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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JANUARY 4, 2024

INVESTIGATION

Quick Fixes, Shifting Sands: Downtown History Piles Up

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – Construction on a bridge known as the “White Bridge,” which has not been white for over 85 years, may continue to cause traffic jams for weeks to come. Just down the bike path, massive piles of sand and tree branches have suddenly appeared next to one of the oldest businesses in town, the Montague Machine Company. We returned from our holiday break to find many downtown readers asking us what on earth was going on.

Repairs to the White Bridge, which crosses the Connecticut River from Turners Falls to Green-

field just below Fifth Street, have been on and off for a few months. The bridge was closed in early November, reduced to one lane with no public notice on December 20, and closed December 21. Last week several area news outlets announced that it would be closed again beginning December 26 – “for a few weeks to a couple of months,” according to WWLP, which cited the Montague police department’s Facebook page.

The bridge was open last Friday, December 29, when this Reporter crossed it to Greenfield, and saw no evidence of construction. When we revisited it this Tuesday, see **FIXES** page A4



SINGLETON PHOTO

Greenfield, Montague, and state officials bashed out a plan earlier this week to keep the bridge open to alternating traffic during the current round of repairs.

Six-Town Planning Board Votes 13–3 To Recommend New School District

By MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – After studying the issue together for four years, representatives of the five towns that now make up the Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley public school districts and of Warwick, which recently left Pioneer, met Wednesday night at the senior center in Turners Falls for the pivotal decision of whether to officially propose a new, larger regional district. After an hour-long discussion they voted 13 to 3 in favor of taking this step.

Alan Genovese, chair of the Six-Town Regionalization Planning Board, reported before deliberations began that officials from Montague, Gill, Bernardston, and Warwick had all given the board the nod to move forward after hearing presentations this fall about the expected financial impacts of a six-town region; Leyden officials who were informally polled were also supportive.

“I didn’t hear anything from Northfield,” Genovese said. “But again, it wasn’t required.”

Gill-Montague business man-



JACKSON PHOTO

Representatives of Bernardston, Gill, Leyden, Montague, Northfield, and Warwick all supported drafting a new district agreement to send to their towns for consideration.

er Joanne Blier was on hand to help clarify one major unknown factor: the amount of state Chapter 70 aid a new six-town district might expect to receive in its first year.

Though simply applying the state’s funding formula to the demographics of a new combined district would suggest “a million, or two million” less could be due than the two districts now receive, Blier said, her

understanding of the state’s position was that “you wouldn’t lose money, but you wouldn’t get new money – it wouldn’t be recalculated.”

Genovese, who also serves as chair of the Warwick selectboard, said he had been in touch with officials at the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education seeking a guarantee of this point.

see **NEW DISTRICT** page A5

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Grumbles At School Cuts; Worry About Battery Fires

By GEORGE BRACE

At their meeting last Tuesday, Leverett’s selectboard met with the town’s finance and school committees to discuss the preliminary FY’25 budget for the Amherst-Pelham regional school district, of which Leverett is a member. The board also reviewed planning for a substantial library landscaping project, and discussed applying for intervenor status in a battery storage facility being proposed in neighboring Wendell.

After the close of the meeting, the board responded to complaints about its protocols for speaking at meetings.

Members of all three concerned town bodies expressed dissatisfaction with Amherst’s proposal to base the school district’s preliminary budget on the 3% growth target Amherst set for its school committee. Leverett, Shutesbury, and Pelham must join with Amherst to come up with a joint budget, with costs apportioned to each town based on an agreed-to formula.

While Amherst’s proposal of \$34.6 million falls \$1.9 million short of the \$36.5 million estimated cost of maintaining the current level of services, it also triggers “guardrails” in the district agreement to ensure that none of the four towns’ contributions to the budget exceed 4% growth over the previous year. In the budget under

see **LEVERETT** page A4

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Town Meeting Will Vote on Taking Battery Case to DPU

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard met the evening of December 20, one night ahead of the year’s longest night, with stars shining in an almost-black sky and a bright first quarter moon. The meeting’s agenda was long and the meeting went late, so the moon was high when people left the building.

The board tentatively scheduled a special town meeting on Wednesday, January 31, to combine with a selectboard meeting. That would allow them one regularly-scheduled meeting, January 3, to write the warrant, which would legally have to be posted before the start of their January 17 meeting.

So far two timely issues call for a prompt town meeting: the Swift

see **WENDELL** page A6

GILL SELECTBOARD

Surging Sewer Rates Raising Eyebrows, Ire In Riverside

By KATE SAVAGE

Most of Tuesday’s Gill selectboard meeting was dedicated to discussion of rising sewer rates. The town’s quarterly sewer bills will be going out later this month – but first the selectboard plans to set new rates to cover increasing costs.

The last time Gill increased its sewer rate was December 2021. Since then, the rate Montague charges the town to process its sewage has increased over 21%, according to town administrator Ray Purington. At the same time, much of Gill’s wastewater equipment is old and in need of frequent repairs. To cover these expenses, Purington set out four options, with rate increases of 6% to 12%.

Four residents of Riverside – the see **GILL** page A5

SCENE REPORT

A Shakeup at Scotty’s?

By HUGH FINNERTY

TURNERS FALLS – Scotty’s on the Hill opened its doors this Tuesday to a new year and new ownership. After 15 years as mainstays on the Hill, owners Bobbi and John Marguet decided to transfer ownership to the eager Liana Pleasant and Richard Pervere.

“We came in and talked to Bobbi and John, and just felt so connected to them... It just felt like the right space at the right moment,”

says Pleasant, who has a robust background in the food industry. Her experiences have brought her to a number of local establishments, and her most recent position was running food services at Great Falls Middle School and Turners Falls High School, just a few blocks away.

“It was hard to leave the school,” Pleasant tells the Reporter. “I was really connected to the kids.”

She hasn’t left the lessons of her see **SCOTTY’S** page A6



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Left to right: Liana Pleasant, a new co-owner of Scotty’s on the Hill, with previous owners Sharon Lamonakis and Bobbi Rae Marguet.

SHARP FOCUS



DAVID HOTT PHOTO

Turners Falls High School swimmer Ava Fortin competed in the breaststroke portion of the 200-yard medley relay on Tuesday as the Thunder basted the Ludlow Lions in the newly-renovated high school pool. (We’ll return next week with full sports coverage!)

A Little Snack of a Paper

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August 2002

Legal Strategies

The *Montague Reporter* wishes a happy New Year to all our readers! 2024 is an auspicious number for a year – it's 2³•11•23, for one thing, and not only is it a leap year but it's the first year with five Thursdays in February since 1996, and therefore the first time there will be five editions of the *Reporter* in February ever, if everything stays on track.

This event is not unprecedented in Turners Falls. After all, what is? The *Turners Falls Reporter* came out every Wednesday for 50 years, and published five times in February 1888.

The 1888 leap day edition broke the news that Ed McCrea overturned his sleigh while driving to the leap year ball at Montague the previous night, "causing the horse to run, and was treated to a grand smash up." (The ball itself was a great success.) Dolph Lovenbein was bitten by a dog, opponents of the reelection of R.N. Oakman as selectman were dismissed as the town's "disgruntled liquor element," and a young man named Timothy Leary was buried at the South End, which we now call the Patch.

Unlike us, that paper reprinted national and international news from other publications – back then this was the main way news circulated. A wealthy Frenchman had killed 8,000 sharks; Queen Victoria "has domestic servants over from Hindustan, who shiver in the halls of Windsor"; and the science of electricity was becoming more and more useful every year. "Oscar Wilde has cut off his ringlets and discarded his knickerbockers." President Cleveland authorized a railway to be built through Indian Territory, and an area of the Sioux reservation larger than the state of Kentucky was further "proposed to open up to settlers."

Leap years are election years in the United States, and 1888 didn't end up well for Cleveland, an incumbent who won the popular vote that November but lost the Electoral College to Benjamin Harrison.

Which brings us back to 2024; as a comic on Page B7 points out, this, too, is an election year.

And not just in the US, either – *The Economist* recently ran the math and announced that this will be the biggest election year in world history, with 4.2 billion people invited to elect leaders in 76 countries, including India, Pakistan; Bangladesh, Brazil, and Mexico, and Indonesia; and Russia

and Ukraine. Of all of them, the magazine seems to think the United States's election will be closest, as "President Joe Biden is likely to face Donald Trump, the Republican front-runner, in a repeat in 2020."

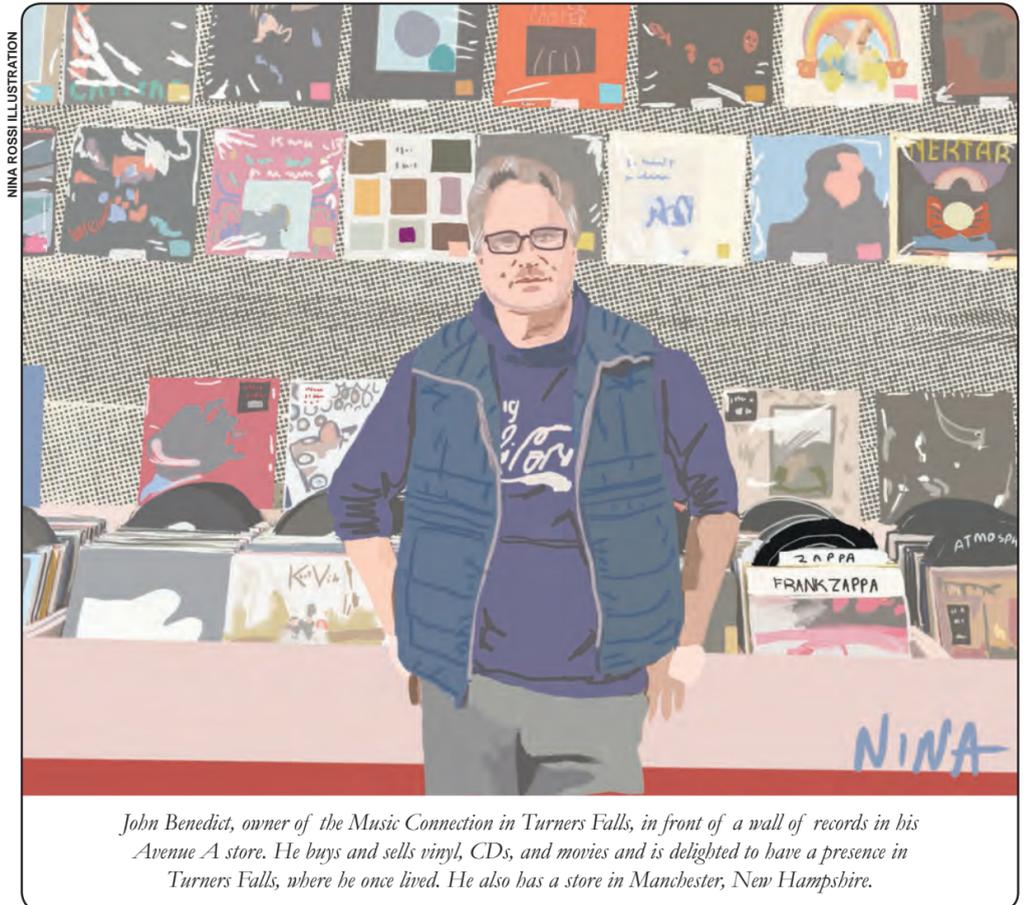
As of press time, the most recent polling of a head-to-head rematch between the two shows Trump winning by 3% (Suffolk University/USA Today), Trump winning by 1% (Morning Consult), and a dead heat (YouGov/Economist). But a lot can happen in the next ten months – after all, in the last ten months Biden's net approval has dropped by 6 points (YouGov), 10 points (Rasmussen), 14 points (Morning Consult), or 17 points (RMG).

Democrats are understandable, panicking, and their strategy is either unclear or multi-pronged. One approach is to block Trump from the ballot by legal means. (Whatever the outcome in the courts will be, the strategy seems short-sighted – after all, if your favored leader stood to win an election but was blocked by other means, would you take it sitting down?) Another is to blame the party's demoralized left wing for the weakness of the party coalition, and attempt to scold it into rejoining without offering any political inducements.

One thing we feel safe in predicting about the next 10 months is that this election will unfold in the context of international war. And while foreign affairs usually rank low in American voters' priorities, one large segment of the electorate – young, cosmopolitan, politically engaged, and normally inclined to vote against Republicans – has been glued for the last two months to live, civilian-driven coverage of the bombardment of Gaza.

If you haven't been keeping too close an eye on this campaign, on December 29 South Africa submitted a comprehensive application – 86 pages, 151 sections, and 574 painstakingly documented footnotes – to the International Court of Justice at the Hague. They argue the bombardment of Gaza constitutes a genocide under international law, and make a strong case that the Israeli plan is to enact an illegal, forcible transfer of millions.

Wherever your sympathies lie, this is strongly recommended reading, as this debate will shape both global and domestic politics in 2024. Catch up on what your taxes have been up to abroad at tinyurl.com/SouthAfricaHague.



John Benedict, owner of the Music Connection in Turners Falls, in front of a wall of records in his Avenue A store. He buys and sells vinyl, CDs, and movies and is delighted to have a presence in Turners Falls, where he once lived. He also has a store in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Letters to the Editors

Farren Memorial Proposed

Like many of you in this community, I can proudly say: I was born at the Farren. And as with many of you, I remember with gratitude the many services that were provided for family members, friends, and neighbors over the years at the Farren.

Built in 1900, the Farren Memorial Hospital provided medical services for nearly nine decades, and then specialized in long-term care until closing in 2020. Now, unfortunately, due to changing demographics and the ravages of time, the Farren is no more.

Some months ago, I was given custody of the two outdoor statues that graced the entrance to the Farren these many years. One of the statues, that of Jesus Christ welcoming all with open arms, is still

in relatively good shape. That statue will serve as the centerpiece of a memorial to the Farren that will be erected in front of Our Lady of Peace Church, located on Seventh Street, Turners Falls.

