

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 22 – NO. 9

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JANUARY 25, 2024

## School Budget Cuts Likely After State Chapter 70 Aid \$700,000 Less Than Hoped

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – “It’s not what I was hoping,” Joanne Blier, business manager for the Gill-Montague school district, told the *Reporter* late Wednesday afternoon. An hour before, the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) had released its estimates of the aid districts will receive next year under the Chapter

70 program, the main pool of state money for public schools.

Blier’s working budget for FY’25 had included an educated guess that this aid would increase this year by 9.3%, or \$730,895. The number that came in was lower than that – by \$702,755. This news was bad.

“We’re really looking hard at [cutting] the budget anywhere but positions,” Blier said. “But I don’t

see **SCHOOL** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Calls for Better Solar Planning As Delayed Array Blows Hole in Airport Budget

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard’s January 22 meeting was dominated by discussion of local solar policy, as energy committee co-chair Sally Pick presented a draft Community Solar Action Plan, analyzing the current state of solar power in town and providing a road map for expanding it significantly.

The board also discussed ways to close a large gap in the Turners Falls municipal airport budget caused by the loss of revenue from a planned solar array.

Pick began by making the case for the town to develop a comprehensive solar policy. Her reasons included the declining cost of solar, an extension of federal tax credits through 2032, potential legislation to meet the state’s carbon reduction goals by reducing the cost of connection with the electrical grid and increasing subsidies for solar development, and the “abundance of farmlands and forests” in Montague, which state policy currently targets for large-scale solar arrays.

Pick reviewed the 48-page draft report, produced by Victoria Haskins and Caroline Williams of the UMass Clean Energy Extension in collaboration with Montague’s new solar committee, beginning with the results of a survey distributed to over 600 residents which garnered 249 responses. Large majorities opposed solar development on agricultural land and woodlands, but supported it on “previously disturbed” sites,

see **MONTAGUE** page A6

AINSWORTH AT LARGE

## Election Year Kicks Off



Marianne Williamson speaks to her supporters in the downstairs auditorium at the Keene Public Library last Thursday, in the final week before New Hampshire’s Democratic primary.

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – Marianne Williamson was in Keene last week, ratcheting up support on her quixotic quest to be the 47th President. The 71-year-old California native now lives in Washington. She got the election bug ten years ago when she ran for the 33rd Congressional district, which encompasses Los Angeles County. She was endorsed by actress Eva Longoria and finished fourth of 18 candidates with 14,335 votes, or 13.2 percent.

Six years later she announced her presidential bid and qualified for two Democratic primary debates, but withdrew from the race on January 10, 2020, and endorsed Bernie Sanders. Granite State voters favored Sanders over Pete Buttigieg 25.6 to 24.28 percent, and Joe Biden finished fifth with 8.36 percent.

About 50 people gathered to hear her speak in the downstairs auditorium of the Keene Public Library. I clicked a photo of the get-together

and sent it to my MAGA-hating, MSNBC-loving friend. “Democrats with tin foil hats,” he replied.

Williamson arrived on time and stayed until she’d answered the last question. She’s ridden her dark blue campaign bus with Iowa plates and “Marianne 2024” emblazoned on it from the White Mountains to Manchester, over to the seacoast and up to the White Mountains.

“You don’t go through what this is just to get a message out,” she said. “There’s a viciousness that’s worse than it was four years ago. Kicking people off ballots? Black-listing candidates that don’t toe the line? We are not going to defeat Donald Trump by scaring people.”

Another Opening, Another Show

Lawn signs were set on the wall next to a card table holding campaign buttons, bumper stickers, and literature. I pocketed three buttons and a Williamson sign I might plant on my friend’s yard.

A staffer took names and asked see **AT LARGE** page A4

ERVING SELECTBOARD

## Town Planner to Step Down; Paper Mill Proposals Sought

By KEITH WATERS

The Erving selectboard met Monday night, as January continued to be a very busy month for the town.

Town planner Mariah Kurtz has announced plans to vacate her position on March 1. The board discussed a draft description of the position the town may put out to try to make up for the loss.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith floated the idea of not hiring a town planner, but instead hiring an executive assistant who would

take on some of the duties of the town planner. Selectboard member Scott Bastarache and Jackie Boyden, who serves on a number of committees, both recommended against this idea, arguing that the position of planner has come to be important to the town.

Kurtz herself weighed in on the draft job description with a number of points. The position requires attending a lot of night meetings, she said, and related to that, it should probably be added that a car and

see **ERVING** page A5

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

## Battery Bylaw Misses Deadline; Second Winter STM Proposed

By JOSH HEINEMANN

At their January 17 meeting the Wendell selectboard reduced the warrant for the town’s January 31 special town meeting to a single article, which would authorize the school committee to sign a five-year contract with FM Kuzmeskus for Swift River School transportation, if the school committee considers that the best option.

The town meeting warrant was originally expected to have another article, stemming from the effort to stop, restrict, or assert some public control over a large battery facility proposed by New Leaf Energy for forested land between Wendell Depot Road and the dirt section of

New Salem Road.

As the meeting began former selectboard member Dan Keller, using the public comment time and speaking unofficially for the unofficial citizen’s group No Assault & Battery (NAB), Zoomed in to urge the board to consider seriously the ordinance or bylaw the group was proposing.

Gloria Kegeles, Nina Keller, and Bill Stubblefield of Leverett came to the meeting on behalf of the group. They submitted a proposed ordinance to the selectboard meeting’s agenda, but not in time for the town meeting warrant.

Their reasoning for the ordinance is familiar, but has been expanding. The facility, they said, would put an

see **WENDELL** page A3

## High School Sports Week: Ups and Downs

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – This week the boys’ basketball teams from Franklin Tech and Turners Falls let some games slip through their fingers. The Turners boys mounted a late-game run against Athol, but it wasn’t enough, and then a tied game against Hampshire dissolved into another loss for the Boys in Blue. The Tech Boys played even against Smith Academy for a quarter, but the Smithies prevented them from registering their first win.

In girls’ basketball, the Tech Eagles just keep rolling along, and the Turners JV girls won their first two games. The schools’ hybrid swim teams split a meet against Renaissance and swept Holyoke, while the Tech wrestlers hosted a three-state rumble and finished the week 2–1–1.

Sadly, in January we lost another old-timer. Bettine “Betty” Gleba passed away on January 4 at the age of 98. Before the new Turners Falls High School was built on St. Germain’s farm, and well before the woods behind the airport were cleared to build Franklin Tech, Bet-

ty and Walt Gleba were living on Wentworth Ave. Mrs. Gleba worked at Hillcrest Elementary, then the new high school. Her daughters Doreen and Janice graduated from Turners, and her two grandsons from Franklin Tech. Janice still works at the tech school, and grandson Dan works the sidelines as the EMT at Tech’s football games.

Rest in Peace, Betty, and say hello to Walt.

Wrestling

FCTS 36 – South Hadley 29

FCTS 48 – Chicopee 25

FCTS 39 – Keene 39

Middlebury 45 – FCTS 24

Last Friday the Franklin Tech wrestlers tamed the Tigers of South Hadley, 36-29. The team, which supplements its numbers with athletes from Turners, had so many players that when they sat in folding

see **SPORTS** page A4



Franklin Tech’s Gabe Mota drives into the paint last Friday as Smith Academy’s Garrett Willard defends.



### The Kind Of Thing A Real Human Would Read

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# The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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August 2002

## Heads in the Sand?

The Leahy Laws are good laws, as laws go.

Born and raised in Montpelier, the son of newspaper publishers, Patrick Leahy went off to our nation’s capital to become a lawyer and came back to serve the public in his native Vermont. He ran for US Senate in 1974 and won, one of a cohort of liberal Democrats swept into Congress amid the Watergate crisis and the first Democratic senator in the state’s history. He served for 48 years.

After 22 of those years, Leahy introduced an amendment to a bill that would lead – or could lead – to a reshaping of American foreign policy. In the mid-1990s the country was pouring operational support into Colombia, a nation beset by brutal civil war for decades, under the umbrella of the global drug war, and it was becoming obvious to all objective observers that the funding was being used to commit atrocities against civilians.

Leahy’s motion stipulated that any foreign force found to be committing human rights abuses will not be eligible for US aid until they demonstrate that they are reforming their behavior. This was such a bright idea Congress applied it to all State Department funding, and then set up a similar safety mechanism on Department of Defense funding. (The DOD’s version can be ignored if the Secretary of Defense feels “extraordinary circumstances” accuse the crimes in question.)

The Leahy amendments represent a paradigm shift for the US, which let’s just say has not *always* made sure the operations it sponsors on *all* points on our planet’s surface fall under the “non-human-rights-abuse” category.

“It is different from other human rights legislation because it does not require a decision to cut off aid to an entire country,” Amnesty International explains, “which the US government is often reluctant to do – rather it tackles the challenge by prohibiting aid solely from the offending units.... The Leahy Law has saved lives since its passage and it provides an incentive to countries whose security forces’ possess poor human rights records to clean up their act.”

Around Thanksgiving a second Vermont senator, Bernie Sanders, told *The Intercept* that he was considering invoking the Leahy laws in the matter of ongoing US military aid to Israel. Sanders has been a supporter of the state of Israel

historically, and volunteered for several months in 1963 at a kibbutz outside Haifa – during the assault on Gaza, much of the international left has considered him a coward and a disappointment for refusing to call for a mutual ceasefire.

Nevertheless, he seemed to feel it would be a good idea to have our country follow its own law by simply requesting that the State Department compile for Congress “information on Israel’s human rights practices” and describe “the steps that the United States Government has taken to... discourage any practices that are inimical to internationally recognized human rights.”

Sanders forced a vote last Tuesday. “A vote against this resolution essentially says, ‘I don’t want more information,’” he argued. “‘I don’t want to know how US military aid is being used. I don’t want to know what responsibility the US may have in this humanitarian disaster. *I want to bury my head in the sand.*”

S.Res.504 was slapped down by 35 Republican and 37 Democratic votes to table the resolution, and 17 convenient absences. Standing with Sanders in the request for information were one Republican and nine Democrats, including both Massachusetts senators.

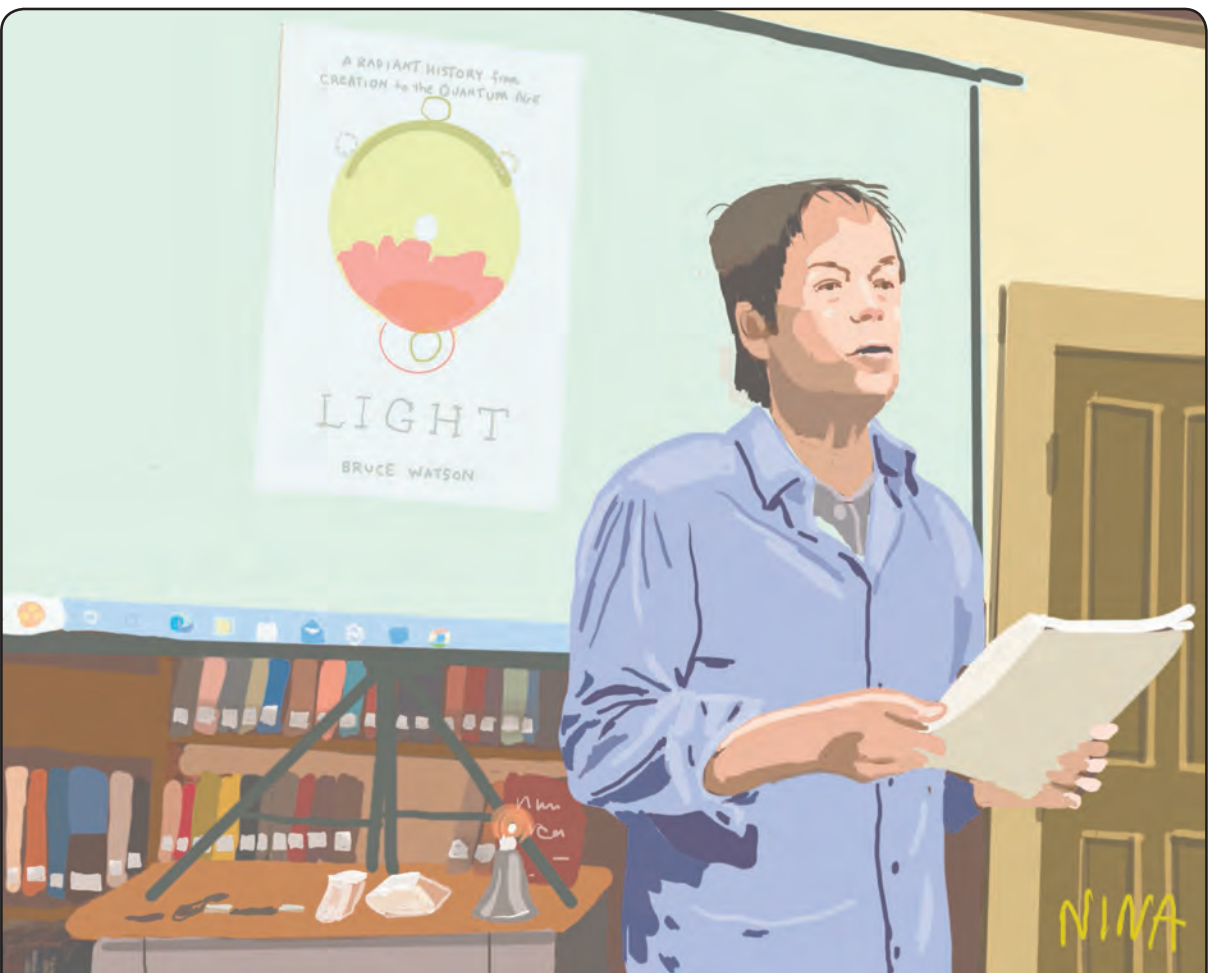
“For decades, I have steadfastly stood by Israel,” said Sen. Edward Markey. “But the Netanyahu government cannot continue to conduct the war in Gaza the way it has until now. It must protect innocent Gazan civilians, negotiate the return of the remaining hostages held by Hamas, and unequivocally commit that it will not engage in a forcible mass transfer of Palestinian civilians from Gaza.”

Many senators explaining their votes to table the resolution implicitly acknowledged that the aid is being used to violate human rights. “I am concerned that the resolution could potentially cut off all aid to Israel and send a message that invites other adversaries in the region to expand the current conflict,” said Sen. Patty Murray (D-Washington).

And Lindsay Graham (R-South Carolina), according to the *Jerusalem Post*, “likened the Israelis’ need to ensure unconditional surrender from Hamas to the US decision to use the atomic bomb to force Japan’s surrender in WWII.”

Once we understand that what is happening in Gaza is *US policy enforced by Israel*, rather than Israeli policy supported by the US, all this mess begins to make more sense.

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



Bruce Watson shared highlights from his book, *Light: A Radiant History from Creation to the Quantum Age*, at the Montague Center branch library on Monday. His talk touched on art, science, spirituality, and philosophy – including a few nifty hands-on demos. Watson also writes an online magazine, *The Attic*, which features “true stories for a kinder, cooler America.”

## Letter to the Editors

### Library Mob Explains Lot Choice

Montague’s Library Trustees appreciate all the public and private feedback we received in 2023 – through surveys, focus groups, public forums, and through emails and conversations – related to our pursuit of a Massachusetts Public Library Construction Project grant to either expand Carnegie Public Library or construct a new library building.

In response to questions we’ve been receiving about our process for selecting a site for a potential new building, the Library Director and Trustees have written the following statement describing the process by which 38 Avenue A was selected for the MPLCP grant proposal:

“The Montague Public Libraries Trustees support a library construction project that would expand the Carnegie Library or construct a new building in downtown Turners Falls/Great Falls.

“Over the last two years, the Libraries’ Trustees and Library Director have polled the community, held focus groups, facilitated one-on-one interviews, and organized public forums, first for the Libraries’ strategic planning process and again for the Libraries’ construction project application process.

