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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

FEBRUARY 1, 2024

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Gutter’s Fate To Be Sealed Next Week, Over Zoom

By GEORGE BRACE

At their meeting on Tuesday, Leverett’s selectboard decided to hold an extra meeting next week to focus on drafting a presentation to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) in support of the board’s petition to discontinue a portion of Rattlesnake Gutter Road as a designated county road.

In 2023 the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust (RGT) asked the board to discontinue the road so the RGT could pursue grant funding to repair serious erosion it said threatened the Leverett landmark’s future. The road has been closed to vehicle traffic for over 20 years due in part to this erosion, and has served as a popular trail for hiking and recreation in that time.

Following the RGT’s request, another group of residents asked if the town would study the feasibility of repairing and reopening the road instead. In their decision to go ahead with the petition rather than look into this option, board members cited the likely cost of repairing the road for vehicle use, as well as the value to the town of maintaining its current status as a trail.

Selectboard chair Tom Hankinson see **LEVERETT** page A2

GILL SELECTBOARD

Public Could Soon Own Two Former Schoolhouses

By KATE SAVAGE

At Monday’s selectboard meeting, chair Randy Crochier and member Greg Snedeker addressed a relatively long list of issues, including new tax and sewer rates, and big questions about buildings owned – or potentially owned – by the town.

The selectboard had received a notice that Renee A. Jenkins, who passed away in September, has left her home to the town of Gill. Board members appeared equally honored and perplexed by the gesture.

The home, located at 19 Boyle Road, was built in 1825. It was once the town’s schoolhouse and was later converted to a residence by Jenkins’s grandfather, Herbert B. Hastings, the village blacksmith. The building was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places.

“Renee’s family has made many contributions to Gill, across three, four, or five generations!” said Kit Carpenter, chair of Gill’s historical commission. Jenkins’s obituary notes that she was a lifelong Gill resident known for her professional see **GILL** page A6

ENVIRONS

Rod Shop Zone Coming Quietly to Life

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE CITY – Things are looking up on Rod Shop Road, a short street in the village of Montague City that runs parallel to Montague City Road between Solar and Masonic Avenues.

The road takes its name from the “Rod Shop,” a factory that once

manufactured nationally-famous bamboo fishing rods. The neighborhood also included a striking brick Masonic Hall, previously used as an elementary school, and a library. Across from the Rod Shop is a nearly four-acre property – now wooded – where, the story goes, iconic Red Sox batter Ted Williams once played baseball.

In recent decades the neighborhood seems to have fallen on hard times. The Rod Shop itself has begun to resemble the kind of crumbling factory residents of post-industrial towns know so well. And with the decay comes odd news.

In 2017, for example, local officials caught Jerry Jones – a former owner of the Strathmore mill who had contributed to that complex’s deterioration by filling it with recyclable paper and stripping its copper wire – pumping a liquid containing human waste through a hole in the former factory’s wall and onto the street.

And in 2023, the *Reporter* investigated rumors that the owner of the Quonset-style metal building on the corner of Rod Shop Road and Masonic Avenue had evicted a tenant that manufactured “recreational mining equipment” and distributed “gems” for use at “campgrounds, mini-golf see **ROD SHOP** page A7



SINGLETON PHOTO
Our investigation has established that more is happening down there than you'd think.

Single Missed Deadline Lost Millions In Regional Emergency Housing Aid

By SARAH ROBERTSON

GREENFIELD – Franklin, Hampshire, and Berkshire counties are missing out on millions of dollars in federal aid for emergency housing because the local nonprofit in charge of applying for a major federal grant on behalf of a larger network of social service providers missed its deadline.

“Our number-one priority is that everyone that is currently housed stays housed,” said Janna Tetreault, interim program manager of the Three County Continuum of Care (CoC). “We don’t want anyone to return to homelessness as a result of this.”

The Three County CoC is a network of 15 housing and homelessness assistance programs, service providers, advocates, development agencies, and others. Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV), the lead agency, coordinates services and funding among the member organizations.

In early October, CAPV employees realized they had missed the deadline to apply for a sizable federal grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). As a result, the Three County CoC is trying to fill a \$830,000 funding gap for its service providers.

“We made a big error, but it’s not a terminal error,” CAPV executive director Clare Higgins, told the *Reporter*. “We reached out immediately to ask for help, but we weren’t able to get it, the regional office said, because we didn’t get the application in on time.”

CAPV had been distracted by the threat of a federal government shutdown, Higgins said; confusion ensued, and the application materials were not uploaded in time. CAPV has been in contact with local representatives, state agencies, and the state HUD office looking for a solution to the funding shortfall.

Franklin, Hampshire, and Berkshire counties will see **MILLIONS** page A4

High School Sports: Tech Hoops Heat Up

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – The Franklin Tech girls’ basketball team defeated two tough opponents this week, in a bid to improve their postseason seeding. The Tech boys played even against Hampshire in the first half but lost the momentum and the game in the second half.

Five contests were held at the Turners Falls High School last Friday: the swim teams competed against Chicopee, the Turners JV girls hosted Mohawk Trail, and the varsity and JV boys faced off against Smith Academy. The best game of the night was the overtime game against Smith.



DAVID HOITT PHOTO
Breaking ankles: Turners Falls senior Dylon Richardson evades Lee Wildcats defender Joey Abderhalden. The Thunder hosted the Wildcats on Tuesday, Senior Night, for the final home game of the regular season.

Girls’ Basketball
FCTS 42 – Pioneer 37
FCTS 32 – Longmeadow 26 (JV)
FCTS 48 – Montachusett 41
FCTS 43 – Montachusett 15 (JV)

Because Pioneer does not have enough players to field both a varsity and a JV team, Franklin’s junior string played against the Longmead-

ow Lancers in last Thursday’s opener. The contest was pretty physical, but the Eagles pulled it out 32-26.

The varsity skirmish, played against the Black Panthers of Pioneer, had all the trappings of a playoff game. Pioneer has a wonderful

program, and though they have very few bodies to pick from, the girls are currently playoff-bound, sporting a 9 – 4 record coming into the game.

It was loud, it was exciting – and it was anybody’s game, up until the see **SPORTS** page A6

G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE

School Super Promises to ‘Minimize the Impact’ of Staffing Cuts

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Having heard the news that state aid to the district was estimated to be \$703,755 less than originally hoped, the Gill-Montague school committee voted Tuesday evening to approve a preliminary budget for FY’25 of \$24,048,879, representing 0.7% growth. A week earlier, the plan had been for 2.5% growth.

This budget will now go to the towns of Gill and Montague, then on to public hearings, before a final budget is passed in March to send to the spring town meetings.

Business director Joanne Blier said that she had had a “pretty busy six days,” during which she had reduced the effect of the hit in state Chapter 70 down to a \$509,131 gap by tampering with other revenue lines. Interest income and assessments from the towns both increased, and though projected charter-school reimbursements also decreased; Blier’s new budget draws over \$131,000 more from two revolving accounts.

On the expenses side, the losses were assigned to broad categories. The second-largest was “tuition,” see **GMRSD** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

School Hole One of Many Budgetary Wild Cards

By JEFF SINGLETON

At its Monday meeting the Montague selectboard approved a preliminary budget for the coming fiscal year, which will be subject to further discussion with the finance committee before it is passed on to the annual town meeting in May. Virtually all the conversation on Monday, based on a presentation by town administrator Steve Ellis, involved assumptions and uncertainties lurking in the budget.

“This won’t be looking at [the budget] line by line,” said select-board chair Rich Kuklewicz.

“Small things in the budget change almost hourly,” said Ellis, pointing to unknown health insurance costs from the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust, the taxpayers’ share of infiltration and inflow into the sewer system, and the budget of the Franklin County Technical School, which will be approved in late February. Rough estimates for all these items were included in the proposed budget.

Ellis said the finance committee was inclined to fund a major gap in the airport budget entirely from taxation and that the town was “optimistic” that tax revenue would be sufficient without increasing planned taxation.

see **MONTAGUE** page A5



Sunny, With A Chance Of... More Winter

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August 2002

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



Lawrence George says the most popular beer at his Brick & Feather Brewery in Turners Falls is the In Absentia IPA. The brewery hosts a standup comedy night on the second Friday of each month, and is hosting a benefit for the Friends of the Greenfield Library on Thursday, February 15, and selling some special brews whose proceeds go to the fundraiser.

On the Backs of Giants

Last Friday, this newspaper’s editor had the privilege of driving up several dark fog-enshrouded hills to a celebration for the *Wendell Post*, an all-volunteer community paper that ran from 1977 to 2001. The *Post*’s legend and its gentle winding down are both part of the *Montague Reporter*’s own family history, and it was touching to see forty of its beautiful hand-assembled front

pages blown up and hung on the walls of the Wendell Meetinghouse. The *Post*, a perfect cross between a town newsletter and a DIY underground newspaper, is still a great read, and we recommend you check it out. A nearly complete set was scanned and uploaded to the UMass Amherst Libraries’ Special Collections website – search “Wendell Post Collection” to find it.

LEVERETT from page A1

said the purpose of the special meeting, tentatively scheduled for Monday, February 5, at 1 p.m., was for the board to plan its presentation, but that the board would also be able to take questions at its discretion.

FRCOG’s public hearing on the closure will be held at 5 p.m. Thursday, February 8, over Zoom.

Resident Isaiah Robison expressed the belief that Zoom-only formats posed accessibility and inclusion problems, and asked the board who he should contact to ad-

dress this concern.

Board members were uncertain what rules FRCOG must follow, but suggested that he contact state representative Natalie Blais on the general issue.

Subsequent to Tuesday’s meeting, Hankinson informed the *Reporter* that after learning that emergency vehicles may still be able to access the road after it is discontinued, the town’s police and fire chiefs have withdrawn their opposition to its closure, and now support it.

A petition circulating in town in

support of the closure has so far received over 150 signatures.

Wendell Battery

The selectboard decided to consult the town of Wendell before applying for official intervenor status in upcoming state Energy Facilities Siting Board hearings on a proposal to build a lithium-battery storage facility in that town. Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said Wendell has already voted to apply for the status.

New Leaf Energy, the would-be owners of the project, are petitioning the state to override the Wendell conservation commission’s denial of a permit to build the facility on a 51-acre site in the town. The facility would be large enough to be regulated as a public utility.

Financial issues and potential dangers to the environment and area towns were discussed as reasons to oppose the project. Leverett energy committee member Richard Nathorst said his committee voted unanimously to support Leverett filing as an intervenor if Wendell wanted it to.

Board member Patricia Duffy added that she didn’t like the idea of “big companies coming into our small towns... trying to go around zoning and the conservation commission, and going to the state to force towns to accept such projects.”

McGinnis responded that she had heard from one Wendell official that the town would welcome Leverett’s support if legislation came before the state to prevent towns from being overruled in this way.

Department Budgets

The heads of the police, fire, and highway departments presented draft FY’25 budgets, all of which were in line with the selectboard’s guidance of a 2.5% maximum increase over the current year.

Police chief Scott Minckler also presented an alternate budget which did not fall within this guideline, which included the hiring of a fourth full-time officer, a decision that could be made at a later date.

He said the fourth full-timer was needed in part due to a persistent lack of availability of part-time officers to cover shifts.

Part-timers, Minckler said, have been harder to come by since the state began phasing out part-time police training, a problem not isolated to Leverett. “Things are tough out there for most departments,” he said.

The fire department presentation was brief, but highlighted by a round of applause for fire chief Brian Cook when the board announced that he was recently appointed to the state’s eight-member Fire Service Commission.

Sound Off

Resident Thomas Masterson, attending the hybrid meeting in person, said he was “upset” he can’t participate in selectboard meetings due to poor sound quality. Masterson said he has hearing difficulties, but is able to take part in other meetings, and that the town hall sound system and remote audio arrangements are both inadequate.

A number of other attendees echoed Masterson’s complaints. Board member Melissa Colbert agreed there was a need for improvement, saying it was “not the first time” the issue had come up. “The issue is money,” she said, adding that the discussion was “motivation to go to the next step.”

Finance committee member Nancy Grossman said she “strongly seconds” the idea, citing the importance of accessibility, and noting that she had missed swaths of the meeting in progress due to poor remote sound quality.

