appearances before the community.

"Last year, with just concerts, we had people wall to wall – it was insane," McDonough says. "This year, we had to do two or three nights just to have enough seats for everybody."

Comeau doesn't plan on slowing things down any time soon.

"When I was in high school, band was one of my favorite parts of my day," she says. "Having those field trips, those moments, those memories that I have forever... When I came here and saw that the kids hadn't really had that in a while, and

then all of a sudden we had our first concert and their faces lit up, that was it – I was sold."

As the band and choir reach larger and larger stages, one wonders where the burgeoning young group gets the courage to perform at events like next Monday's Thunderbirds game.

McDonough, one of Ms. Comeau's students, may have one answer: "She just has that ball of energy that you really need going into something like that, because even band and choir, it's a lot emotionally to build the confidence to sing in front of people, or play in front of people... Just having her there saying 'You got this, you can do it, I believe in you,' just being there with the energy, helps a lot."

And Comeau, who acts as conductor, motivator, percussionist, and teacher, says the students in the program, in turn, act as her inspiration.

"Just spreading self-positivity, love, joy and little moments of happiness is why I do it," she says. "I sleep real hard on weekends to recuperate the energy, but how can you not be revitalized by this?"

How, indeed. Tickets for this Monday's Thunderbirds game – and TFMP's performance – can be purchased online at www.tinyurl.com/TFHStThunderbirds or by calling (413) 417-2302.

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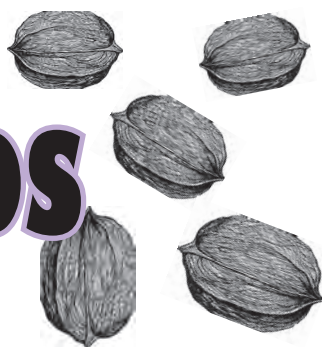
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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

JANUARY 11, 2024



THE RISE OF THE NUTHEADS PART 2



Above: It snowed!

By DONNA PETERSEN

MONTAGUE – Welcome to Part 2 of *The Rise of the Nutheads*, my discussions and interviews with local folks participating in either growing nut trees or processing and using their food: healthy, sustainable, friendly to people, critters, and the planet, and resilient to changing climate conditions.

Last week I introduced Yellowbud Farm in Northfield, and Big River Chestnuts in Sunderland and its affiliated Regenerative Design Group. Now we meet Montague’s Big Foot Food Forest, Kyra Kristof of the Forest Kitchen at Great Falls Harvest Restaurant in Turners Falls, and Chris Pinardi, a local landowner planting trees on Montague’s Chestnut Hill.

Big Foot Food Forest

I met with Babette Wils on Hatchery Road in Montague, where she and her husband Mark Somerville nurture the farm. The couple previously lived in Needham, south of Boston. Babette’s background includes education and



Sarah Eliot plants a chestnut at the Big Foot Food Forest in Montague Center.

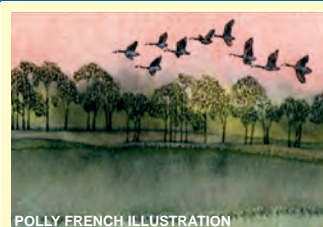
research for organizations including UNICEF and UNESCO, while Mark is a professor at Olin College currently on sabbatical.

The pair started a food forest in their backyard in Needham, learning as it grew. I asked Babette what inspired her to “grow” her idea of forest food.

“I was called,” she told me,

explaining that her “passionate heart started beating while working with the environment and nature” and that she wanted to “do something practical, something sharing and learning.”

Familiar with Franklin County through family living here, the couple have found it to be “an amazing see **NUTHEADS** page B8



POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

WEST ALONG THE RIVER

TIME-TRAVELING IN THE FIRST SNOW

By DAVID BRULE

*We have only one noun
But as many different kinds:
The grainy snow of the Puritans
And snow of soft, fat flakes...
Paper snow, cut and taped
To the inside of grade-school
windows...*

ERVINGSIDE – January 3. It’s been promised, so it’d better happen. The lovely weather girl on the New England channel is getting excited telling us about it. Meteorologists throughout the Northeast are falling over themselves with predictions of potential snowfall accumulations. For all of us it seems like it’s been years.

At seven on this sere January morning, we do have a deep frost coating everything: it glistens on the evergreen holly bush, it edges the withered leaves of the sleeping rose stems in crystal light. But it’s nothing like snow.

The yard is empty, nothing new out here but the frost. Then as if someone gave a secret silent signal, moving birds swarm over the whole landscape. Jays, the dratted English sparrows, optimistic juncos, undaunted chickadees, winter goldfinches looking like faded Christmas ornaments, wise white-throated sparrows, melodious Carolina wren, solemn and silent song sparrows going about their business, squeaking titmice, a tin-horn tooting nuthatch or two, all flow out of the gray skies suddenly, together.

There you have it. I’ve just summarized my winter bird count!

But I need to mention that down along the west-flowing river I encountered the solitary winter wren, appropriately named, flitting through the wild thorn patch of the multiflora rose. Thumb-sized and quiet, she eyes me but only moves around to the other side of her spiny sanctuary, confident I’m not some Irish wren-boy out to capture her and carry her dead body from door to door on St. Stephen’s Day.

Some of us need the promised snow, if only to break the monot-

ony of a drab winter and snowless Christmas. Others can’t stand the cold and snow, needing to spend the winter in tawdry, exotic Florida. Let them go and stay there. Some of us, hale and hearty New Englanders, need the snow and adversity, if only to earn, then justify our resurrection in the spring.

We are still days away from the potential nor’easter. It’s easy to get your hopes up, longing for the first snowflakes drifting down as in days of old. There’d be:

*...stealthy snow, which comes in
the night
and changes the world by
morning...
the surreal snow of 1888
when great-grandfather couldn’t
find his house, his barn...*

By 8 a.m. on *January 5*, the sun rises bleakly between the sentinel pines on the ridge above my valley. There’s still the promise of a foot of snow, according to the radio. It’ll fall on a Saturday night, maybe beginning while we are cooking supper on the campfire, overlooking the river.

The late afternoon will find me splitting and stacking wood, this time for the winter of 2025-26. No sense in getting caught short. Got the winter wood for 2024-25 already split, stacked, and drying. I like to have the woodstove fuel dry for at least two years before bringing it in.

Working by hand with a splitting maul, I keep myself warm with the effort, and I can stop when I want to listen to the rushing river, or like last evening at dusk, the hunting call of my local great horned owl. The view from my woodpile stretches out through the shadows of the bare trees.

Will a winter blanket soon cover the woodland floor, purifying all?

January 6: So it did begin, finally but five hours late. In between the second and third period of the Bruins game it started. At see **WEST ALONG** page B3



KEVIN BRULE PHOTO

Nicky the snowdog, in his element.

NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE



by Trouble Mandeson

GREENFIELD – This month’s column is about nuts, consumed by humans since recorded history. A recent archeological dig in Israel

found evidence that nuts formed a major part of the human diet 780,000 years ago. Seven varieties of nuts, along with “nutting stones” used to

crack them, were found buried deep in a bog. These nutting stones were also found in the US and Europe from 4,000 to 8,000 years ago, used on wild almond, prickly water lily, water chestnut, and two varieties of acorns and pistachios.

The oldest walnut remains discovered in Iraq are believed to be from 50,000 BC, and were considered food of the gods by early Romans. Traded along the Silk Road between the Mediterranean and Asia, the Romans called them “Jupiter’s royal acorn,” as they were reserved for Persian royalty where they originated.

Merchant marines brought walnuts to England from Spain, renaming them the English walnut. Early Mission walnuts were brought to California from Spain by Franciscan monks in the late 1700s. Researched by famed botanist

see **HEARTFELT** page B4



CATHY GOUGH PHOTO

Peanuts are an excellent snack that is rich in flavor, but be careful, they contain polyunsaturated fatty acids which lead to many health problems including coronary artery disease, so limit yourself to how many you eat.