“The community has made clear that they would like to see an expanded or new library in Turners Falls/Great Falls. They have also expressed unequivocally that they wish for the Montague Public Libraries to maintain our three-branch system, and as such, the Trustees and Library Director have written into our construction application that there will be no reduction in hours or services at the Millers Falls or Montague Center branches.

“Community feedback collected in 2022 for our Strategic Plan emphasized the importance of walkability and neighborhood connectivity. Following this feedback, in winter 2022 the Library Director and Town Administrators identified three potential downtown Turners Falls/Great Falls sites to be considered for a new library. These three were: 11 Power Street (formerly Railroad Salvage in the Patch), a First Street municipal lot behind the Shady Glen (since acquired by Habitat for Humanity), and 38 Avenue A (previously Cumberland Farms).

“In early 2023, the state clarified that applications for the Construction Program grant must identify just two sites – one being the existing building’s location (for an expansion project), and the other being the site for a newly constructed building.

“Ultimately 38 Avenue A was selected as the most advantageous site for possible new construction. Located in walking distance to all of downtown’s amenities, in the most population-dense neighborhood in Franklin County, this site is also close to the bike path and local bus routes, making it the most accessible and most equitable of sites, should the current location be unable to meet the diverse interests and needs of the community.”

For more details on the Public Library Construction Grant process, please check out [montaguepubliclibraries.org/building](https://montaguepubliclibraries.org/building).


**Will Quale, chair**  
**Montague Public Libraries Trustees**

## SMALL CORRECTION

Reader Sarah Greenleaf reflected on her own Letter to the Editor in last week’s edition (*Town Should Preserve Rattlesnake Gutter Road*), noting that, while “coming down with a head cold,” she erroneously referred to a state inspector as being from the “DPW” rather than the Department of Transportation.

“[T]he point of what I said remains the same,” she added, “that the inspector from DOT was not an ecologist and thus could not properly evaluate environmental impact to ecosystems.”

Apologies to Ms. Greenleaf for not catching it on our end, and best wishes for a speedy recovery. – *Eds.*



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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

All weekend fixed-route services from the FRTA are free from now until June 30. View the bus schedule at [frrta.org](http://frrta.org).

The next Nice and Easy Walk along the Canalside Rail Trail in Turners Falls is this Friday, January 26, at 1 p.m. The theme for this walk will be the former John Russell Cutlery Company. Meet at the main entrance for the Discovery Center and dress warmly for the one- to two-mile walk.

The Wendell Meetinghouse is hosting an exhibit of 40 covers of the Wendell Post newspaper, published between 1977 and 2001 by community volunteers, that will run through February. An opening reception this Friday, January 26 at 5:30 p.m. will include a panel of Wendell Post artists and contributors, who will guide the sharing of community stories and memories of the production and impact of its publication, as well as classical guitar music by Fran Doughty.

The Post’s cover pages featured original art and stories about events, personalities, and local and regional issues. The copies have been enlarged for display. The idea for the exhibit came from Jerry Barrilla, Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse volunteer and former board member, with support from other volunteers.

The event is free, with donations encouraged. More details can be found at [wendellmeetinghouse.org](http://wendellmeetinghouse.org)

or by contacting Court Dorsey at [courtdorsey@gmail.com](mailto:courtdorsey@gmail.com).

The monthly Psychic Medium Fair in Lake Pleasant is this Saturday, January 27 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Make reservations in advance for a 25-minute reading with Rev. Joanne, Jannie D, or Rev. Kim: [spiritualallianceusa.org](http://spiritualallianceusa.org).

There’s a free local history double-feature at the Discovery Center in Turners Falls this Sunday, January 28, at 2 p.m. Two documentaries, *The Genesis of the Turners Falls Community* and *The Franklin County Fair*, will be presented by the Montague Historical Society. Chris Clawson and Ed Gregory of the Society will lead a discussion after the films. The snow date is February 4.

The Flynt Center for Early New England Life at Old Deerfield is offering free admission on the next two weekends, January 27 and 28 and February 3 and 4. Explore furniture, crafts, textiles, and early American art from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on those days.

The Franklin County Interfaith Council is hosting a Climate Cafe this Monday, January 29 at 6:30 p.m. at the All Souls Church in Greenfield. The dialogue circle will be facilitated by artist Hannah Harvester and climate therapist Sadie Forsythe.

According to the notice, “Expanding on prompts developed by Joanna Macy, we will meet in small and large groups to share our responses

to the Climate Emergency that is unfolding during our generation.” This is the kickoff event for the Council’s “Sacred Earth” series. The program is free to all, with snacks provided.

A Slow Jam class is one of the offerings this winter at the LAVA Center in Greenfield. Adults are invited to join musician Michael Nix in a coached group setting and learn how to play an instrument of their choice successfully. Each person brings a song or instrumental that they would like to play with the group.

Classes meet every other Monday evening from 7:30 to 9 p.m. starting this Monday, January 29. Tuition is sliding scale, from \$5 to \$25 per class. Contact Nix to register at (413)772-0328 or [mnix@nixworks.com](mailto:mnix@nixworks.com).

Unnameable Books, the new bookstore in Turners Falls, has announced an ongoing Poetry Night on the first Friday of each month. The first night will next Friday, February 2 at 6 p.m. and folks are invited to come read a poem that they love, not one that they have written.

On the fourth Friday of the month, they will hold a Movie Night: the first movie to be screened is Agnes Varda’s *Vagabond* on February 23 at 6 p.m. These events are free and open to the public.

Try out snowshoeing during a free clinic at the Northfield Mountain Recreation Area on Saturday, February 3 at 11 a.m. There will be a short snowshoe hike on an introductory trail, and if there is no snow it will be a walking hike, so wear sturdy boots. The clinic is for all ages and abilities. Registration is required at [bookeo.com/northfield](http://bookeo.com/northfield).

Join an online conversation about gender-affirming support for trans, nonbinary, and gender-expansive loved ones on Monday, February 5, at 6 p.m. Topics in-

clude coming out, navigating conversations with extended family, school and community connections, and gender-affirming resources available in the community.

The talk is hosted by the Support Network and facilitated by James Shultis, co-director at Translate Gender ([translategender.org](http://translategender.org)), with a panel of local caregivers of trans and gender-expansive youth. For a Zoom link, contact Gretchen Emond at [Gmond@wmtcinfo.org](mailto:Gmond@wmtcinfo.org).

Fiddleheads Gallery in Northfield has put out a call for artists for their fourth annual photography show. You must live in New England to enter, and photos on any theme taken with phone or camera in color or black and white are eligible, with this caveat: “simple altered OK but no AI generated or enhanced.”

Contact [margedvaa@gmail.com](mailto:margedvaa@gmail.com) for details on how to enter by February 12. The exhibit opens March 1.

The Gill Montague Educational Fund has announced that their annual Gala, to be held Saturday, April 27, will feature Anton Doran and the Tampa Bay All Stars recreating the music of Billy Joel and Elton John.

The band plays material from all eras of each artist’s career, presenting their biggest hits along with now generations of fan favorites, including “Benny & the Jets,” “Tiny Dancer,” “Movin’ Out,” “You May Be Right,” “I’m Still Standing,” “Piano Man,” and many more.

The concert will be held at 7 p.m. in the Turners Falls High School auditorium, and during intermission attendees can meet the GMEF’s board of directors while enjoying beverages and treats from local bakeries.

Advance tickets are on sale at [thegmef.org](http://thegmef.org). Proceeds will benefit enrichment programs in the schools.

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

## WENDELL from page A1

impervious cover over 2½ acres of land upstream of the Whetstone wildlife corridor, would be a source of heat and light pollution, and would involve “tons of trucks” during construction.

Fires in lithium battery systems are not common, they pointed out, but when they occur they re-ignite again and again and leave a toxic residue.

Stubblefield said the town of Carver’s failed attempt to stop a large battery installation was influenced by some local leaders’ support for the project. NAB has been working with the lawyer who was unable to stop the Carver project, and he has said that while the state Department of Public Utilities (DPU) has no power over the town conservation commission, its Energy Facilities Siting Board may have that authority.

Kegeles said the DPU has advised New Leaf that an increase in the project’s proposed size would allow them to call the proposal a public utility. The company’s first required step – to hold a public hearing – has not happened yet, and the proposal seems to be in limbo.

Nina Keller said the mood of the state keeps changing, and delays in the permitting process might work to NAB’s favor. If hundreds of Wendell residents go to a special town meeting and approve the ordinance (or bylaw), she said, it would show the state that the project may be ill-conceived, or at least has serious local opposition.

Selectboard member Paul Doud said he saw no downside to holding another special town meeting in late February or early March, and proposing a bylaw. Town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad said he thought that by then the town may have other issues it needs to decide at a town meeting.

### Swift River Water

Peter Valinski, vice president and project

manager at the engineering firm Tighe & Bond, delivered a report on the PFAS filtration system now installed and working at Swift River School.

The project involved some add-ons: plumbing fixtures were discovered lacking during installation, and a pressure relief valve needed replacement, as did a pressure gauge whose range was too large to allow easy reading of the relevant working pressures.

Valinski proposed eliminating the replacement of the pressure tank’s bladder. The confined space where the pressure tank sits is so small, he said, the contractor considered the job too much to ask of a worker, though a small person hanging upside-down might manage it. The bladder is expected to last another ten years, as long as the tank it is a part of. The school’s first pressure tank lasted 30 years. The contractor can return the bladder for a \$3,800 credit, which can be used to offset the unforeseen costs.

To a question from treasurer Carolyn Manley, Valinski said a new tank would cost \$10,000, and installation would bring the replacement price to \$20,000. He said you would never put a well inside a building.

Increased sensitivity in testing, rather than recent contamination, is most likely what revealed the well’s contamination with PFAS, Valinski said, and the source is nearly impossible to pin down.

The board voted to accept credit for the bladder and apply it towards the cost overruns. Since Wendell and New Salem share Swift River School expenses, Johnson-Mussad said he thought a Wendell selectboard member should attend the next New Salem selectboard meeting.

### Tax Hearing

Adam Hemingway, an associate at Regional Resource Group (RRG), Wendell’s contracted

assessors, Zoomed in for the town’s annual tax classification hearing.

As they have in past years, board members voted to maintain a single tax rate for the town. Hemingway said Wendell has so little commercial property that taxing it at a higher rate would not significantly lower residential taxes. If the state department of revenue approves it, Wendell’s FY’24 tax rate will be \$20.74, down from \$21.41 in FY’23.

Wendell’s total property valuation is \$128,882,319, and the levy limit is projected to be \$2,673,019, allowing for an “excess levy capacity” of \$264,071.

### Other Business

Selectboard members voted to allow Wendell to participate in a regionalization study proposed by the Leverett fire department, which would also include New Salem and Shutesbury.

Johnson-Mussad said his hourly pay is the lowest of any town coordinator locally. He said he likes Wendell and likes his work, but that if he leaves, Wendell would have to raise the position’s pay to attract candidates. He said he was just starting a conversation.

Selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato pointed out that his pay rate does not include vacation and other benefits, but that the subject should be discussed at the upcoming money managers’ meeting on January 24.

Board members discussed a request from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments for Wendell’s priorities for this year’s direct local technical assistance (DLTA), but postponed making a decision until the money manager’s meeting, when the full board will be present.

Nico Naparstek was appointed to the zoning board of appeals.

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AT LARGE from page A1

for email addresses. A man in his 50s wore a cowboy hat and a sweat-shirt that said on the back, “Cops say legalize heroin. Ask me why.” And so I did.

“If we let nature take its course with the drug users, we’ll have a lot more time to take care of the bad guys,” said Howard “Cowboy” Wooldridge, a retired police detective with a business card that read *Citizens Opposing Prohibition (COP)*.

Williamson offered her own spin, saying she wanted a recovery czar, not a drug czar. She wore a waist-length gray blazer over a casual black dress down to her brown leather boots with block heels. She was born in Houston, attended Pomona College (current acceptance rate: seven percent), and became a spiritualist after she read Helen Schucman’s 1976 bestseller *A Course in Miracles*. Schucman claimed the 1,333-page tome had been dictated to her word-for-word by Jesus Christ.

Helped in part by Oprah, Williamson has written four best-sellers including *Healing the Soul of America* and *A Politics of Love*, 13 books all told, which have sold over three million copies.

Crony Capitalism

Williamson’s remarks focused on corporate greed and the downfall of the blue collar system. “We have had a 50-year war on the middle class, a \$40 trillion transfer of power from the middle class to the wealthy... an orgiastic rush to privatize everything.”

“When I was growing up Dem-



As of press time Wednesday Williamson, who ran without an advertising budget, was listed in third place in the Democratic primary with 4,938 votes (4.1%), trailing write-in candidate Joe Biden (63.6%) and Dean Phillips (19.8%) and just ahead of write-ins for Republican candidate Nikki Haley (3.9%).

ocrats represented the middle class. One household member could afford to support a family of four. Now 39 percent of Americans report skimping on meals to pay for the rent. We had more than three million evictions last year. You guys in New Hampshire are down 31,000 housing units.

“Half of all seniors make under \$25,000 a year. Today the American Dream is, ‘I hope I get out of debt before I die.’”

Industrial capitalism, she said, has run amok. “You’re not supposed to be able to spew carcinogens into the river. The right of the owner takes precedence over the people. It is the new status quo. We have turned to a system of legalized bribery and crony capitalism. At what point are we going to say ‘enough’?”

“We need a domestic Marshall

Plan,” she said, referring to America’s pledge to help rebuild postwar Europe. “There are 12,000 nuclear weapons on the planet, and 7,000 are ours. We have a war academy. We need a peace academy. We have war games. We need peace games. Even Donald Rumsfeld said, ‘We need to wage peace.’”

Staying Until the End

After Williamson’s stump speech a middle-aged woman in the first row compared her to a character in J.R.R. Tolkein’s *Lord of the Rings*. “You’re Pippin,” the woman said. “Let’s go!”

A young woman whose father was a US Marine wondered how Williamson would help soldiers be integrated back into society.

A scruffy, bearded man in the

back row raised his hand and asked Williamson if she had read the Flexner Report. No, said Williamson, she hadn’t. “That tells me you’re naive, but you’re teachable,” he said.

Williamson is on the ballot in 26 states, each with its own team of volunteer staffers. Her biggest campaign donation, she said, has been \$3,300. According to Ballotpedia she’s raised \$2.3 million but is about \$200,000 in debt. She can’t afford television ads, the media has ignored her, and corporate donors have abandoned her.

New Hampshire voters went to the polls on Tuesday and chose from any one of 21 candidates on the Democratic primary ballot. They included lost causes whose names appear as Vermin Supreme, Paperboy Love Prince, and President R. Boddie to legitimate candidates like Williamson and Minnesota Rep. Dean Phillips. Biden ran as a write-in out of loyalty to South Carolina, which saved his 2020 candidacy, and also because of his weak showing in the Granite State.

Given the soft field, did Williamson think she could win?

“That depends on you,” she answered. “Lincoln said at Gettysburg, ‘We shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.’”

She paused for a moment, looked at her would-be supporters, and delivered her *raison d’etre*: “I’m running because we’re perishing.”

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

SPORTS from page A1

chairs they spread from sideline to sideline across the gym. The coaches, meanwhile, gave advice on which way to roll, when to stand, or which arm to bend.

After the match the Tech wrestlers methodically rolled up the mats while someone swept the basketball court. Maxon Brunette, Landon Purington, Jacob Martin and Collin Eddy had all pinned their opponents, while Connor Herzig and Carsten Couture won on points.

Tech hosted a round-robin match on Saturday with teams from as far away as Vermont and New Hampshire, and went 1–1–1 on the day. Eddy scored three pins in the tournament, Dillon Laffond, Purington, and Martin had two each, Couture made a pin and won an 8-3 decision, and Izaya Romer, Jackson Morey, and Seamus Collins pinned one opponent each.