Working with Negus & Taylor Monuments and Moretti & Sons Landscaping, we have put together plans for a beautiful, handsomely landscaped memorial. The Christ statue will be placed on a granite base, which will include information about the Farren. In addition, there will be a granite bench and a stone walkway leading to the memorial area.

I now invite members of the community, especially those who were part of the history of the Farren, for contributions to cover the cost of the memorial. Donations may

be made in honor of, or in memory of, whomever you designate. Depending on the size of the granite base, the project costs range from \$14,000 to \$18,500. Both individual and corporate gifts are welcome. Those contributing \$1,000 or more will have their names or businesses inscribed on the walkway. Funds raised in excess of the goal will be used solely for the upkeep and annual landscaping of the memorial.

Contributions should be made out to Our Lady of Peace Farren Memorial Fund, and mailed to: Greenfield Savings Bank, ATT: Briggs Doxzen, 282 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376.

Rev. Stanley J. Aksamit, Pastor
Our Lady of Peace Church
Turners Falls

Merely Saying 'No'

Based on the *Reporter's* recent coverage, it appears we are rapidly becoming "The Little Valley That Couldn't." Despite rapidly intensifying climate change and skyrocketing housing costs, any proposed project addressing these crises is immediately greeted with cries of "No!" "Not here!" "Build it somewhere else!" "Or better yet, not at all!"

This isn't to say that all the naysayers arguments are without merit. Rather we need to come up with realistic alternatives.

Don't want a green energy project on critical wildlife habitat or prime farmland? Designate an industrial zone where such projects are encouraged. Don't want a large housing development in a meadow with inad-

equated infrastructure? Upzone your town center and similar already-developed areas.

Merely saying "no" to everything that comes down the pike – or passing restrictions so onerous that they have the same effect – is a great way to get the State to approve the projects without local input. Ironically the intransigence of the opponents of these projects is exactly what's causing the loss of local control they bemoan.

I encourage everyone to ask themselves not "How do I stop this?" but "Where would I build this so it would be an asset to our community and our planet?"

Marcus Graly
Northfield

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The Carnegie Library in Turners Falls is offering **preloaded tablets called Launchpads** that kids, teens, and adults can check out like library books. Each tablet has apps, videos, and games – just turn it on, no WiFi necessary. Note that you must return these to the front desk, rather than putting them in the book drop container.

The next **used book sale at the Carnegie** is this Saturday, January 6 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fiction, paperbacks, kids' books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks are available, and the library is offering a holiday special of one free book to every book sale visitor.

The Gill Montague Senior Center is offering two free programs that start this month. They have partnered for both with staff and students from the Franklin County Technical School's computer and web design programs.

During **Senior Tech Time Drop-In**, anyone aged 60 and above can stop by and get help with their laptop, phone, or tablet. Drop-in times are on Tuesdays, starting January 9, from 12:30 to 2 p.m. No appointment is necessary!

The second program is a **six-week course for seniors who don't have computers**. They can learn the basics such as setting up a Gmail account, joining social media, protecting passwords, and discovering games to play. Upon completion the participant gets to own the laptop they have been using in the class.

These sessions will run on Thursdays from January 18 to February 22, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. You must apply for this course by January 10; pick up an application at the senior center at 62 Fifth Street in Turners Falls.

This Sunday, January 7 at 1 p.m., there's a sound and art event at the Latchis Gallery in Brattleboro entitled "**Meditation & Creation: A Duet of Sound and Color.**" Percussionist/gong specialist Stephan Brandstatter and artist Julia Volodina and will combine their talents

to create an improvised soundscape and an original abstract-impressionist painting.

"Audience participation in the soundscape is encouraged as part of the creative process," reads the description. "Clapping, chanting or moving to the rhythm of the soundscape becomes an integral part of the entire artistic moment."

This improvised event will take place in Theatre 4 of the historic Latchis Theatre complex, a space connected to the Latchis Gallery at 50 Main Street. Details are available at facebook.com/juliartvt.

The Friends of the New Salem Public Library will kick off the 2024 season of **Reading Aloud for Grownups** next Tuesday, January 9, at 7 p.m. Betsy Pelz and Marcia Gagliardi will each read a short story of their choosing, with a brief intermission in between.

Further Read Alouds are on February 20, with Bo and Jan Henderson, and March 12, with Dee Waterman and Frederick Edwards. Readings will be at the library and on Zoom. More at nsfriendsofthelibrary.weebly.com/events.html.

The young actors of **Young Shakespeare Players East bring The Tempest**, with its story of magic, betrayal, forgiveness, power, and control, to the Shea Theater this month.

"In a world where conflicts dominate headlines, the themes of revenge and forgiveness are more relevant than ever," their announcement reads. "The play invites reflection on the consequences of holding onto grudges, the transformative power of mercy, and the potential for healing through forgiveness."

The YSP actors manage every aspect of the performance, with each serving as director and stage technician in addition to memorizing lines and immersing themselves in the story and its characters. Admission is free to four performances: next Friday, January 12 at 7 p.m., Saturday, January 13 at 1 and 7 p.m., and Sunday, January 14 at 1 p.m.

Two intermissions are planned during each show, which runs for two hours and 45 minutes.

The next **Montague Common Hall open mic** is next Saturday, January 13 from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Sign-up starts at 6:15, and bring your own food and beverage. Donations are welcome.

Ralph Carson is the featured performer this month. He tells tales of common folk and faulted characters, songs of red dirt and dry flatlands, harking back to his Oklahoma roots. His most influential sources include James McMurtry, Guy Clark, and Robert Earl Keen.

Last month state regulators made a ruling, DPU 20-80-B, intended to help pave the way for a **transition from gas to renewable sources**. Massachusetts currently has 21,000 miles of gas pipeline and 52% of households heat with natural gas. The state set goals in 2021 to reduce emissions to 47% of 1990 levels by 2030, and net zero by 2050. Current levels are 18% less than 1990.

The Home Energy Efficiency Team (HEET), a nonprofit "climate solutions incubator," is building a map of public interest in local geothermal networks. If you want to encourage that transition, you can register your interest by adding your house or business to their map at tinyurl.com/want-geo.

A fundraiser for the New England Learning Center for Women in Transition (NELCWIT), "**Resilience Rising**," is in the works at the Ja'Duke Theater in Turners Falls, with performances scheduled for February 9 and 10. The show will feature community groups such as first responders; nurses; staff, survivors, and friends of NELCWIT; Ja'Duke staff; and young professionals.

Individuals can donate and receive a luminary that will be used in the show, or show support by attending the performance; all proceeds will go directly to NELCWIT. They are also looking for sponsors from local businesses. Find out more at jadukecenter.org.

If you have a driver's license, a vehicle with an emergency hand brake, or both, the Pioneer Valley Workers Center is looking for **vehicles and sponsors for road tests** for community members applying for their Massachusetts driver's licenses for the first time, but don't own cars. For all road tests, the RMV requires applicants to provide a vehicle and a licensed sponsor to accompany them.

Bilingual fluency in English and Spanish is a plus, but not required. If you are interested, contact Sarah at sarah@pvworkerscenter.org.

A new program called **MassReconnect pays for community college** for non-degreed Massachusetts residents over 25 who have completed high school and are ready to take on at least six credits per semester. If you qualify, the program pays tuition and fees plus an allowance for books and supplies. If interested, apply to the community college of your choice and complete the 2023-24 FAFSA application. Learn more at tinyurl.com/free-school.

A series of programs this year at the Great Falls Discovery Center will build on the theme of **Food, Farms, and Factories** that grew out of the Smithsonian's "Crossroads: Changes in Rural America" the Center hosted last year.

A Sunday matinee documentary series begins with screenings at 2 p.m. on January 14 and 28. The first, *A Long Row in Fertile Ground* by WGBY, presents the story of agriculture in Western New England. Meet retired WGBY general manager Russ Peotter for a discussion after the film. (Snow date is January 21).

There's a double feature on January 28: *The Genesis of the Turners Falls Community* and *The Franklin County Fair*, produced by the Montague Historical Society. Chris Clawson and Ed Gregory of the Historical Society lead a discussion after the films. The snow date is February 4.

There's also an historical presentation on Saturday, January 27, at 2 p.m. called *Going Against the Flow: The History of Montague's Navigational Canal*. Learn about the original canal connecting Montague City to what is now Turners Falls, and why it was important for moving molasses.

The **Clark Art Institute in Williamstown is offering free admission** for all visitors from January through March! This is the second year of the Clark's "Free for Three" program. In 2023 they welcomed nearly 20,000 visitors during this three-month free admission period.

There are three new exhibitions to see: *50 Years and Forward: British Prints and Drawings Acquisitions*, through February 11; *50 Years and Forward: Works on Paper Acquisitions*, through March 10; and *Paper Cities*, opening March 9.

The museum grounds are always open free of charge, with miles of walking trails. In winter months visitors can borrow snowshoes to explore the grounds on a first-come, first-served basis. Find more details at clarkart.edu/events.

Do you have trouble hearing dialogue when you go to the movies? You will be very pleased to know that the **Greenfield Garden Cinema will show movies in open caption**, for both matinee and evening shows, every Wednesday.

Although the theater has been supplying hearing assist devices and closed captioning viewer screens, these are not as easy to read as having the captions right up on the screen. This is a pilot program for all of January and February; Wednesdays are the slowest days of the week for attendance, and the cinema hopes to bump up attendance with this offering.

Films available in open caption will be *Wonka*, *The Boys in The Boat*, *Night Swim*, *Aquaman: The Lost Kingdom*, *Ferrari*, *The Color Purple*, *Mean Girls*, *The Beekeeper*, *I.S.S.*, *Poor Things*, *Argyll*, *Chosen Season 4*, *Lisa Frankenstein*, *It Ends with Us*, *One Love*, *Madam Web*, *Ordinary Angels*, and *Drive Away Dolls*.

The Erving Library invites people to attend a workshop called **Remember and Celebrate You in 2024**. There will be STEM activities and crafts that guide attendees in exploring who you are today and who you want to be a year from now, and what you want to leave behind versus what you want to carry forward. The workshop is on Wednesday, January 17 at 4:30 p.m. and all ages are welcome.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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Sawmill River 10K Results

MONTAGUE CENTER – One hundred and eight runners crossed the finish line at the Annual Sawmill River 10K Run that was held in Montague Center on New Year's Day. Anna Zilinski of Swansea, New Hampshire was the overall female winner for the second year in a row, and Owen Wright of Boulder, Colorado was the overall male winner. Zilinski finished with a final time of 39:16, with Wright bringing in a time of 32:37. Results per division are as follows:
Youth, 17 and under: Virginia Glick-Krezmien of Colrain (49:46); Carson Richardson (42:26).
Open Division, ages 18 to 39:

female, Zilinski; male, Wright.
Master Division, ages 40 to 49: female, Laure Van den Broek Raffensperger of Leyden (43:45); male, Christopher Parker of Cambridge (39:41).
Senior Division, ages 50 to 59: female, Jennifer Schimmel of Deerfield (47:15); male, Michael Hoberman of Shelburne Falls (45:11).
Senior+ Division, 60 and up: female, Debra Hevey of Chicopee (51:05); male, Nat Larson of Amherst (35:35).
 Proceeds from the event benefit Montague Parks and Recreation Department's Sponsor-A-Child Scholarship Program.

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LEVERETT from page A1

consideration, Leverett and Pelham would max out at a 4% rise, while Amherst's portion would rise by 3%, and Shutesbury's by 1.37%.

The consensus at Tuesday's meeting was that Amherst's approach of using its own town budgetary guidance as a basis for the district budget was misguided. Leverett school committee member Jed Proujansky suggested that the process should begin with Amherst providing a level-services budget, and "let[ting] the chips fall where they may" when the costs are apportioned. "Our job is to fund the schools and give them a quality education," he said, "not to assuage Amherst town council's desires."

Proujansky agreed with selectboard chair Tom Hankinson, however, that it may serve Leverett better to go along with this year's process but put the issue "right up front" next year. Fin com member Bethany Seeger said the town should ask to see a level-services budget included for reference at the next four-town budget meeting in February.

In a related matter, school committee member Tilman Wolf requested guidance on how to vote on a measure coming up at the next regional school district meeting which would change the wording of a previously-passed measure to allow the possibility of natural, rather than artificial, turf to be used for a recreation field project at Amherst-Pelham Regional High School. The selectboard suggested he vote "yes" to the change.

Spaces of Opportunity

Library director Hannah Paessel presented draft plans for a landscaping project at the town library. Paessel said she and the Friends of the Leverett Library (FOLL) have been brainstorming for improvements, and brought in a landscape design student who came up with a design which includes an ADA-accessible walkway and a new 20-by-24-foot covered stage.

Paessel said that in addition to ADA accessibility, the walkway and grounds were designed with children in mind, and that the project would provide space for a multitude of uses including performances, classes, and "other opportunities for education or fun."

She said the library planned to pursue the project in steps. The FOLL has already committed money, and other funding is expected to be available. Paessel said she and the FOLL were coming before the board to gauge the temperature for the proposal.

"Warm," replied selectboard member Patricia Duffy. Hankinson and board member Melissa Colbert also expressed support.

Intervenor Status

Proujansky requested that Leverett apply to be recognized by the state Department of Public Utilities as an "intervenor" entitled to weigh in on a proposal to build a 51-acre lithium-ion battery storage facility in neighboring Wendell.

Proujansky outlined a number of problems and dangers with such facilities, including their effects on the environment and wildlife and potential fires. He said that

in the event of a fire at the facility Leverett would be directly affected by pollution and a possible need for evacuation, adding that the two towns' police and fire departments were already "joined at the hip" due to their joint-policing and mutual aid agreements, and that Leverett would incur added costs in responding to incidents at the facility. He argued that Leverett should have a seat at the table in negotiations, and that it was important for small towns to support each other through mutual aid in such matters.