Pet of the Week



COURTESY OF DAKIN HUMANE SOCIETY

'TIMON'

Timon is a sweet, playful boy! Just look at that face. He has lived with other cats and enjoys their company. He likes playing with wand toys and will chase them with vigor.

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pets – those not in foster care – coming in as soon as possible is the fastest way to adopt!

You can also 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.

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Five-Hour Improv

PUTNEY, VERMONT – In *Forgotten Bloom*, renowned improvisers Nate Wooley (trumpet) and Travis Laplante (saxophone) play for five hours together, with the intention of entering a space never before traversed.

Meanwhile, Sarah H. Paulson both impacts and is influenced by the collective sound, as she engages in a performative drawing process. Paulson will work with natural inks and pigments made by Katherine West. The performance will result in a new series of gestural paintings.

The performance is presented in conjunction with *Dragon Land*, a solo show of paintings by Paulson, which originated during the opening of the School of 3 Lights Artist Residency Program (www.schoolof3lights.org). These paintings will be up and available for viewing in the adjacent gallery.

Forgotten Bloom will take place this Saturday, January 13, from 2 to 7 p.m. at Next Stage Arts, 15 Kimball Hill Road, Putney. A suggested donation of \$15 to \$20, via cash or Venmo, will be accepted at the door.

Guests may arrive and depart at any time throughout the five-hour piece. Feel free to come for a few minutes, an hour, or more.

On Jan. 11 & 25:

LAKE PLEASANT – Because attendance at meetings of the Village of Lake Pleasant Tea & Crumpet Society, a/k/a Montague Word Workers United, Local 01347, on the second and fourth Thursday evenings of each month, has been strong, it began operating last November under a system designed to ensure that as many people who wish to read their own or a favorite author's work get to do so between start-up at 6:30 and shut-down at 8.

The current format follows: those intending to read should bring two offerings and sign up on the sign-in sheet on the glass-topped table near the podium. The first reading should be no longer than five minutes, plus a one-minute grace period; the second – should time allow another round – may be as long as 9 minutes with one minute of grace, until we arrive at 8 p.m., then disband. People who want to listen, rather than read, are also welcome to attend.



CASEY WAIT ILLUSTRATION

By CASEY WAIT

TURNERS FALLS – Happy New Year, darling sickos!

If you're reading this it means you have made it through a fourth year of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that is not something to take for granted.

These pandemic years have been, and continue to be, grueling and grief-filled. Since January 2020 over 1,165,118 Americans have died from the novel virus. COVID remains the third-leading cause of death in the United States. And while there is no accurate estimate of the number of Long COVID patients in the country, we now know that the likelihood of developing chronic health conditions increases with each reinfection.

Speaking of reinfection: it has become so incredibly normalized that the entire state of Massachusetts can be in a state of high community spread – as we are now – with many people's lives greatly impacted as a result, and there can be little to no organized response to the situation. How have we accepted such a state of affairs? Where is the anger? The resistance?

Humans can adapt to almost any situation – this can be a vital survival skill. However, when we become accustomed to a status quo that abandons and debilitates millions, we become complicit in that violence. This is true of so many entrenched aspects of American society: systemic racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia, the callous disregard for those in prisons and jails, and more.

A first step in opposing these normalized forms of violence is to call them out, to refuse to toe the line or play along: "I see what is happening. It is not acceptable and I will not participate."

I feel like that's what this column has become – my public refusal to shut up and accept my status as a social non-entity. In the midst of this current COVID surge, my world has shrunk. There are few places outside of my own home where I am safe. In fact, since the fall, I think I've only been unmasked in three places other than

my apartment. I haven't received many holiday invites. I don't go to public events. The one reading I attempted to attend recently was full of so many unmasked coughing and sniffing people I only lasted five minutes before deciding to go home. I am lonely and sad and angry. The end of 2023 saw me, frankly, heartbroken.

The very small circle of friends who have committed to taking precautions to ensure I'm not alone all winter are the only people who seem as upset as I am at this situation. One friend recently said to me, "I don't understand why more people aren't enraged that so many of the places they hang out aren't safe for you to be in, and aren't doing basic shit to make sure you can come to their events!" It meant so much to me to hear someone else say something I've felt for years now.

And this isn't just about me, or even only about immunocompromised people more generally. We are all at risk right now. Constant reinfections will take their toll, sooner or later. There are now so many variants spreading unimpeded that we can't even count on a recent infection for brief immunity. In fact, the damage of a COVID infection to the immune system puts us at greater risk of subsequent infections, whether by another form of the virus or some other bug making the rounds. I feel like I'm watching the world cross a busy four-lane highway blindfolded, oblivious to the dangers around them. It's maddening and demoralizing.

In the past six months I've felt an acute lack of solidarity from my community. I've done all I can to take care of myself physically, mentally, and emotionally. My housemate and I have found moments of joy and fun and made our home a cozy respite from the world. I'm grateful. But that doesn't make things okay. I am not okay.

It shouldn't fall on those most hurt by our society to take care of ourselves, to find ways to keep going despite it all.

I find myself having a greater appreciation for the sheer will it takes

for all marginalized people to carve out spaces for themselves in this world. Though I inhabited marginalized identities before the pandemic, it has only been in the last four years that I have so intensely felt the cruel indifference of dominant society directed at me. I am awed by the creative resilience of my disabled, BIPOC, queer and trans friends and elders, and at the same time I am furious that they have to scrape and fight so hard to get by. I question the way I fetishized and shallowly praised their survival in the past because it lacked an essential acknowledgment and anger that they had to try so hard in the first place.

Julia Doubleday wrote an excellent piece for her Substack *The Gauntlet* titled "How the press manufactured consent for never-ending COVID reinfections," and I want to share a quote from her:

"My beliefs throughout the pandemic have never changed: that vulnerable people deserve access to society, that mitigation must be prioritized, that great progress is possible with great effort, that community care is most critical in times of state abandonment. It's hard to know where to go from here, at the nadir of a COVID response that vilifies and mocks any gesture toward prevention and care. But for those of us who are still here, education must start from a place of unpacking several years-worth of propaganda, while learning from disability justice activists who have reckoned with their social marginalization for decades.... [W]e'll continue to repeat it, until the people are ready to hear it: COVID is not mild. COVID is not harmless. COVID is not inevitable. COVID is not over."

This pandemic has changed us all. We have all been through more than we're equipped to process alone. We need each other. I need you, and you need me. Where is our collective anger? Where is our collective resistance? And what if, after four years of collective heartache, we collectively chose to care more and not less?

With love and rage,
Your Sick Friend

Senior Center Activities JANUARY 15 THROUGH 19

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 1/15

Closed
Tuesday 1/16
9 a.m. Good For U Workout
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringers
Wednesday 1/17
9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
Thursday 1/18
9 a.m. Core & Balance
10 a.m. Barre Fusion
Friday 1/19
9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

Monday 1/15

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
10:15 a.m. Outdoor Chair Yoga
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
Tuesday 1/16
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 1/17
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 1/18
9 a.m. Senior Help
(by appointment)
1 p.m. Pitch
3 p.m. Tech 4 Seniors Class
Friday 1/19
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Pizza Party
2 p.m. Chair Dance

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.

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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- Safe Combinations Changed

WEST ALONG from page B1

first, it wasn't there, then suddenly it was, falling slowly under the street light. Nicky our Siberian came in with his weather report: snowflakes all over his thick black and white winter coat. Snow!

Drifting down as in our memory, I watched it fall with all the lights in the house out before going up to bed. Standing in the old kitchen, whiteness outside the four windows, I capture and memorize the moment as best I can, already writing the scene in my head, forcing future remembrance for when some day I may not be there in my snow-bright kitchen at night.

Snow can put you in that mood.

Villon's neiges d'antan, snows of yesteryear, lost with ladies gone out like matches...

The Russian snow we remember Along with the warmth and smell of furs...

The special snow that goes with Christmas,

Whether it falls or not...