“It’s about time we stopped dancing around,” said Nathorst. He announced that he was bringing a proposal for a study to the budget committee. Hankinson said the board would try to come up with an article for town meeting addressing the problem.

Meeting Protocols

Resident Silas Ball initiated a separate discussion calling for great-

er clarity on meeting protocol. Ball had raised the same concern following the board’s previous meeting, saying the denial of an opportunity for him to speak seemed inconsistent with his prior experience.

Ball said he had then contacted McGinnis for a copy of the rules governing speaking protocol at meetings, and was told there wasn’t one. Ball, board members, and other attendees engaged in a robust discussion on the desire to improve the format and protocol in ways that would balance order and flexibility.

Many also mentioned a need to provide the public with a better understanding of how the meetings function.

Other Business

The board voted to adopt a flag policy allowing only for town, state, United States, military branch, and POW/MIA flags to be flown on town flagpoles. The move came in response to an anti-abortion group asking to fly its flag on the town’s pole.

The board was notified that the Community Preservation Commission was not in favor of using Community Preservation Act funding to paint the Field Museum. Colbert said she believed the commission was concerned about doing cosmetic work while the building’s future is uncertain.

Colbert also provided an update on the town’s mosquito surveillance project, saying the second year of the project had provided a much larger sample of mosquitoes than the first year, and no viruses were detected. The data gathered, Colbert said, could help the town avoid aerial spraying of pesticides by the state in the future, and she recommended continuing with the study.

The board approved a request from the 250th celebration committee to use the town hall for a “birthday party” for the town. The event will include “games, music, talks, refreshments,” and birthday cake, and is set to take place from 1 p.m to 4 p.m. on March 9.

FACES



AND PLACES

Josh Heinemann, now a reporter with the Reporter, with an enlarged version of the front page of the October-November 1992 edition of the Wendell Post.

“I learned that Kathleen Ramsey was leaving her position as Wendell and New Salem’s shared administrative assistant when Steve Broll of the Wendell Post asked me to write an article covering her departure,” Josh said – or rather, wrote, as the lede sentence of his Page 1 piece, “Kathleen Moves On.” Josh’s fearlessness in breaking the fourth wall in his coverage helps set a tone of accessible, approachable community journalism, and we are grateful he never lost it!

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PHONE: (413) 863-8666
EMAIL:
editor@montaguereporter.org
features@montaguereporter.org
ads@montaguereporter.org
bills@montaguereporter.org
circulation@montaguereporter.org
events@montaguereporter.org
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AT LARGE

Baby You Can Plow My Street

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – Props to Bernardston-Northfield Community TV, specifically operations manager Otis Wheeler and production coordinator Tyler Bourbeau. Without them moments like the brief but telling dialogue between selectboard chair Alex Meisner and other members on January 23 would go unnoticed.

As the two-hour, 45-minute meeting was winding down, town administrator Andrea Llamas proposed a get-together between the sewer commission and Tighe & Bond, an expensive consulting agency out of Westfield and 16 other locations.

The board agreed, and then Meisner, referring to sewer commissioners Karen Boudreau, Tom Walker and Dan Gray, asked, “Is there something wrong with getting the entire sewer commission to show up for a meeting like that?”

“I don’t know if you can get all of them,” said Bernie Boudreau.

“There will be a majority, though,” said Llamas, who presumably meant Boudreau and Walker, because Gray has been sick.

“Tommy is dependent on the weather,” said Boudreau, referring to Walker’s responsibilities as the town’s highway chief. The maintenance crew has been short-staffed for over a month, and no one could be hired until Llamas returned from vacation.

Meisner persisted. “What I’m saying is if he can get in a truck – if he’s able to get in a truck and plow my street – you’d think he’d be able to come to a meeting.”

“Okay guys,” said Bee Jacque, who quickly changed the subject.

Meisner didn’t say who he was

referring to. Was it Walker, or Gray? A half hour before the special town meeting the next night, Meisner was reminded of his “plowing my street” comment and asked who he was referring to.

“Dan Gray,” he answered. During the subsequent meeting Meisner claimed Gray hadn’t been to a sewer commission meeting since October. “I know because I looked at the minutes,” he said.

Meisner lives on Larita Lane, a private dead-end road between Route 10 and Maple Street. The town doesn’t plow Larita Lane, but before I could ask Meisner if he had actually seen Dan Gray plowing his street, he said, “That’s all I’m saying to you.”

He turned and walked down the hallway, then stopped and turned around. “You’re probably going to say I walked away, because that’s what you do, Chip.”

As of Wednesday morning, Larita Lane was unplowed from Sunday’s three-inch snowstorm.

Meisner’s behavior during selectboard meetings has reminded me of what Illinois politician Robert G. Ingersoll said about Lincoln: “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”

Meisner wore a stovepipe hat at the 350th anniversary parade, but he’s no Lincoln.

Radar Proliferation

A sparse gathering of about 30 to 40 townsfolk braved miserable conditions to show up and vote on six articles. Selectboard members sat on the left side of the stage, finance committee members on the right, and assistant town clerk Dan Campbell

sat between them and town moderator Nathan L’Etoile. Town clerk Amanda Lynch lives in Brattleboro and didn’t attend.

L’Etoile gavelled the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and warned residents not to chirp at the speakers. “We don’t heckle,” he said, perhaps remembering Meisner’s meltdown after Paul Gorzocowski III spoke against the proposed \$13 million emergency services facility.

The first five articles breezed through with little discussion. Voters approved moving \$35,000 from the town’s overlay account to the appellate tax board, and spending \$3,000 for the town to join the Franklin Regional Council of Governments’ cooperative program for plumbing, gas, and electrical inspections.

Next, police chief Jon Hall requested \$27,250 for up to eight stationary radar units. “This is not surveillance,” he said. “This is not Big Brother.”

Joan Valva requested a unit on Route 142 to slow down drivers coming to and from Vermont. “I like to remind [the town] that there’s another part of Northfield on the other side of the river,” Valva said when she got back to her seat.

The vote cleared, but wasn’t unanimous. “I don’t want one outside my house flashing all night long,” said a voter. “If you have to beat someone over the head, they’re going to [speed] anyway.”

Indeed, speed bumps are the only way to slow down drivers. Any police chief, including Jon Hall, would agree.

The next two articles asked voters to approve taking “up to” \$50,000 from the sewer enterprise fund to hire engineers to help with grants,

and \$50,000 from the same fund to pay for work on Highland Avenue in East Northfield.

Sewer Growth

The sixth and final article sought to expand the board of sewer commissioners from three to five. “I can’t do it alone. It’s unfair,” said commissioner Karen Boudreau, the wife of selectboard member Bernie Boudreau.

Boudreau said that on January 24, the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) informed her it was willing to consider switching from equivalent dwelling units (EDUs) to metered billing. Equivalent dwelling units are charged the same flat rate regardless of how many people live in the unit, while metered billing is solely based on flow rate.

“The next step is a damn good plan and data the DEP can buy into,” Boudreau later said.

Meisner said he didn’t think anyone would want to run for sewer commissioner, and wanted the selectboard to find and appoint them instead. “If you think you’re going to find two people [willing] to be called to service,” he said, “think long and hard before you make this move.”

Boudreau said she was confident two candidates could be nominated and elected, but Michele Johnson had her doubts. “Little children don’t grow up yearning to be on the sewer commission,” she said.

“There are people who said they’d be involved,” Boudreau insisted.

“This is pretty simple,” said Joe Graveline. “This is whether you have the right to choose. I’m a hard-nosed American – I want to choose.”

Chris Sikes concurred: “This is a small town, but this is a huge issue with skyrocketing costs. I would want five people.”

The article “clearly passed,” as L’Etoile would say.

The Taxman Cometh

Property tax bills have already been mailed, excise tax bills go out on February 10, and sewer bills will be mailed in March. In August, the six-month sewer rate was \$395. The latest bill will be for \$455, and a \$59 surcharge was mailed last March. In less than a year, ratepayers will have been billed \$909 to flush the toilet.

Here’s the Rub

Zo Z Massage Therapy “sadly and unfortunately” will be closing its Main Street location at the beginning of March. A notice taped to the window quoted landlord Jody James: “The LLC has another use for this space.” The other use is said to be a bakery, which has been selling its goods across the street at the IGA.

Meanwhile, Pioneer Valley administrators are considering a grand opening for when the middle and high school’s \$60,000 auxiliary gymnasium is unveiled. “I want to get people in to see it,” said PVRS superintendent Patricia Kinsella.

Lastly, Northfield’s newest police officer is Curtis Weaver, late of the Bernardston PD. The fishing’s good from the post office curve to the Route 63 intersection, and Chief Hall is trying to get the limit reduced to 35 mph.

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

MILLIONS from page A1

receive none of the nearly \$125 million in aid coming to Massachusetts this year through HUD’s Continuum of Care program. Last year, according to Tetreault, the Three County CoC was awarded \$3,081,304.

“We are actively looking for new funding sources to fill the gap,” Tetreault said. “For most of the projects affected, their contracts would have turned over in July, so the biggest impact is still a few months away.”

Losing the grant this year initially left the Three County CoC member organization with a funding shortfall of \$1.3 million, she said, but after some creative budgeting, contract extensions, and funds from other sources, that gap was reduced to \$830,000.

“Some projects have been able to obtain other funding from other sources – that’s why the gap is less,” Tetreault said. “Some projects can make it an extra month. Some projects can stretch.”

One local Three County CoC member, DIAL/SELF Youth and Community Services, has asked for and received funding from the state Office of Health and Human Services to fill gaps of about \$98,000 and \$70,000 in two of its youth programs.

“Myself and some of the other Three County CoC leaders are actually in the process of talking about how to work with state legislature folks, to see about getting interim support from the state while we work with HUD,” said DIAL/SELF executive director Phillip Ringwood. “We have a big funding gap for the whole region.”

It’s difficult to estimate what the Three County CoC’s total budget is for any given year, Tetreault said, because different funding sources have different timelines. The Continuum of Care grant is one of five the coalition routinely receives from HUD.

This year the HUD homeless assistance grants will provide nearly \$3.16 billion dollars to thousands of CoCs nationwide. The awards

are “the largest amount of annual federal funding provided through HUD’s Continuum of Care program in history,” according to a recent press release, and the “backbone” of the federal government’s support for unhoused people.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 established some of the first federal aid programs for people experiencing homelessness in the United States. The bill defined anyone lacking a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” as experiencing homelessness, and established multiple grant programs for local agencies serving them.

In 1995, HUD began to designate regional networks, rather than individual service providers, as grant recipients. The reason for this shift to the CoC model was to streamline the application process, use the money more efficiently, and encourage providers to collaborate locally.

“By requiring communities to submit a single application, HUD hoped to encourage a more structural and strategic approach to both housing and providing services to homeless people,” the National Alliance to End Homelessness website explains. “A CoC would provide this more strategic system by providing homeless people with housing and services appropriate to their range of needs.”

Across the country, HUD now provides thousands of CoCs with funding for outreach, emergency shelter, and permanent supportive housing. They also collect regional data on the number of unhoused people and available housing units for the federal government.

Wednesday night marked the beginning of the weeklong census known as the “point-in-time count,” which attempts to capture a snapshot of the number of people experiencing homelessness each year in the US. Local CoCs help by surveying their communities and reporting to HUD how many people they know are sleeping outside, on couches, or in cars.

Next Monday, February 5, a Youth Action

Board associated with the Three County CoC will table at the Greenfield Public Library to talk with people experiencing homelessness, share warm beverages and other resources, and explain the point-in-time count.

Together, members of the Three County CoC provide 199 beds for people in need of emergency shelter, transitional housing, or permanent supportive housing. As of this week 180 of those beds are occupied, Tetreault said, while other people in need of housing wait in the queue. The organization’s “coordinated entry system” prioritizes those who have the most urgent needs.

“It’s possible a few units might not get filled in this time period, but our goal is to operate as usual,” Tetreault said of the funding shortfall. “There’s always going to be more need than there are units.”

The coalition will still be eligible to apply for funding again this fall, Tetreault said, but does not expect to receive any additional funds to make up for the loss.

Contacted Wednesday evening, HUD Boston office spokesperson Christine Baumann said she would not be able to provide a comment by press time on the Three County CoC’s lack of funding. Instead, she shared Tetreault’s contact information.