The selectboard members said they would consider the request and take it up at a future meeting.

Other Business

Proujansky requested that the fin com assess the potential financial impact of the major housing development proposed for the Kittredge estate, and draft a position for the town to take on the proposal. He presented research suggesting that the cost of educating students from 700 households would exceed the additional tax revenue the developers have projected the town would receive from the project.

The board said they'd like to see "something in writing" outlining a request for use of the town hall for a birthday party celebrating Leverett's 250th anniversary before agreeing to it. The party is tentatively planned for March 9, from 1 to 4 p.m. Event organizers said they would come up with something.

The board agreed to a request from the fire department to declare two vehicles as surplus to be sold at auction.

The board decided to tell the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) that Leverett was "on board" with joining Shutesbury in developing a "digital equity plan" addressing gaps in residents' access and ability to use digital services.

The board signed a contract allowing state funds to be released to FRCOG to create a prioritization plan as part of the town's participation in the state's "Complete Streets Program."

At the end of the meeting, resident Silas Ball complained that he had not been given an opportunity to speak, sparking a discussion of meeting protocols, the state open meeting law, and public comment. Ball and resident Isaiah Robison both said it was not clear the meeting had already been adjourned when Ball was denied an opportunity to comment, and that based on their prior experience it appeared the selectboard was inconsistent in providing opportunities for public comment.

All three board members said the meeting had indeed been closed. Colbert added that she was "really open" to discussing their concerns "in a formal way, where everybody can participate," but that this wasn't happening in the present discussion, and could only happen during a posted meeting due to the open meeting law.

Robison said he would like to have a clearer understanding of what the end of a meeting was supposed to look like, and that attendees were normally asked whether there was anything else to discuss.

FIXES from page A1

the middle of the bridge was reduced to one lane, with a detail allowing alternating traffic from each direction.

According to Montague police chief Chris Williams, a meeting of Montague and Greenfield officials had decided that day to try to keep the bridge open during construction. According to a statement on the Montague website, "The 'White Bridge'... will be under repair in the coming weeks. Construction is scheduled from 6am-4pm Monday - Thursday. It is [the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT's)] intention to maintain single-lane alternating traffic during this time."

A MassDOT spokesperson told the *Reporter* that "work is expected to continue to the end of March," and that there will be "intermittent full closures, which will be publicized in advance."

Town officials were not clear on the reasons for the current closures. According to Montague town administrator Steve Ellis, MassDOT has placed the bridge on its list to be completely replaced, with work to begin probably by 2028. MassDOT's email explained, "The repairs involve steel repairs on the beams below and some concrete repairs on the bridge piers."

On Tuesday, staging attached to the deck of the bridge could be seen hanging alongside the concrete pillars that extend down to the river. "Just fixing some concrete and metal," a worker for Z-Tech Contracting, a subcontractor, told this reporter. (The general contractor for the work, Williams reported, is SPS New England.)

According to local historian Ed Gregory, the White Bridge was originally built as a suspension bridge in 1872, just as the village of Turners Falls was first being developed. Its name resulted from the fact that the towers from which the cables were suspended were covered with wood and painted white.

That bridge was washed away by the flood of 1936, but was reconstructed the following year. Gregory told us that the current bridge is "essentially the same" as the bridge constructed in 1937, which did not have the suspensions or the white pillars that held them up. The original name, however, still remains, four generations later.



Several readers asked us what the large mounds are behind Montague Machine.

Sand Ordered Exhumed

Down the bike path to the southwest, one passes the Food City plaza, the Eleventh Street bridge across the power canal, and eventually reaches a conglomeration of very old and modern buildings known as the Montague Machine Company.

The buildings sit on one of two large adjacent parcels owned by the company, which also owns a smaller parcel across Rastallis Street, where it operates a U-Haul "neighborhood dealer" as a side business.

The larger parcel to the southwest of the factory is empty – except for very large sandy piles mixed with tree limbs and roots. These have recently become more visible, and several residents of the neighborhood have contacted either the town hall or this newspaper, some wondering whether Montague Machine needs a permit to make such large sand and tree piles.

Town planner Maureen Pollock told the *Reporter* that she inspected the area on Tuesday, and that the site will be discussed at next week's conservation commission meeting. If the sand and brush piles are within 100 feet of the power canal, she said, the project may need a permit from the con com, but she did not wish to speculate further.

We discussed the issue with Ryan Johnston, who is listed on the Montague Machine Company website as a welder and general manager, and told us he is a member of the ownership family. Johnston also told us that the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) had ordered him to remove the sand, which was once used in a foundry operated on the site. He said that the trees needed to be cut down in order to fully remove the sand, and that the mixture in the

piles had been tested and did not contain any hazardous materials.

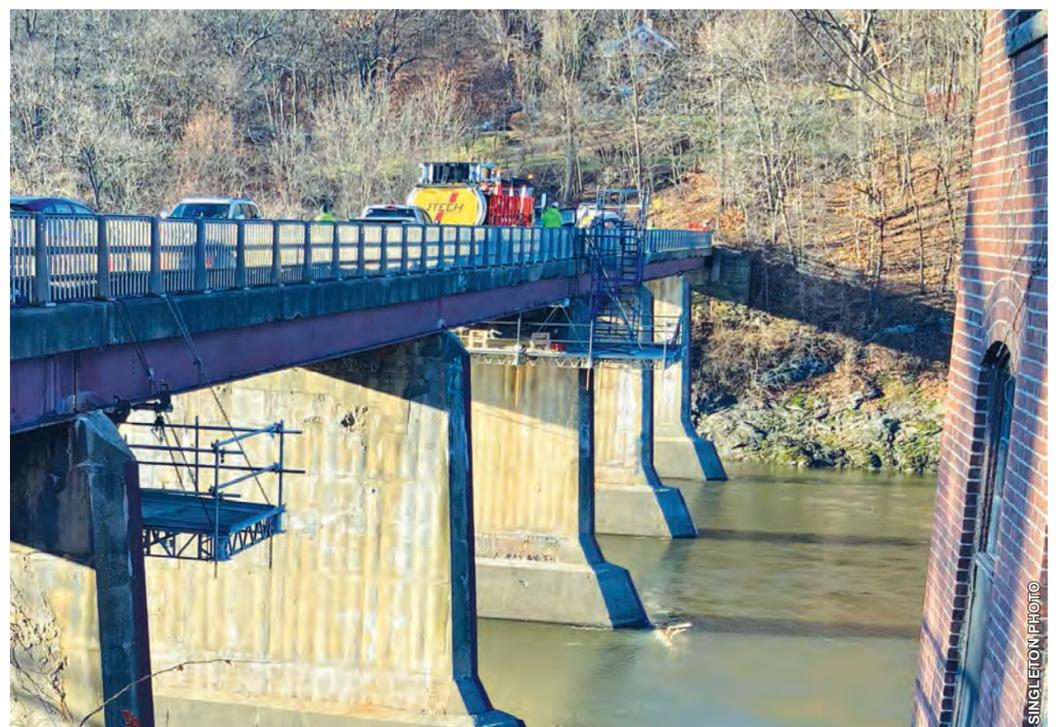
The Montague Machine website devotes space to the company's history. It says that it was "founded in 1908 and owned by International Paper [Company] until the 1970s when our mainstay was supplying machinery to the pulp and paper industry."

A chronology developed by Ed Gregory traces the origins of the company back to the very beginning of Turners Falls in the early 1870s, the same period when the first White Bridge was constructed: "In 1871 A.S. Clark Nathaniel Gilmore (foundry foreman) moved to Turners Falls from Bellows Falls, Vermont and formed the Clark Machine Company."

After a number of ownership and name changes over the next four decades, the company was purchased by the International Paper Company and became known as Montague Machine Company. It originally operated out of the buildings on First Street that would become the Great Falls Discovery Center, and purchased the parcel on which its buildings now sit in 1920 from the Montague Company, which acquired it in 1913 from the Turners Falls Company.

Johnston said it may be possible to use the sand in the piles as "foundation sand" for construction, and that he planned to apply for a "Beneficial Use Determination" from MassDEP. The state agency's order, he said, while financially challenging, has presented an opportunity for the company to "beautify" its two properties along the bike path.

"I am a fourth-generation member of this family business in Turners Falls," Johnston told us, "and I do not want our property to be a dumping ground."



The 1937 bridge is due to be replaced in 2028. For now, MassDOT is making "some steel repairs" and "some concrete repairs."

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GILL from page A1

only neighborhood of Gill served by the sewer – attended to voice their opinions. All sided with the lower end of rate increases.

Peter Conway suggested charging maintenance and equipment costs equally to all sewer users, regardless of the amount of water they use. Currently, all 113 households connected to the sewer system are charged \$4 as a base maintenance cost, even if they don't use any water – an “astronomically stupid little minimum,” according to selectboard chair Randy Crochier. This change would increase that base amount and reduce the per-gallon rate.

Board members expressed interest in this change, and appreciation to the residents for exploring creative alternatives – but they warned that such a change might take more time to enact. Purington said he would analyze sewer regulations and explore the option.

In the meantime, a new sewer rate will be set at the next selectboard meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, January 16, at 5:30 pm.

The discussion ended with many expressions of gratitude for the daily administrative work Purington does to help the town continue functioning.

Other Business

Massachusetts's new “millionaires' tax” is adding \$94,045 to Gill's Chapter 90 funding this year, money which can be used for transportation and road costs.

This increases the town's road funding by 64%. Purington noted the town will need to decide whether to use the money on current projects or set it aside for future needs, including major repaving projects on Main Road and West Gill Road.

He also expressed concern over the uncertain future of these funds. “From some of the newspaper coverage that I've read since the notice of this extra funding went out, it finally dawned on me that I wasn't seeing anything about ‘recurring’ and ‘year-after-year’ [funding],” he said. He learned from state senator Jo Comerford's office that “it's very likely there will be money approved next year and the year after,” he said, but the funding is subject to the budget appropriation process.

“How many millionaires are there?” asked selectboard member Charles Garbiel, marveling at the amount being collected by the new tax.

“Just go out east – there's a lot,” answered fellow member Greg Snedeker.

The board approved a draft of an Efficiency and Regionalization Grant application, requesting funds for regional emergency medical services. Gill relies on Northfield's EMS service, which serves two other communities.

Gill fire chief Gene Beaubien testified to the Northfield service's effectiveness: “They've made every call in Gill since May, when they started,” he said. “They're fairly quick, and most of the time there's at least one person on duty.”



NEW DISTRICT from page A1

“When Warwick left the Pioneer district, we got a lot more money than Pioneer lost with us leaving,” said Warwick town coordinator David Young. “Go figure.”

Young made a motion that the planning board “affirmatively” recommend moving forward on creating a new district agreement. Gill representative Deb Loomer seconded the motion.

Karen O'Neil, who represents Leyden on both the planning board and the Pioneer Valley school committee, was the first to speak on the motion. O'Neil said the two districts' educational philosophies differ: whereas Gill-Montague sorts students into academic tracks, she said, Pioneer “tr[ies] to ensure equity by a different approach,” which she described as “heterogeneous grouping” determined by the students themselves.

“We didn't spend any time discussing how do you move forward with different school cultures, different makeups of the student bodies, and so forth,” O'Neil continued. She went on to say that a larger district would mean some students riding the bus as early as 6:16 a.m. – “just ridiculous, as far as student learning goes” – and that the impact on her own town's assessment would be higher than the other towns, with estimates of growth in the first year as high as 21.1% under outlying wage and healthcare scenarios.

O'Neil pointed to a recent failed attempt in southern Berkshire County to form a larger district from two smaller ones, with voters in four of eight towns rejecting a proposed district agreement in October. “We should save the taxpayers of Massachusetts the money [for] the additional cost of another grant to develop a new district agreement,” she argued.

“I'm a taxpayer in Massachusetts,” Loomer responded. “If you have to spend some money to find the best education for our children out there, you go right ahead.... Turners Falls is multiple cultures, and Pioneer is multiple cultures. When that piece of the puzzle needs to be done, it will be the students who should be making it.”

O'Neil said she had read a study suggesting that smaller schools

can provide better educational outcomes than larger ones due to “personal interactions that were possible, feeling part of the single group and so forth.”

“These are small communities, and even a combined system is a very small school,” said Gill representative Bill Tomb, who added that his own non-recent high school graduating class had 700 members.

“People buy houses where they follow an educational system,” Tomb added. “Realtors happen to make a real point of it – as an assessor, I get that kind of feedback all the time.”

Northfield representative Deborah Potee discussed her experiences as an employee at Greenfield High School and a parent of a recent Pioneer graduate. “I think we should all combine and go to Greenfield,” she said. “I feel very strongly that students can only benefit from having more peers, more teachers, [and] more opportunities.”

Echoing Potee, Leyden representative Steve Richter contrasted his experiences working at Franklin County Technical School, where students came together from across the region and “created their own culture,” and at a “much smaller school,” which he said was “not the right place” for “about a third” of its students and therefore became a “really hard place to work.”

Bernardston's Jennifer Coffin said the planning board had only received input from 1% of the six towns' population. “Is it worth another disruption?” she asked, pointing out that many students are still dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Renee Keir, also representing Bernardston, said that for her the “important lesson” from the pandemic was “that we need each other, and that we need a community.” She pointed to the county's shrinking school-aged population, and the decline of local volunteerism. “Maybe it is time to grow our communities,” she argued. “Maybe it's time to reinvent ourselves a little bit, and to say that we're ready for growth and reflection, and we're ready to have robust programming.”

“Do I believe that this is going to get through the six towns?” she added. “No. Do I believe that it's

time to send a message? Yes.”

Pat Shearer of Northfield said she started her own education “in a one-room schoolhouse, with a stove in the middle and an outhouse,” and went on to eventually serve on the Pioneer Valley school committee for 44 years. Both facts brought murmurs of admiration from the room. “I am Pioneer all over,” she said. “What did the parents of the Pioneer communities think in 1957, when Pioneer [High School] was built?”