On January 7, in the early light on a Sunday morning, we can make out furtive bird shapes just beyond the kitchen windows. They flounder on top of four inches of snow that cover their breakfast seeds put there yesterday. They need my immediate help.

I pull on knee-high Muck boots, heretofore stashed upstairs in the cold north bedroom with all the other unused relics of times past. I then think in a flash of the *valenkii* of Karelia. I first encountered those knee-high Russian boots when I was invited to go ice-fishing at the Arctic Circle one Sunday years ago. Wearing those thick felt knee-high boots made it seem like I was walking in the deep snow in comfy bedroom slippers. They had my LL

Bean boots beat by a mile.

But these days I've got my own high-tech version and I'm ready to confront any and all snow that Mother Nature can throw at me!

On a day like this, my winter chores are reduced to filling feeders, putting fresh water out, sweeping around the feet of the rhododendron for ground-feeding sparrows, spreading out cracked corn. Then I'm ready to sit in my outdoor writer's workshop, open to the elements with the woodshed roof keeping me somewhat out of the storm.

The south-facing shed keeps the snow off my head. I wait, watch, to see what happens. I sit quietly in my spot near from kitchen door, never far from the coffee pot.

On the other side of the house, I hear muffled sounds of civilization: neighbor Chuck Stafford guns his snowblower, eager to slice neat rows of clear driveway, then a path to the woodshed, and out to the cars. My own snow-shoveling can wait, I'm busy out here, drinking coffee and writing.

Snow drifts in and onto my sketchbook, blurring some of the squiggling I've just put down. Snow-dog settles in beside me, just to make sure I don't go off on some adventure without telling him. We both inhale deeply the smell of snow.

Guess I'll just sit here for now and watch the white flakes come down, piling slowly up, while I visit other years, other places, other storms.

Snow as idea of whiteness, As in snowdrop, snow goose, snowy owl.

The snow in the back of our heads, Whiter than white, which has to do With childhood again each year.

(Verse inspired by, and adapted from, "Not Only the Eskimos" by Lisel Mueller.)



Montague Community Television News

Green-Screen Mania!

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – If you like green screens as much as we do, you are going to love this week's uploads. MCTV's own Liz Walber hosts *Lizerella Phones Home*, which just released two new episodes: one with an update on the Pokémon Go wars, and another about gay aliens.

Green screens are used heavily, and are even shown being created, in another new video titled "OK PAINTERS Sistine Chapel," in which a certain famous painting is revealed through the paint.

And the "Lovelylights" have finally released the video from last summer's Fairy House Day on Avenue A, which took the form of a "Mermaid Wedding." There are some green-screen fairies that make an appearance, buzzing around the picnickers and wedding attendants. If you were there, check it out and see if you can spot yourself in the crowd!

And if you love public meetings as much as we do, then it's really your lucky day. We have uploads from the January 9 GMRSD school

committee meeting, a Montague selectboard meeting, a Montague board of assessors meeting, a Montague zoning board meeting, and the Gill selectboard meeting from January 2.

Remember, residents and readers, all community members are welcome and encouraged to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 9 and featured on the MCTV Vimeo page. If you have any ideas for films, MCTV is always available to assist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for check-out, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

And if you're looking for more ways to get involved, consider joining the MCTV Board. If you would like to stop in for a meeting, even just to check the vibe, email infomontaguetv@gmail.com for a link to the Zoom.

Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or infomontaguetv@gmail.com, follow us on Facebook, or find us on Instagram [montaguecommunitytv](https://www.instagram.com/montaguecommunitytv). Find videos and more on our website, montaguetv.org.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Shotgun Stickup at Gas Station; Basement Dweller; Open House; Cha's Run; Loose Horse; Mean Dog

Wednesday, 12/27/23

5:44 p.m. Caller states that she was at Cumberland Farms, and her 12-year-old granddaughter was in the vehicle. A male party approached the vehicle and tried to get her granddaughter to roll down the window, but she refused. When the caller came out of the store she asked the male party what he was doing, and he stated that whoever her granddaughter marries is going to be a lucky guy. Caller thought it was very strange, and made her feel uneasy. She provided a plate and just wants it on record.

Thursday, 12/28

2:11 a.m. 911 caller from Nouria states he was working tonight and was held up at gunpoint by an individual wearing a black mask. Caller states the individual wore a black sweatshirt with white outlines, black pants, and had a short-barrel shotgun. Roughly \$350 was taken from the location. Individual left on foot northbound. No injuries. Officer advises there was a witness. Area departments advised to be on lookout. Shelburne Control contacted for K9 unit. Officer advises K9 on scene; individual headed towards Fourth Street; K9 track leading in that direction. Greenfield PD advises one of their officers observed individual matching description by the Canal Apartments. Shelburne Control advised K9 track leading behind a K Street residence. Officer advises K9 track leading to intersection of K and Fifth Streets. K9 track ended; group returned to gas station; negative findings. MPD and MSP will continue to be on lookout. Investigated.

6:18 a.m. Caller states that her phone was stolen yesterday while she was at a friend's house. Referred to an officer.

4:05 p.m. Caller states that someone is riding a four-wheeler around with no helmet in the areas of Fifth and Seventh streets. Out with party on K Street. Party advised.

Friday, 12/29

11:39 a.m. 911 caller reporting that another driver sideswiped her vehicle in the Food City parking lot. Report taken.

11:48 a.m. Report of tree down in the road on Highland Street. DPW notified.

6:16 p.m. Fire alarm activation on L Street; notified over radio by Shelburne Control. TFFD on scene investigating. No active smoke or flame.

8:22 p.m. Caller from Park Street states his car has two flat tires and he is going to bring new ones and

change them in the morning. Does not want a tow truck to be called. Advised caller of parking ban in effect and offered to call tow truck; again declined. He will call when car is moved.

8:50 p.m. Caller from South Prospect Street states there are cars parked on the side of the road and it's making it hard for vehicles to drive by. Officer checked area; road is passable; Christmas party is finishing up, and cars are leaving.

Saturday, 12/30

10:42 a.m. Caller requesting call back from an officer regarding a fraudulent bill of sale and title for a vehicle he was selling to a friend. Advised of options. 7 p.m. Officer assisting with a vehicle that was pulled over on Federal Street. A little girl was carsick. Stood by until she was better and they continued on.

Sunday, 12/31

11:06 p.m. Caller from Crescent Street states someone has gotten into her house and she doesn't know how. Referred to an officer.

Monday, 1/1/24

5:07 a.m. Burglar alarm activated at 253 Pharmacy. Fire department is on scene for fire alarm and opened a door. Owner called stating he is en route from Hadley.

9:24 a.m. Officer checking on vehicle on the side of the road at Avenue A and Second Street; not in a parking space. Female in-vehicle advised of license status. She is having someone else come to drive the car.

3:10 p.m. 911 open line; could hear a child screaming "I don't like this" and another voice in the background. After a few attempts, spoke with adult who states her son was playing with the phone he got for Christmas and must have dialed out. No emergency. Officers advised.

4:47 p.m. Caller from L Street states there is a trailer that is parked on the street, but the truck is not attached. Referred to an officer.

5:38 p.m. 911 caller from Avenue A requesting well-being check on her neighbor; he is banging on the walls and throwing items into the hallway. Involved party has an active warrant. A 45-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a default warrant.

8:28 p.m. Caller from South High Street states there are people in the backyard who are not supposed to be there; have had issues with them in the past and were advised to call police if they show up again. Officer spoke with caller and with person caller believes was on their

property. That person denied being on the property but was advised to stay off it if it was them.

Tuesday, 1/2

12:39 p.m. Manager of an L Street property states that a male party is living in the basement. He is not wanted there, and is refusing to leave. Male party not in basement at this time. Property manager advised of trespass options.

12:45 p.m. Nouria employee reporting that a male party matching the description of a suspect involved in a recent robbery there just came into the store. Investigated.