“Please see the contact information for the CoC below to confirm whether they submitted an application and how it will impact their programming,” she wrote.

One way HUD has helped the Three County CoC, Higgins said, is by extending the current contract until January 2025. The move will not come with any additional funding, she explained, but saves the coalition the trouble of having to apply this fall as a “new” applicant.

“We talked to people at multiple levels at HUD, and they have all been very supportive and helpful,” Higgins said. “HUD wants to work with us, and wants us to be successful here.”



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GMRSD from page A1

which she said also reflected a half-million-dollar reduction next year in out-of-district special ed placements, based on guesses about a handful of students’ plans.

The largest was “benefits and insurance,” though to complicate matters Blier explained that a tentative contract agreement with the schools’ Unit C employees had been taken into account, and that the real reduction was in fact “going up into the staffing adjustments.”

Neither Blier nor superintendent Brian Beck offered the committee any specific details about what this might mean. “Even though we had the administrative team put together a broad list of potential reductions,” Beck told them, “we want to be able to take more time, because we have until March.”

Beck said the team planned to “ensure that we’re absolutely minimizing any potential impact” of staffing reductions on students, and also attempt to reduce impact on existing personnel.

“We have many open positions in the district,” he explained. “That’s where we want to start.”

“We’re also going to take a look at some potential reorganizations in the schools,” he added.

Before the vote, Gill member Bill Tomb moved to approve the previous version of the budget instead, pointing out that once a preliminary budget is set it can still be reduced but not increased. This effort was voted down, 5 to 2.

The reduced budget was then passed unanimously.

Other Business

The middle and high school parking lot was packed Tuesday evening, as it was Senior Night, and the smell of popcorn wafted down the hall toward the meeting room.

Student rep Syna Katsoulis reported that there would be two musicals this season – *Chicago* and a “showcase” version of *Rent* – and that there were now two new math teachers and a new science teacher at the high school, which was good because it “definitely changes the feel of your classroom when you don’t have a teacher.”

Joyce Phillips, assistant treasurer of the Gill-Montague Education Fund, came to speak with the committee about the GMEF, a private group that gives enrichment grants to supplement school programs. Most of its fundraising, she said, happens at its annual gala, which is scheduled for April 27 at the high school auditorium. She then discussed technical problems with the venue, as well as communication breakdowns in rectifying them. Technology director Tina Mahaney said the soundboard and lightboard were being upgraded this season, and all parties agreed to continue the discussion.

A vacant Montague seat on the committee was filled until May by the appointment of Carol Jacobs, a retired school superintendent herself, by a 7-0 vote.

The committee’s next meeting will be held Tuesday, January 13, over Zoom. Staff union president Heidi Schmidt foreshadowed that this meeting may include an announcement about a Unit C contract settlement.



MONTAGUE from page A1

Kuklewicz noted that the 18% increase in the “solid waste” portion of the public works budget reflected the town’s new contract with Casella Waste Systems for hauling trash and recyclables. Ellis said the board’s decision not to increase trash sticker prices this year also had an effect on the bottom line.

Selectboard member Matt Lord reported that the Gill-Montague regional school district might increase the assessment it is asking of Montague because its state aid came in approximately \$700,000 lower than expected.

“It seems to contradict the messaging [from the state] to fully fund the Student Opportunities program and [provide] additional rural school aid,” Lord said, “but it clearly has not translated for a number of districts.” He went on to say that the district’s assessment was “one of the uncertainties” in the town budget.

Assistant town administrator Walter Ramsey announced that public works superintendent Tom Bergeron had told him earlier in the day that a dump and plow truck purchased in 2002 would not make it through the next winter, and that he wanted to replace it with a larger truck which could cost over \$360,000.

“This is a big one,” said Ellis, noting that the expenditure would need to be reviewed with the capital improvements committee.

The budget ultimately approved by the board, not including expenses that will need special articles at town meeting, totaled \$29,012,471, an increase of about 2.7% from the current year. Of that, \$12,377,977 finances the town’s operating budget, which includes most departments; \$3,079,656 the Clean Water Facility; \$422,893 the Turners Falls airport; \$965,101 the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS); and \$12,146,844 the Gill-Montague regional school district.

Nineteen potential “special” money articles included \$275,000 for rehabilitation of the town hall parking lot, \$150,000 for a Turners Falls library feasibility study, \$100,000 for paving and sidewalks at Hillcrest Elementary School, and \$78,500 for sewer pipe and manhole relining – all funded by the town’s capital stabilization fund.

Another \$283,800 from sewer retained earnings was proposed to

rehabilitate the Montague Center pump station, and \$250,000 would be transferred from the assessors’ overlay surplus account to the “other post-employment benefits trust fund” to prepare to pay future health-care benefits to retired town staff.

Town Employees

Meeting as the town personnel board, the selectboard approved a contract with Ramsey, who will become town administrator on July 1. Kuklewicz said that the contract is “essentially the same as we have with Steve [Ellis].”

At the request of police chief Chris Williams, the board “back-tracked” and approved the current pay rate for new reserve officer John Dempsey. The board had approved a higher wage for Dempsey several weeks ago more consistent with the pay of full-time officers, but the shift in policy would need the approval of the March special town meeting.

“We jumped the gun,” said Kuklewicz.

The board voted to request the current police civil service list from the state in order to promote a patrolman to the position of sergeant, filling a vacancy created by Dempsey’s semi-retirement.

Williams then told the board that the civil service, which Montague is still a member of until it is changed by town meeting, requires that the town promote the officer with the highest score on an assessment center test. However, according to Williams, “two of the three officers on the list are tied for first place.” Williams said he had talked to Ellis and they agreed that the position should be filled through a “structured, objective interview” of each of the front-runners.

The board approved that process for choosing a sergeant.

Road Aid, Dump Gas

Ramsey, still assistant town administrator, came before the board with a number of requests, including that it start the process of making Sandy Lane, which runs between Turnpike Road and the town transfer station, a “public way.” Ramsey said the 715-foot-long road, though heavily used by town residents, is technically a private way owned by the town.

The advantage of making it a public way, he said, is to add it to the road mileage used to calculate

state Chapter 90 highway aid. Ramsey said making the road public could qualify the town for an extra \$340 in aid each year.

The board voted unanimously to send the change on to the planning board. From there it would presumably return to the selectboard, who would put it on a town meeting agenda.

Ramsey also requested that the board list some priorities for direct local technical assistance from the state, which the Franklin Regional Council of Governments facilitates. His recommendations were help with work on the town’s comprehensive plan, particularly in the area of land use; legal support in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s process to draft a new license for the FirstLight hydropower company; and help revitalizing Brownfields properties.

The board did not take a vote on these priorities, though its members’ heads nodded at various points.

The board did vote to approve hiring the engineering firm GZA GeoEnvironmental to install three gas monitoring devices at the town landfill. The devices, which are being required by the state Department of Environmental Protection, measure methane being generated by the capped burn dump. Ramsey called this a “public safety measure,” at a potential cost of \$11,600, and said the cost might be covered by the public works operating budget.

Other Business

Ellis gave a lengthy report on the state Cannabis Control Commission’s (CCC) “really slow-moving” process to develop regulations to reform the contracts between municipalities and cannabis companies known as “host community agreements.” The goal, a response to a legislative mandate, is to help business owners from communities “disproportionally affected by past cannabis laws get into the marketplace.”

“The time is now,” said Ellis, noting that the town was sent a model host community agreement “template” several weeks ago, with a request for input to the CCC by this Wednesday.

Montague has already implemented some of the proposed reforms, such as eliminating impact fees based on sales, in its two existing agreements, Ellis said, but those agreements would probably

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MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE

In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, the Montague Conservation Commission will hold a public meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 8, 2024 to review the Request for Determination of Applicability RDA #2024-01, filed by Montague Machine Company to determine whether the proposed work to move a sand pile and grade the land at the rear of Parcel #09-0-003 is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act. Remote meeting login information and the filing available for review are at www.montague-ma.gov/calendar.

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

PUBLIC HEARING on the FY25 BUDGET

Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.

Per Governor Baker’s orders suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. Chapter 30A Section 20, the public will not be allowed to physically access this School Committee Meeting. The option for public bodies to hold meetings remotely until March 31, 2025 has been signed into law by Governor Healey as Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023. Notice is hereby given in accordance with Chapter 71, Sections 38N of the Massachusetts General Laws that the Gill-Montague Regional School Committee will hold a public hearing for the purpose of receiving comments on the Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Budget on Tuesday, February 13, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

To access the FY25 Preliminary Budget information for the Public Hearing, please visit the ‘School Committee’ page of the district website www.gmrtd.org on or after Friday, February 9, 2024. The link to the zoom meeting will also be available by following this link: www.gmrtd.org, where the agenda will be posted on the ‘School Committee’ page, by Friday, February 9, 2024.

The School Committee strives to meet the needs of all students while also employing sound fiscal management. The Preliminary FY25 Gill-Montague Regional School District budget was approved by School Committee at its last January meeting. The Preliminary Budget is based on Montague’s Affordable Assessment and state aid revenue estimates.

Some major factors influencing the budget include the following areas:

1. Loss of ESSER funding;
2. Continued staffing to meet student needs as a result of the pandemic;
3. Student enrollment and impact of state funding formulas;
4. Revenue sources and balancing the proposed budget.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The Franklin County Transportation Planning Organization will open a 21-day public review and comment period for Draft Amendment #1 of the Franklin 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program. The draft documents are available for review on the FRCOG website at www.frcog.org, or call (413) 774-3167 or email Giannini@frcog.org to request copies.

Comments on the draft documents will be accepted from Friday, January 26 through Thursday, February 15, 2024. Comments should be submitted in writing via email to Giannini@frcog.org or by letter to Beth Giannini, Transportation Program Manager, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 12 Olive Street, Suite 2, Greenfield MA 01301.

need more revision. He added that the CCC would start reviewing host agreements on March 1.

Ellis raised concerns that under the template agreement distributed by the commission, the town might be responsible for ensuring that social equity hiring policies are followed by local cannabis firms, and that the limitations on fees might prohibit a tax such as a “betterment tax” to upgrade the industrial park’s electrical system from being applied to cannabis firms.

The board appeared to approve submitting the town’s concerns to the cannabis commission, without taking a formal vote.

Finally, Ellis addressed emerging regulations that may require towns to have a preference for social equity cannabis firms. He suggested that Montague would need to be much more “transparent” about the process for applying for a local license, including listing the process and criteria on the town website. He said that state guidance on this policy will be developed in the spring.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 5.

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GILL from page A1

cake-decorating skills. She volunteered at the polls for decades.

“It’s quite a remarkable gift,” said town administrator Ray Purington. But, he noted, big questions remain, such as: What could the town use the property for? What was Jenkins’s intent in giving it to the town? Would it be inappropriate to accept the property, but then put it on the market – or demolish the building and use the land for something else? What would it cost to maintain the building? What renovations would be needed to make the property safe and accessible? How much money should the town spend even exploring these possibilities?

“It can’t all be emotional,” conceded historical commission member Bob Perry. “It’s got a bill attached. We all know that – we all pay taxes.” Perry expressed commitment from the commission to help gather information so the town can make the best decision.

Carpenter asked if the board could imagine the building being used by a nonprofit or other local entity.

“My answer right off the top of my head is ‘Oh, hell no,’ because I don’t want the town to be in the position to be a landlord,” said Crochier.

The board decided the first steps would be talking more with Jenkins’s family and having a building inspector make a first assessment. Ultimately, a town meeting vote is required to accept any gift of land.

“There are a lot of unknowns,” said Purington, “and I think we’re still early enough in the process that we don’t want to, and don’t need to, rule out anything.”

Four Winds Future in Doubt

Toward the end of the meeting, the board touched briefly on rumors about the future of the alternative middle school Four Winds School, which is located in the town-owned Riverside Municipal Building.

“It sounds like Four Winds School is facing some enrollment issues that impact financial abilities,” said Purington. “I wouldn’t say it’s a guarantee that they’ll be there as a tenant next year.”

If the school leaves, the town would have to determine a new use for the building. Crochier reminisced about an attempt around 15 years ago to sell it. The selectboard “pretty much had their heads handed to them on a platter, as I understood it,” he said.