Shearer said she feared that “if we don't do something,” the state will mandate regionalization, and the Pioneer towns may be “pushed into joining with communities that we're really not at all like.”

Bernardston representative Kristie Sulda said her daughter had recently graduated in a class of 23 students from Pioneer, and she observed that some students in even smaller classes were left out “because there weren't enough people like them.”

“A small school is lovely if you do get the individual attention,” Sulda said, but “there's kids that are suffering because of it.”

“On paper, it looks like a great program,” Reina Dastous of Northfield, chair of the Pioneer Valley school committee, said of the potential district's educational offerings, but she said that she was opposed to longer bus routes.

“I go back and forth with how big geographically you need to be to be able to meet kids' needs,” Dastous said. “One of my frustrations from the beginning has been that we were limited to this one option.... There might be other solutions out there.”

“This is the opportunity that has presented itself,” said Greg Snedeker, a selectboard member from Gill and the planning board's vice chair. “This is it.”

Snedeker said he had been driven out of teaching by enrollment declines. “Where are the demarcations of too small and too large? I don't know where they are,” he said. “We want to keep our rural towns the way we are, so we have very limited ability to grow our tax base to be able to cover the increases in cost that keep coming.”

Genovese called a roll call vote on the motion, and 13 of the committee members voted in favor, with

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In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, MGL Ch. 131, §40, the Montague Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing at 6:30 pm on Thursday, January 11, 2024 to consider a Request to Amend an Order of Conditions (DEP # 229-0263), filed by Montague Department of Public Works, for proposed modification to the previously approved **South Ferry Road Culvert Replacement Project**, including modifications to the culvert design and layout, grading, wetland restoration work, and resource impacts to Bordering Vegetated Wetlands, Bank, Land Under Waterways, and Riverfront Area to the Sawmill River, located in proximity of **29 South Ferry Road** (Map 39, Parcel 42).

The public hearing will be held in the Second Floor Meeting Room, Montague Town Hall, One Avenue A, Turners Falls and via remote participation. Remote login information and filing is available for review at www.montague-ma.gov/calendar.

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O'Neil, Coffin, and Dastous casting nay votes. (Montague representative Lynn Reynolds was not present.) The representatives of all six towns supported the motion either unanimously or by majorities.

By statute, the next step in the regionalization process will be to draft a proposed district agreement to send to the towns, and the board plans to issue a request for proposals for the job. Genovese said the board still had \$99,571.70 remaining in its coffers from a \$125,000 state planning grant, which it can use until June 30.

“I don't think we will need to apply for another grant – we might have to apply for an extension,” Snedeker said.

Once drafted, the regional agreement must be approved by town meetings in all the would-be member towns. “This timeline isn't happening for these [May] town meetings,” Keir said. “So this is a year out, another year?”

“It doesn't have to be at a spring annual,” Snedeker replied. “It could be a special.”

The group's final discussion turned to communicating about the proposal with the public. There was a consensus that the board's Facebook page has inspired limited engagement, and that a new website should be launched.

Quite a lot of pizza was left over after the meeting adjourned.



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WENDELL from page A1

River School transportation budget, and whether the town intends to formally intervene in the state Department of Public Utilities' permitting process for a large battery storage project proposed for forested land off Wendell Depot Road.

The citizens' group promoting intervening, No Assaultin' Batteries, asked for space in the town newsletter scheduled to come out in January to describe the proposal and their reasons for opposing it. Selectboard member Paul Doud said he would want to read their submission before it goes into the newsletter, and to make it clear that the article's author is not the selectboard.

Selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato said she thought a citizens' section is a reasonable part of the newsletter.

Headhunting

Town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad said he and treasurer Carolyn Manley like the town's present accounting arrangement, with software and an accountant, Erin Degnan, supplied by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). "You have no idea how good it is to have the information I need," Manley said of working with Degnan.

FRCOG has announced plans to change to new software on July 1 that would cost Wendell far more. Johnson-Mussad said he had talked with other town administrators and convinced FRCOG director of regional services Bob Dean to delay the changeover, to give towns a bit more time to gather the extra money or make other arrangements.

Johnson-Mussad said Degnan prefers the present software, and likes working with Wendell.

Manley proposed working with New Salem to hire Degnan as a shared accountant at 12 hours a week for each town, enough total hours to grant benefits. Adding salary, insurance, retirement, and other expenses, including possibly a new laptop, she said she thought the total cost would not be far from what it would cost to stay with FRCOG.

Though Degnan reportedly seems committed to the area, board member Gillian Budine wondered what would happen if she were to move away after Wendell and New Salem committed to working with her.

To a question from DiDonato, Johnson-Mussad said Wendell's finance committee is not necessarily aware of this situation. He added that

he had thought to ask Dean, "If we steal her from FRCOG, can we have her laptop too?"

Special Employee?

Shawn Jarrett and Tom Mangan came again in their pursuit of using a place at the WRATS for collecting and redeeming deposit containers, as was done in the shed until July 2023, to benefit a local charitable cause.

The state allows a town employee working under 800 hours per year to be designated as a special municipal employee, which would be required for a private charity to reimburse an employee for transporting the containers to a redemption center off the clock.

The WRATS assistant's position is up to 19 hours per week, which figures to 988 hours over 52 weeks. The current WRATS assistant seldom works his full allotted time, so he is likely eligible, though the law makes it difficult – the limit is a running total, so every month the assistant would have to count up the hours he worked in the prior 12 months to see if he remains eligible to be a special municipal employee.

Mangan said he felt mileage reimbursement for driving containers to a redemption center would be considered extraordinarily reasonable, and that the WRATS assistant was not interested in getting paid. The previous charity, Good Neighbors, does not have a formal agreement with the town; Mangan said the state ethics commission wants to avoid a situation where some town official picks the charity of his choice.

DiDonato said the next step would be to draft a town policy for interactions with charities in general, and to discuss the situation again with the road commission, which supervises the WRATS.

Jarrett said the Wendell Country Store parking area, which was considered as an alternative collection site, is no longer available, and suggested canvassing town residents for their preferences.

Too Little Zoom

Johnson-Mussad said Wendell's two public Zoom accounts are not always enough for all the remote meetings town committees use. Open space committee chair Dan Leahy said his committee "got bumped," and that when he was able to set up another Zoom connection 45 minutes later, the other members had scattered and he had to reschedule the meeting.

Johnson-Mussad said the planning board has unspent money in its budget, and could open another Zoom account. He said he would email other town committees to gather data about their use of Zoom, and see if they have money for setting up their own accounts, so that committees that have the money can share with committees that do not.

Leahy said the open space committee has enough money to set up its own account. He offered to open an account privately and get reimbursed from the open space budget, paying the tax himself so the committee can get the service sooner.

Other Business

The selectboard voted unanimously to grant Deja Brew and the Wendell Country Store liquor licenses for 2024. They approved a Class III license allowing Scott's Garage to sell used vehicles, and appointed Jim Thornley to the energy committee.

Former selectboard member Christine Heard, speaking during public comment time, told the present members of a lease arrangement made by an earlier board for town-owned land south of the library playground and fence.

Long before the construction of the library the owner of the abutting property, Apollo, had been told that the property line was where the fence is now. He planted fruit trees on the land he thought was his. A survey taken before the library was built, however, showed the property line was well behind his trees.

Rather than requiring Apollo to uproot an established orchard, the town granted his household a lease to continue using the land for agricultural purposes – as long as they owned the property. As neither the present town coordinator nor any of the selectboard members were serving when that arrangement was made, Heard said she thought it would be good to let them know.

She went on to say that Google Maps has been directing drivers up Thompson Road, a sporadically-maintained dirt road. The road has a history of bonfire parties and trash dumping, and though the state Department of Conservation and Recreation once proposed installing a gate, it had no money and did not do so. Heard said they have money now.

As she always did when she was a selectboard member, Heard brought cookies to this last meeting before the Christmas holidays.

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SCOTTY'S from page A1

experience in the schools far behind, either. "I'm working on setting up to take SNAP benefits," she says. "After working at the school, I had a firsthand view of what is really important to the families in this community.... I just want to give people what they need in this space, because it is so central."

While a change in ownership may create some wariness amongst regulars, Pleasant seeks to assuage those concerns. "I've got all the recipes [Bobbi] used, and actually those are probably the recipes Sharon [Lamonakis] used, who had this for 20 years before Bobbi."

While the generations before her were laying this foundation, Pleasant was never far from the picture. "I grew up here, just down the street," she says. "My sister worked here in high school."

The only changes customers should expect are going to be delicious and eco-friendly: "My joy is the food, so you're going to see more rotating specials and things like that." Pleasant says she wants to continue supporting environmentally-friendly initiatives, such as reducing plastic and styrofoam waste, a change she initiated at her last post. "I turned [the Gill-Montague food services] almost 100% green, or compostable... that was one of the things that was really important to me," she adds.

The transition of this beloved establishment into new hands seems to mean business as usual for the community on the Hill. Patrons can expect the warmth of the new owners to radiate out from this classic location as they welcome customers old and new alike.

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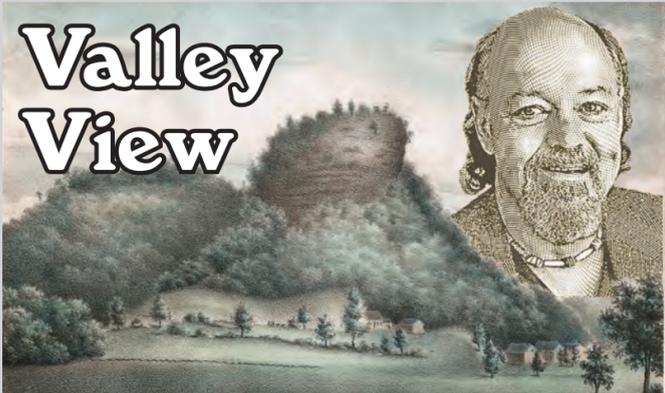
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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

JANUARY 4, 2024

Above: Parkin, of Montague Center, finds content of interest in this year's special wrapping paper edition.



ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

Toby's Western Skirt

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – These days, I find myself wandering back and forth between local history and prehistory, and although my current focus leans strongly toward the former, the latter is always within reach.

I get a good dose of cutting-edge discovery about ancient human-proboscidean (mastodon and woolly mammoth) interactions from archaeologist friend Mike Gramly, who in recent years has uncovered ground-breaking (no pun intended) evidence of 14,000-year-old ritualistic offerings at kill sites in New York and Kentucky. That alone is enough to keep North American anthropology on a front burner. Plus, I always keep my finger to the wind about local activity related to Native American studies.

So, it should come as no surprise that a recent email invitation from Northampton book dealer Betsy Frederick piqued my interest. With a fascination in all things local and indigenous, she reached out after reading my recent column about a manmade stone structure I found about a decade ago, buried high and deep in the forest. An expert who studied photos of the feature said it was a Native American prayer seat, which led to my own speculation that the ridgetop enclosure could have been used for vision- or spirit-questing.

Frederick was eager to show me a similar feature she thought could have served the same deep-history function in the woods above her Sunderland home, nestled into Mount Toby's western skirt.

We met on a Sunday morning at her home overlooking Route 47 from a forested knoll. From there, we drove a short distance to a woods trail that took us to within quick walking distance of the dark-gray stone feature. And, there it sat, a large, sturdy, squared U-shaped stone enclosure poking out from knoll near the edge of a three-story-high cliff. Facing south and east, it appeared to be a natural formation that could, I suppose, have been tweaked at some point by human hands.

Someone with more expertise than I would have to make that call, especially these days when Native American stone-structure fanatics identify every stone wall as a serpent, every game and old logging trail as an ancient path, and every pointed irregularity on forest boulders as raptors' beaks. I listen, but it's getting ridiculous.

Frederick isn't one of them. She came to the Connecticut Valley as a Gloucester college student, liked what she found, and settled in. Her suspicion that the hidden feature could have Native American significance is grounded in reality. She's sat in this sturdy stone seat for winter-solstice sunrises, the first rays of which stare her in the face.

Frederick knew me from my near-40-year *Greenfield Recorder* columns. We met many years ago when, similar to this latest rendezvous, she wanted to introduce me to the incredible ledges in the woods enveloping her home. She believed that several overhangs along the base of the tall ledges showed great promise as ancient rock shelters that could have been inhabited during the peopling of our valley during early or even pre-Clovis epic. Who knew? She could be onto something. These shelf caves would have been conveniently located along the shoreline of proglacial Lake Hitchcock, which drained some 13,500 years ago.

Though I thought of it more than once on my recent ride to meet her, I never mentioned the poignancy of our first, unforgettable meeting. It occurred at about 11 on the morning of April 6, 2014 at her home. I had stayed up the previous night to watch Coach John Calipari's Kentucky Wildcats advance to the NCAA men's basketball championship game with a win over Wisconsin. Several times during the game, I had called son Ryan's Northfield apartment to chat, and all my calls went curiously unanswered. I knew he'd be watching. He was a big "Coach Cal" fan dating back to the rags-to-riches days when he put UMass Hoops on national center stage. I see **VALLEY VIEW** page B3



THE RISE OF THE NUTHEADS PART I



By DONNA PETERSEN

MONTAGUE – To quote Arlo Guthrie, "It's a movement!" And it is growing and fermenting here in western Massachusetts and elsewhere across the country. It is kind of "forward into the past": to a past where nut-bearing trees were a major food source for indigenous peoples, and later settlers. Hickories, oaks, chestnuts, and maples produced the nuts, acorns, and sap that provided fats, carbohydrates, and sugars that fed generations across the land.

With European settlement came extensive land clearing and crop planting, and so people depended less and less on these sustainable forest foods. Then came a chestnut blight that within decades changed the forests forever. And now with Stop & Shop, Big Y, and Amazon's Whole Foods, who needs tree food?

Well, an increasing number of often young farmers think we – and the planet – do. You've likely read local, regional, national, and global stories about permaculture, sustainable agriculture, agroforestry, silviculture, and similar practices. Maybe you do some of this type of gardening or farming yourself.