Swimming  
TFHS 67 – Renaissance 15  
Renaissance 67 – TFHS 20

Last Wednesday the Renaissance swimmers came to town and split a meet against Turners Falls. This is another sport that is comprised of students from both schools.

In the girls’ win, Ainslee Flynn placed first in the 200-yard individual medley, Sophia McComb in the 50-yard freestyle and the 100-yard backstroke, and Sylvie DeBartolomeo in the 500-yard freestyle. Sigrid Calhoun placed second in the 50-yard freestyle and Rose Fortin second in the 500-yard freestyle.

In the boys’ meet Liam Bliss and Tyler Galenski won the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyles, Connor Glennon placed second in the 200-yard individual medley and third in the 500-yard freestyle, and Cody McDonough came in second in the 100-yard breaststroke.

On Tuesday the teams swamped the Holyoke Purple Nights. In the girls’ meet, Tristan Bliss took first in the 100-yard butterfly, Madi Liimatainen in the 100-yard breaststroke and 50-yard freestyle, and McComb in the 100-yard backstroke; for the boys, Glennon took the 100-yard butterfly, Liam Bliss the 500-yard freestyle, and Galenski the 200-yard freestyle.

Boys’ Basketball  
Athol 61 – TFHS 57  
Hampshire 54 – TFHS 37  
Smith Academy 56 – FCTS 46

Before the game against Athol last Wednesday, Addi Talbot and Rae Juarbe gave a wonderful rendition of the National Anthem, and although the pep band, the cheerleaders, and the Blue faithful made plenty of noise, the Red Bears were not deterred.

The Bears came out swinging from the tipoff, knocking out eight points before Turners gained their footing. Blue got on the board with a field goal, but Athol piled on seven more to stretch the lead to 15-2.

The teams traded shots for the remainder of the round, and after a quarter, the margin was 20-7. Thunder was unable to cut into the lead in the second period, but kept the margin at 13 going into the second half. They shaved two points off that lead in the third, going into the final period down 44-33.

Eight minutes is not a lot of time to make up double digits, but Blue made a run for it. To the delight of the home crowd and the chagrin of Da Bears, they posted up, scoring more points in the last quarter than they had in the entire first half. But it wasn’t enough. Branden Truesdell led Blue with 21 points, followed by Caden Williams Senethavisouk (15), Joey Mosca (9), Jackson Cogswell (5), Devan Sloan and Alex Quezada (3 each), and Dylen Richardson (2).

On Friday the Boys Thunder traveled to Westhampton and dropped a game against the Hampshire Red Raiders. After an even 15-15 first quarter, Blue’s offense sputtered and the Raiders took advantage. Eight players scored for Turners: Cogswell (14), Mosca (5), Williams Senethavisouk, Truesdale, Richardson, and Cameron Burnett (4 each), and Sloan (2).

That same night, after the wrestlers rolled up the mats, the Tech boys took on the Purple Falcons of Smith Academy. It looked good for the first period – the Eagles held their own against Purple, and when the buzzer sounded it was tied at 10 each. But the Falcons pulled away in the second period to take a 24-17 lead



Franklin Tech’s Jack Gancarz goes up for a shot as the Eagles hosted the Smith Academy Falcons.

at the half. They padded the margin in the third quarter, and even though Tech outscored them in the final period, the Falcons won 56-46.

Robert Belval (14) and Tyler Lafountain (12) were the top scorers for Franklin, followed by Gabe Mota (6), Jack Gancarz (5), Josiah Little (4), Nolyn Stafford (3), and Cam Candelaria (2).

Girls’ Basketball  
FCTS 60 – Mohawk 22  
FCTS 54 – Athol 29  
TFHS 51 – Mohawk 40 (JV)  
TFHS 40 – Athol 30 (JV)

In what might be their best game of the year, the white-shirted Eagles swept away Mohawk by the score of 60-22 last Thursday. The Warriors had no answer for Tech’s rebounding and defensive prowess. Mohawk has some quick guards, and throughout the game they picked the pockets of any player

not protecting the ball. The one cylinder that wasn’t firing for the White Eagles was their foul shooting, but though they only hit 31% of the free shots they owned the boards so they frequently got second and third chances.

By the second half, Coach Joe Gamache was sending in his reserves. Lea Chapman led the scoring with 28 points, pulled down 14 rebounds, and made five steals. Kyra Goodell (11), Hannah Gilbert (7), Haleigh Benoit (5), Kaitlin Trudeau (4), Jenna Petrowicz (3), and Lindsey Taylor (2) helped out.

It was worse for the Athol Red Bears. In Monday’s game Tech jumped out to a 21-1 lead after a quarter and led 37-5 at the half. This gave Gamache the opportunity to rest his starters. As a result, 11 different girls scored points for Tech.

The Bears never gave up, however. With the game in hand for Tech, Athol scored 21 points in the final stanza to reduce the margin to 25.

Gilbert (13), Goodell (9), Benoit (7), Cordelia Guerin (6), Taylor and Chapman (4 each), Brayleigh Burgh (3), and Trudeau, Laken Woodard, Samantha Duncan, and Abigail Carlo (2 each) all contributed to the win.

The Turners Falls Junior Varsity Thunder finally won their first game of the season last Friday, defeating the Mohawk Trail Warriors 51-40 up in Buckland. And on Tuesday, in front of a sparse crowd at home, they won their second.

Turners shot out to a 10-plus lead in the first quarter, and kept it into the fourth. They did this through an aggressive defense and coordinated offensive attacks. It seemed that every white jersey pestered every ball carrier, yanking it loose at every opportunity. The game got a little physical at times, and one of the Athol players was called for a technical, but for the most part it was a well-played, good natured game and every player got to play.

Eight Thunder Ladies scored: Ivy Lopez and Dulce Berduo Galvez (9 each), Brian-na Preston (8), McKenzie Stafford (5), Aba-rua Marilyn (4), Autumn DiMare and Madison Haight (2 each), and Shayly Martin Ovalle (1).

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**SCHOOL** from page A1  
know that we'll get there without looking at some."

The Gill-Montague school committee is required to approve a preliminary budget before February 1, discuss it with its member towns and the public over the following weeks, and then vote on a final budget in mid-March, 45 days before Montague's annual town meeting, in accordance with state law.

With the Chapter 70 data dropping on the fourth Wednesday of January, the district administrative team has only six days to bridge the \$702,755 deficit before the committee's vote January 30.

Just one night earlier, still hoping that this sword was not dangling above their heads but aware that it could be, the committee had held a special session to discuss the draft budget in detail with Blier. The conversation wandered to what the next steps would be if Wednesday's news was unexpectedly positive or negative.

"We'll know tomorrow, really," she told them. "It's like Christmas, waiting for the state aid to come out – it's one of those anticipation things."

**Luck of the Draw**

Since early December, Blier had emphasized to the committee the number of wild cards shuffled into the budgetary assumptions, explaining the rationale behind each of her guesses.

DESE determines its Chapter 70 aid level according to a complex formula that takes into account the district's foundation enrollment – the total number of school-aged children in Gill and Montague, minus the high-schoolers who switch into the Franklin County Technical School district – and subtracts a calculation of what the minimum "required" contribution from the towns should be, based on local income and property values as compared with a statewide pool.

(Under a 2010 agreement with the district known as the Compact for Funding Education, Gill and Montague actually give an "affordable" assessment to the district that now amounts to roughly double the DESE-required figure.)

DESE's "required" contribution stayed nearly the same for four years, then jumped by 7% in FY'23 and 6% in FY'24. Taking an average of these past six years, Blier guessed that the figure would rise by 2%. Instead, it rose by another 7.5% – carving \$379,525 off the anticipated aid revenue.

Blier told the *Reporter* she was hoping to hear back from Montague town accountant Carolyn Olsen about whether the affordable assessment is expected to increase in light of the state's math. In recent years, as property values have increased, the town has also been leaving some "excess capacity" untaxed, a luxury not imagined when the 2010 Compact was drafted. Discussion this week at town hall of a deficit in the airport budget indicates the selectboard may also see cutting into this excess capacity as an option still on the table.

Nevertheless, Blier said she hoped for just "a little extra" from the towns – "maybe \$30,000" – in light of the state's calculations.

Another major guess in Blier's draft budget was that the foundation enrollment would slightly increase, from 947 to 950. "I don't have a

crystal ball," she said at Tuesday's meeting. DESE's recipe instead showed the figuring dropping by nine students, to 938.

The actual enrollment of students in Gill-Montague schools has stabilized and even begun to increase in recent years, driven by a dramatic shift in school choice patterns – between 2018 and 2023, the number of students lost by school choice and to charter schools dropped from 314 to 203, while those choosing in crept up from 95 to 100. But Chapter 70 aid is based on underlying demographics, and the number of students who live in the towns has simply continued to shrink.

The resulting "foundation budget," as DESE terms it, was therefore \$390,716 lower than Blier's guess. Combined, these numbers would have resulted in a Chapter 70 figure slightly lower than Gill-Montague is receiving in the current year, triggering an alternate status known as "hold harmless," in which the district's aid instead increases by a set \$30 per pupil – in other words, by \$28,140.

**Rainy-Day Funds**

As of Tuesday's meeting, it was still seen as possible that Chapter 70 aid might come in higher than Blier's projection. The presentation included a list of up to 18 possible new staff hires, "requested but not added to the budget," including seven paraprofessionals at Sheffield Elementary, math and social studies teachers at the high school and middle school, two permanent subs, a custodian, and a facilities supervisor.

**"Teachers are the last people in the world, I think, that need to be cut."**

**– Wendy Thompson  
Montague school committee representative**

Heidi Schmidt, president of the Gill-Montague Education Association, observed the meeting and took notes. In recent months, GMEA members and supporters have argued publicly that understaffing of paras and other support staff, exacerbated by locally uncompetitive wages, is negatively affecting the school environment. The union is currently in negotiations with the district over renewal of the contract that covers these workers.

"We have talked internally about what if we need to cut," Blier told the committee. "We're still trying to save positions: we're looking at our supply lines, we're looking at adjusting our revenues..."

The district has discretionary control over how much revenue it pulls from certain accounts – chiefly the "excess and deficiency" (E&D) account, the school-district equivalent of free cash or savings, as well as certain "revolving" accounts through which the district is reimbursed by the state for expenditures in previous years.

Blier has warned against dipping too far into these limited slush funds in a given year to stabilize spending.

Her draft preliminary budget, however, had already reflected an increased reliance on E&D and various revolving accounts in order to offset the end of ESSER, a three-year federal program of direct pandemic aid to schools, this September.

In a discussion of a potential

deficit caused by school-choice tuition expenses outstripping reimbursements, Blier gave one hint as to a threshold beyond which staffing cuts could be necessary. "If we have a \$200,000 deficit, we have to cut staff," she said. "There's nothing else in our budget that adds up to that amount of money that we could cut. We can't turn the heat off, we can't turn the lights off, we can't just cancel people's health insurance."

Blier clarified to the *Reporter* that this was specifically referring to a mid-year deficit that could in theory be created by too many students choosing out after the budget has already been set, a scenario that leads her to fund the school choice tuition expense line on the higher side.

"We can also look at revenues right now to balance the budget, because the budget is not approved," she explained. "Once the budget is approved you can't overspend it."

**Payroll Protection**

If forced to cut costs, Blier said she would begin with supplies. The draft budget includes relative increases for "instructional equipment" – rugs, chairs, cubbies, racks, standing desks, and tables – at Hillcrest, Sheffield, and Gill elementary schools from a combined \$8,685 to \$34,813.

Gill school committee member Cristina Marcalow asked why the same line increased so much at all three schools, and Blier explained with a grin that the three schools' principals "sit together while they're working on their budgets."

"We can spend some of that money this year on some of this equipment that they're looking for," she added, "and take it out of this budget if we need to reduce it."

"Staffing is our biggest expenditure," said Montague member Wendy Thompson. "I assume that we are going to go through the budget and knock out some of these things first, before we start drilling away at that teaching staff?"

Blier confirmed that this would be the priority, and said that when cuts are needed, the administrative team meets and the principals typically sacrifice as much as they can – "I can do without those things, knock \$2,000 off of here, knock \$1,000 off of there" – in order to preserve staffing levels.

"If we're slapped with a waking nightmare where we have to cut staff," Thompson, a first-year committee member, asked later in the discussion, "is that a decision that we're involved in, or is that strictly on an administrative level?"

"That's at our level," superintendent Brian Beck told her. "If that comes up, we really have to work closely with principals to mitigate potential impact on students, and we can really only do that at the operational level."

"Teachers are the last people in the world, I think, that need to be cut," Thompson said. "We're in the business of teaching kids... All the stops should be pulled out before that's ever even considered."

"There have been times when they had to cut staff," Jane Oakes, longtime school committee chair and a retired district teacher, warned her. "They had to – there was a huge deficit. And it's very hard."

Attempts to reach the Gill Montague Education Association for comment on the Chapter 70 announcement were unsuccessful as of press time.



Tip of the week ...

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**ERVING** from page A1

driver's license are required, because making it to all the locations necessary would not be possible using public transportation. She added that it should be noted that the position entails a fair amount of public speaking.

In the ongoing saga of the former International Paper Mill, the board decided to put out a new Request for Proposals (RFP), while at the same time obtaining an updated bid for the full demolition of the complex. An RFP put out last year resulted in no proposals.

A public hearing was held in the middle of the selectboard meeting to present proposed changes to the layouts of Maple Avenue and Bridge Street. A number of residents were present with some questions, but everyone seemed satisfied

with the plans.

The proposed layout changes will be presented for the town to vote on at the special town meeting (STM) coming up next Wednesday.

Selectboard member James Loynd was appointed to negotiate on behalf of the town in discussions with the town of Montague about the renewal of the agreement to process Millers Falls wastewater in Erving.

A new policy was passed banning the display on any town-owned property of anything but official, military, and quasi-military POW/MIA flags, banners, and signs.

The selectboard will meet again next Monday, January 29, and a special town meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, January 31 at the elementary school.



**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Wood Bank Still Has Wood**

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Montague Community Wood Bank still has dry firewood available for Montague residents in need of heating assistance.

Wood will be distributed in half-cord allotments to low income residents with the potential to receive additional wood as need and supplies allow.

Income eligibility criteria are the same as for fuel assistance: \$42,411 for a single person and \$55,461 for a household of two. Interested parties should contact the

Gill-Montague Council on Aging at [coa@montague-ma.gov](mailto:coa@montague-ma.gov) or call the Gill Montague Senior Center at (413) 863-9357 for more information or to apply.

The Town of Montague recycles town tree removals into firewood with the help of the Tree Advisory Committee.

Volunteers are always welcome to come help split and stack firewood. Interested volunteers should contact the Senior Center as well.

**Montague Community Television News**

**Our New Hit Shows**

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

**TURNERS FALLS** – New episodes of our hit shows, *Montague Selectboard*, and *Montague Finance Committee*, will air on MCTV this week. If you miss their premiere on Channel 9, you can find them on the MCTV Vimeo page, which is linked from our website.

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](mailto:infomontaguetv@gmail.com) for a link to the Zoom.

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

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**MONTAGUE** from page A1  
municipal properties, rooftops, and parking lots.

The report listed 19 municipal sites, including the Franklin County Technical School and Turners Falls High School, and estimated their potential for generating solar. Similar calculations were made for 26 commercial and institutional properties, ranging from Judd Wire to the former Southworth paper mill to the Millers Falls Rod and Gun Club. Generation on parking lot canopies near 10 buildings was also estimated.

Though Pick did not discuss it, the UMass report included recommendations to modify the town's restrictive zoning regulations, which allow ground-mounted arrays over 30 kW only in "industrial" and "historical industrial" zones. The report suggested that these restrictions may violate state law, and that the town should consider the "expansion of the locations that larger systems (500 kW and above) could be located."