2:23 p.m. 911 caller reporting that an older guy was threatening him and his friends in the Third Street alleyway. Area checked; unable to locate.

8:57 p.m. Caller captured a dog that was running loose. It does not have any tags. She is willing to meet an officer at the shelter. Officer advised.

10:14 p.m. Caller states that a car hit a deer on Montague City Road; the car took off, but the deer is still in the roadway; appears to be alive but not moving. Officer advises that the deer has been dispatched.

Wednesday, 1/3

8:39 a.m. Animal control officer advises that he picked up a white-and-gray female pit bull wearing a harness in the Eleventh Street area. Dog placed in shelter.

8:58 a.m. ACO advising dog complaint on Union Street from a neighbor.

4:45 p.m. Principal from Hillcrest Elementary School calling in for log note that a teacher's car has a flat tire and will be parked in the staff parking lot overnight and fixed in the morning. Report taken.

10:32 p.m. Conway assistant chief called in an older-model blue Toyota Tundra parked on Route 47 for over an hour; possible alcohol or narcotics use. Caller states he stopped and asked the male if he needed help, and the male party told him he was "waiting for his old lady." MPD officer providing courtesy transport for operator.

Thursday, 1/4

12:06 a.m. Caller states there is a black/gray SUV parked in front of an Avenue A building that has been playing loud music for over three hours straight. Caller advises there is an individual in the vehicle. Officer advises that upon arrival, music from vehicle was at an appropriate volume. Vehicle operator advised of complaint; stated they would turn down the volume.

9:42 a.m. Caller from Walnut Street states that there is a three-wheel bike in the backyard that does not belong to anyone there; also states that a former tenant may have broken into an apartment. Not as reported. Bike belongs to the son of a resident.

12:31 p.m. Walk-in from Whitney Way would like to report a past breaking-and-entering incident; will come back later to speak with an officer.

4:54 p.m. Caller from Third Street advises that his neighbor was being really loud around 4 a.m. today; caller was going to call at that time, but the noise stopped. Caller just wants this on record and will call if this happens again. Report taken.

5:21 p.m. Caller states he just got off the phone with his aunt and she is very nervous as she was notified that her house is posted on Craigslist for sale, and they are planning an open house tonight from 7 to 9 p.m. The ad has a picture of a different house, but has her address listed under it. Officer spoke to homeowner and sister of caller; advised of options. Sister will stay with homeowner for the night and call if needed.

7:54 p.m. Shelburne Control requesting officer attempt to make contact with female on East Main Street to see if she knows who is using her car, as it is currently being towed from Northfield by Koch's. Officer advises party's neighbor borrowed the car to go to Cha's in New Hampshire to get cigarettes. Car broke down and was waiting for a tow. Control updated.

8:36 p.m. Report of male party on the side of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge hanging over the edge closely. Caller worried he may not be safe. Officer checked bridge both ways. Male party in front of town hall; couple of people walking on bridge; no one suspicious or in need at this time.

Friday, 1/5

4:35 p.m. Detective in downtown area investigating drug/narcotics violation.

Saturday, 1/6

11:12 a.m. Report of loose horse on Turners Falls Road. Chief reports horse has been corralled and the owner has been notified.

1 p.m. Family Dollar store manager reports that a male party was outside asking customers for money. He has since left the area.

1:37 p.m. Caller from Third Street reports ongoing harassment by his neighbor. Requested to have on record only per request of landlord. Caller

see MPD next page

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MPD from page B3

advised of civil court options.

Sunday, 1/7

2:29 a.m. Shelburne Control advises that TFFD is requesting PD response to an Avenue A apartment building; they are there for a fire alarm activation, and residents are getting upset with them. A resident called 911 concerned that TFFD is there; she wants to press charges. Officers on scene advise that TFFD is still on scene waiting to hear from the bar owner. TFFD had to make entry into the bar. Situation with resident mediated.

8:51 a.m. Officer located a car that just crashed into a telephone pole at Turners Falls Road and George Avenue. The pole is broken. Eversource notified and respond-

ing. Rau's responding for tow. Report taken. 9:37 a.m. Caller from Greenfield Road states that their pickup truck is on fire in the driveway, not near the home. FD and PD responding. Officer providing courtesy transport to vehicle owner. 1:35 p.m. Report of two vehicles stuck in the road on Turnpike Road near Walnut Street. Unable to locate.

4:25 p.m. 911 caller from Coolidge Avenue states he was plowing and a male party threatened to hit him with a shovel. Can hear male yelling in background. Officer advises verbal disagreement; situation mediated.

5:31 p.m. Caller from Eighth Avenue advises that the DPW plow came very close to hitting his porch. It did back up and hit

his cement blocks and tipped them over. Caller would like message passed along to DPW. Services rendered.

10:03 p.m. Caller states that a dog lunged and tried to attack him at Tenth and G streets, but did not bite him. Owner of dog was in area yelling at it but had no control over the dog, and it was not on a leash. Caller states it is a bigger white dog with a red collar; states there has been an ongoing issue with it attacking other people and dogs. Caller states he was kicking at the dog to get it away from him and his dog, and the owner had zero control over the animal. Caller states dog is inside now, but wants it on record. Copy of call left for ACO.



MOVIE REVIEW

Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* (1925)

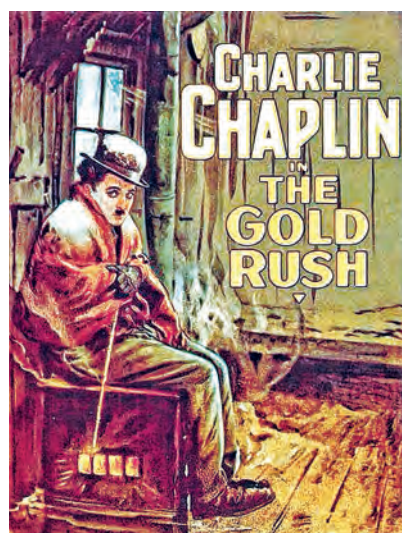
By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – It seems showing silent movies has become a regular thing at the Garden Cinema. I know who Charlie Chaplin is when it comes to silent films, but I have never seen any of his films on screen, so I decided to go see *The Gold Rush* at the theater on the first of January.

Jeft Rapsis, the silent film accompanist, again played music to the film as he regularly does on these occasions, making him a continuing part of this series. As he did with *The Phantom of the Opera*, Rapsis gave an introduction before the film. He mentioned a bit of history about the film, including a re-release which Chaplin narrated.

I found Chaplin's acting to be very good in this. I enjoyed him a bit more than Buster Keaton, whose works I have seen at the Garden.

The film got a lot of laughs from the audience. The comedy includes Chaplin's character, stuck in a cabin with two other men in the middle of a snowstorm, getting out of going



out to find food, only to be blown out of there when one leaves to get food. Another funny moment was when he and a remaining man ate one of his shoes that he cooked.

The interaction between these men wasn't the only thing on screen – there was an outlaw in the mix, which gave the film a layer of drama, and there was also some romance, which came in the form of a girl named Georgia whom Chaplin's character meets. He first sees

her at a dance hall in a town that had grown up during the Gold Rush, and he tries to win her heart. Like any romance, he has a bit of competition for the girl from a ladies' man. Some of that was also cute and sweet to see on screen. He is apparently so nervous with her that he set himself on fire.

The laughter from the audience continued quite nicely throughout the film. Some of Chaplin's comedy included tricking someone into giving him breakfast, and getting into a fight over Georgia with the ladies' man. He also has a funny interaction with her in which snow keeps falling on his face. He tries to have a romantic dinner with her, and does a gag with the food the audience loved.

There is a moment in the film which the audience applauds. He does get the girl in the end.

With *The Gold Rush*, Rapsis continues nicely his streak of playing music well to films. He didn't miss a beat, and wasn't off-key at all. I would happily see more of Chaplin's works on screen.

HEARTFELT from page B1

Luther Burbank, California walnuts are considered among the finest quality today and account for 99% of the US commercial supply according to walnuts.org.