“We’ve got to put this building on our radar, figure out what we’re doing with it,” Crochier continued. “That’s not a building I’m in a hurry to get rid of, because I like the land around it.”

“More to come on that,” concluded Snedeker.

Tax Rate Down, Tax Bills Up

The selectboard agreed with the board of assessors’ recommendation to set the new property tax rate at \$15.48 per thousand dollars in valuation, lower than last year’s rate of \$16.91 per thousand.

In keeping with previous years, the board voted to make this a single tax rate, with no open space discounts and no exemptions for residences or small businesses.

Because property valuations are increasing, the new annual tax bill for the average single-family household is estimated at \$4,413, which is \$169 higher than last year.

Board of assessors chair Bill Tomb noted that according to the assessors’ analysis, the total value of property in Gill has grown by around \$23 million in the past year.

Dreams of Safer Streets

With a goal of making streets more accessible to cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users, the state Department of Transportation offers a Complete Streets funding program, which gives towns up to \$500,000 over a five-year period. To apply for the funds, each town must submit a prioritization plan showing

which projects it needs funding for.

Laurie Scarborough, senior transportation planning engineer with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, presented a draft prioritization plan created after conversations with Gill officials, an online survey of residents, and fieldwork.

The top priority identified in the document is building a sidewalk from the senior housing development Stoughton Place to The Mill gas station, for an estimated cost of \$268,000.

The document also prioritizes safer pedestrian crossings at several key areas: between the Slate Library and the town common; around Northfield Mount Hermon School; at the disc golf field on West Gill Road; at the Blake Town Forest Trailhead, and between The Mill and the Leaf Joy cannabis dispensary.

The plan calls for better pedestrian access to the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, wider sidewalks along Route 2 from Meadow Street to Main Road, and speed limit signs and sidewalks near the Gill Elementary School in the hope that greater safety will encourage more people to walk or cycle to the school.

The document also highlights the need for safe bike lanes along West Gill Road, which is part of the Franklin County Bikeway. However, the estimated cost for that project is \$3.5 million. “It’s a large project that would definitely exceed the available funding through the Complete Streets program,” said Scarborough. “But we did evaluate it, because I understand that it is something that in the medium term or perhaps longer term would be a great way to accommodate bicyclists more safely.”

Another costly project in the document is creating a safer and shorter pedestrian crossing where Main Road meets River Road. This would require regrading River Road so drivers can better see the intersection, and making the road narrower at the crossing, at a cost of around \$1.5 million.

The selectboard will review the plan and discuss changes at its next meeting.

Police Regionalization

The board approved an Efficiency and Regionalization Grant application to help the town explore police regionalization. “The town is looking into its options,” explained police chief Christopher Redmond. “As a police department, there is inevitable downsizing due to retirement – ”

“I just have to correct that,” interrupted Crochier. “It doesn’t have to be inevitable.”

“You’re younger than any of us here,” added Snedeker.

Redmond said legislative changes have impacted his ability to hire part-time officers, who had previously made up a third of Gill’s force. “Many similar small towns in Franklin County and rural Massachusetts are kind of in the same situation,” he said. “It just affects us much more, because there’s only two of us that are full-time.”

Crochier called the regionalization process “a necessary evil, if this guy won’t stop talking about retirement.”

“There are no cakes ordered yet,” Redmond said.

Redmond also announced that his department received funds from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program, which will pay for two radio repeater systems for its cruisers.

Other Business

The board increased sewer rates by 6.5%, to the cost of 34.92 cents per cubic foot. Riverside sewer users who attended the previous meeting had asked for a smaller increase, but Crochier pointed to growing equipment and processing expenses as justifying the new rate.

Nikolas Martin was appointed as a firefighter through June 30, 2024.

The board approved equipment purchases for the fire department: \$1,824 for drafting hose and \$1,470 for scene lights, which are used to illuminate outdoor emergency situations.



SPORTS from page A1

last intentional foul. As in playoff games, three refs officiated, which led to foul calls throughout the contest. Only eight Panthers came to play, but they held their own.

After a hard-fought first quarter in which Franklin couldn’t buy a long-shot, they led by a slim 10-9 margin. In the second, with both teams in foul trouble, the Cats nosed ahead to make it 23-21. The battle went on in the third, and at the buzzer the Eagles were leading again, 32-30.

Pioneer quickly tied it up. Even with the Eagles’ mascot flapping his wings to rile up the crowd, the Lady Birds couldn’t shake the Panthers off. With most of her teammates riding the bench, junior guard Hannah Gilbert took control. She got hot in the second half, scoring all of Tech’s 21 points.

After Gilbert hit a couple three-pointers and time began running out, Pioneer was forced to intentionally foul. Because Gilbert was the one with the ball, she was the one who went to the foul line. She was money at the line, and Tech eked out the 42-37 win, cementing their hold on the Franklin South top spot. Pioneer remains in second.

Gilbert led Tech with 25 points. Lea Chapman finished with 8, grabbing 12 rebounds and blocking 3 shots; Kyra Goodell scored 5, Kaitlin Trudeau, injured in the game, scored 2 points and she made 7 steals; and Trinity Doane scored 2 points and blocked a shot.

On Monday the Montachusett Purple Bulldogs came to Tech.

The JV game was rough, with multiple fouls called on both teams. At one point, after a flagrant foul by one of the Bulldogs, their coach admonished an official for calling out the player loudly. But in the end it was a one-sided battle,

and Tech won it 41-15.

The varsity game was just as physical, but much closer. Commuters from Fitchburg had trickled in during the JV game, and the Bulls had a large, loud contingent in attendance.

Chapman got into foul trouble early and had to sit for much of the first half, and with Trudeau out of the lineup, other players had to step up. The teams banged heads and bodies, and Tech led 23-20 at the half.

They increased that lead in the third and finished strong, taking the hard-fought game by seven points. Only four workhorses scored for Franklin: Gilbert (15), Goodell and Chapman (13 each), and Haleigh Benoit (7).

The Eagles travel down to Ware this Thursday to take on the third-place Indians.

Boys’ Basketball
Hampshire 59 – FCTS 40
Smith Academy 69 – TFHS 61
Lee 67 – TFHS 61

Last Friday the Tech boys traveled to Westhampton, and ran out of steam in the second half against the Hampshire Red Raiders. The Birds fought to a 12-12 tie after a quarter and knotted it at 20 at the half, but that’s when it went south; Red outscored Tech 18-5 in the third and coasted to a 59-40 win.

Eight different Eagles scored points for Tech: Brody Hicks (9), Cam Candelaria and Robert Belval (6 each), Gabe Mota and Hunter Donahue (5 each), and Tyler La-Flamme, Caleb Johnsen, and Jack Gancarz (3 each).

On Friday, after the two swim meets and two JV games, the Turners varsity boys took on the Purple Falcons of Smith Academy.

The gym was rocking, with fans from both squads cheering and



Turners Falls swimmer Tristan Bliss powers through the water in the 200-yard free relay during the Thunder’s final home meet of the year, hosting Hampden Charter School of Science West last Friday.

stamping their feet. It seems that Smith had bused in their students, and the visitors’ bleachers were packed with stomping, screaming supporters.

Smith pulled ahead by six early on, but Powertown stormed back, tying it on a shot and a foul to make it 17-11. In the second they pulled ahead by four, but the Birds closed the gap to 31-30 at the half. The Thunder inched ahead in the third, but in the fourth Purple seemed to put it away, leading by three points and retaining possession with seconds left on the clock.

The ball was lost out of bounds. Turners got it, and Branden Truesdell was fouled on his way to the hoop. The basket counted to make it a one-point game. He hit the free-bee and Smith was charged with a back-court, sending the game into overtime.

In the fifth quarter, the Falcons jumped out to a four-point lead. Blue pulled within two points, but that would be as close as they came.

They kept fouling, but Smith kept sinking both foul shots *en route* to an eight-point victory.

Truesdell led the Thunder with 23 points, followed by Jackson Cogswell (14), Alex Quezada (12), Caden Williams Senethavisouk (5), Joey Mosca (4), Kainen Stevens (2), and Dylen Richardson (1).

On Tuesday, the Thunder celebrated Senior Night against the Lee Wildcats. The Wildings shot out to a 34-18 lead at the half. Blue made up some ground in the second half, but were unable to make up the deficit, and dropped the game 69-61.

Cogswell (21), Williams Senethavisouk (18), Mosca (11), Cam Burnett, (5), Quezada (4), and Truesdell (2) sank hoops for Thunder.

Swimming
TFHS 104 – Chicopee 68
Chicopee 59 – TFHS 51
TFHS 70 – Hamden West 2
TFHS 44 – Hamden West 9

The Chicopee Pacers came to town last Thursday to split a meet

against Turners.

In the girls’ contest, the medley relay team of Sophia McComb, Avery Heathwaite, Tristan Bliss, and Madi Liimatanien finished first with a time of 2:09.64, qualifying them for the Western Mass post-season meet.

In the 100-yard freestyle, Liimatanien took first and Ainslee Flynn placed third, which qualified both for the Fast Chance meet. Tristan Bliss broke her personal best in the 100-yard butterfly with a time of 1:14.78.

Sigrid Calhoun won the diving event, Sylvie DiBartolomeo and Rose Fortin finished second and third in the 500-yard freestyle, and Ella Sibley also placed third in the 200-yard individual medley at 3:24.05.

In the boys’ lanes, Liam Bliss finished first in both the 100-yard backstroke and 50-yard freestyle, Tyler Galenski first in the 200-yard and 500-yard freestyles, and Cody McDonough second in both the 100-yard freestyle and breaststroke.

On Friday, the Turners teams dunked the Hamden West swimmers. It’s the first year Hamden has had a swim team, to be fair, but this gave some of the other Turners swimmers the opportunity to score.

The 200-yard freestyle relay team – Keira Feeley, Bre Kempf, Maya Deramo, and Shelby Paris – placed first, and DiBartolomeo won both the 500-yard and 200-yard freestyles. Kempf placed second in the 100-yard freestyle, Addie Ehle in the 100-yard breaststroke, and Calhoun in the 100-yard backstroke.

For the boys, Liam Bliss won the 100-yard backstroke and 50-yard freestyle, and Galenski both the 200-yard and 100-yard freestyles, and Matt Sibley the 200-yard IM. McDonough won the 100-yard breaststroke, and finished second in the 50-yard free.



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SINGLETON PHOTO

Leander Bartlett started the Montague City Rod Company in 1882, and in 1931 it became Montague City Rod & Reel. The company continued making its well-regarded split-bamboo fishing rods until the 1950s. The site has recently been vacant, but the Reporter learned this week that its ownership is in some degree of transition, and maintenance work is underway.

ROD SHOP from page A1

courses, [and] family fun centers,” and was considering replacing that business with a large electric storage battery.

Those rumors turned out to be mostly incorrect – the gem business had moved to a better location in Kentucky, and the battery storage idea never panned out – but the discussion encouraged the view among residents that the Rod Shop neighborhood, and Montague City in general, had over time been victimized by shady developers and ignored by town government.

This view has been fed by the recent closure and demolition of the Farren Care Center, a block away. The historic hospital’s owners have announced plans to give the cleared property to the town of Montague, and town officials are now leading a public process to decide what to do with it.

So our antennae were out when a reader reported in mid-January that he had seen an exhaust pipe, for what he believed was a newly installed oil-burning oven, protruding from the yellow metal building next to the main Rod Shop property. The reader was concerned the building was being used to burn off oil from reclaimed oil tanks without a permit or safety review.

Upon investigation we found that a South Deerfield company, JRB Disposal and Excavation, had recently purchased the yellow building. Its website did not, however, list oil tank removal among its many services.

We reached out to Montague building inspector Bill Ketchen and Turners Falls deputy fire chief and inspector Kyle Cogswell. Both said they had also been alerted to the concerns about the building, and had visited the site. They said that they had spoken with JRB Disposal owner Jeff Burniske, and that he vowed not to burn any oil from reclaimed tanks, but planned to burn small amounts of spent oil from his own trucks in burners that are designated as legal under state law.

The disposal of waste oil, it turns out, is heavily regulated by the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). Businesses that generate small amounts of oil, primarily through

oil changes, are allowed to burn the product in small space heaters to heat their garages. This process, according to MassDEP’s Office of Technical Assistance and Technology, requires a permit from the local fire department, as well as a notification form sent to MassDEP.