Pick advised that solar policy be included in the town's comprehensive plan, and that the selectboard and energy committee meet with department heads in April to discuss the report.

The selectboard was generally supportive of Pick's presentation, but member Matt Lord said he felt the selectboard was not necessarily the right venue for discussing the complexities of solar policy. He urged the energy committee to work with the planning board and capital improvements committee to make "changes that the boards feel are appropriate to expand the amount of solar."

"Solar's obviously here for the future, and I think it is a great opportunity," said member Chris Boutwell.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said he had "mixed feelings" about solar power, but believed "the technology is improving... and it's worth doing planning on."

Town administrator Steve Ellis noted that in April the selectboard would be in the throes of getting ready for the May 4 annual town meeting, and recommended the solar discussion be held after that. Pick agreed.

**Plugging the Hole**

Ellis reviewed options for addressing the loss of revenue at the Turners Falls airport caused by the prohibitive cost of a solar interconnection required by the Eversource

electric company. That cost, driven by the need to upgrade the industrial park's entire transmission system to accommodate a planned solar array, made it unrealistic to construct the array, creating revenue losses in both the current fiscal year and the upcoming FY'25 budget.

Ellis said the finance committee had "shared dismay at the situation," and stressed the need to "ensure a responsible budget" so the airport would "remain compliant with all regulations."

He shared two options, developed in consultation with town accountant Carolyn Olsen and assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey, for plugging the \$172,000 gap for the remainder of FY'24. One would draw \$138,000 from "free cash" – money left over from previous fiscal years – along with funds from the sale of real estate and the town's capital stabilization account. The second would take the full sum from free cash.

He then showed a similar chart for the FY'25 budget, which must be proposed at the town meeting in May. One option would be a "blended approach," taking money from projected taxation and using funds from general stabilization and real estate sales for the rest. The other would bankroll the airport budget almost entirely from "available taxation."

This second option, however, would require that the town reduce the level of "excess capacity" – i.e. taxes not collected – that the board has recently endorsed, and would in turn increase the town's "affordable assessment" to the Gill-Montague school district by over \$19,000.

The board did not take a vote on any of the options, but is hoping to vote on its budget recommendations at next Monday's meeting.

**New Connections**

In related news, the selectboard approved a \$15,099 change order to move electrical switches, part of a connection between a new used generator at the Clean Water Facility (CWF) and the electrical grid, from a transformer into their own box. The change was caused by a requirement by Eversource that the connection conform to a process known as "cold-sequence metering."

CWF superintendent Chelsey Little said Eversource had originally required that the town upgrade the transformer, which would have been "wildly expensive, and taken two

years' lead time." After negotiating with the company, she said, "we were able to take some of the mechanisms out of the transformer [box]."

Kuklewicz, who once served as the town electrical inspector, said cold-sequence metering "has been the standard since I have been in the trade," but that Eversource "should have, in my opinion, had an engineer come out to the facility and explain to the engineers what they needed in the beginning."

The board unanimously approved the change order, and also a second change order reducing the cost of the project by \$4,490 by modifying "some of the connections," in Little's words, to the transformer and switch box.

**Beautification**

The board authorized the planning department to hire Commonwealth Murals, LLC to manage the project to paint a mural on the northeast side of the Shea Theater. Town planner Maureen Pollock said the scope of services would include working with a "steering group," engaging the community in the project, overseeing a request for proposals to choose an artist, and developing a final design. The mural is expected to be completed this November.

In response to a question from Lord, Pollock said the project could be funded within the \$25,000 previously approved by the selectboard from American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Kuklewicz once again raised concerns about the visual impact of a drooping electrical conduit where the mural will be located. "Thank you for the reminder," said Pollock. "We do intend to straighten it, or paint over it."

Pollock also reported on a potential \$5,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts to expand public WiFi from the Carnegie Library to Peskeompskut Park. If Montague receives the grant, she said, "the town would be responsible for monthly WiFi rates" at the park.

**Other Business**

Elena Pepe-Salutric was appointed to the position of part-time library assistant, and Easton Smith was promoted from library assistant to substitute library assistant.

At Ellis's request, the board executed a one-year extension of the town's information technology contract with Suzor IT, at a rate

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of \$44,130.08. This cost, he said, was "steeply discounted from their standard price." As the town has not approved its budget for next year, the contract contains a "subject to funding" clause.

Ellis gave a detailed report on the January 19 meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Association. The "best part," he said, was a presentation by governor Maura Healey and lieutenant governor Kim Driscoll on their proposed "Municipal Empowerment Act." Among the proposals in the bill, Ellis stressed an increase in unrestricted local aid, continued use of millionaires' tax revenue to fund Chapter 90 road aid, and increases in local "revenue tools" such as meals, lodging, and auto excise taxes.

The board was particularly enthusiastic about a proposed ban on "double" utility poles – poles not removed within 90 days after new ones are installed. This has been a

perennial complaint of the Montague selectboard. Ellis said this proposal was the one that produced the loudest round of applause from selectboard members present at the MMA meeting.

Asked whether the recommendations of the recent state mosquito control task force were discussed by the MMA, Ellis said that if there was a discussion he was not aware of it. He added, however, that Montague's public health director was planning to bring the selectboard "an update" on the health board's position on joining the regional mosquito control district.

The board voted to accept \$34,827.36 the town has received as a result of a lawsuit against a driver who injured former police staff sergeant Lee Laster.


The next selectboard meeting will be held January 29.



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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

JANUARY 25, 2024



**By DAVID BRULE**

**SOKWAKIK/NORTHFIELD**—For Indigenous peoples, the Dawnlands are the homelands of the east, the lands and waters first touched by the rising sun.

The tribal people of the coast where the first light of day appears are the peoples of the dawn, the Wampanoag, the Wabanaki, the Abenaki.

Once the sun reaches the shores, it extends across dunes, estuaries, woodlands and rivers to soon reach the east-facing ridgeline of Wissatinnewag. This ridgeline extends from the falls at Peskompskut to Wequamps, which some now call Sugarloaf.

On that ridgeline there can still be found prayer seats where for thousands of years shaman, medicine man, medicine woman, spiritual leaders sat, performed ceremony, and waited to greet the rising sun. Their voices and prayers are still here, not erased, but still lingering in the air we breathe.

Most recently, a folklorist felt inspired to locate and record new living voices to tell some of the old stories of our central Connecticut River Valley.

Michael Kline undertook a labor of love to record and combine the voices of four local historians of Indigenous affiliation and descent. These four individuals have now added their voices to the oral archive of this ancient valley.

Michael, having recently moved to Sunderland after more than 40 years of life in West Virginia, is no stranger to our valley. He served many years as a collector of oral histories for the Pioneer Valley Folklore Society before heading to the Smokies and elsewhere to do hundreds of interviews and recordings of Southern voices.

He and his wife Carrie have also spent countless hours recording the voices of our neighbors in projects that include what Kline calls the “Wally and Juanita Nelson Memory Project,” as well as important archival histories of people such as local hero Randy Kehler, the Kinder-Morgan pipeline resisters of Northfield, and now Indigenous stories of this central valley.

Michael completed his PhD in folklore at Boston University under the mentorship of none other than the celebrated and late lamented Tony Barrand. He has spent a lifetime in historical preservation work, recording and disseminating cultural treasures.

His latest project, which he calls *New Voices in the Dawnland*, is the culmination of more than 650 hours of recording and editing, now rendered down to a two-hour audio recording, available online and featured in live presentations at local libraries.

The sessions include the voices of Chief Roger Longtoe and Rich Holschuh of the Southern Vermont Elnu Abenaki tribe, Joseph Graveline of Sowakik/Northfield, Doug Harris, retired deputy tribal historic preservation officer of the Narragansett Indian Tribe and ceremonial stone landscape preservationist. I myself, as coordinator of the National Park service study of the massacre at the falls in 1676, provide historical perspective of the stories at the falls and elsewhere.

Barry Higgins offers eastern woodland flute works during musical interludes, and Jennifer Lee provides both the introduction and conclusion of the audio session.

Blending the voices and stories of the above contributors, Kline’s recordings take the listener back through the multiple histories and perspectives of this valley we call home.

Joe Graveline takes us on a journey of 13,000 years in just a few thumbnail sketches of this valley’s geological and cultural evolutions. You are standing there with him on the shores of the vanished glacial lake that for



The author, at left, with folklorist and editor Michael Kline.

Above: A misty walk up Old Sunderland Road, this time last year.

## MEMORIES

### Summer in a Greek Farming Community

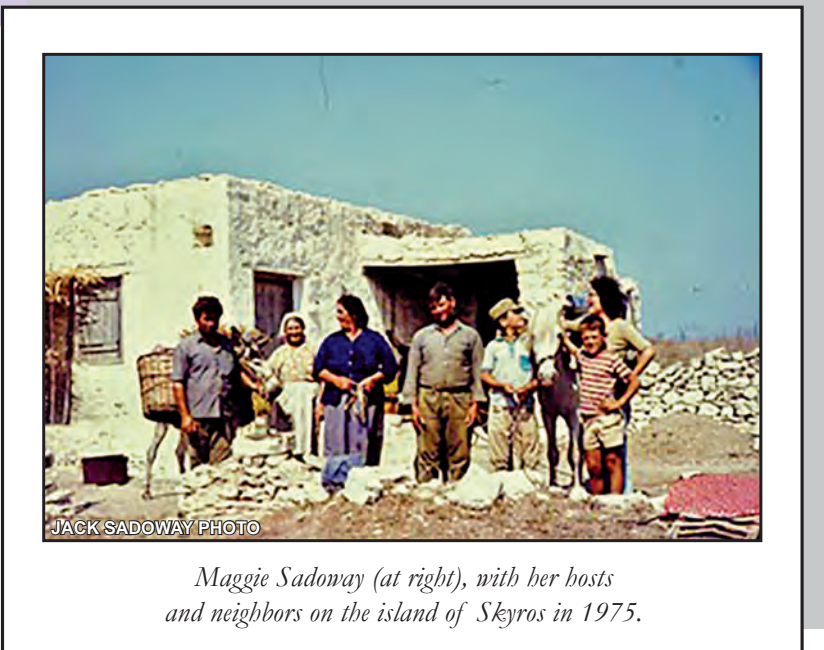
**By MAGGIE SADOWAY**

The sun roused us early from sleeping bags on the cement roof of an old farmhouse, far from the main town of a Greek island crowded with Athenians but seldom visited by foreigners. It was July 1975; my husband Jack and I, he from Ohio and I from New England, were in our early 30s, childless, living on a shoestring, and eager for a summer adventure far from busy Athens, where we had been living since meeting in a Greek class in 1967.

After a hot 14-hour trip by three buses and a ferry, we had arrived in Skyros to move into the room we had reserved in the main town for the summer – but it was no longer available. Our friend Maria suggested we camp in the whitewashed building where she used to keep her donkey. Never mind that it had no electricity, water, furniture, or outhouse, and was a seven-mile hike from town on a dusty dirt road. Hesitantly, we’d decided to give it a try.

We had no inkling the next ten weeks would rank high among the best things we would experience in 45 years together.

Maria loaded our backpacks onto her donkey and we set off for Trahi (*trah-HEE*), a fertile plain bordered by the Aegean Sea. We walked past sweet-smelling thyme and oregano, a dry riverbed full of pink oleander,



Maggie Sadoway (at right), with her hosts and neighbors on the island of Skyros in 1975.

and thousands of dust-covered olive trees. Dotted the hillsides were miniature whitewashed churches, one built following a saint’s instructions received in a dream.

Six miles into our walk we came upon barely visible remains of crumbling animal shelters and threshing floors, remnants of more prosperous times. An old-looking man of about 50, eyeing his neighbor’s meager flock of sheep, told us sadly, “His father had so many sheep that if you threw a handful of sand into that big pasture over there none of it would reach the ground.”

Stopping to gulp water at the



### Rail travel news for Massachusetts and beyond in 2024.

**SOUTH DEERFIELD** – Travel by train is having its moment in 2024. For railfans like me or people who haven’t seen the inside of the aged Amtrak Amfleet in decades, it will be a year of new train lines, new high-speed rail construction, and more and more ways to ride. All aboard the Railroad Travel News Express!

If you want to experience an actual high-speed train trip now on a scenic, warm weather route, head south to the busiest airport in Florida, MCO Orlando. Here you can board the Brightline Express, which will take you to Miami, with stops in West Palm Beach, Aventura, Fort Lauderdale, and dozens more. Brightline Holdings’ trains are clean, spacious, and bright yellow and green. A one-way ticket in Smart Class will cost \$89 for the three-hour trip, and up to \$189 for First Class, with free snacks and beverages and bigger seats up front.

Out in California later this year, the same company’s Brightline West division will break ground in the Mojave desert to build a Las Vegas-to-California



Brightline’s train at its West Palm Beach, Florida station.

high-speed train line. The Rancho Cucamonga-Las Vegas line will be in the median of I-15.

How about that, Martha? High-speed trains run down the middle of the interstate across the desert!

see **TRAVEL** page B4



Pet of the Week



‘BOOPER’

Booper is a timid brown tabby with a mysterious past, having arrived as a stray with little known about her history. Despite her shyness, there’s an undeniable charm to her demeanor.

Booper’s fur is adorned with intricate tabby stripes, accentuating her unique and endearing appearance. Slowly adjusting to her new surroundings, she is a quiet observer, often found nestled in cozy corners, peeking out with curious eyes.

The journey to unraveling the enigma of Booper’s past is accompanied by the hope that, with time and patience, she’ll blossom into a trusting and affectionate companion.

Open adoption hours are in Springfield Tuesdays through Saturdays, 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org).

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

Senior Center Activities  
JANUARY 29 TO FEBRUARY 2

**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 Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

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

**Monday 1/29**  
9 a.m. Interval Workout  
10:15 a.m. Seated Workout  
12 p.m. Pitch Card Game  
**Tuesday 1/30**  
9 a.m. Good For U Workout  
10 a.m. Line Dancing  
11 a.m. Social Stringers  
**Wednesday 1/31**  
9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning  
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics  
11:30 a.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo  
**Thursday 2/1**  
9 a.m. Core & Balance  
10 a.m. Barre Fusion  
**Friday 2/2**  
9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

**GILL and MONTAGUE**  
The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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

**Monday 1/29**  
10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
10:15 a.m. Outdoor Chair Yoga  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
**Tuesday 1/30**  
9 a.m. Chair Yoga  
9:30 a.m. Tuesday Knitters  
10 a.m. Zumba Lite  
12:30 p.m. Tech Help Drop In  
3 p.m. Tai Chi  
**Wednesday 1/31**  
9:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo  
4:15 p.m. Mat Yoga  
**Thursday 2/1**  
10:30 a.m. Brown Bag  
1 p.m. Pitch  
3:30 p.m. Tech 4 Seniors Class  
**Friday 2/2**  
10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
2 p.m. Chair Dance

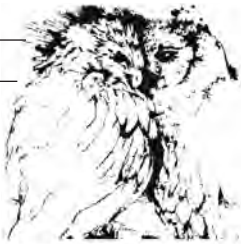
**LEVERETT**  
Chair Yoga classes are held on Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom. Foot care clinic is held monthly.

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Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

**SOUTH HADLEY** – Happy New Year! As usual, I hope this new year brings as much or as little satisfying sexual and/or sensual activities as you would enjoy.

Today I’m going to review the recent film *Poor Things*, as it is the most astonishingly, blatantly sex-positive film I may have ever seen in a theater. It was directed by Greek auteur Yorgos Lanthimos, and is currently playing at Amherst Cinema.

To give a brief summary, Bella Baxter, astutely and skillfully played by Emma Stone, seems to be a very intellectually- and motor-skill-challenged individual under the stewardship of the surgeon and mad scientist Godwin Baxter, a.k.a. “God,” played by Willem Dafoe with a patchwork-quilt Frankenstein’s-monster-like face.