Early Native Americans used "hammer stones" to shell beech, hickory, walnuts, and chestnuts, which they ate whole and ground into flour or butter, used as fuel for fire, and even cooked into a broth that when cooled with a layer of congealed fat on top was scooped off and used for later cooking.

Pecans were found in archeological excavations in Texas along with human artifacts which date back to 6100 BC. The pecan, native only to North America, was found in or near river beds and was a staple in the diets of both Native Americans and early settlers.

While many of us think of Hawaii as the place for macadamia nuts, they actually originated in the rain forests of Queensland, Australia and were brought to Hawaii in the late 19th century where much of the world's supply is now grown.

The hazelnut is also known as the "filbert" after St. Philbert, a seventh-century Frankish abbot, so called because the nut ripens on St. Philbert's Day, August 29. A manuscript found in China from the year 2838 BC places the hazelnut among the five sacred nourishments God bestowed on human beings. Introduced to the US with a shipment of seeds arriving in 1629, they are now grown mostly in Oregon and Washington states. The American hazelnut produces about 3% of the world's supply, with the rest mostly coming from Turkey.

The cashew nut is native to Brazil, but has been widely cultivated in Indian and Africa since the 16th century. It was introduced to the Philippines by the Spanish traders. Cashews always come to us shelled because between the outer and inner shells there is a caustic oil that necessitates burning or roasting off the outer shell, after which the nut is boiled or roasted again to remove the inner one.

Brazil nuts, also native to South America, are actually large seeds, with 15 to 30 arranged in a pod like the sections of an orange. This pod weighs 4 to 6 pounds and hits the ground with such force it can kill a man. The first European reference to the Brazil nut dates to 1569 when a Spanish colonial officer collected thousands of them to feed his troops. Brazil nuts were later introduced to Europe by Dutch traders in the late 17th century.

The peanut is not really a nut but a goober (a legume) and a member of the pea family, originating in South America where the Indians used them for over 2,000 years. Spanish and Portuguese slave traders introduced them to Africa and Europe, and the enslaved people in turn brought them to the US. The peanut was regarded as a food for poor people, but by the turn of the 20th century there was a great demand for peanut oil, roasted and salted peanuts, and the newest product, peanut butter.

As a kid, I used to close myself into the kitchen pantry and snack on the many jars of nuts, dates, coconut flakes, and chocolate chips my mom kept for cookie baking. I'd dip into each jar, eating them by the handfuls. To this day, I, too, have multiple jars of almonds, cashews, and walnuts for my baking and snacking needs. I guess old habits die hard.

Cooking with nuts adds protein and nutrition to dishes. Almonds are ground into flour, made into nut milk, and pureed into nut butter for consumption. Raw almonds are best used to make these, but roasted and seasoned almonds also make a great snack.

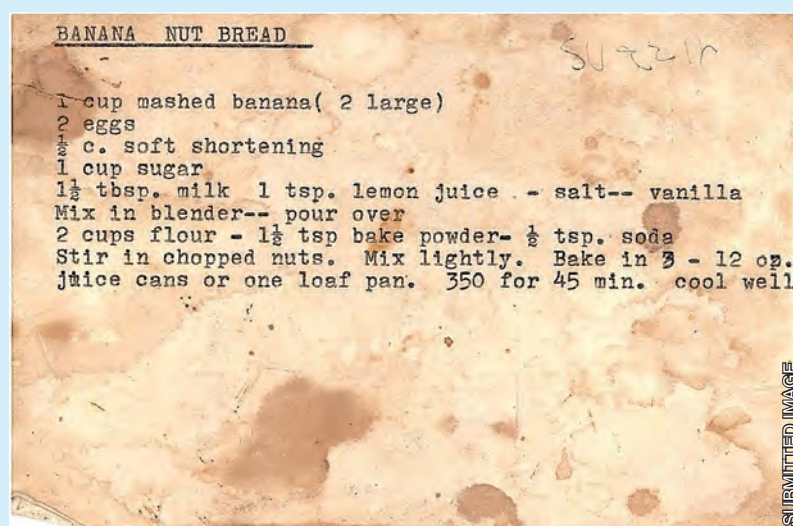
DEEDY'S BLENDER BANANA BREAD

2 large ripe bananas
2 eggs
1/2 cup room-temperature butter
1 cup sugar
1 1/2 Tsp. milk mixed with 1 tsp. lemon juice (or real buttermilk)
a pinch of salt
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 cups flour
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 cup chopped nuts

raisins, chocolate chips, coconut flakes (all optional)
Mix the bananas, eggs, butter, sugar, the milk with lemon juice (or buttermilk), salt, and vanilla in the blender.

Pour over flour, baking powder, and baking soda, and mix. Add in chopped nuts and optional raisins, chocolate chips, or coconut flakes.

Bake in a loaf pan at 350° for 45 minutes. Cool and serve.



The author's most beloved recipe card is the original from her deceased mother's recipe collection. It's dog-eared and stained but still serviceable.

Meaty walnuts are good used in sweet and savory dishes. Blended into dips with beets, roasted with root veggies, and toasted and added to hot cereal, they do have a bitter taste from the tannins which toasting covered in maple syrup or honey can mitigate.

Cashews are known as a "vegan's secret weapon," as they add creaminess to soups, dips, and spreads without any dairy. Often used in Thai cooking, their high fat content makes them good for pureeing. Pecans go rancid quickly, and should be stored in the freezer. They're great for pies and brownies.

Hazelnuts are sweet and wonderful when used in granola, pastries, and paired with chocolate while plump and meaty pistachios

make a good ingredient in salads and granola bars. When buying pistachios, opt for unshelled and shell them yourself as pre-shelled pistachios are quite expensive.

Macadamia nuts are rich and fatty and an ideal foil to bitter greens like pesto. And peanuts, 'nuff said, you know how to use them!

I give you my mom's quick Blender Banana Bread as a great vehicle for walnuts, pecans, or the nut of your choice.

Trouble Mandeson lives in Greenfield with her wifey and their newly adopted cat Peeps. She volunteers for local nonprofits to cook and feed those in the community, and loves to write, copyedit, and create art.



Banana bread, a frequent and favorite recipe from the author's kitchen, is a great vehicle for nuts, as are cakes, cookies, and pies.

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MOVIE REVIEW

Poor Things (2023)

By SAM GERDES

GREENFIELD – Yorgos Lanthimos' *Poor Things* maintains the director's outlandish, macabre sensibility in a surreal and humorous tale of self-discovery. *Poor Things* is dripping with blood, guts, and sex in a wildly dystopic carnival of affairs. Released at the tail end of 2023, it came home from this year's Golden Globe Awards with two shiny prizes, one for Best Motion Picture in the "Musical or Comedy" category and the other for Best Actress in regards to Emma Stone's performance as Bella Baxter.

Poor Things is an absurdist cinematic wonderland. This Victorian-era/retrofuturistic mashup propels the audience into a world of texture and color. Below watercolor skies, London's steam-powered industrial milieu is the birthplace of this monstrous film. The set is grand, as is the house, the costumery, and the feminist vision – which often falls short. Behind the gauze of lurid extravagance is the hood-wink of Hollywood's liberal feminist morale.

At first the principal character, Bella Baxter, appears to be an erratic woman with child-like gestures and speech. She delightfully dances on unsteady feet in the foyer, throws her fist into the face of new company, and merrily breaks dishware. She is no monster – she is an infantilized woman beset by the male gaze. To start, she is under close observation

and confined to a London flat by her guardian, Dr. Godwin "God" Baxter, and his apprentice Max McCandles (Ramy Youssef).

In Bella's state of innocence, immured to God's house and laboratory, she is wrapped in quilted white robes and airy linens. Once Bella finds the idylls of self-pleasure, she becomes resistant to confinement and the morals of polite society. This stirs in her a lustfulness which compels her on a quest for bodily autonomy. She soon escapes her wardens with the charming lawyer, Duncan Wedderburn (Mark Ruffalo).