We called Burniske, who responded to our message within an hour. He seemed astonished that anyone was monitoring his activity in a small yellow building he purchased a month ago on an obscure street in Montague. Burniske said that his business occasionally removed oil tanks, but that he had no intention of burning their contents on Rod Shop Road, had met with the building and fire inspectors, and was going to burn oil from truck oil changes legally.

On Monday, Burniske texted us to say he had “permit in hand.”

So, things may be looking up a bit on Rod Shop Road. The old Rod Shop itself seemed to be a beehive of activity this Wednesday afternoon, with new screening over the windows, refuse being removed from the site, and a Canadian flag hanging in the interior.

Our editor, however, had by now noticed that the owner of record, Horse Drawn LLC, had been dissolved by the state of Vermont and no longer existed because its 2021 annual corporate report had not been filed.

We contacted a man named David Keenan, once briefly a selectboard member in the town of Amherst, who appeared to be the most recent head of Horse Drawn LLC, having become its sole member in 2021.

Keenan was forthcoming and enthusiastic about the future of the Rod Shop, but said the ownership entity was in the process of being re-incorporated by a colleague named Neil, who also owns the company Apollo Contracting.

We spoke to Neil Bannon about the Rod Shop. Bannon said he had a permit to clean, secure, and stabilize the building, “so that it does not fall down on itself.” The next step, he said, will be to put a new roof on the structure’s lower section, but this may have to wait until the ownership issue is stabilized.

Bannon was hesitant to get into

details about the transition, but said that he and Keenan were well on their way to repaying back taxes owed by Horse Drawn LLC, a fact confirmed by Montague town treasurer Eileen Seymour.

Energized, we then visited the attractive two-story brick building on the other side of the Rod Shop. The building, owned and inhabited by Brian Smith, is in good shape. It contains three fireplaces and a woodstove, but only one bedroom, as it was originally built as the administration building for the Rod Shop business.

Smith said there were at least 30 telephone lines in the basement, originally used for marketing, when he moved in in 1992. The building was constructed in 1924, “so it’s the 100th anniversary this year,” he pointed out.

The reader may have had enough of Rod Shop Road at this point, but we must note that the Quonset building on the corner of Rod Shop and Masonic Avenue, formerly the gem manufacturer, is now owned by Joseph George, Jr., who uses it for storage for his Greenfield-based insulation company.

George told us he likes the neighborhood, and is considering creating a garden on the lot.

The old Masonic Hall building across the street has seen recent extensive renovation under the ownership of Greenfield-based plumber Dale “Skip” Descavich. He is renting the space to his daughter, Hayley, who has turned it into a dance studio called Catherine Grace Studios.

Ms. Descavich called us back after concluding a ballet class. She noted that she had recently returned to the area after living in New York City for ten years.

She also repeated the story about a famous baseball player playing in the now-wooded area across from the Rod Shop.

So did Don Mailloux, the Coldwell Banker Realtor who is marketing the property, although he knew the player was Ted Williams.

We noted that the property was somewhat small to contain a regulation baseball diamond.

“Well,” Mailloux said, “maybe he hit a home run.”



LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on January 30, 2014: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Turners Dropout Rate Lowest in Years

According to figures recently released by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Turners Falls High School had only a 2.1% dropout rate in 2012-13, equaling a loss of six students.

This is a slight improvement over the 2011-12 school year, when eight students, or 2.8%, left school

before graduation. But compared to earlier years, it is a major step forward. In 2002-03, for instance, the dropout rate was 12.6%; in 2005-06, it stood at 10.4%.

Reporter’s Mailing Costs Rise

Subscribers to the *Montague Reporter* who receive their paper in the mail will be noticing a lot of stamps on the mailing wrapper. This is due to a postal increase from 46 to 49 cents for first-class letters, effective January 26. The cost of mailing the *Reporter* has increased from 66 to 70 cents.

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on January 29, 2004: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

G-M Schools to Lose State Aid

The Gill-Montague Regional School District expects to lose some \$620,000 in state Chapter 70 aid due to a drop in enrollment of 148 students this school year. The changing enrollment figures will increase Montague’s share while decreasing Gill’s.

Present at the school committee’s meeting this week were three dozen teachers concerned with ongoing contract negotiations, some with signs reading “Two Years is Too Long.”

Eye to Eye with Bald Eagles

MassWildlife staff and volunteer eagle spotters braved high winds and frigid temperatures during the annual Midwinter Bald Eagle Survey, recording an early tally of

61 of the regal birds wintering in Massachusetts on January 9, 2004.

A focal point of the survey has been two of the most important eagle wintering areas in the state, the Quabbin Reservoir and the Connecticut River. Crucial to an accurate count was helicopter flight time donated by National Grid, the project’s sponsor, for up-close observations.

Thirty-nine eagles were counted at Quabbin and six along the Connecticut River. Last year 50 bald eagles were reported statewide.

Frames Askew at Hot Spot

Friday night’s Pageant open mic at the Hot Spot Teen Center had an overwhelming turnout of 60 people, most of whom stayed the whole four hours of performance ranging from acoustic guitar sets to poetry, as well as a new punk band from Greenfield called the Me and Them, who set the picture frames askew with their volume and energy.

150 YEARS AGO

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

Local Matters

The river has risen considerably the past week.

A.C. Lewis has lost a valuable horse.

Monday was the coldest day we have had this winter, and Old Jack Frost has been rather too close an acquaintance for the comfort of a great many.

The Clark & Chapman Machine Co. have just completed a contract for a large lot of shafting, Pullies, &c, for the Messrs. Newtons of Holyoke, to be used in the large Screw Manufacturing shop, which the latter have just completed. The Messrs. Newtons are also using one of the C. & C. Machine Co.’s largest sized Turbine Wheels, which meets their most sanguine expectations in its working.

Jerry Morgan’s establishment on K street is doing a brisk business just now in the horse-shoeing

line. During the past week there has scarcely been an hour of time devoted to any other branch of the trade.


Messrs. Clark & Co. have put up a new sign, beautifully executed, with gilt letters and dark background. We can congratulate them on having one of the brightest signs of the times. The work was performed by Bartlett Bros.

The young people of Riverside held a concert Sunday evening at Riverside Hall, presided over by Mr. D. A. Wood. Quite a number of the old folks and others congregated to listen to the programme, which was well learned and well recited by the young people, who had evidently taken considerable pains to gain the approval of their audience. Rev. Mr. Potter was present, and, although having a very heavy cold, addressed the children at some length.

Nathaniel Holmes of Riverside has just completed a new Summer House, which displays much taste and neatness, and is a credit to his beautiful grounds.




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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Capital Planning Asserts Right to Veto Shared Trail Project As Planner Exits

By KATIE NOLAN

On Monday night the Erving selectboard, finance committee, and capital planning committee reviewed FY’25 budget requests from town administrative departments together, and looked over a list of capital project requests. However, they spent the most time discussing a MassTrails grant application, as well as the town’s process for reviewing such applications.

The officials sat at a long table near the senior and community center windows, decorated with Valentine hearts, but it wasn’t all love for the application.

Town planner Mariah Kurtz asked the selectboard for its “blessing” of a \$34,000 application to MassTrails for a feasibility study of a proposed shared-use path connecting Farley Flats, Erving Center, and Wendell Depot. The application was due February 1. If awarded, the grant would require a \$6,800 match from the town – \$4,500 in cash, a capital expense, and \$2,300 in in-kind services.

“Hopefully, it’s a quick item,” Kurtz said. Her forecast was wrong.

Selectboard chair and capital planning committee (CPC) member Jacob Smith asked if the CPC had any recommendation.

CPC member Debra Smith replied that it had not yet made any recommendations on departmental requests. Jacob Smith wondered aloud whether Erving should be applying for grants without first seeking the CPC’s approval.

Selectboard member Scott Bastarache suggested the town wait for the grant award to review the expenditure and decide whether to move forward on the trail project.

Debra Smith reminded the selectboard that it had requested departments to scale back requests this year. “It feels like it’s being put in front of us,” she said, “and we’re being told ‘Yes or no? Now, make a decision!’”

After about ten minutes of comments, Jacob Smith asked to defer further discussion of the grant, and grants in general, until after other departmental budgets had been considered.

After the admin budget requests were considered, the MassTrails application – and the grant process – were discussed for another 45 minutes.

“Going after money we aren’t ready to work with,” Jacob Smith argued, could make it more difficult to complete other projects.

Debra Smith mentioned the IP Mill and Bridge Street as major upcoming projects and wondered whether the planner replacing Kurtz, who is resigning as of March, would be able to take on the trail project.

Bastarache countered that the new planner would be in the position for several months before the award is announced in May or June. He reiterated that the town could apply now and decide later whether to accept or reject the money.

“What’s the vision?” selectboard member James Loynd asked. “What’s the plan?”

“This came in as part of the FY’25 budget capital plan,” said Debra Smith, appearing annoyed. As the CPC had not had the opportunity to “vet” the project, she said, submitting the application was “circumventing the process – which, frankly, is disrespectful to the capital planning committee.”

According to town bylaws, she pointed out, costly projects must be recommended by the committee: “If this is approved... something else of a more needful priority will not be approved.”

Bastarache said that no one was trying to circumvent the CPC, but that it made sense to know whether the funding was actually available before subjecting the trail project to capital review. Saying that he supported the grant application but not necessarily the project, he made a motion to authorize Kurtz to submit it.

CPC and fin com member Benjamin Fellows asked what would happen if, when the CPC meets in March to decide on its recommendations, it does not recommend the trail project.

Bastarache asked why the CPC would review the project before the town knew whether MassTrails had funded the study.

Kurtz said the timing of the grant, with a February 1 due date, was “weird.”

She recalled that the selectboard and CPC had supported the trail project for FY’24. Although an earlier MassTrails application was rejected, the agency encouraged a revised application for FY’25, so she had continued work under the assumption that the town still supported it.

“We don’t have a good process,” Jacob Smith concluded.

After further comments from Debra Smith and Bastarache, he ended the discussion. “It’s clear it’s not clear,” he said, and called for a vote. The board voted unanimously to authorize the application.

After the vote, CPC member Linda Downs-Bembury answered Fellows’ question. “The town could withdraw the application,” she said. Jacob Smith said the selectboard would expect to be informed if the CPC rejected the project, and would want to discuss it.

Department Requests

The selectboard and fin com had asked all departments to level-fund

as much as possible, and the FY’25 requests were generally similar to FY’24 requests.

Tax collector Michelle Turner requested \$44,109, level-funded except for wage adjustments. The \$5 late-payment fee, she said, could be increased to \$15 if the town wanted to drum up revenue.

The \$141,470 request for accounting included a \$32,000 increase for software subscriptions. The treasurer requested \$121,290, including a \$20,000 increase for wages.

The town clerk’s office requested \$49,914, with a \$4,500 wages increase, and the election clerk \$14,867 – up by \$5,441, because there are three elections in 2024. Asked about mail-in ballots, town clerk Richard Newton said about half of Erving voters voted by mail in 2020 and he expected a similar amount this year, and that the ballots will cost more due to the cost of envelopes and stamps.

The conservation commission requested \$10,100, up by just under \$200. Con com chair Mark Blatchley, also a school committee member, proposed offsetting conservation-related Erving Elementary School field trip expenses with money from the con com’s trust savings fund, a proposal he said came from the school’s hope of “cutting their budget back.”

Debra Smith and Downs-Bembury both commented that the school should pay for field trips, and the con com funds should be used for con com expenses. Jacob Smith said the selectboard would ask about the proposal when the school committee reviews its budget on February 12.

The board of assessors requested \$162,558, an increase of \$28,557. Principal assessor Jacquelyn Boyden said software and legal fees had increased and an assessors’ clerk is being added, which she noted will be useful when she retires in two years.

Boyden also reported that the appraised value of the Northfield Mountain Project (NMP) had been reduced by \$145 million, which will result in a reduction of tax revenue. Board of assessors chair Mark Burnett explained that the NMP is appraised using an income-based method, and the reduced value resulted from changes in the interest rate and in the project’s return on investment.