The setting appears to be how we might imagine London’s Victorian times: ornate decor and architecture, and voluminous puffy sleeves galore. Curiously the main Victorian mansion also has some pincushioned padded floors in parlor rooms. Much of the film, notably when Bella is experiencing the more traditional development and guidance at her and God’s home, is in black and white, as well as filmed through a round fisheye or peephole lens, to further lend a nostalgic air.

To me the entire cinematography reminded me of a vastly more interesting and engaging Wes Anderson style, with a hefty amount of steampunk thrown in.

We soon learn that Bella is progressing each day a bit in development of motor skills, vocabulary, and even hair growth. God picks one of his curious students, Max McCandles, to continuously observe and chart all of Bella’s growth. At first Max is told Bella suffered a head injury, and is having to re-learn human functioning. He assiduously notes and charts her every improvement.

I won’t reveal the real reason behind her continued progress, but suffice it to say, we observe her go through stages of language acquisition, building cognitive skills, motor skill mastery, and eventual sexual development. The rest of this column is about this last aspect, as it is what greatly astonished and delighted me.

Bella eventually discovers mas-

turbation, and initially tries many objects, with complete innocence, to find pleasurable self-stimulation. She also initially has no sense that self-pleasure should be private. The writers reasonably have her keepers inform her that “working her body” is something to be done in private, which she quickly adapts to.

She continues to learn how to enjoy her body on her own, essentially championing self-pleasure – what many sex therapists and educators tout as a fundamentally important human behavior that helps us communicate our desires and preferences to others.

By this point Max has fallen in love with her, and God believes that Bella loves him, so he proposes a marriage contract. Ostensibly Max has observed that Bella enjoys sexual pleasure innocently, without any shame, and is looking forward to participating in this with her. However, God hires a lawyer to secure the nuptials and various legal agreements, including that Bella and Max live forever in God’s home.

The caddish lawyer, Duncan Wedderburn, played perfectly by Mark Ruffalo, becomes incredibly curious about the lengths to secure such a “desirable creature.” He searches the house until he finds her. After a short encounter in which he nonconsensually touches her (this is perhaps the only such depicted moment), he then begins a sexual dalliance with her, which she agrees to as she finds him enjoyable. He eventually convinces her to go on an adventure before settling down with her betrothed, Max.

Bella very outspokenly explores her own sexual pleasure, both by herself and in relation to Duncan. Due to her beginner nature, she finds it funny that men have a limit to how many orgasms they can generally have in a single encounter, when she has not found a limit.

At one point on a cruise boat she meets a woman who is much older in appearance, perhaps in her 60s, and asks her immediately if she is “furiously jumping” with anyone for pleasure. The woman remarks it has been over 20 years, and she is fine with that. Bella is chagrined, and follows up by asking whether she at least “works on her own body” with her hand. The woman says yes, and Bella is much relieved.

Bella’s unconstrained sexual freedom proves too much for Duncan, and they part ways in Paris, where Bella takes employment as a sex worker – something that initially seems ideal as she had even wondered why people don’t constantly engage in sexual pleasure. She quickly learns that men seeking paid sexual activity are often self-centered and unconcerned about the worker, or even whether their body is ready for the activity.

She tries to initiate some empowered strategies, like suggesting the workers choose their clients versus the other way around, and engaging clients in brief conversation prior to sexual activity. For instance, she tells a joke, they tell a childhood memory. Some of these improvements are welcomed by clients and the madam proprietor of the brothel.

Later in the movie a new character has convinced Bella to go with him for some time. I’m staying vague to avoid spoilers. She goes with him out of curiosity, but then quickly sees that he is cruel and means to control her, to the point that she overhears him consulting a doctor about a clitorrectomy. She immediately understands what this is, as she has now had full accurate anatomical vocabulary for some time, and is able to escape.

In conclusion, this may be one of the most vulva-empowered positive films I have yet to ever see in a theater or otherwise – certainly the most feminist and empowered film directed and written by men. In the face of ever-tightening patriarchal forces in the film, Bella continues to unabashedly explore her sexual development, consistently verbalize what she likes and wants, take charge of her anatomy, and make her own decisions as to her geographical location, employment, and relationship partners. Might we all adopt even 10% of this empowered self-direction.

*Stephanie Baird is a certified OWL facilitator and an EMDR psychotherapist and consultant who encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health. She is the author of the book EMDR Therapy and Sexual Health: A Clinician’s Guide (2023). She welcomes feedback and suggestions at [sexmatters@montaguereporter.org](mailto:sexmatters@montaguereporter.org).*

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# EXHIBITS

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

**Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls:** *On the Ground and In the Air and Inbetween*, Amy Dawn Kotel, through February 23. Reception Saturday, February 3, from 1 to 3 p.m.

**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. *Small Works Exhibit and Sale*, annual community art show featuring works smaller than ten inches square. February 4 through 26. Reception Sunday, February 4, from 1 to 4 p.m.

**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 Carris and Rae Heller. Closing reception this Friday, January 26, from 5 to 8 p.m.

**LAVA Center, Greenfield:** *Staff Picks Exhibit*, works by artists who

have shown at LAVA previously. Reception Saturday, February 3, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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

**Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett:** *Student Art Show*, artwork by Leverett Elementary School students. First two weekends in February.

**Gallery A3, Amherst:** *In Residence: Art for the Soul Gallery*, through Saturday, January 27. *The Dance of Dementia*, by Cheryl Rezendes, February 1 through March 2.

**Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls:** *Love at First Sight*, group show by member artists, January 31 through February 28.

**D’Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield:** *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.



## You Probably Don’t Need to Upgrade This Year.

By RYNE HAGER

**TURNERS FALLS** – Pretty much the most common question I get asked is, “Should I upgrade my gadget?”

Whether it’s a TV, a phone, a laptop, or even a car, people tend to fear missing out, and with the incredible quantities companies spend marketing The New Hotness, we tend to want new things. There’s nothing intrinsically wrong with the desire to make yourself happy, but odds are that a new phone won’t do it unless you’re rocking something really, really old.

That might be an obvious sentiment for some of our readers, but there are other reasons not to upgrade as well. Chief among them: Thanks to the magic of commoditization and its impact on technology in recent years, the version you have is probably as good as whatever you’d upgrade to.

“Commoditization” is a process that happens in some markets when, over time, a novel or unique good or service changes into something that lacks real differentiation. Think of it like water. Yes, you might spend money on it when you’re thirsty – say, for an overpriced bottle at the zoo or in a museum – but you aren’t shopping around for water reviews, comparing water specifications, or following the water news for weeks before making that purchase. Outside of horror stories like Flint, Michigan, one glass is essentially equivalent to another. It’s a commodity.

Companies that produce products do everything they can to prevent this from happening by trying to differentiate their goods and services from their competitors, adding special features or specific benefits they hope will make them unique. Sometimes, this differentiation isn’t even material or functional but simply based on marketing the product as more premium. But these approaches are not always successful, and most product markets tend to drift in favor of commoditization over time.

This is both a good thing and a bad thing.

Benefits include lowered costs for consumers – interchangeable products only really have one thing left to compete on, after all and that’s price. But commoditization also discourages innovation. Smaller prices mean smaller margins, and that can mean fewer investments in service infrastructure or engineering, though there are sometimes ways to break that cycle.

Coming back to your hypothetical gadget upgrade, this tendency towards commoditization has been hitting the electronics market pretty hard over the last half-decade, as even a quick glance at TV prices and year-over-year smartphone hardware improvements makes clear. Some companies still differentiate in small ways – or, at least, they try to – but outside specific bleeding-edge technologies or the ultra-premium market, those massive TVs on display at BJ’s or Best Buy are essentially identical.

And the same goes for this year’s crop of smartphones and many of the internal-combustion cars out there. (The rapid pace of change in the EV market is a very different story, in my opinion.)

It’s my job to try all the phones and gadgets, and unless you’re looking to buy something totally novel and new or are severely budget-restricted, most of them offer about the same quality these days. All the cameras are fine, all the phones are fine, and all the TVs are fine. And, unless you’re rocking an antique or it’s broken, the one you’re using now is also probably fine.

As we gear up for tax season and look forward to those possible tax refunds, think twice before using it on an upgrade. You probably won’t get very much more for what you pay.

So, when is the *right* time to upgrade?

Thanks for the idea, dear reader. We’ll discuss that next time.

*For more questions about consumer technology, how gadgets work, or which doodad to buy if you need X, Y, and Z, shoot me an email at [deviceadvice@montagureporter.org](mailto:deviceadvice@montagureporter.org).*

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

## Key Situation; Potential Peebag; One Recovered Cat; Weed Pen; Mustard Squirts; Thrown Cones; Buried Bones

**Tuesday, 1/16**

8:56 a.m. Caller from Cross Street states his large pickup truck is broken down on a bad corner. Services rendered.  
9:46 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that her black Nissan Sentra is not where she parked it last night. She believes she may have left the keys in it. Report taken.

1:16 p.m. Walk-in found something suspicious in a wooded area that an officer should see. Officer located object. It was just an old tarp frozen in the snow and ice.

5:38 p.m. Caller states that there is a semi truck stuck coming around the corner on Millers Falls Road, and he is out directing traffic looking for officer assistance. Officers advised. DPW advised for assistance with sand.

**Wednesday, 1/17**

12:06 a.m. Caller from G Street advises there is loud noise coming from

a nearby location; states noise is caused by a male and his friends who come and go. Caller states active noise and yelling now. Officer advises he spoke to two females who did acknowledge and apologize for the noise level. They stated they would be quiet for the evening.

3:42 a.m. E-911 caller from G Street reports her boyfriend took her vehicle keys and is not giving them back. Caller advises she was going to leave and the male hid the keys. Male party advises he did not take the female’s keys and that the keys have been lost for a few hours; this situation has been going on for roughly three hours. Officer advises parties separated for the night. At this time, keys have not been found.

8:17 a.m. Caller from G Street states that a female has been sitting in her car all night/morning and is now screaming that she’s cold and doesn’t have her keys and that her boyfriend sold them to another male for drugs. Officer advised. Female party advised of services; is refusing all services to the point of uncooperative behavior. Female advises she has a ride coming.

9:38 a.m. Caller states that residents at a Vladish Avenue address are whipping a dog outside with a leash and swearing/screaming at the dog. When caller said something to them, they started screaming and swearing at her and threatening her. Officer requesting assistance from animal control officer. Had conversation with residents and advised of complaint. ACO canceled per officer request.

12:13 p.m. DPW advises they are receiving complaints of people snowblowing into the road on Third Street. Officer advises it wasn’t in large amounts. Male party was advised and left.

1:12 p.m. Walk-in requesting to speak to an officer about a male party; believes a bag of urine was thrown at his car and that his car was keyed. Advised of options.

4:51 p.m. Caller from Powertown Apartments states that one of his neighbors slapped his friend’s butt and said “F— you” to him. Caller would like incident on record per request of housing authority.

10:28 p.m. Multiple 911 calls regarding smoke coming from an H Street address. Second caller reporting flames in the downstairs apartment. Shelburne Control advised. Officer confirms structure fire; advises that the residents stated that everyone is out of the building and only animals should be in the building at

this time. DPW contacted to bring sand to scene. Water department contacted to advise FD will be unable to turn off the hydrants because of the cold. Officers transporting parties to station. Officer back on scene to retrieve a cat that was recovered in the fire; bringing cat to station to be reunited with owners. Building owner looking for his cat; advised we will call him if found.

**Thursday, 1/18**

3:19 a.m. 911 caller reporting motor vehicle accident on Montague City Road. No fluids or injuries. Officer requesting Rau’s for tow. Summons issued for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and marked lanes violation.  
10 a.m. Caller from 253 Farmacy requesting officer to business for a customer who tried using counterfeit money last night. Officer advised. Money was not counterfeit; pen was faulty. Male party can pick up his money from the station.  
12:51 p.m. Notice of re-possession recovered from I Street.

3:48 p.m. Caller states that a white dog is tied up outside on Fourth Street; it is barking and jumping around and appears to be all red around the neck. Caller is concerned that it might be bleeding. Officer advises that dog does not appear to be in distress and is wearing a red and orange collar. No answer at door.

7:26 p.m. Caller from Third Street states that his tenant called him and stated that there is a black SUV with CT plates in the driveway and she is unable to park. Caller called his tenant and they don’t know who it belongs to. Officer advises vehicle left when he pulled up.  
11:43 p.m. Caller from Third Street states that a female party has driven by her twice and the passenger in the vehicle is yelling inappropriate/vulgar things at her. Caller would like it on record.

**Friday, 1/19**

8:08 a.m. Caller from Bridge Street states that the downstairs neighbor is pounding on the walls again and just squirted mustard on his back porch. A second tenant called to say the male party is pounding the walls again. No answer at door; neighbors think he left and is somewhere in the area. Officers checking area. Had conversation with caller, who reported vandalism to his porch area in the way of mustard packages squirted all through the stairwell. Officer observed same. After numerous attempts to serve in hand, copy of 258E paperwork visibly and securely left in the door of apartment on the back porch entrance.

12:11 p.m. Caller believes there are cats still living on the H Street property where there was a recent house fire. Caller given phone number for ACO.

**Saturday, 1/20**

10:43 a.m. Shelburne Control took a 911 call from a party stating that a vehicle rear-ended them on the Gill side of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, then drove around them and sped across the bridge. Officer meeting caller at Nouria. Officer went to address of involved vehicle and found it, but there was no damage on it that he could see.

1:24 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road states that a car just struck a deer and the car appears very damaged. Officer requesting fire and ambulance to evaluate vehicle operator. Rau’s requested for tow. Report taken.

4:11 p.m. Crash detection from iPhone at West Main Street and Millers Falls Road; no voice contact; no answer on callback. Second caller transferred from Shelburne Control states that a vehicle with two occupants hit a pole. EMS and fire dispatched. Rau’s contacted for tow. Shelburne Control contacted Eversource.  
8:04 p.m. Report of threatening/harassment at Powertown Apartments. Caller would like it on record for now.

**Sunday, 1/21**

9:12 a.m. Caller states that a male party is asking people for money on Avenue A. Party moved along.


9:59 a.m. Caller from Emond Avenue concerned because his CO alarms are sounding in his house. FD responding.

11:37 a.m. Caller states that as she was driving over the bridge over the Connecticut River onto Canal Road in Turners Falls, she saw three kids dressed in black throw some orange safety cones off the bridge into the river. Unable to locate.

5:01 p.m. 911 call reporting small oil fire in oven while cooking dinner on K Street. Put out with fire extinguisher, but house is filled with smoke. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

8:48 p.m. Caller states someone moved in above him four days ago; party has been making a lot of noise today, sort of yelling and banging around, and caller is scared that the male party is going to come downstairs and beat him up. Caller called back stating he heard the male party say he is going to kill the caller and “bury his bones.” Officers spoke to male party in apartment; he was playing music loudly and was advised of complaint. Unhappy and slammed door.

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TRAVEL from page B1

Brightline has committed \$600 million towards initiating the project, and is pursuing \$3.75 billion in federal infrastructure funding to offset approximately one-third of the total project expenses. Brightline is owned by Fortress Investments, one of the deepest-pocketed hedge funds. Last June, a \$25 million federal grant was secured to support the design and construction of two

stations in California. The remaining funding is anticipated to come from private sources. Brightline West expects to serve more than 11 million one-way passengers annually. The project is near shovel-ready and expected to break ground in early 2024, followed by a four-year construction period with hopes to commence passenger operations in time for the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

The only drawback with the faster-tracked Brightline train line is that it ends in Rancho Cucamonga, California, with an LA Light rail line connection; of course, ending it in the center of Los Angeles would be much better. But for now, it's a significant step forward.

Despite its garish color scheme, 97 Floridians have been hit by the passing Brightline trains since they began service in 2018. It remains a big problem with trains of all sizes, but these high-speed trainsets have to pass road crossings at some points, unlike in Europe, where dedicated fences keep high-speed lines separate and safer than in the US.