I heard about some local nut tree farmers through my niece's partner, who helped with planting 1,000 chestnut trees, and I soon realized there were connections to the effort all around our landscape. Intrigued, I contacted Yellowbud Farm in Northfield and then discovered Big River Chestnuts in Sunderland, who you will meet this week in Part 1.

Next week, in Part 2, we'll meet Kyra Kristof of the Forest Kitchen at Great Falls Harvest Restaurant, and then Big Foot Food Forest in Montague. And to bring it home, I spoke with a resident of Chestnut Hill in Mon-



SUBMITTED PHOTO / JESSE MARKSOHN

Jesse Marksobn and Eric Cornell of Northfield's Yellowbud Farm visit an exceptional hybrid hickory tree.

tague who is working to "re-chestnut Chestnut Hill."

I had a chance to speak with growers and others dedicated to reviving forest food production, which promotes both healthy forests and nutritious foods. Each has a different way to achieve those goals, from educating and planning for farmers and organizations, to

see **NUTHEADS** page B8



A year of travel: Looking back at 2023.



HARTSHORNE PHOTO

The famous Rosenbaum House in Alabama, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

SOUTH DEERFIELD – I began my year of traveling later than usual. My first excursion of the year was to **San Antonio, Texas** in March, a city I had never been to, but that left me with a positive feeling. Between biking all over the city on safe paths to the luxurious digs at the JW Marriott Texas Hill Country Resort, it was a great winter break from cold New England.

An exciting new addition to the famous Alamo brought me down there. The interesting thing is that the man who has donated his collection of Alamo-related materials and weapons, which makes up the new Alamo museum that will open next year, is rock legend Phil Collins.

see **TRAVEL** page B5

Pet of the Week



COURTESY OF DAKIN HUMANE SOCIETY

'HOT CHOCOLATE'

Hot Chocolate came to Dakin after being found in a box. According to his foster, he is super sweet. He can't get enough chin rubs, petting and cuddles. He doesn't run when you reach in the cage to pet him, and doesn't struggle when picked up. He seems very happy with attention. Hot Chocolate loves soft hidey beds and enjoys snacking on carrots.

Guinea pigs are incredibly social animals who need to be kept in pairs or groups to thrive. They need lots of space to run around in, and toys to keep them active and

enriched. They should get daily "floor time" outside of their cage. This time outside of the cage will be great for bonding and growing closer with them.

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

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

JANUARY LIBRARY LISTING

Montague Public Libraries

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

Erving Public Library (413) 423-3348

Gill: Slate Library (413) 863-2591
 Leverett Public Library (413) 548-9220
 Northfield: Dickinson Library (413) 498-2455
 Wendell Free Library (978) 544-3559

MONTAGUE

Multiple days: Grab & Go Bags. Science: waterproof boot. Craft: popsicle stick sled. Free kits at all branches while supplies last.

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

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

Thursdays, January 4 and 18: Great Stories Club for teens. Free books, snacks. Brick House, 3 p.m.

Every Saturday: Story Time. Jump-start early literacy for preschoolers. Carnegie, 10 a.m.

Saturday, January 6: Used Book Sale. Fiction, paperbacks, kids' books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks. Hundreds of donations. Carnegie, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Monday, January 8: Friends of MPL Meeting. All welcome. Email vgatvalley@gmail.com for info. Carnegie, 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, January 11: Hot Chocolate Social. Millers Falls, 3 to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, January 17: Author Series. Lee Wicks, forthcoming memoir *Five Dog Marriage*. Refreshments provided. Montague Center, 6 p.m.

Saturday, January 13: Bluey Party. Crafts and activities, theme "let's play library." Discovery Center, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Saturday, January 20: Winter Ecology Walk. For all ages, skills, and fitness levels. Info and registration at montague-publiclibraries.org. Montague Center, 1 p.m.

Monday, January 22: Book Talk. Bruce Watson, *The History of Light: A Radiant History from Creation to the Quantum Age*. Montague Center, 4 p.m.

Thursday, January 25: Book Club. Sue Hubbell, *A Country Year: Living the Questions*. Montague Center, 7 p.m.

ERVING

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

Wednesday, January 10: Teen Media Club. Ages 11 to 19. Snacks provided. 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, January 11: PJ Storytime. Ages 0 to 8. RSVP requested. 6 p.m.

Sunday, January 14: Friends' Puzzle Swap. All ages, no puzzle required. 1 to 3 p.m.

Sunday, January 14: Genealogy Drop-in Help. 1 to 3 p.m.

Thursday, January 18: Hands-Only CPR. Free 30-minute class, RSVP requested. 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, January 21: Friends' Craft Day. Materials provided, RSVP required, 1 p.m.

Thursday, January 25: Book Club. 5:30 p.m.

Monday, January 29: All-Abilities Social. Food provided. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Tuesday, January 30: All-Abilities Social. Food provided. 4 to 6 p.m.

LEVERETT

All Month: Art Exhibit, monographs by Jen Lambert.

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

Every Monday and Wednesday: Online Qigong. Free, all welcome. See leverettlibrary.org or email CommunityQigong@gmail.com for info. 10:30 a.m.

Every Wednesday: Playgroup, for children ages 0 to 5 and their caregivers. See leverettlibrary.org or email budine@erving.org for info. 10:30 a.m.

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

Thursday, January 18: Lotus Lantern Workshop. Korean craft and culture. Email leverettlibrary@gmail.com to sign up. 4 p.m.

Tuesday, January 23: Heart to Heart Workshop. Gina Simm presents tools for caregivers, teachers, and parents of kids ages 5 to 9. 6 p.m.

NORTHFIELD

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

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

Every Wednesday: Tech Help. First hour for topic of the week, second hour one-on-one 15-minute consultations. Bring your device. 1 to 3 p.m.

Thursday, January 4: Spice Club pickup starts. Stop in for a sample and suggested recipes while supplies last; look for a new spice every month.

Friday, January 5: Coffee and Tea Social. 10 to 11 a.m.

Saturday, January 6: Puzzle Swap. Dozens of puzzles for kids and adults. For more info, email friendsofdml01360@gmail.com.

gmail.com. 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, January 10: Readings Group. Poetry anthology: *After Frost*. Pick up a copy at the library. 3 p.m.

Thursday, January 11: Library Trivia Night. Four Star Farms Brewery, 6 p.m.

Thursday, January 11: Environmental Awareness Group. Andrew Boyd, *I Want a Better Catastrophe*. Pick up a copy at the library. 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, January 17: Online Art Talk. *Fierce Females: Women in Art*. Email dmemlib@gmail.com to register. 7 p.m.

Thursday, January 25: Book Group. A book you read years ago that you may feel differently about now. 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, January 25: Woodpeckers. A Northfield Bird Club presentation by Dana & Bob Fox. 6 p.m.

WENDELL

All Month: Art Exhibit. "Robot quilts" by Marge Barrett-Mills.

All Month: Grab and Go. Kit for Wendell Tiny Art Show.

Every Tuesday: Art Group. 5 p.m.

Every Wednesday: Matinee Movie. 4 p.m.

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

Every Saturday: StoryCraft. Picture book read-aloud at 10:30 a.m.; drop in until 2:30 p.m. for a connected craft.

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

Tuesdays, January 9, 23, and 30: Yoga Workshops with Shay. Donations accepted. 11 a.m.

Friday, January 12: Homeschool Hangout. 10:30 a.m.

Friday, January 12: Office Hours with state rep. Aaron Saunders. 2 p.m.

Tuesday, January 16: Craft Workshop. Rolled wax candle and clay holder. All ages. Registration required. 4 p.m.

Wednesday, January 17: Craft Workshop. Rolled wax candle and clay holder. All ages. Registration required. 2 p.m.

Friday, January 19: Film screening: Regenerating Life. 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 20: Puzzle Palooza. Puzzle swap at 12:30 p.m.; competition at 1 p.m.

Tuesday, January 23: Tech Time. By appt., 4:30 and 5 p.m.

Sunday, January 28: Cookbook Book Club. 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 30: Adult Book Group. 10 a.m.

Senior Center Activities JANUARY 8 THROUGH 12

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments.

For Senior Health Rides, contact Jonathan von Ranson at (978) 544-3758.

ERVING

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

Monday 1/8

9 a.m. Interval
 10:15 a.m. Seated Workout
 12 p.m. Pitch Group

Tuesday 1/9

8:30 a.m. Toe Nail Clipping
 9 a.m. Good For U Workout
 10 a.m. Line Dancing
 11 a.m. Social Stringers

Wednesday 1/10

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

Thursday 1/11

9 a.m. Core & Balance
 10 a.m. Barre Fusion
 Friday 1/12
 9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Cen-

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

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

Monday 1/8

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
 10:15 a.m. Outdoor Chair Yoga
 11 a.m. Chair Exercise
 12 p.m. Pot Luck Lunch

Tuesday 1/9

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 1/10

Foot Clinic (by appointment)
 4:15 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 1/11

1 p.m. Pitch
 Friday 1/12
 10:15 a.m. Aerobics
 11 a.m. Chair Exercise
 2 p.m. Chair Dance

LEVERETT

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

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

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VALLEY VIEW from page B1 was sure “Rynie” would be eager to discuss the game.

My wife was concerned. I told her to relax. Maybe he was visiting a friend or entertaining a girlfriend.

Next morning, still worried, she called his apartment first thing. Still no answer. Sensing something had gone amiss, she showered, dressed, and drove to Northfield to check on him. He was still in recovery from open-heart surgery seven months earlier to repair an aortic dissection that could have killed him.

She called me moments before I left for Frederick’s house. Bad news. She found Rynie unresponsive in his recliner. It was very serious. He was alive, *en route* by ambulance to the Greenfield hospital. She was on her way. It looked like sepsis. No reason to cancel my appointment. There was nothing I could do at the moment. We could talk later.

Soon I was knocking on Frederick’s door. She asked me in and we exchanged pleasantries. I told her of my son’s dire situation. *He may not make it.* I don’t recall her reaction. Probably that maybe we should cancel and reschedule. I stayed.

My host threw on a jacket and we took a short drive in my truck, parked, and walked to the base of a series of impressive tall ledges. Following them north, with a sandy-bedded spring brook snaking its way through marsh to our left, we stopped to examine several shallow caves that would have been more than capable of sheltering several people under large, sturdy overhangs.

I returned home to learn that Rynie was indeed septic, and “critical.” An ambulance was transporting him to Springfield’s Baystate Medical Center. It was touch and go. Nine days later, on the day before his 29th birthday, he was dead.

The impetus for that 2014 walk with Frederick was columns I had written about the 12,400-year-old Paleo “Sugarloaf Site,” and the indigenous “Great Beaver” origin tale of Mount Sugarloaf and its Pocumtuck Range. The Sugarloaf Site – a Clovis archaeological treasure trove straddling the Deerfield-Whately line across the river from Frederick’s home – was a multi-occupation, seasonal place of repeat encampments, visited for decades by nomadic bands of Paleoindian caribou hunters.

There some of our valley’s earliest human inhabitants left many fascinating traces of their Clovis culture buried on a sandy outwash plain that was once lake bottom. Now the raised terrace is cropland, bordering fertile river meadows

between it and the river. Gramly believes it’s one of North America’s largest, most important, Paleoindian sites.

Although Gramly’s 1995 and 2013 excavations uncovered many important artifacts there, he believes his limited research only scratched the surface. There is much more to be gleaned from the site. Nonetheless, it has been largely ignored due to strict state oversight and secrecy.

After my first tour of the Toby rock shelters, I reported to Gramly what I had seen. Months later, I explored similar cliffs and rock shelters behind the Ward Cemetery along the eastern base of North Sugarloaf, just around the corner from the Sugarloaf Site. Since then, Gramly has himself visited some of the ledges along Toby’s western skirt as well as a secluded waterfall in the same area. He was impressed with what he saw, and in awe of what that landscape may someday reveal about the peopling of our valley.

What is it, he wonders, that has kept UMass archaeologists away? Are they shamefully unaware? Have they not a hint of intellectual curiosity? How can they call themselves scientists, he asks?

Gramly can only imagine what would come to light if someone – even an untrained hobbyist with limited knowledge of what to look for – started probing the old Lake Hitchcock shoreline on both sides of our valley. All it would take to scratch up important discoveries around rock shelters, forgotten springs, and waterfalls is a little energy, intellectual curiosity, and the type of hand-held, five-finger claws found in most garden sheds.

Gramly, a Harvard PhD archaeologist with *beaucoup* field experience, scoffs at the notion that such surface investigation would be invasive, irresponsible and destructive. He calls that opinion a red herring disseminated by cultural-resource-management devotees. In fact, he believes a little “poking around” would be no threat to future professional exploration.

In his mind, someone ought to get the ball rolling toward further research. He himself tried twice, yet today the archaeological hot spot known in the field as the Ulrich Locus languishes under a 15-foot mound of dirt I sarcastically named Mount Dincauze years ago in dishonor of late, respected UMass scholar Dena F. Dincauze (1934-2016). It was she who ordered heavy-equipment operators excavating the site to cover it with a protective mound before convincing the state to buy private land and prevent future archaeological digs.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Foot Pursuit; Smoking Dryer; Meats and Cheeses Theft; MGM Studios Threat; Christmas Eviction; BMW Attack

Monday, 12/18

6:20 a.m. First of six reports of trees and wires down in Montague Center, Turners Falls, and Millers Falls.

5:49 p.m. Caller stated that his wife was driving home and drove by a house in Northfield and thought she saw someone hanging in the window. Shelburne Control advised.

8:26 p.m. Walk-in party reporting assault that occurred at Unity Park. Second party at station filling out statement alleging first party assaulted her daughter.

Tuesday, 12/19

10:29 a.m. A 48-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a straight warrant.