\$93,586 was requested for community planning – an increase of \$9,376 due to wages – and the planning board asked for \$10,325, level with the current year.

Increased software fees also accounted for most of the IT services budget increase of \$4,344, to \$158,250. The department also requested \$35,000 in capital expenditures to replace 13 outdated computers.

The public access TV fund re-

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quested \$25,000, with an increase of \$4,800 to broadcast additional town hearings, meetings, and events. Public access TV is funded from cable company revenue rather than by taxes.

Town administrator Bryan Smith reported that the town’s insurer had reassessed several town properties, resulting in an increase in property insurance costs. The request was for \$162,500, an increase of \$14,500.

Other Business

On January 25 the public works department reported a water main break on River Road. Johnson Asphalt Paving of Northfield excavated the main, which is under a part of the roadway and sidewalk, and after the main was repaired, the road and sidewalk were reconstructed by January 26.

The town had asked for state authorization to complete the work without using the competitive bidding process, and at Monday’s meeting the selectboard waived competitive bidding for the procurement.

“It keeps happening annually on this same stretch,” Jacob Smith observed.

Water superintendent Peter Sanders replied that the main had been installed about 50 years ago, and the fill used included large boulders, which shift with the freeze-thaw cycle. He said the area was re-filled “with nice, clean sand” around the main, and then “good fill with no rocks.”

The board reviewed and accepted a revised town planner job description, as well as a community profile describing Erving, in preparation for hiring a new planner to replace Kurtz.

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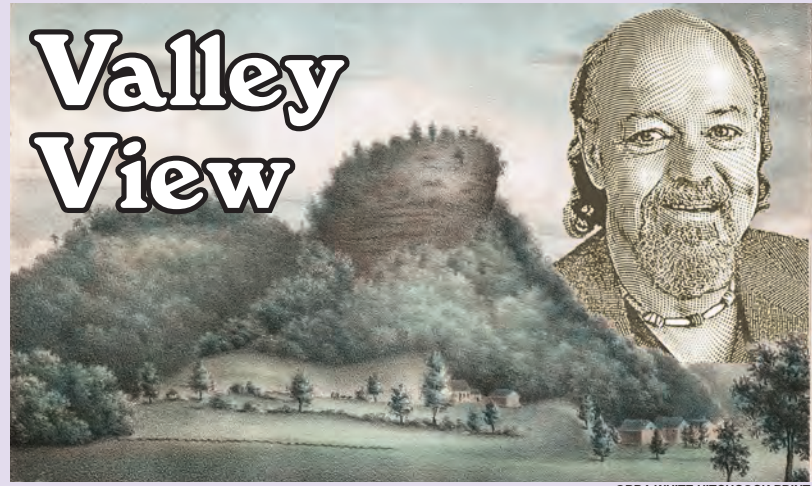
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Valley View

Mark Resting in VT Peace?

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Friday morning, raw and rainy, January fading away, and I’m pondering George Washington Mark... again.

You may recall that I wrote about this famous Greenfield folk artist in recent weeks after finding his painting of a storied hound that was once the sporting pet of blacksmith and tavernkeeper Henry A. Ewers (1806-1867), a previous owner of my Greenfield Meadows home.

Mark was born in 1795 in Charlestown, New Hampshire, and in 1817 chose Greenfield as his home. Known as “The Count” and remembered about town for his flashy attire, he died in 1879 – leaving a rich legacy as Franklin County’s all-time finest house, sign, furniture, sleigh, and carriage painter.

When he applied his artistic touch to oil-on-canvas painting and opened a gallery in 1848, his work was largely ignored and eventually even ridiculed by a harsh New York critic from *Knickerbocker Magazine*. Then, long after Mark had left this world in a custom, 700-pound, metal coffin, his reputation as an American folk artist soared to great heights in the mid-20th century, when his primitive paintings were sought for prestigious American art museums and sophisticated private collections.

Mark’s posthumous celebrity forced art historians and reporters to explore the man as local advertisers trolled for potential surviving examples of his work. The market was ripe.

Greenfield was abuzz with Mark-revival clamor in the wake of regional and national articles appearing in *Old-Time New England* (Summer 1950) and *Antiques* magazine (July 1952). Then the man was squarely on the map as an important folk artist, not to mention Greenfield’s only primitive painter of note. His story was destined for intermittent newspaper regurgitation and refreshingly new scholarly avenues of research.

The list of late, 20th- and 21st-century Greenfield newspaper scribes who explored Mark’s life and work included Bill Gorey, Al Oickle, and my old friend Irma-

rie Jones, known for her popular *Just Plain Neighbors* column. For parts of five decades, we shared an occasional raucous corner of the *Greenfield Recorder* newsroom.

In the late 1970s, Greenfield Historical Society president and *Recorder* freelance columnist Steve Finer took a deep dive into the Mark narrative. The rare-book dealer and historian kept plugging away at the famous artist in his Saturday Editorial Page column. Then, with a bulging Mark file assembled, Finer delivered a comprehensive, well-attended Historical Society presentation.

In the process, Finer placed the most intense community spotlight on Mark since the 1890s, when Greenfield judge Franklin Fessenden scurried to assemble and promote his paintings. Eventually, Fessenden gathered more than 30 paintings that ended up in Deerfield historian George Sheldon’s barn before being sold in the 1930s to a New York City department store. Sheldon cherry-picked *Old Indian House*, which is now displayed at Old Deerfield’s Memorial Hall Museum.

Despite many attempts over the years to fill in missing details about Mark’s fascinating life, the Greenfield artist remains a bit of an enigma today. Cloaked in the allure of the unknown, his story presents many tempting threads of inquiry dangling for further investigation. One never knows what a gentle tug on such a dangler will unravel.

Among many mysteries surrounding Mark are two that most interest me: 1.) who was first wife Mary Ann Skinner (1798-1860), said to be from Gill at the time of their marriage, and 2.) where is Mark buried in that heavy, talk-of-the-town coffin? It’s possible that both questions will never be answered, even in these days of ever-expanding online genealogical resources. That’s no accident, but rather Mr. Mark’s intention. He obviously believed it was nobody’s business, and took special measures to obscure all discovery paths.

I could find no newspaper obituary or death notice announcing his wife’s February 15, 1860 see **VALLEY VIEW** page B3

Above: Fog, trees, and a field, spotted together Saturday along Gill’s famed Main Road.

A TEAM FOR THE AGES REACHES THE HALL OF FAME

By RICHARD ANDERSEN

TURNERS FALLS – Imagine this:

It’s 1942. Springtime. The country is in the first of months of a war that will become one of the deadliest catastrophes in world history. By the time it ends in 1945, thirty million people will no longer be among the living.

You’re 18 years old, in your final semester at Turners Falls High School. There are only thirty-four boys in your graduating class. Death is staring every one of you in the face.

What will you do between now and the time you’re called to serve? Complete your degree, of course, but what about when you’re not at school? Certainly not work. You’re still living in the time of the Great Depression. There are no jobs!

With time now playing a more important role in your life, you ask yourself what you enjoy doing more than anything else in the world. What would you most regret if you didn’t do it before being shipped across the Atlantic or the Pacific?

You answer that question in one word: *Baseball!*

You’ve been playing the game



Left to right: Turners Falls High School coach Earl Lorden, catcher Hennick Welcome, left-fielder Paul Whiteman, and shortstop and team captain Francis Bourdeau receive the 1942 state championship trophy from official “Doc” Mooney.

almost as long as you can remember. It’s one of the ways you measure your life. Tulips and daffodils don’t announce spring’s arrival; the crack of the bat does. The diamond is the one place where you feel most alive.

There is no Little League in 1942 – kids play on makeshift community teams. Because there are so many kids in your town, whole teams can

be made up from just a few neighborhoods, with games played on the weekends. Fourth Street and Fifth Street each have their own team. So do the Patch and the Top of the Hill. Newt Guilbault, the unofficial recreation director at Unity Park, organizes the teams into leagues, posts the weekend schedules, and makes sure the fields are maintained.

see **BASEBALL** page B8

RECIPES

That Mushroomy Something

By CLAIRE HOPLEY



Tasty mushrooms, clockwise from top: enoki (*Flammulina filiformis*), shiitake (*Lentinula edodes*), and baby bella (*Agaricus bisporus*).

LEVERETT – When you were walking under a confetti of bright leaves on vivid fall days, mushrooms would have been peeping out at you: fairy rings dancing on patches of grass, black trumpets lurking in leaf litter, clusters of oyster mushrooms and hen-of-the woods hanging out on tree trunks. They appear in fall, looking magical, visitors from the world of elves and goblins. No wonder they entice cooks into the kitchen!

But, lacking the robust mushroom-gathering traditions of Poland, France, and other European countries, most of us can’t tell the poisonous wicked witches among the wild woodland mushrooms from wonderful fairy godmothers. Fortunately, some mushrooms, once only available to foragers, are now being cultivated, so you can buy them in supermarkets and in farmers markets, where local growers sell their crops.

Since mushrooms grow indoors in the dark, you don’t have to wait for fall; they are in season all year, even in the depths of winter.

Shiitakes, a Japanese mushroom that grows on oak logs, were among the first woodland mushrooms to be cultivated and have already become familiar. Deeply flavorful, they are the perfect partner to meat dishes.

Shiitakes have the archetypical familiar mushroom shape – a flat cap on a slender stem – but many other wild mushrooms come in carnival shapes and sizes. Oyster mushrooms grow greyish-beige, oyster-shaped flaps stacked in piles that seem sure to topple. In his 1989 book *A Passion for Mushrooms*, Italian chef Antonio Carluccio described them as “Useful for adding that extra mushroomy something to a dish.” Sauté

see **RECIPES** page B4

Pet of the Week



‘PEBBLES’

Pebbles is about as cute as it gets! When she’s sleepy, she burrows under blankies to get cozy. She’s super snuggly, playful, and affectionate.

She has lived with a large dog and told him off frequently, so she may need similar-sized or very tolerant doggy friends. Pebbles has lived with kids and done well. She’s also fully house-trained to go outside!

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Senior Center Activities FEBRUARY 5 THROUGH 9

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Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

ERVING

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

Monday 2/5

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

Tuesday 2/6

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

Wednesday 2/7

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

Thursday 2/8

9 a.m. Core & Balance
10 a.m. Barre Fusion

Friday 2/9

9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

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

Monday 2/5

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
10:15 a.m. Outdoor Chair Yoga
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Kitchen Club

Tuesday 2/6

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 2/7

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
4:15 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 2/8

10 a.m. Coffee, Donuts
& Chit Chat

1 p.m. Pitch
3:30 p.m. Tech 4 Seniors Class

Friday 2/9

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

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.

FEBRUARY LIBRARY LISTING

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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: surface tension with Cheerios. Craft: origami heart bookmark. Free kits at all branches while supplies last.

Every Thursday: *Bilingual Music & Movement.* Sing and move with Tom and Laurie. Montague Center, 10 a.m.

Saturday, February 3: *Used Book Sale.* Fiction, kids’ books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks. Carnegie, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Saturday, February 3: *Valentine Card Making.* All ages welcome. Refreshments provided. Carnegie, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

Wednesday, February 7: *CPR training.* Montague Ctr., 4 p.m.

Thursday, February 8: *Hot Chocolate Social.* Millers Falls, 3 to 4 p.m.

Friday, February 9: *Love Letters,* play by A.R. Gurney, feat. Marina Goldman and John Bechtold. \$20 suggested. Montague Common Hall, 7 p.m.

Saturdays, February 10, 17, and 24: *Story Time.* Jumpstart early literacy skills for preschoolers. Carnegie, 10 a.m.

Sunday, February 11: Documentary: *Root, Hog or Die.* Western Mass farmers in the 1970s. Discovery Ctr., 2 p.m.

Monday, February 12: *Friends of MPL Meeting.* Email vgatvalley@gmail.com for info. Carnegie, 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 20: *Drop-In Art with Caroline Wampole.* Millers Falls, 2 to 4 p.m.

Wednesday, February 21: *Author Series: Dean Cycon, Finding Home.* Refreshments provided. Montague Center, 6 p.m.

Thursday, February 22: *Graphic Novel Club.* Ages 7 to 11. K. O’Neill, *The Moth Keeper.* Email gracenm@montague-ma.gov to register. Visit any branch to pick up a copy. Millers Falls, 3:30 p.m.