Up in central California, Amtrak continues over budget, but is moving forward on an even bigger and more expensive project: California High-Speed Rail, which will eventually connect San Francisco and Los Angeles in 2030. Stay tuned – for now it's only building in the Central Valley between Merced and Bakersfield, and negotiating the right-of-ways for the rest of the 350-mile route.

Closer to home, we have a few new railroad stations opening up in Massachusetts in 2024.

New Bedford and Fall River will get train service this summer as a new MBTA line to Boston opens. Phase 1 of the South Coast Rail project extends commuter rail service to Taunton, New Bedford, Freetown, and Fall River. Service was supposed to begin by the end of 2023, but was delayed.

In both Ashland and Lynn, T service is returning. The Ashland T stop recently reopened following a multi-million dollar restoration project that closed the station in August. Meanwhile, the T has also opened an interim platform in Lynn to restore train service after safety

What Else is New for Rail?

- Here are some of the new train routes planned for Amtrak for years beyond 2024, part of what the Biden administration is pushing as part of a new vision on rail travel in the US:
- Raleigh, North Carolina to Richmond, Virginia
  - Harrisburg to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
  - \$729 billion for a new rail bridge over the Potomac River to expand passenger rail between Washington, DC, and Richmond.
  - The bridges and tunnels of the Northeast Corridor have always been the main reasons behind the delays and slow train speeds. Now, the feds have signed off on the third Hudson River tunnel which will dramatically improve the flow of trains through New York City.



Amtrak Airo trains like this will begin service 2026 along the Northeast Corridor.



The upper-level seats in one of Amtrak's 2024 double-decker long-distance trains.

issues caused that station to close down in 2022.

Up in Brattleboro, Amtrak is building a new station next to the river starting this March. And wait until you see the bridge that will open in 2024, a high-arching steel monster that will tower over the old bridge to Brattleboro from Hinsdale, New Hampshire.

The town's new train station will house a waiting area with 36 seats, a restroom, an outdoor area with more seating, and an engineers' room with additional parking on site. It will even have an electric

snowmelt system! And, to the south: in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, while you can now park there for free for a few days, a new Amtrak station is under construction and will be open for business in 2025.

Max Hartshorne, local travel editor, writes about traveling around our region and a little beyond.

Max is the editor of GoNOMAD Travel and hosts the short-form GoNOMAD Travel Podcast, which you can hear at anchor.fm/max-hartshorne.



Brattleboro's new Amtrak station, shown above in a computer rendering, will be open in 2025.

EVENT PREVIEW

Cosplay for Wizard of OZ

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – Isaac Mass, the owner of the Greenfield Garden Cinemas, likes showing old movies a lot, such as silent films and classics like National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation. He also likes doing promotional events.



The Wizard of Oz has an 85th anniversary coming up, and Mass got ahold of the film to show at the theater. They are doing a cosplay contest in connection with the film, with some very cool prizes. Cosplay contests are where people dress up as characters from things. At the Garden, it is as characters for films they are showing; one of the other times they did a cosplay contest was for the Barbie movie. The contest will be held this Sunday, January 28 from noon to 4 p.m., and the movie will start showing on that day. Mass confirmed they are doing this because of the anniversary. "Yes, we are doing this to get peo-

ple excited about the 85th anniversary," he told me. "We know a lot of people like to dress up like the characters from The Wizard of Oz." Some of the prizes come from Cleary Jewelers, which is a good fit for the film and the contest. Other things include gift certificates from Doggie Dips N Clips and Clarkdale Fruit Farm, and an oil change from Goly's Garage. "All our prizes tie into the movie," Mass said, "and we hope it gets people excited to participate in the cosplay." Cleary Jewelers is a very fancy place to be involved in something like this. Their jewelry is an "Emerald City" tennis bracelet and a ruby pendant necklace. This made me ask Mass how that happened. He said all the businesses who gave the prizes to this event loved the idea, and were excited to join in the fun. I would call this event a bit of a big deal. Mass mentioned that the theater hasn't had the greatest luck with people showing up the other times it has held cosplay events. He wants a lot of people to show up at this one, and feels the timing on the weekend will create better luck. The other ones have also been at night. The jewelry as a prize has already piqued my interest for the event. Maybe the same will happen with people who are fans of this movie. Given the characters who are in this movie, I picture people being in some really cool costumes for this.

WEST ALONG from page B1

thousands of years submerged the sites of our modern-day towns of Northfield, Montague, Greenfield, Deerfield and beyond. You walk with the first Paleo peoples as you venture north and camp along the glacial lake shores. You marvel with Graveline in wonderment about the earth upon which you stand.

We venture deep into the Abenaki sense of language and place with Elnu Rich Holschuh. We learn anew the first lessons and instructions for living in balance and harmony with our world. For many of us those lessons have been lost, and forgotten. Rich reminds us.

We learn again the simple sense of language as a key to how we should see the world around us. What do our everyday words tell us of our place in the world? Much of our modern-day English is primarily functional. Holschuh offers a glimpse of Indigenous language that is deeply descriptive, that reminds the Abenaki peoples of their role and place in a web of life that does not place human beings egotistically at the center, at the top of the food chain.

To listen to Holschuh is to plunge into a different way of seeing, to see for an instant a new way of envisioning the world that is ironically tens of thousands of years old. He shares with us ways to recover relationships with words as a pathway to living in balance that has long been forgotten by many of us.

Interspersed among the narratives and storytelling are traditional songs of greeting and welcoming, sung by Chief Longtoe. He also shares an Abenaki origin story of the life, death, and gift of Corn Woman. He tells of her sacrifice so that her people may have sustenance in the growing season of the yearly cycle.

Doug Harris shares his mission of seeking to locate and preserve sites of ceremonial stone groupings, to find meaning in the stone landscapes, and to rally the support of non-tribal people to protect the sites. He reveals a new tool in trying to comprehend the age and significance of the stone groupings around us. He speaks of "optically stimulated luminescence." You will need to listen to his voice to grasp what that means.

Graveline, Holschuh, and I all share what we have learned of the tragic events that took place in 1675-76

in this stretch of the Valley. We recount anecdotes, stories, and research about the contact period between English and Native peoples. This encompasses the subsequent histories of the founding and then destruction of English settlements, the cultural conflicts and violences of King Philip's War, and the efforts to engender and encourage healing more than 400 years later.

In conversation, editor Kline makes the point of the value of audio recordings. He is convinced that listening to a recording has advantages over a medium with images. He feels that images can create a difficulty, in that they can trigger receptors that influence and prejudice the way we take in the storyline. By not picturing anyone, the audio allows the listeners to create their own pictures and images. The vulnerability of a raw interview requires courage on the part of the speaker, which in turn provides a sense of authenticity in the ear of the listener.

He should know. Michael and Carrie have done thousands of hours of interviews from Maine to Guatemala, recording voices from many troubled and challenged locales where the voices of regular people can still be heard.

I'd venture to say that our "new voices in the Dawnland" are not really new. They are voices that have come down to us over the millennia, but have been ignored or their stories temporarily lost. Those of us who have been recorded in the New Lights sessions are in fact giving voice to these very old stories. Our voices find their strength in memory and in the heart where memory dwells. We speak from studied intertribal memory and legend passed through a multigenerational conduit of oral tradition.

We also speak from a perspective informed by decades of historical research and archaeological data provided by dozens of local scholars, both tribal and non-tribal persons alike.

You can find the audio sessions at [www.soundcloud.com/talkingacrossthelines/new-lights-in-the-dawnland](http://www.soundcloud.com/talkingacrossthelines/new-lights-in-the-dawnland) or on the "Talking Across the Lines" podcast.

To schedule a public airing in your community, with questions and answers, contact [kline@folktalk.org](mailto:kline@folktalk.org).



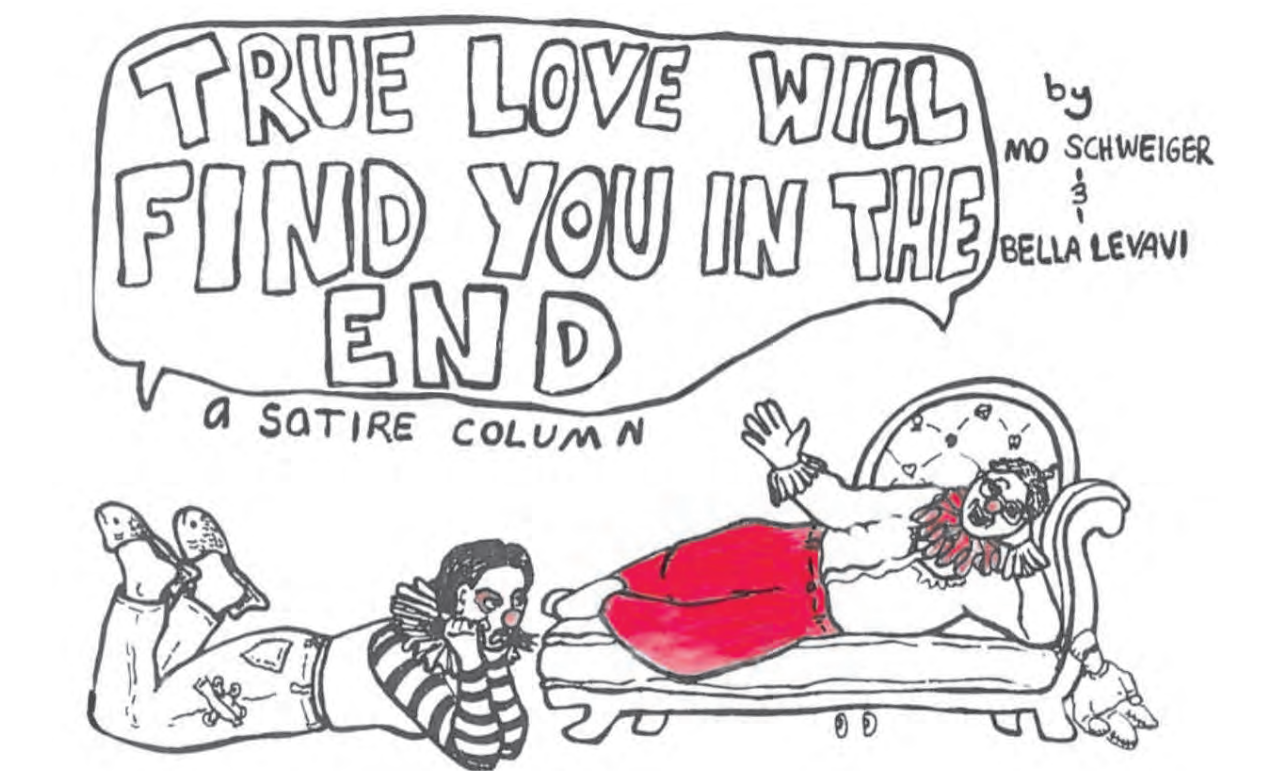
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# The Plight of the Medium-Distance Relationship

By MANDY MUDBALL

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – Dating is a difficult tightrope to walk when living in a rural area. Do you choose to date within your own insular community, risking the chance of being in an abstract theater piece with your ex? Or do you brave the trek elsewhere, relinquishing the chance for physical proximity to your beau?

*Frolic in Franklin, or hoedown in Hampshire?* This dilemma has existed since before Northfield was colonized in 1714. When dating was first invented in the area currently known as Massachusetts, young singles would flock to the water, hopping into Mishoon boats and paddling the 30 miles southward on the Kwenitegok (currently known as Connecticut) River to Hadley to flirt on the largest Common in the world. Centuries later, singles are still asking that age-old question: is it worth it to date someone in Hampshire County if you live in Franklin County?

All of these years of history, or at least the one and a half years I’ve lived here, have pointed to one thing: you’re gonna like it better up North. Let me spell it out for you.

Let’s be economical here. Even if you’re buying gas from the two cheapest gas stations in Franklin County, the Planet Gas and Mobile next to the Greenfield rotary, the amount of money that you would spend at the pump ferrying back and forth from Hampshire County should deter you from flirting with even the most attractive Northampton barista.

With that money, you could be buying a 50-cent art object from Nik Perry’s gumball machine pop-up (at Sadie’s Bikes, the Wagon Wheel, or the Upper Bend), a two-dollar 12 oz. glass of PBR from Smittys’ sexy bearded bartender Kolyn (name changed for anonymity), or a five-dollar game of chip ‘n’ putt at Goodnow’s nine-hole course (located so close to a wetland that you can feel it in your socks).

I cannot overstate how much the commute will impact your relationship. While it might not be that long, the 30-minute drive down the bleakest strip of I-91 will snuff your spark. After your date at the Gypsy Apple Bistro in Shelburne Falls you practically float home, giddy about your blossoming crush. But after you get breakfast at Miss Florence Diner, complete with bottomless mid-strength coffee, you find yourself picking apart every word

your sweetie said on the date.

While the drive home began with you singing along to 93.9 The River, by the time you hit Deerfield and your car radio picks up 95.3 Bear Country, you are ready to switch lanes and call it quits.

As you’re driving to your Tuesday night date, you find yourself overanalyzing the cryptic text that your girlyboyboygirlfriend sent to you the night before about the new behavior of their pet rats. Did they really mean what they said – that the rats have escaped their cage and crawled into the walls of their house, proceeding to chew up the electrical cords and leaving the apartment in the dark after/because they met you? What does that mean their rats, and by extension, they, think of you? What do you think of them? If you were a rat, would meeting them cause you to wreak havoc on an entire apartment building’s electrical grid? Would this fit of rodently passion make the relationship last to Christmas? What size stocking do you buy for a rat on Christmas? Do rats have their own rat Christ?

Oh, a rumblestrip! Man, I love rumblestrips.

As I was saying. This is not a problem that you will run into in a relationship with someone in Leverett. While it is a similar distance from your queer cohousing unit in Greenfield to their tiny home on their parents’ property, the drive down Rattlesnake Gutter Road is so beautiful that your mind will be occupied with the majesty of nature, rather than the rodents and short-comings of your date.

Furthermore, the 20-something populations in Franklin and Hampshire counties are physically identical – especially the men to me, as I suffer from a rare condition known as *male faceblindness*. They look so much alike that, while walking down Main Street in Greenfield or Northampton (or even Avenue A for that matter), one might be convinced that they see their ex until they get closer and realize the cutie in question is in fact their roommate.

Even though this may be true in both counties, the similarities between the populations are only skin-deep. It is extraordinarily likely that you, Franklin County-based reader, will have nothing in common with your Hampshire Countypart. While you both sport close-cropped brown hair, broken glasses, and a crossbody bag, Hampshire County hotties have a reputation for being employed. This cannot be said for

the *crème de la crème* of Franklin County’s most eligible bachelorxs. And no, your two-week dog sitting gig in Whately does not count.

Many chalk up this difference in 20-something employment rates to a lack of job opportunities in the more rural area. What it actually comes down to, though, is a lack of desire to work.

This phenomenon in Franklin County has been equated with the Generation Z and Millennial trend of the Great Resignation. For a time I thought this comparison was apt, but according to a study completed in 2022 by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, the fact that no one here has a 9-to-5 is due to the basic principle of being a punk. ACAB.

Not only will it be difficult for you and your Hampshire County sweetie to find time to hang out, as they work during the day and you spend your nights vandalizing Poet’s Seat Tower, you will likely want to do different things when you manage to find an evening to spend together.

If your crush lives in Hadley, they might invite you to a show at 90 King Street featuring a classic four-piece band of men. When it’s your turn to plan a date, though, the performance you invite them to might be more likely to involve abstract turntablism or dark techno. If you do manage to find a show involving an act with stringed instruments out here, it will likely be made up of a bass ukulele, fiddle, cello, and flute made out of a zucchini stem. This will blow your Hampshire County date’s mind, causing them to reevaluate the meaning of sound and break up with you so that they can spend their time and emotional energy reconstructing their understanding of music.