10:55 a.m. Walk-in requesting people not ride their dirt bikes on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day as it’s supposed to be nice weather; doesn’t want the noise disturbance. Advised party to call if it happens and MPD can attempt to make contact with involved parties.

5:06 p.m. Odor of gas reported in the area of Third Street and Avenue A. Shelburne Control advised.

5:08 p.m. Injured deer on Turners Falls Road. Animal gone upon officer’s arrival. Additional report of deceased deer. Officer off checking area. Passerby took the deer. Operator of vehicle that struck deer came into station to file report.

6:25 p.m. Following a foot pursuit in the Green Pond Road area, a 37-year-old Millers Falls woman was arrested on a default warrant.

6:44 p.m. Report of smoke coming from a wood stove at a Sherman Drive address. Caller advises she was advised by TFFD to call when she observes this. TFFD advised.

7:35 p.m. 911 caller states she was just hit, driver’s side door, on Turnpike Road near Sandy Lane. No airbag deployment or injuries. Report taken.

Wednesday, 12/20

9:16 a.m. Officer requesting DPW treat an area of

roadway near Montague City and Turnpike Roads where there is a patch of ice. DPW foreman notified.

9:49 a.m. Caller concerned about sidewalk at K and Ninth streets being blocked by a resident with various equipment. Property owner advised of complaint and given options to remove items so the sidewalk is cleared.

1:58 p.m. A 28-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a straight warrant.

5:11 p.m. Anonymous caller states that roofers are making a lot of noise on Second Street, and it is disturbing her. Referred to an officer.

Thursday, 12/21

1:09 p.m. A 41-year-old Turners Falls woman was arrested on a straight warrant.

2:30 p.m. Caller states that one of the dryers inside the Third Street Laundry is smoking. Shelburne Control notified.

6:02 p.m. Caller from Highland School Apartments states that he believes that a package that was delivered several days ago has been stolen. Package contained meats and cheeses. Caller would just like it on record for now.

7:49 p.m. Caller states that her son’s girlfriend texted her that her son was in the upstairs apartment of the building that he lives in and it’s a known drug house; she doesn’t want him in there, and the girlfriend told the caller that she had to call the PD because she is family. Officer left message for caller.

9:56 p.m. Caller states that a male party was taking pictures of her back and she did not like it. Referred to an officer.

Friday, 12/22

12:19 p.m. Caller states that an alarm is sounding inside the Verizon substation on Crescent Street and it is bothering the neighborhood. Reports that this happens all the time. Officer located phone number on building. Property department will contact supervisor for that area and have him call the PD. No call as of 3 p.m. Property department manager, Rob, called in stating the alarm is being worked on and should be fixed soon. Alarm is quiet now.

4:58 p.m. 911 abandoned call pinged off cell phone tower on Turnpike Road. Upon callback, male party stated a Massachusetts group is planning an attack on MGM Studios this weekend and police need to be sent there. Male party then hung up. Officers advised.

5:23 p.m. Caller states she hit a deer on her way home on Route 63 North before Montague Center.

Car was driveable; deer ran into woods, and she drove her car home. The windshield is cracked, and the driver’s door is damaged. She will contact her insurance company.

7:17 p.m. Caller states that while she was outside her apartment, the upstairs neighbor’s window opened and a teenage girl she hasn’t seen before asked for help escaping to go back home. Caller states the girl was visibly upset and crying. When the residents of the apartment heard, they shut the window and locked it. Caller could hear them talking quietly to someone else in the hallway of the building. Officers advised. Male party opened door; female party seen in background declined needing assistance. Male party then slammed door shut.

Saturday, 12/23

11:24 a.m. Caller states that an aggressive dog, white with a red collar, is following pedestrians and barking at them near Tenth and G streets. Area checked; unable to locate.

4:10 p.m. Caller states that there is rapid shooting in the area of Center and South streets and it’s too close to the road and neighborhoods. Officers advised.

11:16 p.m. Caller states that an alarm is making noise at the Verizon building on Crescent Street and has been doing so for multiple days. Caller states she has called about this before. No site information for involved location; units advised of nature of call.

Sunday, 12/24

6:50 a.m. DPW requested to treat roads due to icy spots.

7:31 p.m. 911 caller states that a vehicle just struck her at the intersection of Third and L streets. No injuries or fluids. Tow requested for both vehicles.

8:07 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that she got into an argument with her son and when he left, he broke her porch door and some wooden slats. Advised of options.

Monday, 12/25

12:31 a.m. Caller from Morris Avenue states that on 12/23 around 6 p.m. when he arrived home from a bike ride, he noticed a vehicle not familiar to the area with a busted rear door. Caller states he felt they might have been “casing” the area and tonight realized he is not home and neither is his neighbor; was feeling unsettled. Officer advised; will keep an eye out in the area.

10:05 a.m. 911 misdial; passing out gifts and emergency button on watch was pressed for too long.

12:50 p.m. Caller from Bridge Street states that a neighbor is banging on the walls yelling he is going to

kill everyone. Male party is in the process of being evicted from the building. Quiet upon officers’ arrival. No answer at door.

4:58 p.m. Caller from East Chestnut Hill Road states that a male party has a Ford Mustang which he drives recklessly; she is fearful for her children’s safety while walking and riding on the road. She has asked him to slow down, but he still continues to drive fast. Officer advises she spoke to male party; not as reported.

Tuesday, 12/26

8:02 p.m. Officer conducting vehicle stop at Avenue A and Third Street. Passenger listed as a missing juvenile entered by Springfield PD. Officer advises operator has been detained and advised of her rights. Rau’s requested for tow. Springfield advises to contact reporting party; her info was given. Detective advises they have already made contact with the sister. Juvenile located in NCIC. Juvenile in lobby awaiting sister. Sister at the station to pick up her brother. Summons issued.

8:16 p.m. 911 abandoned call from Fifth Street; got voicemail upon callback. Received call from female stating they were just playing around but they don’t really need anything; “It was just a joke.” Received third call from same number; hung up without saying anything.

9:03 p.m. Report of unwanted person on Fourth Street. Officer advises quiet upon arrival; situation mediated.

11:22 p.m. 911 caller from Mormon Hollow Road states that individuals in a BMW pulled up at the end of his driveway and attacked his friend. Caller states his friend has bad head trauma and is bleeding heavily. Caller unsure who involved people are or where they came from. Caller indicated his friend was bringing out trash when this occurred. Caller transferred to Shelburne Control for an ambulance. Responding officers advise male party has facial lacerations and a large hematoma under his eye. Initial reports are that a baseball bat and machete were used in this attack. Officer advises only info we have at this time is that a four-door black sedan fled the scene with five occupants headed toward Wendell. Shelburne Control and MSP advised to be on lookout. Officer initiated vehicle stop at Turners Falls-Gill Bridge and made an arrest in connection with this call. A 25-year old Turners Falls man was arrested and charged with aggravated assault and battery. A summons was issued to a second party [redacted].

MONTAGUE CRYPTOJAM !!!
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LOOKING BACK: 145 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on January 1, 1879: Ads from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

COAL. Reduction in Prices! On and after this date, I shall sell Coal for CASH only, and shall reduce my prices to correspond with the state of the trade. I have all kinds at the lowest prices. Chestnut Coal. Delivered \$6.50. At Yard. \$6.00 Other sizes in Proportion.

F.I. Webster, Dealer in Hardware, Iron and Steel, Coal, Lime and Cement, Baled Hay, Plas-

tering Hair, Manufacturers' and Builders' Supplies. Farren House Block, Turners Falls, Mass.

Farren House, Turners Falls, Mass. This favorite hotel has been refitted in first class style and is now open for accommodation of the public. No pains will be spared to maintain the reputation which this house has heretofore enjoyed. Charges will be reasonable, and we hope to receive a fair share of the public patronage.

C. W. Hazelton, Prop'r.

135 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 2, 1889: Ads from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

CALL AND EXAMINE our Stock of hats, bonnets, plushes, velvets, ribbons, feathers, wings, fancy pins, children's wool bonnets, &c. Children's plush and velvet bonnets made to order. Also our stock of fancy plushes and Florentine silks, for chair rolls, fancy linen scrim, Congress canvas, rings for towels, fancy tidies with rings to use instead of ribbon, plaques and panels on which to put the new FRENCH ART WORK. Bolting cloth, butcher's linen, rope silk, rope linen plush, balls, arasine, chenille, &c. &c.

Marble & Rochford's, Dressmaking - Stamping. Avenue A, Turners Falls.

Livery and Boarding Stable. The subscriber, having added new teams to his stable recently purchased of Lamb & Wilder, is now ready to furnish good teams at reasonable rates. All calls promptly attended to. Special attention given to boarding horses.

C. A. Davis, Turners Falls, Mass.

Any One Can Own a Fine Gold Watch by joining the Watch Club. There are no blanks, every number draws a prize.

John H. Starbuck, Starbuck's Block, Ave. A, Turners Falls.

130 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 3, 1894: Ads from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Jacobus Bros. Wholesale and Retail Dealers in wines, malt and spirituous liquors of all kinds, both Imported and Domestic. We are Agents for A. J. Houghton & Co's Celebrated Pavonia Beer. This beer is made from the best Bohemian Hops and Canada Malt to be had, and is free from all adulterations. You will always find it

on draught at our place, No. 34 Second Street. We keep constantly on hand well known whiskies, which we sell at reasonable prices by the pint, quart and gallon.

Buy the New Household Range! The original ventilated oven. Guaranteed to roast meats of all kinds without basting or turning in the oven. Buy this range and take no other.

Manufactured for Geo. Starbuck & Co., Turners Falls, Mass.

125 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 4, 1899: Ads from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Safe Sure Speedy. Mme. Le Clair's famous French Remedy Never Fails. Endorsed by thousands of ladies as a periodical regulator without an equal, successful when Cotton Root, Pennyroyal, Ergot, etc. have proven worthless. 25 two-cent stamps brings trial package, and convinces the most skeptical of their wonderful properties. Send 4 cents in

stamps for pamphlet, containing valuable information for ladies. Address LeClair Pill Co., U.S. Agents, Boston Mass. N.B. All correspondence confidential and returned with trial package.

For Sale in Turners Falls by A. E Martel.

Scientific American. A handsomely illustrated weekly. Largest circulation of any scientific journal. Terms, \$3 a year; four months, \$1. Sold by all newsdealers. Munn & Co., 361 Broadway, New York.

140 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 2, 1884: Ads from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Grocery Department. Fine Goods for the Holidays. A full line of First Class Groceries and Provisione. Pickles, Jellies, Jams, Canned Goods, Raisins, Currents, Citron, New Nuts of all kinds, Figs, Dates, Prunes, Prunnells, CONFECTIONERY. Our usual quantity of 800 lbs. Strictly pure confectionery 18 cts. lb., 6 lbs. for \$1.00.

Respectfully, M. Collins, Ave. A, Corner 5th st.

A.J. Nims, D.D.S., Dentist, Bank Block, Avenue A, Turners Falls, would inform the citizens of this vicinity that he is prepared to perform all operations pertaining to Dentistry in the most approved and thorough manner. Gas and Ether administered when desired.

Gotlieb Pfefferle, LAGER BEER & CIGARS, Confectionery, &c. Large new saloon, Pfefferle's brick block, Corner Fourth and L Sts., Turners Falls.

120 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 6, 1904: Ads from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Hosts of Hankerchiefs, Handsome Aprons, Golf Gloves, Nubias, Fascinators, Tam O'Shanter. A choice line of beautiful Collars of all kinds. Novelties in Burnt Wood and Leather. Novelties in Pin Cushions, Match Scratchers and Calendars. Sofa Pillow Tops, Center Pieces, Bureau Scarfs, Doilies, Pin Cushions, &c.

Anna Rochford, Ave. A Turners Falls.

Call on HENRY MAINGUEY, Riley's Brick Shop, Rear of Hotel Riley. First class blacksmithing, horeshoeing, wagon making, general jobbing, at reasonable prices. Give me a call. You will get your money's worth. Henry Mainguey, Second St., Turners Falls.

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EXHIBIT ANNOUNCEMENT

Anna Hepler Show at NMH

GILL - Multimedia artist Anna Hepler of Greenfield is exhibiting her work in a show called *Borrowed Light* in the gallery at the Rhodes Arts Center at Northfield Mount Hermon School (NMH).

Hepler, who says she values "embarrassment, blunder, uncertainty, and fragility" as agents in her creative process, explores in her work the "awesome fragility" of a tension between organization and chaos.

Her sculptures, prints, ceramics, and photographs focus on patterns and linear forms that shift unexpectedly and weave playfully in and out of geometric orderliness. She works with a broad range of materials, including clay, cardboard, wire, wood, and cloth, and she frequently

repurposes materials.

"The Gallery at the Rhodes Art Center is excited to share the work of Anna Hepler," says Jamie Rourke, an NMH art teacher and director of the gallery. "The focus on craft, willingness to move across boundaries - real or imagined - and natural curiosity to make new connections are themes that are echoed in our learning and living community here at NMH. We are so fortunate to have this amazing work on view."

Borrowed Light runs until January 19. Please note that the campus is closed to the public through this Sunday, January 7. The gallery is open to the public Mondays through Fridays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



The Puzzle, by Greenfield multimedia artist Anna Hepler.

EXHIBITS

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Junior Duck Stamps.* See the top entries for the 2023 Junior Duck Stamp competition. This statewide contest for students highlights the importance of preserving wetlands. Make your own stamp at the investigation station in the Great Hall. Through January 16.

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

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

Northfield Mount Hermon Rhodes Arts Center, Gill: *Borrowed Light,* sculptures, prints, ceramics, and photographs by Anna Hepler. January 7 to 18.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *In Residence: Art for the Soul Gallery,* January 4 through 27. Opening reception tonight, January 4, from 5 to 7 p.m.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: *Chile Nunca Más.* Residency marking 50 years since the military coup - *el golpe* - in Chile. Javiera Benavente, Ester Orellana, and collaborators. January 8 to 13, with a community gathering at 4 p.m. Saturday, January 13

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

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

D'Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield: *As They Saw It: Women Artists Then and Now,* over 60 works by women artists spanning three centuries, through January 14. *A Gathering: Works from Contemporary Black American Ceramic Artists,* through March 24.