Duncan whisks Bella away on a globetrotting journey on which she sets out to accumulate lucidity. It soon becomes apparent that Bella has found herself under the watch of a dastardly jealous and threatening man. She starts to wander out on her own and gain a sense of independence. No longer in her era of girlhood, her costumes become vibrant, with sheer pinks and puffy sleeves.

In a quick yet impactful glimpse, Bella catches sight of the slum below her cosmopolitan condition. This stirs in her a liberal impulse to single-handedly save the poor and starving people. It is a failed attempt, which leads to no further class analysis.

This act leaves Duncan and Bella in a desolate winter in Paris. In order to make money she takes up sex work. Duncan becomes pitiful and rancid even as Bella fortifies a sense



of autonomy and intellectual prowess. At the brothel, she attempts to defy the system, questioning why the women do not make the choice of who they go to bed with. And in one sex scene, which is not for work but for pleasure, Bella and her socialist *consœur*, Toinette (Suzy Bemba) take to the sheets.

By this time, as Bella is devouring philosophy, fluently speaking French, and attending political meetings, she has become empowered and self-possessed. In the end, she is surrounded by people that she has pursued on her own volition, in a home of her own. Her dress is black, and more structured to reflect her seriousness.

Over the course of this two-and-a-half-hour film, Bella Baxter transforms from a childish lark to a whip-smart socialist. As she develops her bearings as a full-fledged adult, she is continually concerned with mitigating cruelty, though as the final scene rolls around I'm not sure she has escaped the knife. **3/5 stars.**

EXHIBITS

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rivers of Franklin County*, geology-inspired, map-based art by Joe Kopera. January 12 through May.

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 highlights the importance of preserving wetlands. Make your own 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.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague: *Maddie Maney*, outdoor landscape, lifestyle, and portrait photography. Through February.

Greenfield Savings Bank, Greenfield: *Eyes Above Franklin County*, aerial photographs in the main lobby. Through January.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Quilt Show*, textile works by Emily Caris and Rae Heller. Closing reception Friday, January 26.

Northfield Mount Hermon Rhodes Arts Center, Gill: *Borrowed Light*, sculptures, prints, ceramics, and photographs by Anna Hepler. Through January 18.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Jen Lambert Solo Show*, monoprints and paintings. Through February. Reception Tuesday, January 30 from 5 to 8 p.m.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *In Residence: Art for the Soul Gallery*. Through January 27.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: *Chile Nunca Más*. Residency marking 50 years since the military coup – *el golpe* – in Chile. Javiera Benavente, Ester Orellana, and collaborators. Ending with a community gathering at 4 p.m. this Saturday, January 13.

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

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.

CALL FOR ART

Community Art Exhibit At Sawmill River Arts

MONTAGUE CENTER – The Sawmill River Arts Collective invites local artists to submit work to its tenth annual Small Works Exhibit and Sale, taking place from February 4 through 26 with submissions due January 14 through 29.

This open and non-juried show seeks original two- and three-dimensional pieces of visual art across all media and subject matter. Pieces must be 10 inches by 10 inches or smaller and ready to hang or display securely. Due to space limitations, each artist may submit one or two pieces, and only the first 80 pieces submitted to the gallery will be accepted.

The entry fee to participate is \$5 per piece; at least one artwork from each artist will be exhibited. All work must be for sale for no less than \$36; Sawmill River Arts receives a 20% commission on sales. There will be an opening reception on Sunday, February 4, from 1 to 4 p.m.

All information, including applications and labels, can be found at sawmillriverarts.com, with hard copies available at the gallery. Hand-deliver your application and artwork to the gallery at 440 Greenfield Road at the Montague Mill complex in Montague Center. The gallery is open Thursdays through Mondays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Friends of the Discovery Center Announce Launch of 'Food, Farms, and Factories' Series

TURNERS FALLS – The Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A in Turners Falls, will host a year-long exploration during 2024 on the themes of "Foods, Farms and Factories." This multi-faceted programming will examine these themes from historic, Indigenous, immigrant, economic, industrial, and artistic perspectives.

Programming kicks off at 2 p.m. this Sunday, January 14 with the WGBY documentary film *A Long Row in Fertile Ground*, with comments by retired WGBY general manager Rus Peotter.

"Take a walk in the woods surrounding any of our towns and villages, and you are treading on hallowed ground," says Dr. Leo Hwang of UMass Amherst, the program's humanities advisor. "Whether you step carefully around an indigenous sacred stone structure, the traditional fishing grounds of our first peoples, or the coloni-

al walls that once corralled grazing animals into clear-cut hills and farm fields, or whether you are wading around the vestigial remains of a sawmill, tannery, or broom factory, the sacred trinity of Franklin County – food, farms, and factories – are embedded in our communal heritage, and continue to evolve and change to this very day."

"Food, Farms and Factories" has been developed through a partnership between the state Department of Conservation and Recreation, RiverCulture, the Montague Public Libraries, and the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, with the support of Mass Humanities and the Mass Cultural Council. The programming is an extension of the themes developed through the 2023 Smithsonian Museum on Main Street traveling exhibition, "Crossroads: Change in Rural America," presented at the Discovery

Center last winter.

"We live in a region blessed with rich soil for growing crops, and generations of inventive businesspeople and craftspeople who created useful products," says Sarah Doyle of the Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center.

"We're so excited to extend our programming offerings about rural Franklin County for another year," adds Dawn Ward of the Friends.

Free public events will expand throughout 2024 to include history tours, an exhibition examining Polish and Eastern European immigration, gardening and sustainability workshops, a multi-disciplinary performance by Exploded View, talks about our industrial and agricultural heritage, and a harvest potluck and contradance.

Visit www.discoverycenter.org for more information as it becomes available.

Help Lori's Recovery

www.gofundme.com/f/help-loris-recovery

WENDELL – Four years ago Lori Mars was helping heal others as a craniosacral practitioner, but for the last three, she has been suffering from a debilitating spine condition causing her great pain and increasing immobility. She had a second surgery on October 11, and hopes to regain her health and return to a vibrant life as a healer to others. Lori is forever grateful for her excellent caregivers and community who have rallied to enable her to stay in her home so far, but the financial burden of this illness continues to deplete all her resources. There are many expenses – e.g. for adaptive equipment in her home, and alternative treatments – and sadly she is still in constant pain. Any and all help is appreciated.

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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

Our January Poetry Page

Perseid

It was a cold night. I will not describe it further. It was cold.
TV said the space show would start after 10 pm
As I watched the first streak by
I began to wish one would
The More You Know
straight at my face
what a warm and wonderfilled
way to die.

- Chris Joseph
Greenfield

Magic Music

The Chinese gong is tuned
in accordance with the cymbals,
and in the large hushed room
rhapsodic intervals

swell an embellished scale.
A few crane their ears,
divine a hidden madrigal,
a lucent score that soars,

whirls, dances on tiptoes,
whispers for a moment, then
descends like hailstones
chasing summer rain

- Gene Grindel
Cambridge, UK

Timeline

How long does grief endure?
Better you ask me
what a ghost weighs,
or if there's a compassionate god,
my reply more likely
to beggar some truth.

I'm told it lasts
until the wound begins to heal,
but two years on
the wound of your death
lies open, glistening,
stitches torn,
weeping bloody emotions
no balm or bandage I've tried
can abate,

the pain at times sharp
as the stab of a white-hot needle,
or as achingly gentle
as your last breath,
differing in magnitude,
not effect,
paralyzing as a curare-tipped dart.

So I say
a ghost carries the weight
of a life lost,

I've seen no evidence
of a compassionate god,

and grief knows no clock.
It simply endures
until it doesn't
or you don't.

- G. Greene
Greenfield

Death Waves

The thought that I
will never raise
a glass with you again
hurts me.
The fact that I remember
that pleasure
warms me.
A tapestry
of pain
and pleasure
to remember you
- us.

Some days
I only want to
move on.
But waves of memories
yank me back
and I experience you
all over again.