Friday, February 23: *LEGO.* Montague Ctr. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Saturday, February 24: *Drop-In Art with local artist Caroline Wampole.* Carnegie, 1 to 3 p.m.

Sunday, February 25: *Food for Change.* Documentary, co-ops as a force for social and economic change. Discovery Center, 2 p.m. Snow date March 3.

Thursday, February 29: *Book Club.* R.F. Kuang, *Yellowface.* Montague Center, 7 p.m.

ERVING

Tuesdays, February 6 to March 12: *Astrology Group.*

For adults. Please RSVP and plan to attend the entire series. 4:30 to 6 p.m.

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

Thursday, February 8: *PJ Storytime,* 0 to 8. RSVP. 6 p.m.

Sunday, February 11: *Puzzle Swap.* All ages, no puzzle required. 1 to 3 p.m.

Sunday, February 11: *Genealogy Drop-in Help.* 1 to 3 p.m.

Wednesday, February 14: *Teen Media Club,* ages 11 to 19. Snacks. 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 18: *Friends’ Craft Day.* Materials provided, RSVP. 1 p.m.

Monday, February 26: *All-Abilities Social.* Food provided. RSVP. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Tuesday, February 27: *All-Abilities Social.* Food provided. RSVP. 4 to 6 p.m.

LEVERETT

All Month: *Art Exhibit,* mono-prints by Jen Lambert.

Multiple days, February 1 to 17: *Mystery Date with a Book.* Pick a wrapped book based on its first line, and go home with tea and chocolate. Open hours.

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

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

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

Tuesday, February 6: *Sourdough Workshop.* 6:30 p.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.

Multiple days, February 17 to 24: *Pokémon Seek & Find.* Find all the Pokémon hidden in the library to win a mini Pokémon.

NORTHFIELD

Thursday, February 1: *Spice Club pickup starts.* This month: fenugreek seeds. Stop in for a sample and recipes while supplies last.

Friday, February 2: *Coffee and Tea Social.* 10 to 11 a.m.

Saturday, February 3: *Puzzle Swap.* For more info email friendsofdml01360@gmail.com. 10 to 11:30 a.m.

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

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

Wednesday, February 7: *Readers’ Choice Book Group.* Kate Zernike, *The Exceptions: Nancy Hopkins, MIT, and the Fight for Women in Science.* Pick up at the library. 10 a.m.

Wednesday, February 7: *Tech Help.* Bring your device. 1 to 3 p.m.

Thursday, February 8: *Library Trivia Night.* Four Star Farms Brewery, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, February 8: *Climate Cafe.* A facilitated safe space for people concerned about ecological crises to talk about their emotions. 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 14: *Reading Group.* Sophocles, *Antigone.* Pick up at library. 3 p.m.

Wednesday, February 21: *Mindfulness Meditation* with Jeannette Eaton. Beginners welcome. 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, February 22: *Welcoming Pollinators Home.* 6 p.m.

Wednesday, February 28: *Economic Response to Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine.* Email dmemlib@gmail.com to register. Online. 7 p.m.

Thursday, February 29: *Book Group:* A book with a color in the title. 5:30 p.m.

WENDELL

All Month: *Art Exhibit.* “Robot quilts” by Marge Barrett-Mills.

All Month: *Timed Team Puzzle Competition.* Sign up for a two-hour slot.

Every Friday: *LEGO.* 4 p.m.

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

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

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

Tuesdays, February 6 and 20: *Yoga Workshops with Shay.* Registration required. 11 a.m.

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

Thursdays, February 8 and 22: *Fiber Night.* 6:30 p.m.

Friday, February 9: *Home-school Hangout.* 10:30 a.m.

Friday, February 9: *Office Hours* with state rep. Aaron Saunders. 2 p.m.

Saturday, February 10: *Tiny Art Show* reception. 2 to 3 p.m.

Tuesday, February 13: *Tech Time.* By app’t, 4:30 to 6 p.m.

Thursday, Febrary 15: *Spiders!* 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 27: *Adult Book Group.* 10 a.m.

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VALLEY VIEW from page B1 passing – only a February 27 *Greenfield Gazette* and *Courier* card of thanks to “the Ladies of all the Religious Societies in this place... for the long and constant kindness [shown] in the last distressing sickness of my partner.” He signed that paid expression of gratitude “Your Affectionate and Humble Servant, G.W. Mark.”

End of story on Mary Ann. The online *FindAGrave.com* database names Mary Ann’s final resting place as the North Meadows Cemetery just down the road from my home. The listing also identifies her birthplace as Williamstown and her maiden name as Skinner, both of which are soft but can be found elsewhere with a little digging. Her gravestone stands over one of four graves in the Henry A. Ewers burial plot. Her parentage is not displayed, and may never be proven.

That said, *Ancestry.com* and other online sources show a Mary Ann Skinner born in Albany, New York, on July 2, 1798 to Jared and Mary (Drew) Skinner and baptized three weeks later at Albany’s Dutch Reformed Church. Jared Skinner’s parentage is unknown, but he is believed to have been of New England stock descending from John Skinner, an original proprietor of Hartford, Connecticut, where his name graces the Founders Monument. A branch of this family that settled in Colchester, Connecticut, sent members to Shelburne and Williamstown before the Revolution. Jared also likely came from that Colchester line.

If that’s the same Mary Ann Skinner who married G.W. Mark in 1818, what brought her to Gill? There is no trace of her parents ever living there, and she was married not there but in Mark’s childhood New Hampshire town.

Well, let’s suppose she was orphaned and adopted into a needy Gill family. Mary Ann Skinner’s Albany father was dead by 1813 when she was 15, and soon thereafter her mother disappears from the public record. Perhaps her Williamstown association began then, when her father’s prosperous brother or cousin, tavernkeeper Col. Thompson Joseph Skinner, could have taken her in as a teen. Then, perhaps, rapid-fire Gill developments brought her here.

Mary Ann was 17 when Gill head-of-household Henry Ewers, Sr. (born 1782) died in 1815, leaving widow Lucy (Gould) Ewers (1782-1854) and three young children, of whom young aforementioned son Henry A., 9, was the oldest.

Lucy was the daughter of Ebenezer Brewster and Beulah (Steevens) Gould, a colonial couple with temporary Williamstown back-grounds. Perhaps she was seeking to adopt a girl old enough to help her around the house, learned of Mary Ann from a Williamstown acquaintance, and promptly adopted her as a stepdaughter? Such arrangements were common among farm families of the day, and would explain why Mary Ann (Skinner) Mark lies in the Ewers cemetery plot beside Lucy, Henry A., and his wife Sally.

Enough said. Makes perfect sense to me.

Which brings us to G.W. Mark’s mysterious unmarked grave and that cumbersome metal coffin. I strongly suspect they lie not in Charlestown, New Hampshire, as vaguely reported, but across the Connecticut River at Summer Hill Cemetery in Springfield, Vermont. I base this conclusion on a careful reading of G.W. Mark’s mother’s FindAGrave listing. Mark was just 4 when Hannah (Thomas) Mark died in 1799. An early Summer Hill burial, she lies next to G.W.’s infant older brother William, whose stone posts only a name.

There is, however, a helpful little clue as to G.W.’s final resting place etched across the bottom of his mother’s humble stone. It reads “Erected by her son G.W., 1866.”

So, there it is. At the age of 71, knowing his own life was near the end, George Washington Mark started “making arrangements.” He ponied up to mark the graves of his mother and brother, and very likely secured permission for his own burial in a secret, unmarked grave beside them.

The timing is perfect. He is said to have purchased the coffin eight years before his death because he didn’t want to encumber anyone with unexpected expenses. That would have been circa 1871, five years after he spruced up his mother’s Summer Hill plot. His will eliminated funeral services and stipulated that his metal casket be tightly sealed with a special cement concoction prepared by him.

If, indeed, Mark is buried at Summer Hill, it would be easy enough to prove it with a metal detector. But why? The eccentric Greenfield artist wanted to rest in peace and never be bothered in an unmarked grave.

Gary Sanderson lives in Greenfield. Questions and comments welcome at gary@oldtavernfarm.com.



SANDERSON PHOTO

G.W. Mark’s bound painting, covered in these pages in December.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

High Drama at Program House; Grove Street Cryptid; Other Weird Aggression; Cell Phone Thefts; Icy Roads

Monday, 1/22

2:10 p.m. Tractor-trailer on Federal Street near East Main needs help backing up and finding a new route to Route 2. Truck located and assisted getting under a bridge on Federal Street. Officer will help guide him through Millers Falls. It is an oversized load.

4:15 p.m. 911 caller from Montague City Road just got home and can hear someone upstairs; believes there is someone in the house. Officers spoke to third-floor residents. Their dogs have been home during the day.

6:08 p.m. Caller states that a dog has been howling at a G Street address since 3 p.m. Caller called back stating she doesn’t hear the dog anymore, so she thinks the owners took it inside, but if she hears it again she will call back.

Tuesday, 1/23

9:52 a.m. Caller states he is trying to pay two citations online that he received from our town, and is unable to get into his account on *Mass.gov*; a password reset will take three to four days, and his tickets are due in two. Wants on record that he called. Informed caller he will need to go to the RMV and pay tickets there. Caller states he was told by the RMV that it was a police issue and that he needed to call us.

11:05 a.m. Hit-and-run at Nouria. No injuries or leaking fluids. Report taken.

2:09 p.m. Tractor-trailer driver on Park Street advises GPS took him down residential road and needs assistance backing up. Believes he may have taken down some wires. Phone line belonging to a Park Street residence snapped and placed to side of road.

2:24 p.m. Employee from Apex Dental reporting needle on sidewalk in front of business. Item retrieved.

5:17 p.m. 911 caller reporting a black sedan, possibly a Buick LeSabre, going at a high speed on Turners Falls Road. Referred to an officer.

11:55 p.m. 911 hangup call; male party kept repeating “Are you people OK?” and would not answer any questions. No answer at door; lights off and shades down. No sign of emergency. Shelburne Control got a 911 open line call from the same number. Received a call on the business line from the same number; male stated his parents have abused him over the past 30 years, but does not want to see an officer and wants to remain anonymous because he doesn’t want to be killed.

Wednesday, 1/24

2:22 a.m. 911 caller in the Fourth Street area states that there is a female in her car that she doesn’t want in it; states female got out of vehicle after putting hands on her. Caller has since left the scene to go back to work. States she does not need a call back or wish to file a report at this time.

6:16 a.m. Report of threatening and harassment. Advised of options.

6:42 a.m. 911 caller [same location] states her roommate threw juice at her and was punching her in the back of the head. Received second 911 call from roommate, stating that while she was on the previous call with an officer, her roommate started fighting with her and she had to protect herself. Caller 1 states she has locked herself in the bathroom. Officer advises fight is over community bathroom; both parties advised of options and are leaving for the day. Caller 2 is in the process of moving to another room within the building today.

11:03 a.m. Program coordinator requesting call regarding threats over text; related to previous call. Advised of options.

1:52 p.m. Caller [from same situation] requesting officer as she is attempting to move her belongings, but is now getting threatening texts from the program coordinator that she will be terminated from the program, plus texts from the roommate’s boyfriend. Advised of options.

8:09 p.m. Caller states that his daughter’s cell phone was stolen while at Ja’Duke; that was the last location ping of the phone before it was shut off. Report taken.

9:38 p.m. First caller states that her old roommate’s boyfriend is texting her that he is going to shoot her. Caller won’t stop yelling at the other involved party in order to give dispatch further information. Second caller called 911 stating that her old roommate let herself into the apartment because she still has a key, and she (the second caller) locked herself in her bedroom because she is scared. Parties advised of options again; keys returned to second caller to ensure the former roommate will no longer have access to the apartment.

11:06 p.m. Caller states that a generator is running at a Mormon Hollow Road location and has been for about a week or so. Officer checked area; generator barely heard from roadway; appears they are having a power issue with only a light or two on.

Thursday, 1/25

6 a.m. Town clerk panic button sounding at town hall. DPW is in building.

11:28 a.m. Caller from Goddard Avenue states that there are tire tracks in her front yard, like someone purposely drove on the lawn and did some damage. Tire damage ap-

pears to be from someone turning around on the lawn, possibly after missing the corner or sliding due to ice and snow.