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

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- Discover social media sites;
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Applications due on or before January 10th. Pick up an application at the Gill Montague Senior Center!

Tech Drop-in: TUESDAYS 12:30 – 2 PM

No appointment needed! Come in with questions about your laptop computer, tablet or cell phone ... and we'll help! Starts January 9th, 2024, and following Tuesdays.

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TV ANALYSIS

The 'Roads Not Taken' in *Star Trek*

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – Time travel is a very popular thing to do in sci-fi movies and TV shows. *Star Trek* has done this tons of times. It leads to some very interesting “roads not taken” scenarios. Some things change, and some don’t at all.

Chris Pine was in a *Star Trek* movie, produced in 2009, that features a Romulan from the future trying to destroy planets in an act of vengeance. That doesn’t exactly work out like he wanted, because Captain Kirk still ends up joining Starfleet anyway. This is why this movie also features a much older Spock, played by Leonard Nimoy, from an alternate timeline. Not a bad way to feature a road-not-taken idea in a movie.

The original *Star Trek* TV series did this for the first time with an episode called “The City on the Edge of Forever,” in which Kirk and Spock had to reset things by making a decision that involved a woman’s life.

The second time came with *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, featuring Picard as Captain, in an

episode called “Yesterday’s Enterprise.” The whole deal for the show changes in one episode because a past Enterprise comes to the future. The character by the name of Tasha Yar, who had died in the series, is back on the ship. Worf is not on the ship, and the Federation is at war with the Klingons.

Apparently, the ship from the past makes a big difference in preventing all of this. One particular character, Guinan, tells Picard about the ship needing to go back. Needless to say, by the end of the episode things are back to normal.

Another time this happens comes around with *Star Trek: Enterprise*, featuring Captain Archer played by Scott Bakula, with an alternate-universe concept first introduced in the original series. Instead of the Federation, there is something called the Terra Empire. I call this a “road not taken” example because a historical first contact between Cochrane, the inventor of the warp drive, and the Vulcans didn’t happen like it was supposed to. That was what started this empire.

The latest “road not taken” storylines have been done in the TV series *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds*, featuring Anson Mount as Pike, the Captain before Kirk. The Season 1 finale, “A Quality of Mercy,” showed what would happen if Pike changed an unfortunate fate he is meant to have. They are in conflict with Romulans, and he ends up meeting Kirk. Like in the “Yesterday’s Enterprise” episode, this could have been avoided if he hadn’t traded his fate for Spock’s, which ends up taking a bad turn – he’s the only one who might have helped out with this conflict.

The show tried their hand at it again in Season 2 with an episode called “Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow.” The ship’s security officer La’An is sent back in time to stop something from being undone. Only here, she ends up meeting a version of Kirk who is a captain in something called the United Earth Fleet. Spock and Kirk aren’t even on the same ship.

I think some of the stories that unfold with this theme are very cool.

TRAVEL from page B1

In April I flew to **Huntsville, Alabama** for a tourism meeting, and spent some time on a road trip visiting the famous recording studios that made the Muscle Shoals sound so popular. I met the wife of one of the famous “Wrecking Crew” studio musicians, who told the stories about when the Rolling Stones and Aretha Franklin came down and recorded in these studios.

In May, I took one of the most spectacular cruises I’ve ever experienced when we boarded a 500-foot sailing vessel, the *Star Clipper*, for a week-long loop around **Corsica** and **Sardinia**, ending up in Cannes. The feeling of being underway at night with sail pow-

er was unforgettable, as were the beautiful landscapes of these two under-populated islands.

This cruise differed from 90% of the cruising stories I hear about with thousands of passengers. This ship had just 104 travelers, making it a completely different, more personal experience.

After the cruise in June, we visited Cassis and other towns in **Provence** for some off-duty fun. I didn’t have to cover anything. Instead, we rented an Airbnb apartment overlooking the harbor of this sparkling, sunny city and did some home cooking and day-tripping for four days. The nearby port town of La Ciotat was a memorable afternoon of walking and exploring.

Then we headed north in our rental car to another spectacular place, **Beaumont-de-Pertuis**, in the Vaucluse department in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region in southeastern France. Here we met a couple, Kelly and Philippe, who have opened a wellness boutique inn. Kelly skillfully taught us how to make some of the Provençal specialties after they took us shopping at two different farmers’ markets in search of zucchini flowers.

We spent the rest of the summer at home and then enjoyed exploring **New Brunswick, Canada**, in early September. This province is easy to drive to right across the Maine border. It’s full of friendly people who speak both English and French, mostly English, and we learned how they hatch lobsters and release them offshore to keep this fishery sustainable – a true lobster success story. Acadian history was a big part of this trip with stops at many historical areas, including First Nations.

A short visit to **Medford, Oregon** and the spectacular Crater Lake was on tap for October. This region of southern Oregon is dotted with 70 vineyards. The combination of its national beauty and delicious wines made this region stand out.

My final trip in late November included my son Sam – so fun – to the **Coastal Mississippi** region of the US. We meandered our way from one side of the coast to the other and took in many exciting attractions like a gigantic model train display and Jefferson Davis’ house called Beauvoir.

Traveling with your kids when they are older gave me a perspective, and a chance to really talk and get to know my son better. Indeed, this was the reason I enjoyed this trip more than most.

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.



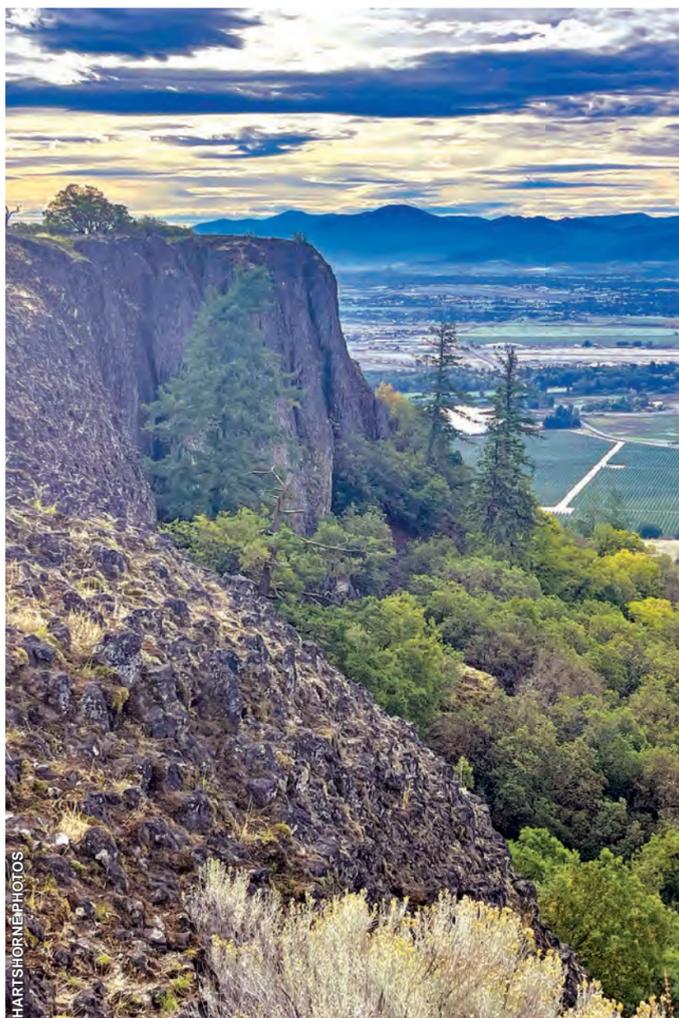
Poppies growing in the wheat fields in Le Luberon, Provence, France.



Pays de la Sagouine, where Acadian music comes to life in Bouctouche, New Brunswick.



Funky shack, dining with alligators: Sam Hartshorne, the author’s son, at Huck’s Cove in Gauthier, Mississippi.



The view of Medford, Oregon from Upper Table Rock.

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ANALYSIS

New Year, New Power Lines

By SPENCER SHORKEY

MILLERS FALLS – Those of us living in modern homes in the United States use electricity delivered from the grid in the form of alternating current (AC) at specific voltages (V), with 120 V-AC powering small appliances, and 240 V-AC powering large appliances. Anyone living in a motor home may also be accustomed to using direct current (DC) devices at 12 V.

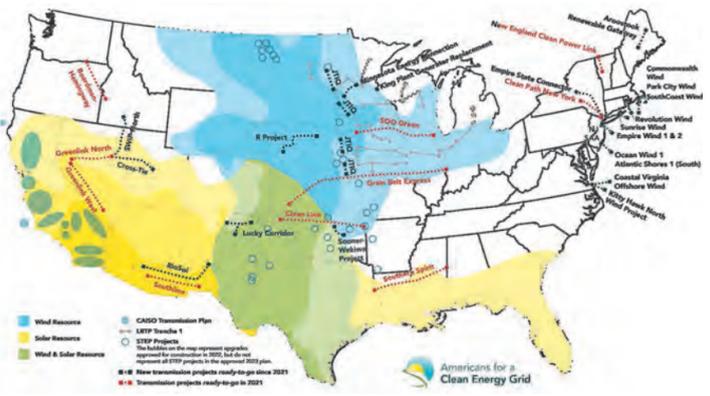
Electronic devices that rotate, including turbines and motors, are built with magnetic fields arranged so that their rotations either produce AC power, such as a wind turbine, or use it, such as a blender. Many other household devices, however, run off DC power internally, and thus require a rectifier to convert AC

from the grid into DC in the device. Solar panels and electrochemical batteries, which produce DC power, require an inverter to convert DC to AC and interconnect with the grid.

In terms of our electric grid infrastructure, AC power is ubiquitous due to the dominance of rotating machines in industry, and the advantages in voltage regulation via transformers. Prior to this infrastructure, industrially-useful energy generation came in the form of fossil-fueled steam turbines or hydro-powered waterwheels or turbines, which integrated well into AC power systems. The ability of transformers to easily convert AC power between low and high voltages is also critically important for moving large amounts of power over long distances at low current.

The only significant downside to AC in long-range power transmission, as opposed to DC, comes down to efficiency: AC suffers from capacitive and inductive power loss, which is not an issue with DC. The economics work out such that for gigawatt-scale power transmission lines that run over hundreds of miles, the 30% to 40% gain in power transport efficiency by using DC is enough to rationalize the added costs of DC-to-AC conversion equipment.

High-voltage DC (HVDC) power lines are therefore an important aspect of the grid modernization efforts needed to fully harness and distribute renewable energy resources over long distances. HVDC is also valuable for forming stable, low-risk connections between asyn-



A map of major new transmission projects in the US since 2021, from the industry group Americans for a Clean Energy Grid's 2023 "Ready-To-Go Transmission Projects" report. ACEG IMAGE

chronous AC grids, such as between those in Canada and the US.

Locally, we have the 2.25 GW Quebec – New England Transmission line, a HVDC line initially built in the 1990s which runs over 1,000 kilometers (km) from the 15.2 GW James Bay hydroelectric project, through Quebec, Vermont, and New Hampshire to the Boston area. Efforts to expand the connections between Canadian hydroelectric resources and power-hungry New England include the Northeast Clean Energy Connect (NECEC), which planned to route a new 1.2 GW HVDC line through 145 miles of Maine at a cost of \$1 billion.

son Power Express is another local HVDC project under construction, traveling 339 miles from Quebec to New York City. The largest operational HVDC line in the US is the 3.8 GW Pacific DC Intertie, built in 1970, which runs 846 miles from the 2 GW Dalles dam in northern Oregon to Los Angeles in southern California.

And an 8 GW, 1370-mile HVDC line in Hami-Zhengzhou commissioned in 2014 is currently the world's largest.

According to the recent industry report *Ready-To-Go Transmission Projects 2023*, there are 36 projects totaling 9,976 miles of high-voltage power lines in the works in the United States, representing 187 GW of transmission capacity at a cost of \$64 billion. At the moment, 19.5 GW of these projects are under construction.

The ongoing transition to renewable energy is marked by significant progress across various sectors, influenced by both environmental imperatives and capitalist interests. However, it's crucial to address the impacts that large-scale energy projects can have on local communities and ecosystems.

The debate around the implementation of solar panels, for instance, illustrates this point. Rather than resorting to clearcutting forests, a more sustainable approach could involve utilizing the tens of thousands of acres of available open parking lots and rooftops in Massachusetts. This strategy could potentially accommodate 40 GW of solar panels, on roughly 1% of the state's acreage. This would be more than enough to meet the 24 to 27 GW in the state's "Net Zero" plan, prioritizing less invasive methods of harnessing solar energy and reflecting a more balanced approach to environmental conservation and energy development.

IN THE NEWS

Artificial Intelligence & Intellectual Property

By SPENCER SHORKEY (10%) and CHATGPT4 (90%)

MILLERS FALLS – There is mounting concern among media executives about the role of content distribution and copyright in training of "artificial intelligence" (AI) models. ChatGPT and other large language models (LLMs) are trained by analyzing and processing vast amounts of text data collected from the internet. AI tools such as DALL-E, Midjourney, and Stable Diffusion create images by training on vast digital libraries of images and artwork.

This has sparked debates over potential copyright infringement. Lawsuits from entities such as Getty Images and individual artists claim these AI models use copyrighted material without proper authorization, crediting, or compensation, effectively diminishing artists' rights and revenues.

In a notable development, the *New York Times* has now filed a lawsuit against OpenAI and Microsoft, citing copyright infringement. This case is pivotal, touching on crucial aspects of copyright law, AI ethics, and the digital publishing industry. It specifically addresses the unauthorized use of the *Times*'s content by OpenAI for training its chatbot models, alongside legal arguments concerning fair use.