I weep from the pleasure of it
so firmly lodged in my heart.
There is no final
goodbye.
Death just took you
to another place.
See you in the
next wave.

- Leona Phillips
Santa Cruz, CA

Contributors' Notes:

Chris Joseph lives in GrittyBurg, WestMass. He runs a website called *WeMailCoconuts.com* where he doesn't mail coconuts. His work has been published in local papers and in such online publications as *fourthreethree.org*.

Gene Grindel, Reader in Classical Languages at Clare College at the University of Cambridge, has published many books of poetry as well as translations from Latin and Greek.

Leona Phillips is a retired professor and psychotherapist, formerly of Amherst, Massachusetts. Currently she is a weaver, a cultivator of awe coming to grips with the natural order of things and the mysteries we encounter on our journeys. She is currently living in Santa Cruz, California to be near an ocean.

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*.



WRITING THE LAND

The Poetry Page is supported by
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Poetry Page Readers!

Zoom in on Sunday, January 21 at 1:30 p.m. EST
for a poetry reading to raise funds for this Poetry Page.

Be sure to sign up to get the meeting link at
www.nature-culture.net/local-poetry-paper-place

You may also donate directly at any time to the
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IMAGE: GUSTAVE COURBET, *THE DEER*, 1865

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



The Reporter is looking for volunteers to help us curate this listing. Interested? Contact us at editor@montaguereporter.org!

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11

The Drake, Amherst: *Lonnie Holley, Mourning [A] Blkstar*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Young Shakespeare Players* present *The Tempest*. Free. 7 p.m.

Montague Common Hall: *Viano's Paisanos, The Slide Grinders*. \$ 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Roger Clark Miller*. \$ 7:30 p.m.
Everything Must Go, Northampton: *Scratch Ticket, Mountain Movers, Bong Wish, Phroeggs*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Abby Volta, Sonum Unum, Josh Silvera*. \$ 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

Montague Common Hall: *Open Mic* with featured performer *Ralph Carson*. By donation. 6:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Young Shakespeare Players* present *The Tempest*. Free. 1 and 7 p.m.

Next Stage Arts, Putney, VT: *Travis LaPlante and Nate Woolley*. (See description, Page B2). \$ 2 p.m.

Wendell Town Hall: Full Moon Coffeehouse feat. *Gaslight Tinkers*. Benefit for Friends of the Wendell Free Library. \$ 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Elizabory, Tysk Tysk Task, Bel-lower, Amulette*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Young Shakespeare Players* present *The Tempest*. Free. 1 p.m.

Hawks & Reed: *ZydeGroove, Planet Zydeco*. \$ 1 p.m.

Buoyant Heart, Brattleboro: *IM-iles Hewitt, Hannah Frances, Norma Dream, beetsblog*. \$ 7 p.m.

Red Cross, Northampton: *Mac-ula Dog, Lucy, Mark Cone, LSDV*. \$ 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16

Hutghi's at the Nook, Westfield: *A.P.I.E., Michael Slyne, Fragile Rabbit*. \$ 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17

The Drake, Amherst: *Trousdale, Julia Pratt*. \$ 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 18

Marigold Theater, Easthamp-

ton: *Achings, Three Word Name, Barrett Gelineau Gussin Trio*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Cinemastorm* double feature: *The Quick and the Dead* (1995), *Tombstone* (1993). Free. 7:30 p.m.

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

Next Stage Arts, Putney, Vermont: *Lonnie Holley, Mourning [A] Blkstar*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *Full Moon Reggae Dance Party* with *Simon White, The Roots All-Stars*. \$ 7 p.m.

Bookends, Florence: *Nanny, Teen Driver, Rage Honey, Doll Flower*. Fundraiser for Middle East Children's Alliance. \$ 7 p.m.

Montague Common Hall: *Orkestar Banitsa, Myrtle Street Klezmer*, workshop (see Local Briefs, Page A3). \$ 7:30 p.m.

Mt. Toby Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Windborne*. \$ 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Wolfman Jack, Lexi Weege*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Opel, Rev. Dan and the Dirty Catechism*. \$ 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Terrafunk, Massive Prophet*. \$ 8 p.m.

LaPop, Northampton: *Sad Noise, Marie Carroll, Cursed Image, Joe Mygan, Dimension Viewer*. \$ 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthamp-ton: *Creepin Cadavers, Greatest Failure, The Agonizers, Bag Lady, HardCar*. \$ 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Boys from '69*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Chuck and Biscuits*. No cover. 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *2 Step Night* with *Les Taiauts, The Honky Tonk Angels*. Two-step lessons; classic country karaoke; no cover. 7 p.m.

Rat Trap, Holyoke: *Halo Bite, KO Queen, Robbery, Strange Fate*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Greenfield Records, Greenfield: *Johnny Gifford, Asa Etc*. \$ 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthamp-ton: *PWRUP, Mega Infinity, Skappository, Double Star, Green St. Fiends*. \$ 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bluegrass and Beyond*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

looking forward...

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

Nova Arts, Keene: *All Feels, Chodus, Sunset Electric*. \$ 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Bent, Cazador, Olde Bard*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16

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

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *50th Anniversary Celebration of Lovejoy's Nuclear War*. \$ 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

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

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Bill Frisell Three* feat. *Gregory Tardy, Rudy Royston*. \$ 6:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 1

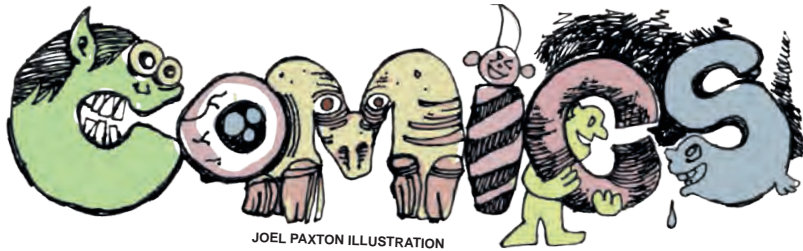
Academy of Music, Northampton: *Jonathan Richman*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

Hawks & Reed: *RJD2*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

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



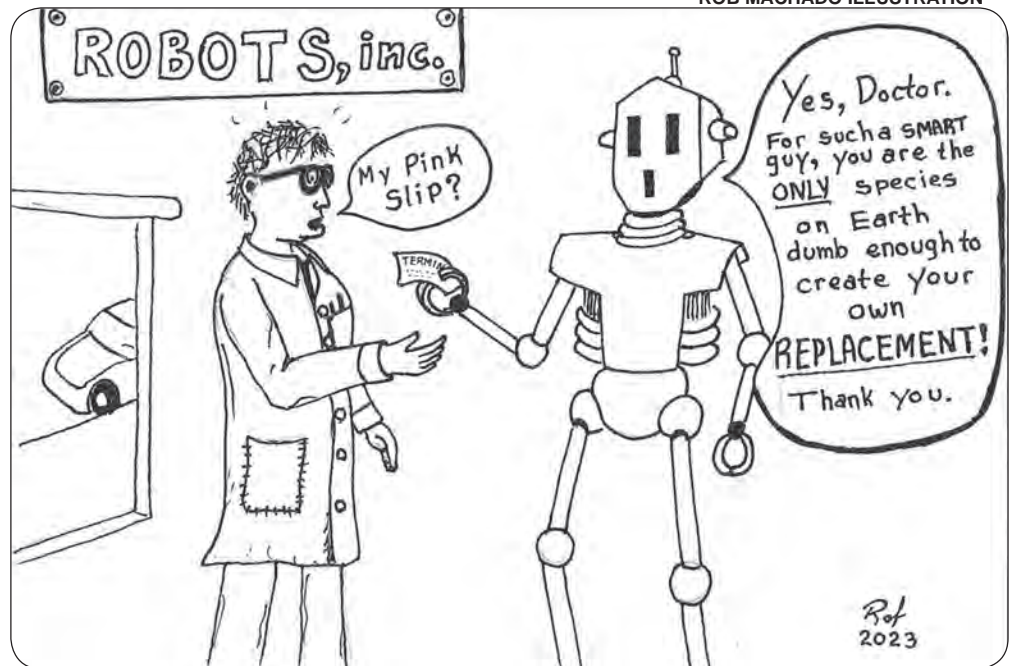
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Rob 2023

OVER THE HILL

Carolyn Clark



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NUTHEADS from page B1

part of the world.” When they decided to grow the farm, it made sense to look in this area, and in 2019 they found 36 acres for sale here on Hatchery Road on old Bitzer Farm land, a few hundred yards down the road from the state’s Bitzer Fish Hatchery.