While this is an all-encompassing list of situations you might, nay will, fall into if you choose to date south of the Whatley/Hatfield line, you will probably have to do so anyway given that you’ve already slept with every single person who comes to the Upper Bend on Sunday mornings. Let’s be honest, there’s just not that many people here.

Stay tuned for next month’s edition: *The Question of Brattleboro*. Spoiler: it mostly comes down to whether or not you’re willing to date a clown.

True Love Will Find You  
In The End (TLWFYITE),

Mandy Mudball

## LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on January 23, 2014: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

### Wendell Fire Chief Hangs Up His Helmet

At its January 15 meeting the Wendell selectboard formally received a letter announcing the retirement of fire chief Everett Ricketts. Certainly one of the town’s longest-serving public servants ever, Ricketts joined the department in 1957 and became chief in 1976 – 38 years ago.

The 77-year-old Ricketts said that his retirement was partly a result of “friendly persuasion” by town officials who say they’re

concerned about the chief’s safety in his advancing age.

### The Gardener’s Companion: “Joy in January”

The ground is as hard as a rock and it is near impossible to imagine digging and planting time. Still, spring will come, often before we are quite ready.

If you haven’t already indulged in the joys of perusing the colorful seed catalogues, treat yourself now. We may have many more days of cold and dark, but this gives you the excuse to sit by the fire and peruse those tempting garden catalogues. It’s not too early to prepare your order.

## 20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on January 15, 2004: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

### Montague: Carnegie Library Renovation

Last week, the Carnegie Library was approved for a grant of \$1.8 million for improvements to the 100-year-old building, increasing the size from 7,520 to 19,890 square feet, if the town of Montague can come up with the remaining \$2.8 million.

There is no disputing that the library is in need of renovation, but with the police living in a cramped basement and the DPW’s budget being cut, the town has some important decisions to make. And gaining support for another major

renovation project may prove difficult while the town is paying for the high school renovation.

“I don’t see some magic time in the future when we will have more money than we have now,” said Mike Naughton of the fin com.

### NMH School to Consolidate

Having taken a “financial hit” to its endowment, and in the face of rising costs, Northfield Mount Hermon School is consolidating on its Mount Hermon campus in Gill.

The board of trustees made the decision favoring the Gill campus based on its “community feel,” the superior maintenance of its buildings, and the presence of good building sites for new construction.

## 150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on January 21, 1874: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

### Local Matters

Ice for cutting – nowhar.

When is Mr. Waterbury going to put a weathervane on the steeple of his church here?

The Pulp Mill was at its speed all day Friday last, the ice preventing the shutting of the gates. No damage was done.

The freight business between Greenfield and here is heavier than usual at this season of the year, and business is increasing. The freight business during December amounted to \$7,684.

The Divine services were very fully attended last Sunday. At the various churches, there was more than a usual attendance. The Episcopal, Baptist and Roman Catholic being particularly noticeable.

Some thieves went for Wm. Schuler’s saloon on Sunday night, and stole about \$75 worth of tobacco, cigars, candy, etc. An entrance was effected by means of false keys. As a clue to the perpetrators is had we refrain from saying more. Wouldn’t it be well to

make an example of some of those fellows. A bit of cold lead or so.


At last we seem to have a singing school that is going to be successful. Mr. Snow had the largest number out on Saturday evening that has yet been collected. A competent, careful, pains-taking teacher, a nice comfortable room, and a price within the range of the poorest person in town.

The Griswold Manufacturing Company will resume operations on their mills about March 1. The Company have been cutting and preparing the timber for the buildings during the winter, and, as they have a large lot of brick all ready, the work will be pushed with rapidity. One of the foundations is already in and next in order is the brick work. These mills will be among the largest and finest cotton mills in New England.

Don’t think that a reporter knows everything by instinct. Unless parties interested will give him information of their wishes he must go without. If the columns of a newspaper are worth using, they are worth the taking the trouble to give some idea of what you want. If you desire to be helped, just lend your own aid.



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# Aquí se habla español

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



## ¿Qué está pasando en Ecuador?

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

**GREENFIELD** – El día 10 de enero de 2024 las instalaciones del Canal 10 de televisión en Ecuador en Guayaquil, fueron asaltadas por un grupo de delincuentes que llevaban armas de guerra y explosivos. Además del canal de televisión, una universidad y un hospital también sufrieron ataques de organizaciones criminales. Los criminales iban enmascarados y se enfrentaron al presentador del programa, colaboradores y a distintos trabajadores que se encontraban en el estudio en ese momento.

Las imágenes se pudieron ver en directo ya que el programa la violencia se llevó a cabo durante la transmisión del mismo. En el video se ve y se oye como las personas presentes en el estudio gritan y piden clemencia al tiempo que son empujados por los asaltantes y se les obliga a arrodillarse. En la grabación se escucha también como obligan al presentador del programa a que pida a la policía que salga de las instalaciones de la televisión.

El incidente acabó con la detención de la mayoría de los delincuentes, entre los que había menores de edad, algunos heridos, pero ninguno de gravedad.

Esto es solamente la guinda al pastel de una situación que se lleva produciendo en Ecuador desde el final de la pandemia.

Unos días más tarde, el fiscal que investigaba este incidente fue asesinado cuando salía del edificio de la fiscalía. Unos individuos lo persiguieron con armas cuando iba en su propio automóvil en Guayaquil. En ese momento viajaba sin escolta, aunque había pedido al presidente protección policial ya que se sentía indefenso después de haber participado en el interrogatorio de los criminales que participaron en el asalto del Canal 10 de televisión.

*Pero, ¿qué es lo que está pasando en Ecuador?*

A finales de noviembre de 2023, **Daniel Noboa** fue nombrado nuevo presidente electo de Ecuador. Es un hombre de negocios, que proviene de una familia dedicada a la exportación de bananas y gestiona algunos de los principales puertos del país. Nunca lo ha reconocido en público, pero sus ideales políti-

cos se acercan al centro derecha. A su llegada al poder Ecuador estaba viviendo una de las crisis más graves de violencia y criminalidad de toda su historia, con cientos de heridos en las calles, coches quemados, y las cárceles tomadas por los delincuentes, usando como rehenes a los guardias de prisiones y a otros presos.

Así que el 8 de enero de 2024 el presidente Noboa decretó el estado de excepción. Este decreto implica un toque de queda de al menos 60 días. Significa que entre las 10 de la noche y las 5 de la mañana nadie puede salir de casa, el ejército es el responsable de velar por la seguridad en las prisiones y en las calles y se prohíben todo tipo de reuniones no autorizadas.



Se llegó a este estado de violencia porque las bandas organizadas intentaron crear el caos como forma de presión para que las cárceles no fueran vigiladas por el ejército. El presidente decretó esa medida extrema porque consideraba que las acciones criminales habían desembocado en un conflicto de tal magnitud que era literalmente un estado de guerra.

En el decreto del estado de excepción, el presidente Noboa mencionó hasta 20 organizaciones criminales como causantes de la inseguridad del país.

Las bandas mencionadas trabajan para redes internacionales de narcotráfico y con relaciones muy estrechas con los carteles de la droga en México. Algunos de sus líderes se encuentran en prisiones ecuatorianas y desde allí dirigen el negocio por lo que necesitan man-

ga ancha de los guardianes para poder seguir trabajando.

Esta violencia era desconocida hasta ahora en Ecuador, pero a partir de la pandemia las cifras de criminalidad se elevaron tanto que ahora es uno de los países más peligrosos de Latinoamérica.

Uno de los criminales más famosos que se encontraba en prisión era **Adolfo Macías**, conocido por el alias de **Fito**. Es el jefe de la banda de Los Choneros, una de las bandas más peligrosas y violentas de Ecuador. Estaba detenido como presunto autor intelectual del crimen del candidato presidencial Fernando Villavicencio que fue asesinado en plena campaña electoral. Se suponía que debía cumplir 34 años

de condena ingresado en una de las cárceles de alta seguridad del país, pero desapareció de la prisión. En esos días también se fugó de prisión **Fabrizio Colón**, el jefe de Los Lobos. Eso hizo que el gobierno promulgase el estado de excepción ante la magnitud del peligro y la escalada de violencia en las calles. Por su geografía y localización estratégica, Ecuador se ha convertido en un lugar ideal para las bandas de narcotraficantes que utilizan el país para sus operaciones de envío de cocaína a Europa y Estados Unidos. Ecuador tiene frontera con Colombia donde están la mayoría de cultivos de hoja de coca en el mundo, y eso hace que el país sea presa fácil de las bandas organizadas que cruzan la frontera. Tampoco ayuda tener un gobierno débil políticamente y una

situación económica en desventaja para el ciudadano de a pie.

Al llegar al poder el presidente Noboa presentó un plan que incluía nuevos materiales y equipos para la policía, así como mejorar las condiciones económicas de las fuerzas estatales y de los guardias de prisiones para evitar los sobornos.

La situación en Ecuador llegó a ser tan extrema que a veces parecía sacada de una comedia de acción. Por ejemplo, Fito, con el dinero que manejaba en la cárcel pudo construirse una piscina dentro de la prisión para su uso exclusivo, organizaba fiestas para los que trabajaban para él con alcohol y drogas dentro del centro penitenciario.

A partir del momento del estado de excepción el gobierno ecuatoriano ha ido tomando medidas para garantizar la seguridad ciudadana. A pesar de ello, desde el 8 de enero en Ecuador ha habido más de 50 amenazas de bomba al día. Las clases presenciales se han ido reanudando poco a poco en las escuelas y universidades a partir del 22 de enero, y muchos de los funcionarios públicos continúan teletrabajando ya que tienen miedo de volver a sus puestos de trabajo.

Noboa ha creado un plan estratégico de seguridad al que ha llamado “Plan Fénix.” Por supuesto, estas medidas necesitan un aporte económico, y Noboa ha propuesto subir el impuesto IVA del 12% al 15% para conseguir este dinero. También ha afirmado que este plan tendrá un coste de unos 800 millones de dólares, aunque Estados Unidos aportará 200 millones de dólares en armas nuevas para el ejército ecuatoriano.

Ha anunciado que en marzo convocará una consulta popular sobre este tema. Noboa cree firmemente que se necesita más tecnología, una organización dedicada a la inteligencia estatal, mejores entrenamientos, refuerzo de la seguridad en las prisiones y mayor control en las fronteras para combatir el crimen organizado.

El pasado domingo 21 de enero se llevó a cabo la mayor operación antidroga conocida en el país en la provincia de Vinces. En ella se encontraron unas 22 toneladas de clorhidrato de cocaína que los carteles tenían previsto enviar a Europa, Asia y Estados Unidos utilizando avionetas y barcos de carga.

El gobierno declaró que esta op-

eración se estaba llevando a cabo desde hacía algunos meses con vigilancia del ejército a sospechosos de pertenecer a bandas armadas.

El éxito de esta operación llega justo a tiempo porque el gobierno quiere presentar al congreso para su aprobación una ley para expropiar los bienes y dinero de las bandas de narcotraficantes para utilizar estos recursos para luchar contra ellos.

Otra de las propuestas de Noboa para afrontar esta crisis de seguridad es liberar espacios en las cárceles mediante la repatriación de unos 1.500 presos, especialmente de Colombia y Perú, y está manteniendo contactos con ambos gobiernos para poder llegar a un acuerdo de extradición.

Y entre todo ha surgido la polémica del caso Metástasis. Es un escándalo de proporciones nacionales que implica a jueces, fiscales, políticos y narcotraficantes antes de la declaración del estado de emergencia.

En medio de este tema está la alcaldesa del cantón Simón Bolívar, amiga personal del ex-presidente Correa. Antes de ser alcaldesa **Maria Fernanda Vargas** se ganaba la vida creando contenido para adultos en la página web OnlyFans. Esto parece que no importaba demasiado a sus votantes, pero sí los correos electrónicos intervenidos por la fiscal general del estado en los que aparecen diversos chats con uno de los narcos más peligrosos, **Leandro Norero**, y que fue asesinado en 2022.

Los correos electrónicos y chats intervenidos demuestran cómo el narco era capaz de comprar las voluntades de diferentes cargos de la administración pública. Norero pagó a jueces y fiscales grandes cantidades de dinero para ser puesto en libertad.

Norero estaba implicado en una relación, siempre según estos chats, con la alcaldesa a la que utilizaba para comprar armas ya que debido a su posición era más difícil que le interceptasen durante la compra. Norero, al que sus subordinados apodaban el Patrón, era el cerebro de bandas como Los Lobos, enemiga acérrima de los Choneros.

En cuanto a los países vecinos, en la **Asamblea la Comunidad Andina** celebrada este fin de semana pasado condenaron la violencia en Ecuador y decidieron adoptar medidas concretas para luchar contra la criminalidad organizada transnacional.

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ARTS

ENTERTAINMENT

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 25

Parlor Room, Northampton: Heather Maloney. \$. 7:30 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.

Parlor Room, Northampton: Heather Maloney. \$. 7:30 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.

90 King, Northampton: The Treasury, Michael The Generator, marselle, Barbie.AI. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: PWRUP, Mega Infinity, Skappository, Double Star, Green St. Fiends. \$. 8 p.m.

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

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

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

Pioneer Brewery, Turners Falls: LakeSide Drive. No cover. 7 p.m.

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

Hawks & Reed: 2 Car Garage. \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: The Bones of J.R. Jones, Billy Keane. \$. 8 p.m.

Bookends, Florence: Bashful Slasher, bobbie, Cow Person, Magick Lantern. \$. 8 p.m.

Red Cross, Northampton: Nuxx Vomica, X Harlow, Sediment Club, Clock Serum. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: Prawn, Glom, Little Fuss, Two Wrong Turns. \$. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: The Suitcase Junket, Cloudbelly. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Paul Kilmer, magic; Ezzy P., hip hop. \$. 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Four Rivers Charter School Annual Variety Show. \$. 7 p.m.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: Square Dance

with caller Sarah Gibson and the Ruth and Ben Band. \$. 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: Coverchella: Covers Night. \$. 8 p.m.

Bookends, Florence: Norma Dream, Ethan WL, Rebecca Schrader & Marie Carroll. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: Doomsmas feat. Black Pyramid, Cortez, Benthic Realm, Strange Highways, Evil 80. \$. 6 p.m.

Pioneer Brewery, Turners Falls: Shyne. No cover. 7 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: Rough Francis, YourArmsAreMyLegs, Robbery. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Catamount, Drowning in Bones. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

The Drake, Amherst: Jon Spencer. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: River of Dreams, Billy Joel tribute, American Elton, Elton John tribute. \$. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: Weird Phishes. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro:

Surrealist Party Games with Roger Clark Miller. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Legend, Journey tribute. \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: Ryan Montbleu, Brooks Forsyth. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: RockitQueer Returns with DJ LeFox. \$. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Bookends, Florence: Valentine's Ball feat. "Enya," "The Magnetic Fields," "Yo La Tengo," "Broadcast," "The Breeders," "Blink-182." \$. 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Falltown String Band. No cover. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Padded Waltz Lite, Doonward Spiral. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

ToriTown, Holyoke: Bikethrasher, The Buddy System Forever, Ladybug, Nodderly. \$. 6:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: Mephiskapheles, The Prozacs, Threat Level Burgundy, Green Street Fiends. \$. 8 p.m.

looking forward...