OpenAI executives had previously asserted that their extensive collection of data from vast areas of the internet, including the arti-

cles from the *Times*, falls under the legal protection of the "fair use" doctrine. More recently, OpenAI has responded to these challenges by forming licensing agreements with other publishers.

Creators from various fields, including writers and programmers, are alarmed about AI systems being trained on copyrighted works without consent, credit, or compensation. This situation poses a significant challenge to copy-

right law and creative rights in the digital era, potentially reshaping the traditional understanding of intellectual property.

The criticism of OpenAI and other AI developers concerning artists' rights highlights a complex interaction between technological innovation and copyright law. It emphasizes the urgent need for a balanced approach that honors both AI's potential and the rights of original creators.



A symbolic image, made using DALL-E, representing the complex interplay between AI technology and artistic copyright issues.

Please use this form to suggest topics of interest to discuss in future Science Pages! www.tinyurl.com/MRSciencePage

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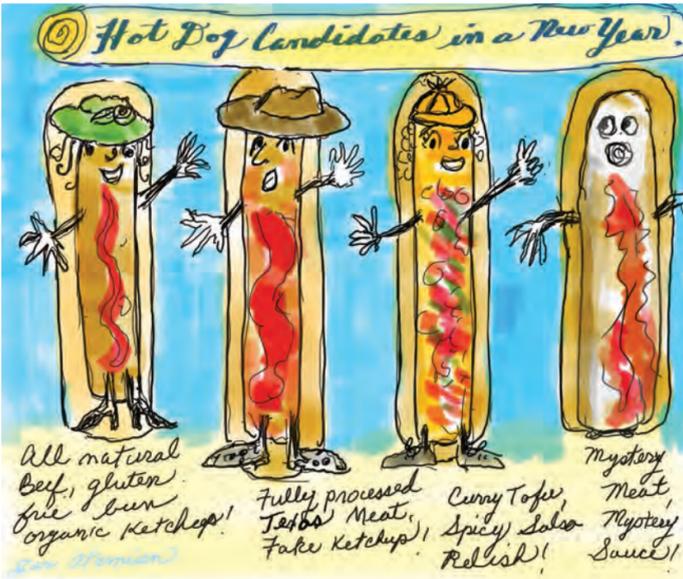
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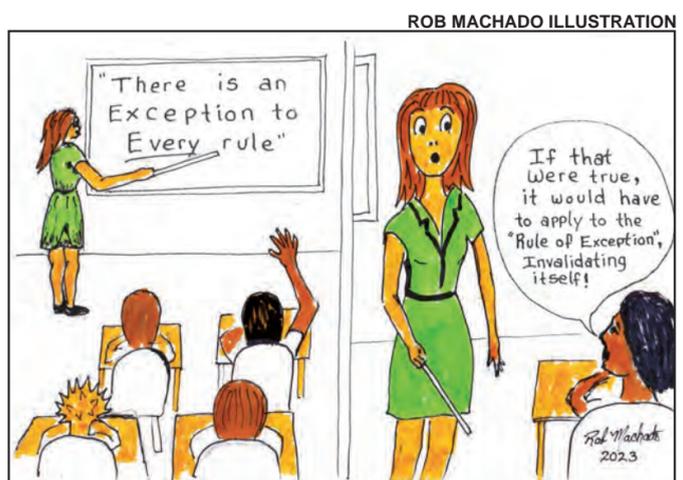


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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 5

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Montague Square Dance*. Caller, Erica Weiss; band, *Lost Sea Squirrels*. All ages. \$ 7 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Black Pyramid, The Worst, Craetor*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6

Tori Town, Holyoke: *Bochek, Bedside Manor, Magick Lantern, Perennial*. \$ 6:30 p.m.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Boston Comedy Club*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Next Stage Arts, Putney, Vermont: *DiTrani Brothers, Jason Scaggs*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Hutghi's at the Nook, Westfield: *Fred Cracklin, Videodrome, Gloons, Chris Wardlaw*. \$ 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Barbicide, Solgyres, O-Rama, Rednave, True Jackie*. \$ 3 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10

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

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11

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

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12

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

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Roger Clark Miller*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

Everything Must Go, Northampton: *Scratch Ticket, Mountain Movers, Bong Wish, Phroeggs*. \$ 8 p.m.

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

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13

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

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Warm to Close, Tysk Tysk Task, Necralant, Amulette*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 14

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

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

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16

Hutghi's at the Nook, Westfield:

A.P.I.E., Michael Slyne, Fragile Rabbit. \$ 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17

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

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

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

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

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

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

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

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

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

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

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

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

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

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

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

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *LakeSide Drive*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

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

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

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.

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.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Bombyx Center for Arts & Equity, Florence: *Ladysmith Black Mambazo*. \$ 3 p.m. & 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Matt Pond PA, Alexa Rose*. \$ 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22

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



looking forward...

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

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

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29

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

FRIDAY, MARCH 1

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

THURSDAY, MARCH 7

Palladium, Worcester: *GWAR, Cancer Bats, X-Cops*. \$ 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

Hawks & Reed: *RJD2*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 16

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

SUNDAY, MARCH 17

Nova Arts, Keene: *Horse Lords, Ka Baird, Know Your Program*. \$ 7 p.m.

FRI-SUN, JUNE 21-23

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *Green River Festival* feat. *Cake, Fleet Foxes, Gregory Alan Isakova, Mdou Moctar, Dakhbrakha*, and more. See greenriverfestival.com for more information.

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NUTHEADS from page B1

providing products, to offering forest food, to planting hundreds of trees on one's own land.

Everyone I spoke with is quite passionate about creating healthy sustainable forests and landscapes that will provide resilient food crops in a time of increasing climate change. That climate change will likely be problematic for farmers, as drought, floods, and the possibility of new invasive pests and diseases will threaten our food systems.

Yellowbud Farm

Carya cordiformis, also known as yellowbud hickory and bitternut hickory, is one of six hickory species found in our neck of the woods, and is the most widespread species growing in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic and into the Midwest. "Hickory" comes from the Algonquian word *pawchiccora*, meaning a rich oily soup or milk made from hickory tree nuts.

Yellowbud Farm in Northfield is named for the species, which is the primary crop being grown on the five acres so far in cultivation. Interested, I visited the farm on a volunteer work day and met the principals, farm founder Jesse Marksohn and Eric Cornell. They were too busy to talk much about the farm that day, so we met up to talk a few weeks ago.



Yellowbud hickory, commonly known as bitternut hickory, the Northfield farm's namesake and a food its owners believe will be a future staple.

Neither Jesse nor Eric had any farming background or education; Jesse told me he was on track to "maybe take over his father's business, or go to business school." He got a job running a mushroom farm, but didn't see a future in that damp fungal business. He became increasingly interested in tree crops, and spent his free time planting trees.

Eric went to school for computer science, and ended up being the produce manager at a natural food store, which led to questions: "Why is there organic food? Why do we get food from other continents? How does one forage to survive the apocalypse?"

The two were living 20 minutes apart in Vermont and were separately becoming "obsessed with hickory trees," inspired in part by foraging book author Sam Thayer. There are groups of self-professed "nutheads" out there, and when the two met during a "nut-head" meetup on Zoom and connected over their shared obsession, the nut seed for Yellowbud was planted.

Jesse was able to purchase 20 acres in Northfield. I asked why this area – "the weather is warmer, and the soil better," was his answer. So Jesse and Eric began their enterprise helped by friends and volunteers. They researched and made contacts with growers, and in 2021 took a "seed harvest trek" through New York, Pennsylvania, and into Ohio and the rest of the Midwest. They sought out the best hickory nuts and most promising hybrid chestnut varieties for seed stock.

I asked about people wanting only "pure" American Chestnuts. Jesse told me people of-

ten express that ideal, but it ain't gonna happen. Sadly, all the chestnuts now being grown are hybrids, which growers hope will be resistant to the blight that decimated the chestnut forests across the US in the early 20th century. At least for now, we may have to accept that it is better to have thriving hybrid chestnuts than none at all.

So why this specific *Carya cordiformis*, this bitternut or yellowbud hickory, as a primary crop? Because it is the most widespread hickory, the one most tolerant of different growing conditions, and because it is the easiest to process, with a thin shell and a very high oil content. "The yellowbud hickory is the olive of our region," Eric told me.

The chestnut trees that the farm is also growing are loaded with carbohydrates that can be made into flour. "Chestnuts are the bread, and hickory is the butter," Eric explained, regarding the two tree species' food potential.

In Northfield about five acres are planted with the hickories and chestnuts; mulberry, persimmon, and honey locust trees, which offer more food for people and wildlife, are going in as well.

Yellowbud has partners and collaborators around Vermont, including the Northern Forest Foods group and Breadtree Farms just over the New York border, as well as different organizations and quasi-governmental bodies. From talking with Eric and Jesse, it becomes apparent that there is a loose network of other growers and people invested in the tree-food idea who cooperate and share ideas, efforts, and resources.

Yellowbud is a wholesale grower; there is a general 100-tree sapling minimum, and they work with customers to make sure their trees work for the site and goals of the customers. "We offer vigorous trees ready to thrive in their forever homes," Eric stated. There is, of course, a lag time between planting and nut production, so this is a longer-term investment.

Eric also told me the farm is considering a one- or two-day retail sale at some point, and assured me that "volunteers for work days can be paid in trees!"

Besides the wholesale tree business, Yellowbud's plan is for the cold-pressing of hickory oil, using equipment bought second hand from a retired psychiatrist at reduced cost; the equipment is usually very expensive. That equipment is now at the Great Falls Harvest Restaurant in Turners Falls, where the pressing will be done, and where Kyra Kristof works her forest food magic. Yellowbud received a US Department of Agriculture grant for "specialty crops" to help with the oil-processing setup.

Like everyone I met with for these articles, Jesse and Eric spoke with enthusiasm about the resilience of the species they are growing, and the promise of healthy soils, forests, and landscapes as a result of agroforestry, silvopasture, ecoforestry, and a host of other sustainable-agriculture practices that, as they put it, "don't do less bad, but do good."

Big River Chestnuts

Driving on River Road in Sunderland in early October, I saw a sign for Big River Chestnuts and made a quick u-turn. Aha! More chestnuts! *Castanea dentata!*

There was an announcement poster for a Chestnut Festival and roasting there on October 14. I returned on that date and was surprised and glad to see a full parking area. Dozens of people strolled around a number of tables with displays of educational material, actual tree nuts of different species, food samples including chestnut flour and a kind of oatmeal-y cereal, and chestnut seedlings to buy.



The public samples Yellowbud's goods at the Big River Chestnut Festival in October.

There was a grill set up, with chestnuts being roasted for people to buy and taste. And there at their table were Jesse and Eric from Yellowbud and folks from Breadtree Farms in New York state. I bought a pound of chestnuts to roast at home, and made arrangements to speak with Big River Chestnuts owner Jono Neiger at a later date.

Big River and the affiliated Regenerative Design Group (RDG) have a two-pronged approach that is different from Yellowbud's methods, but their goals are aligned. The farm is intended as a kind of model for future nut tree farmers to see in action, and the RDG worker-owners and their team work with landowners and farmers to establish a healthy agroforestry cropland system.

Jono has a background in conservation biology and told me he has "been planting nut trees for 15 years – nut crops are a part of my diet." He started Big River Chestnuts in 2018. At the Sunderland farm and on rented land, he said, "a complex of hybrids are planted."

I asked him about the "pure" American Chestnut question. "People have been tweaking crops for many many years," he countered. Native peoples practiced selective breeding from the most vigorous and productive plants, and where would Italians – or the rest of us – be without tomatoes from South America? (Or the Irish without potatoes? Although that one led to tragic results in the mid-1800s.)

With its team of people with various areas of expertise, RDG offers "farm planning, resilience planning, and helping community and local food systems." Their projects include Grow Food Northampton's community gardens, the Clark Art Institute's Forest Garden, and numerous private homes. The group offers "opportunities to bring us into the roles of mentors and guides for landowners" and to look for ways to diversify and expand crops using practices that Jono de-

scribes as "agroecological, agroforestry, silviculture," and a few more.

I asked Jono about some of the older local farmers who may be hesitant to try this new-fangled forest farming. "I've had a lot of conversations with old farmers and their kids," he told me. "They want to see how they will actually make money, but people are excited!"

Big River has received a "specialty crop" grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and has worked with the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) on funding. Jono told me "there is a pretty strong network locally, regionally, and nationally" for the nutheads. There is hope for a producers coop in the future and said nutheads are already looking for funding. I saw evidence of the regional network talking to people; everyone seems to know each other, and has worked together on buying and sharing nut seeds and more.

What does Big River's future look like? Jono said the farm is "slowly lifting off the ground." Next year there are plans for more events; expanding to perhaps have cooks come and give demos, have music and tables. A goal of "scaling up, to have a place where it is happening, integrated with crops and livestock" where farmers and landowners can see the potential. Another goal is developing "shared processing and marketing, and with increased harvest, product price will come down".

As at Yellowbud, volunteers are welcome to go to the farm for planting, mulching, chestnut roasting, and helping with events such as the Chestnut Festival. The farm has some very welcome "super supporters" as well.

Hug a Nut Tree

To wrap up Part 1: I came away impressed and heartened to see people so dedicated to bringing about and realizing the "forward into the past" idea of a healthy, tree-based crop system that, integrated with livestock, will help improve our soils, forests, and landscapes and provide healthy local foods.

Resilience is a word I heard often; climate change will present people, animals, agriculture, and our region and planet with challenges that we can at this point only imagine to an extent. The fact that any monetary gains for the principals may be a few years away makes the effort more amazing.

This movement will take landowners, farmers, and – in the near future – buyers of the tree nut products produced right here in our communities. In Part 2 we'll visit Big Foot Food Forest in Montague, Kyra Kristof's Forest Kitchen, and the chestnut planter on Montague's Chestnut Hill.

Contact Information

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Millers Falls Road (Route 63), Northfield
www.yellowbud.farm
Website includes blog and contact info.

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