Young chestnut trees grow at Big Foot Food Forest.

Babette laughed: “It is terrible land, really, with no organic matter” – thanks to the glacial deposits that created the nearby sandy-soiled Montague Plains – “and one area is increasingly wet.” The plan is that the farming practices will improve the soil over the years. “The main focus is to grow nut trees,” she said, “but that takes years to become productive, so in the meantime, we have chickens and sheep who improve the soil.”

Thank goodness for chicken and sheep poop. Big Foot is using the silvopasture, permaculture, and regenerative practices of nut tree culture. “Characteristic of our approach is to really think of nut trees as a planned plant, fungi, and animal community,” Babette told me. She drew a picture with words: a circle with a nut tree in the center, with wood chip mulch and herbs, such as mint and chamomile, around the perimeter.

They will have blueberry bushes interspersed with evergreen trees, probably Christmas-tree types. Citing Suzanne Simard’s book *Finding the Mother Tree*, Babette told me that “the evergreens and deciduous shrubs share sugars, and the fallen needles will nourish the acid-loving blueberries, creating a strong plant community.”

The nut trees already planted and future plantings will include hybrid chestnuts, walnuts, northern pecans, and hardy almonds. Babette told me of a “hican” tree, a hickory-pecan hybrid. So far there are five acres of nut trees as well as other food and fruit trees. The trees are generally planted at six to twelve inches in height and, as at other nut farms, in protective sleeves. “Maybe willows will go in the wet area,” Babette mused, for producing material for basket makers and craftspeople.

Though the farm’s main crop will be the tree nuts, it also grows oyster and shiitake mushrooms. Sitting at a table talking, we were surrounded by incipient mushrooms in their growing medium. They hope to move the shiitake-growing out into the woods. As a side note, shiitakes are fun and easy to grow if you can access freshly cut logs, preferably oak. In

the meantime, you can buy the farm’s mushrooms and eggs seasonally at the Greenfield and Turners Falls farmers markets.

There are opportunities to learn and help at the farm; volunteers often stay as guests. “Guests are taught,” Babette emphasized, explaining that these volunteers, often friends or friends of friends, come to work and learn. “It’s kind of like WWOOFing,” she said, referring to the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) program: “staying at the farm and working on non-commercial projects.” A strawbale building workshop was held in 2022, and the farm will likely get back to holding workshops at some point.

I asked Babette how they picture the farm in the future. “There is so much planning and research to be done,” she said. “We’re at the stage of building up the farm. The vision is to be actively harvesting nuts, berries, and willows in five to 10 years, more marketing, and we’d love to have a nut grower cooperative in the area.” After talking to the various nut tree folks, it looks to become a reality pretty soon given the interest shown by growers.

The Forest Kitchen

At the Forest Kitchen, in the Great Falls Harvest restaurant on Third Street in Turners Falls, Kyra Krystof has been demonstrating the culinary possibilities of nut trees and other wild foods. With a background in art and business, she has been involved in a variety of food-related projects and worked on CISA efforts. She met Eric Cornell and Jesse Marksohn of Yellowbud Farm in 2021 at Big River Chestnuts. Maybe it was fate; a meeting of obsessed nuthead minds.

A self-taught chef/cook, Kyra said she sees “cooking as a form of storytelling,” and that the food she produces is at “the interface of delicious and the aliveness of landscape.” At dinners held by the Forest Kitchen, in collaboration with small-craft producers and their goods, she tells a story that sources who have



Kyra Krystof of Forest Kitchen and Bridgette Chaffee of Great Falls Harvest plate a flourless mushroom-chocolate cake at a dinner event last year.



A pan of chestnuts about to go into the oven at the Forest Kitchen for roasting, seasoned with rose petals, fresh ginger root, hemlock needles, and Atlantic nori.

asked to remain anonymous tell me is very tasty, good, and beautiful.

One dinner a while back included Forest Pie, made of chestnut and hazelnut flour and hickory oil crust, with a venison-and-blueberry filling. Dessert was a concoction of sweet fern and white pine topped with a fermented birch syrup. Wow! Different, and different is good.

Though the Forest Kitchen is on hiatus for the winter – “refreshing the pantry,” according to Kyra – the Great Falls Harvest Restaurant is still open; check their website for hours.

Hickory nut processing on equipment owned by Yellowbud Farm is ongoing at the restaurant, under a cooperative effort to get high-quality hickory oil ready for use. Kyra said she hopes to host workshops and events as well. She also recommends that folks check out the Sage Green Apothecary in the Great Falls Market, the space connected to the restaurant on Avenue A in Turners Falls, to check out their offerings of herbs and more.

Readers can look forward to the warmer months when the Forest Kitchen again offers its unique meals.

Rechestnuting the Hill

Chris Pinardi lives on West Chestnut Hill Road, in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Montague. You can’t get there from here; you have to go through North Leverett to get to that section of town.

There were once many chestnut trees growing up on the hill. It was a harvest gathering place in the past before the chestnut blight began devastating the trees, leaving stumps that resprout but die back only to resprout again.

Driving by Chris and his mother’s land, with her house built in the 1700s, I saw dozens of the protective seedling sleeves I’ve seen on the nut tree farms. I talked with him about the plantings, and he told me he plans to “rechestnut Chestnut Hill.”

So far, he had planted about 175 trees in the woods, with about another 80 still waiting to go as of early December. About another 150 were being held for spring planting.

Some of the trees are of the “Badgersett” hybrid variety from Minnesota, which produces nuts within three to five years. Chris said he hopes to eventually plant about 55 acres with chestnuts and some black walnuts, red mulberry, tulip trees, and apples. These species will “help to bring back wildlife,” he said.



“Forest cookies”: fermented botanical shortbread made with chestnut flour, pecans, walnuts, and sprouted red lentils, sweetened with maple syrup infused with botanicals from Sage Green Apothecary.

(Please don’t let the deer read this, we have too many already!)

We talked about tree planting, and about not getting to see the fruit and nuts of one’s labor when it is a long-term investment in the future. Chris told me he explained the importance of these efforts to his daughter, and hopes that she and future generations may get to appreciate the full result.

Contact Information

Big Foot Food Forest
16 Hatchery Road, Montague
Email: bigfootfoodforest@gmail.com
www.bigfootfoodforest.com

The Forest Kitchen, Kyra Krystof
Email: kyra.krystof@gmail.com

Nuts and Beyond

Ecoagriculture, agroforestry, silvopasture, permaculture, sustainability, resilience, and regenerative. I heard and read all these words repeatedly while researching this two-part series. *Passionate, visionary, hopeful, dedicated, and hardworking* are the words I would apply to those I spoke with, as they talked about their inspirations and passions.

I was glad to hear Diana Beresford-Kroeger, the Irish-Canadian botanist, scientist, author I wrote about in these pages in October, mentioned. Eric Cornell of Yellowbud Farm said he has been in touch with her and hopes to visit her in Ontario.

In these challenging times, inspirational people – or even trees – can give us hope. Perhaps readers can be inspired by their stories and find a way to support their work. Or start your own story, creating something good for the land, good for critters and us humans, and good for the planet.

It’s not too hard to imagine. As I noticed in this newspaper’s “150 Years Ago” column, from the October 22, 1873 *Turners Falls Reporter*:

“Hickory nuts are very plentiful this fall.”



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