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

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

Club B10, North Adams: Johanna Hedva. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29

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

SATURDAY, MARCH 2

Stone Church, Brattleboro: Thus Love, Flossing, Petracore. \$. 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

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

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

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

FRIDAY, APRIL 26

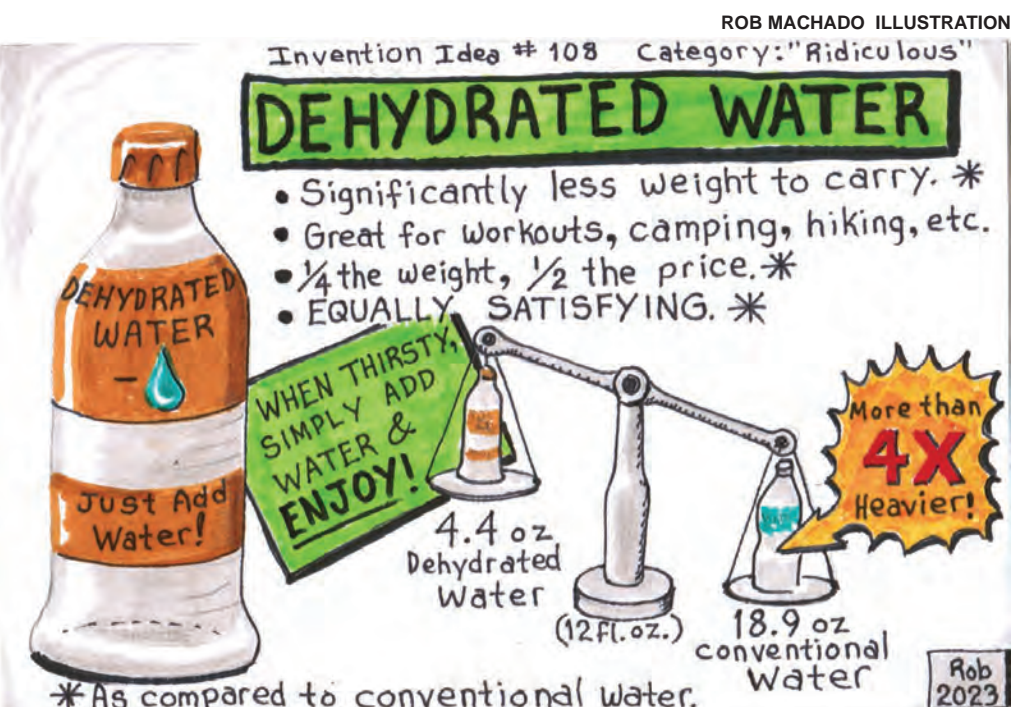
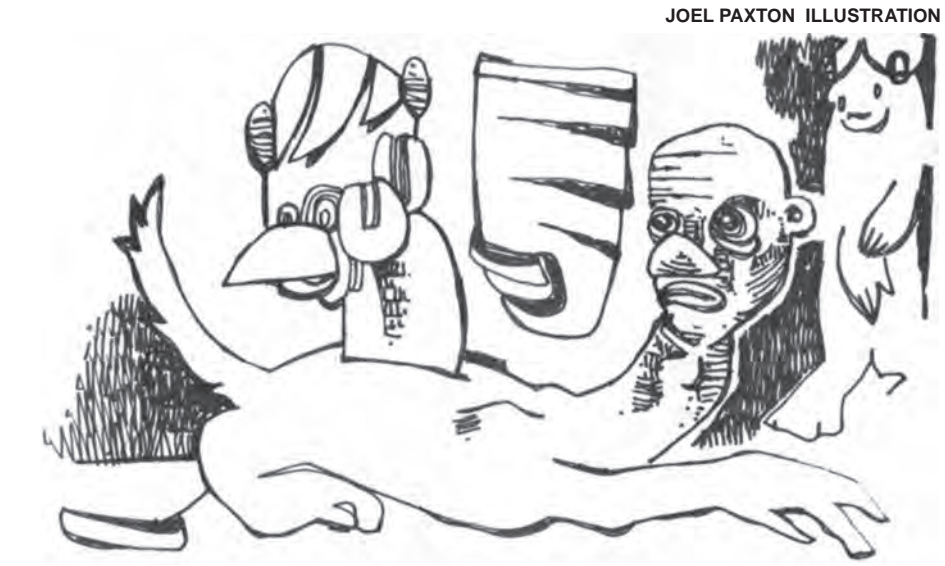
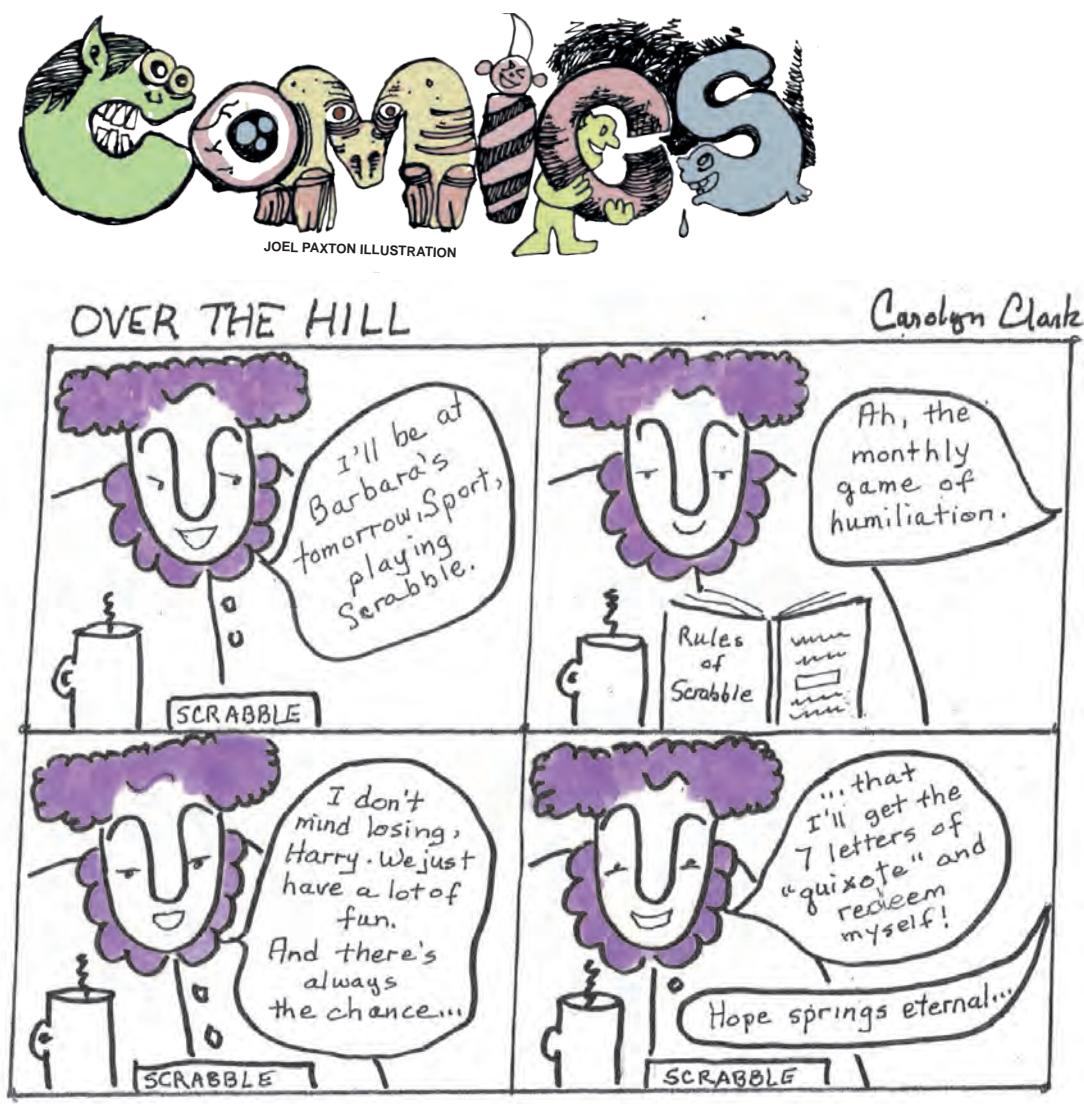
Clark Art Institute, Williamstown: Myriam Gendron, PG Six. \$. 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29

Treehouse Brewing, Deerfield: Waxahatchee, Tim Heidecker, Snail Mail. \$. 8 p.m.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Academy of Music, Northampton: Adrienne Lenker, Suzanne Vallie. \$. 8 p.m.



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MEMORIES from page B1

worldwide, had little ready cash.

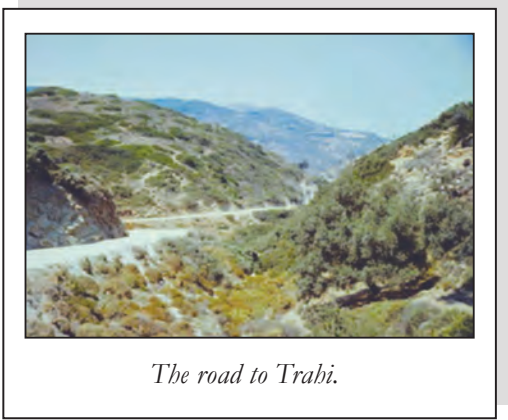
We settled into one room of Maria’s 60-year-old farmhouse, consisting of several thick-walled, non-connecting rooms made of plastered and whitewashed field stones with pine beams supporting bamboo ceilings. Most rooms were full of hay; the one we used had a fireplace; an alcove to keep a clay water jug cool on a bed of thyme branches; and three built-in grain bins hidden by a partial wall. A few houses had glass windows, but most, like ours, were dark when both shutter and door were closed against the wind or rain.

Our days quickly fell into a pattern: down from our rooftop after the early sunrise; coffee while listening to Voice of America news in English; a six-minute walk to the neighbors’ house for a kilo of milk and some eggs – waiting while the goats were milked and the hens were moved aside; home again to boil both on our camp stove; off to the well to fetch a day’s supply of water.

With no outhouses anywhere in the community, we’d often glimpse a neighbor, shovel in hand, heading to a secluded field – as we would do ourselves.

We spent a lot of time learning about people’s work, mostly related to food. Two families took turns using the threshing floor behind our house, each working several days in a row. The wheat or barley was spread out by hand, and two to five animals – donkeys, mules, horses, and the unique Skyrian ponies – were run round and round the floor, guided by a man, woman or child in the center. Jack provided local amusement by trying his hand at it. Eventually, the straw was swept away, the grain was winnowed in the breeze, then shaken in large sieves, and finally scooped into large woolen sacks.

Equipment was homemade: pitchforks from forked branches, brooms from dried thyme, woven sacks from a local loom. The barley



The road to Trahi.

was stored for fodder while most of the wheat was milled for flour. Although the mill in town produced whole-wheat flour, most people preferred the costlier white flour made by mills on an island two hours away by boat.

A nearby house was a center of constant daytime activity for up to five neighborhood women and twice as many children – and an unending source of information for us. In its bamboo-shaded courtyard, dishes, clothes, and children were washed; local gossip was shared.

Bread was made first by mixing starter dough from the previous batch with a little flour and left overnight. Ten to twenty pounds of dough were mixed up in a large wooden trough – no longer made on the island, and carefully passed on from mother to daughter – and four to eight loaves were left to rise in a compartmentalized box. Dry branches were set on fire in the outdoor oven, and the loaves were inserted using a long wooden paddle.

Another job was using some of the wheat not milled for bread to make a winter’s supply of *trahana*, a cracked wheat porridge used as a soup thickener and as stuffing for tomatoes, eggplants, and squash flowers. After being carefully sorted, wheat was ground by hand. The mill consisted of two stones, about 20 inches in diameter and weighing maybe 30 pounds each, connected by a shaft and turned by a brass handle. A woman on the floor with the mill between her outstretched legs could grind about five pounds of wheat an hour.

Later, four kilos of milk and a kilo of wheat were boiled in a blackened pot over an outdoor wood fire, stirred constantly with a long bamboo pole until it thickened. The one stirring in the sun got to wear a cast-off hat proclaiming *Make Love Not Bomb*.

The next day, the women spread fistfuls of the soft porridge out to dry on a roof safe from thieving cats and crows. It was turned several times during four days in the sun, then hung in large sacks to finish drying in the air.

The sun was also used to dry figs to be baked with fresh basil and fennel; oregano and mint for stews; sage and peppermint for tea; egg noodles rolled out and laboriously cut into small squares; salt from the seashore; skins from rabbits, goats and sheep; wool that was scalded at home to remove the oil, then washed in the sea, strenuous work while avoiding jellyfish stings.

That same busy house had a rare propane lamp so, unless the moon was full, we’d head there most evenings and get to know the men. They talked about the high cost of beehives; the summer’s tomato crop almost ruined by rains in August; a calf they retrieved unharmed from a well and another they had to slaughter when it became swollen with gas; the sheep they would take to the sea for their annual “health bath”; the tobacco they used to grow for their own use until the government outlawed the practice; the much larger yields of former years when more hands were available to do the work.

They were livid about the military airport being built nearby – it had already evicted some neighbors and was eating away at their farmland and ruining their crops with dust. They worried about providing a technical education for their sons who might drop out of the local nine-year school at the end of sixth grade.

They weighed their options if the government wouldn’t send a taxi as a schoolbus: their little children would have to walk two hours each way, or some of the family would need to spend the winter in town and some in Trahi to care for the animals.

As they talked they might make themselves a pair of sandals out of an old tire and some leather thongs, saving half of the \$8.00 which this ubiquitous Skyrian footwear cost ready-made. With newspapers a rarity, conversation would briefly stop for evening news on a static-filled radio. Someone might start to sing, and children always fell asleep in any convenient spot long before the adults were ready to call it a day.

Our urban Greek had serious gaps in a rural setting. Even months had different names. “April, May, Harvest, Threshing, August – my calf is five months old.” I asked for meanings of unfamiliar words and jotted them down the best I could in Greek – to mixed reactions, as some people were sure they were being made fun of.

Gradually their suspicions faded until they began using unusual words just to see me record them. One evening, amidst great

hilarity, the whole crew called out word after word they doubted I knew. “Pitchfork.” “Rolling-pin.” “Molting.” A young girl, who, like her mother, had never been off the island, stopped the game with roars of laughter from everyone by shouting, “Here’s one she won’t know! Airplane!”

We heard that some people in town knew us as “those foreigners out in Trahi who are compiling a dictionary.”

After eight years in their country we were used to Greeks being generous, but we were nearly overwhelmed by gifts from our neighbors: green beans, peppers, eggplants, cheese, olives, dried figs, cooked snails, and more. They invited us to pick plums, pears, grapes, and almonds. Except for our morning eggs and milk, we managed to spend only about \$3.00 in Trahi the entire summer.

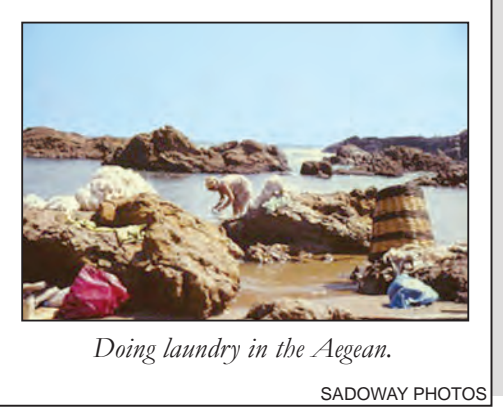


Ready to put bread in the oven.

Fortunately we were able to give something in return: black-and-white family photographs. Most people were a bit shy and uninterested around my 35mm Yashica camera until the first roll of film was developed but after that I was flooded with requests. When the women realized Jack was an artist, they began bringing him faded illustrations of their traditional embroidery designs, asking him to enlarge them so they could sew them. He happily obliged – and became interested in the *motifs* for his own work.

In mid-September we reluctantly prepared to return home to Athens. There was so much more to learn about this community we had fallen in love with: making wine, harvesting olives, winter planting, the lambing season, long winter evenings around a smoky fire eating dried squash seeds. But we left with new friends who welcomed us back even decades later and memories to savor for a lifetime.

These days Maggie Sadoway lives in the Patch in Turners Falls. Each week she proofreads this newspaper.



Doing laundry in the Aegean.

SADOWAY PHOTOS

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McCusker's Market  
3 State Street • Shelburne Falls, MA (413) 625-2548