11:33 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that a black truck has been parked in front of his home blocking the sidewalk for over a week. Investigated. Vehicle is parked legally.

12:52 p.m. Officers on foot with K9 behind Cutlery Block attempting to track female with an active warrant who was just seen in this area. Positive K9 track from Cutlery Block to Avenue A. No contact with female suspect, as it is a locked apartment building.

1:16 p.m. 911 call from Nouria employee reporting that two customers are outside yelling at each other, creating a disturbance. Verbal disagreement. Parties moved along.

2:49 p.m. School resource officer called directly about a motor vehicle accident at the Tech School with someone complaining of pain. Shelburne Control notified. Starting EMS and FD. SRO advises that the party refused transport. Damage is minor, and the parties are going to work it out between themselves.

7:28 p.m. Caller from Keith Apartments states that her neighbor has been in the hallway screaming and kicking doors. Officer advises that they spoke with the involved party and she has calmed down and will stop banging on the walls.

11:10 p.m. Anonymous caller reporting loud noise coming from a Mormon Hollow Road location; described as a loud generator echoing through the woods. Officer advises all quiet upon arrival; no loud noises out of the ordinary.

Friday, 1/26

12:47 a.m. Concerned E-911 caller from Grove Street states she is hearing a strange noise almost like a mix between an animal and a human. Caller states the noise is similar to a cry or yell, and is intermittent. Caller states she has lived in the area for 18 years and has never heard a noise like this. Caller advises noise appeared to be moving towards Unity Street; however, it came back to the area while she was on the line. Officer heard noise while speaking with caller; noise sounded like an animal. Unable to locate. Will continue checking area.

4:21 a.m. 911 caller reported unwanted party. Officer requesting ambulance. Party removed to hospital.

9:51 a.m. Caller [from Wednesday’s conflicts] states she started getting texts last night from a male stating that he was going to shoot up her building tonight and kill her. Caller states she has multiple texts and Facebook mes-

sages about same from the male party. Caller in to station to speak with officer. Courtesy transport provided to courthouse. Received call from second caller stating she got an email today titled “D-Day” and was looking to speak with an officer. Warrant issued for male party. Greenfield PD contacted to see if they will attempt to locate male at shelter to serve warrant and 209A; Greenfield unable to locate party.

5:43 p.m. 911 caller from Fourth Street states his mom was beat up and the assailant stole her phone. Received call from mother reporting same. First caller stating he is going to go after the male party if the police don’t do anything about it right now. All officers out with victim. Spoke with all involved parties. Investigated.

6:20 p.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road reports a strong odor of gas. Officer advised. Control contacted to dispatch FD.

6:59 p.m. 911 caller states a male is beating up a female in the hallway on the second floor of an Avenue A apartment building. All quiet upon officers’ arrival. All units on foot in area. Units clear.

Saturday, 1/27

6:50 a.m. Caller reports a vehicle in the Fourth Street lot has homeless individuals inside; believes they may be doing drugs. Officer spoke with individuals, who advised they were homeless and waiting for an apartment. No drugs or paraphernalia seen.

10:10 a.m. Caller advises he will be in town knocking on doors to sell solar, company name “Trinity.” Advised caller that he needs to get a soliciting and canvassing permit from the department and a sign-off from the chief before he can solicit.

Sunday, 1/28

12:22 p.m. 911 caller slid off Ripley Road and hit a tree; airbags deployed. States she and her passenger are uninjured. Shelburne Control notified and toning out MCFD and AMR. Rau’s requested for tow. Officer advises that the DPW will need to look at the tree that was struck as it may need to be taken down; DPW notified.

12:30 p.m. Caller states that his car slid off Wendell Road and hit a pole and some roadside debris. Officer requesting Rau’s. Report taken.

7:04 p.m. Crash notification from cell phone on South Prospect Street. Control contacted for EMS. Officers advised and responding. Injuries involved. Officers reporting minor leg injury. Rau’s requested and responding. Operator and passenger waiting with officer until ride arrives.

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RECIPES from page B1

them with garlic and butter, dip them in egg and breadcrumbs and fry them, or mix them with other vegetables – leeks are good – and serve as sides with fish.

Oyster mushrooms have a big family, including the primrose-colored Golden Oysters, also called Lemon Oysters. Then there’s King Oysters. Instead of having layered flaps like plebeian oyster mushrooms or the familiar wide cap on a thin stem, King Oysters have a fat white stem topped by a small vestigial cap. Cut them in thin, perpendicular slices and fry them.

They shrink little in cooking, making them good garnishes for steak or chops, and even better in vegetarian main dishes – stir-fried with vegetables and tossed over noodles, for example.

King Oysters are popular in Asian cookery, and so often sold in Asian markets. Enoki mushrooms will also be there, as well as in supermarkets. With slender stalks and elfin caps they look like a bunch of white Q-tips attached at their bases. Along with their fruity flavor and crunchy texture, their cute looks make them perfect for showing off atop salads, soups, and ramen noodles.

Lion’s mane is yet another weird-looking Asian mushroom, often found in a farmers market on a local grower’s stall. It’s white, not tawny, but otherwise really does look like a lion’s mane. Clumps of it look like several lions putting their hoary heads together. Because it has a mild crab flavor it’s sometimes made into vegetarian crabcakes, and it’s also popular in Asian soups.

Morels, one of the favorite mushrooms of classic French cuisine, occasionally appear in supermarkets in spring. You may even spot them growing near stone walls or tree bases. They are waffle-textured, hollow, brown tubes about two inches long on short pale stems. Chanterelles, another favorite in

French cuisine, very occasionally grow locally, and can sometimes be found in supermarkets, usually foraged in Oregon and therefore unpredictable. They have the color and aroma of apricots and are delicious with eggs or veal and chicken.

While fresh woodland mushrooms are not always available, dried mushrooms are always with us. They perfectly capture the fresh flavor, and while they never regain their texture when rehydrated, are excellent in soups, stews, pasta sauces, and for boosting the flavor of ordinary button mushrooms. You can buy packages of mixed kinds, or look for favorites such as oyster mushrooms, morels, chanterelles, or porcini.

Porcini are the mushroom foragers’ holy grail. Their name means “little pig” in Italian, honoring the dense, meaty flavor that makes crumbled dried porcini the secret ingredient of many chefs. Light as cotton candy, packages of dried porcini – sometimes called *cèpes* or *borow-iki*, their French and Polish names – weigh next to nothing. This makes them seem expensive (though Polish ones less so), but just one piece reconstituted in water lifts dishes to new flavor heights. Dried shiitake are also great flavor powerhouses.

Most fresh vegetables are poor in winter, but cultivated and dried mushrooms are always at hand, ready to boost the flavors of winter meals.



FISH WITH OYSTER MUSHROOMS AND LEEKS



- 2 medium-size leeks
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 8 ounces oyster mushrooms, rinsed clean
- 2 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped (or ½ cup canned diced tomatoes)
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- ⅓ cup white wine or vegetable stock
- 1 bay leaf
- salt and pepper to taste
- 4 filets of mackerel or trout (or 5-6 oz. pieces of haddock or halibut)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Preheat the broiler. Wash the leeks and remove all coarse top leaves. Cut the white and pale green parts into 1-inch pieces. In a frying pan warm the butter over medium heat, add the leeks and

cook for a minute.

Rinse the mushrooms clean, and remove any tough bits. Add the tender flat pieces to the pan, keeping them whole. Toss the leeks and mushrooms together and add the chopped tomato, oregano, wine or stock, bay leaf and salt and pepper to taste.

Simmer for 5 to 7 minutes, or until much of the liquid has evaporated.

Meanwhile, arrange the fish pieces on a flat tray or pan greased with olive oil. Season with salt and brush with olive oil. Broil for 4 to 5 minutes, or until the surface is lightly golden and the fish is opaque.

Transfer to warmed plates, and top with the mushroom mixture.

Serves four.

MUSHROOM MEDLEY

- 8 pieces dried mixed mushrooms (or dried shiitake)
- 3 Tbsp. olive or canola oil
- 1 large onion
- 12-inch stick celery
- 2 large portabella mushrooms
- 6-8 shiitake mushrooms
- 10-ounce pack baby bella or button mushrooms
- 1 cup oyster mushrooms
- salt and pepper to taste
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1½ tsp. dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1½ tsp. cornstarch
- ⅓ cup sour cream or Greek yogurt
- parsley or celery leaves

Clean the dried mushrooms, put them in a bowl and add ½ cup water. Set aside to soak for 2 hours, or longer if more convenient.

Peel and chop the onion, and chop the celery. In a casserole or frying pan over moderate heat, warm 2 tablespoons of oil, stir in the onions and celery, and soften them without browning for 5 minutes.

Clean the rest of the mushrooms. Cut the portabella caps into half-inch strips and the stems into small pieces. Remove the tough stems from the shiitake and cut the large caps in two. Add these to pan along with the baby bella or button mushrooms, oyster mushrooms, and the remaining oil.

Drain the liquid from the dried mushrooms and add it, along with the chopped and soaked mushroom pieces. Stir to mix, then add the garlic, thyme, and bay leaf, and season with salt. Simmer uncovered for 10-15 minutes.



You can prepare ahead to this point and set aside. To finish the dish, reheat, and meanwhile mix the cornstarch to a thin paste with water and add it along with the sour cream or yogurt. Stir them into the mixture and simmer for 4 to 5 minutes.

Serve over sliced boiled potatoes and carrots, or other vegetables. It’s good over rice, too. Garnish with parsley or celery leaves.

Serves four.

EXHIBITS

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rivers of Franklin County*, geology-inspired, map-based art by Joe Kopera, through April 15.

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

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

Sawmill River Arts, Montague: *Maddie Maney*, outdoor landscape, lifestyle, and portrait photography. *Small Works Exhibit and Sale*, annual community art show featuring works smaller than ten inches square. February 4 through 26. Reception this Sunday, February 4, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Montague Center Library: *Collages by Bucky Gallery*, through February.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Portraits by Maria Sparrow*, February 7 through March 29. Opening reception February 28, from 5 to 8 p.m.;

closing reception March 29.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Staff Picks Exhibit*, works by artists who have shown at LAVA previously. Reception this Saturday, February 3, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Jen Lambert Solo Show*, monoprints and paintings, through February.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: *Student Art Show*, artwork by Leverett Elementary School students. First two weekends in February. Reception this Saturday, February 3, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *The Dance of Dementia*, by Cheryl Rezendes, through March 2. Reception this Thursday, February 1 at 5 p.m.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *Love at First Sight*, group show by member artists, February 1 through 26.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: *Sanctuary*, exhibit featuring Sharon Carty, in quilting arts; Joyce Maxner, in felted arts; and K. Paul M. in drawing, painting, and collage arts. February 5 through 18, with a performance Friday, February 16 at 7 p.m. on the

theme of “Home.”

Eagle Hill Cultural Center, Hardwick: *Ohio’s Appalachia: Faces & Families, 1972-1974*, photographs by Vern McClish, comprising “an ode to a forgotten people.” Through March. Reception Saturday, February 10, from 4 to 6 p.m.

Tabor Art Gallery, Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley: *Geo-Spec: Cultural Introspection Wealth*. Raishad J. Glover works with mediums such as lenticular printing, graphite powder, beeswax, dura-trans/backlit film, analog/digital photography, and LED lights. Through March 20, with a reception on March 7 from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m.

D’Amour Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield: *A Gathering: Works from Contemporary Black American Ceramic Artists*, through March 24.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

Deadline Set for Thirty-Third Poet’s Seat Poetry Contest!

FRANKLIN COUNTY – The Friends of the Greenfield Library announce the 33rd annual Poet’s Seat Poetry Contest. The contest is open to all residents and students in the county. It culminates on April 23 with the Poet’s Seat Poetry Contest Celebration, at which poets read their work and winners are announced.

Categories are ages 12 to 14, ages 15 to 18, and adult. First-place winners will be published. The winning adult takes home the Poet’s Chair.

This annual contest is held in honor of Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, who lived in Greenfield from 1847 until his death in 1873 and was considered by his contemporaries – Emerson, Thoreau, and Tennyson – to be a gifted poet. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he shunned law in favor of botany and writing poetry. Although he never achieved wide public acclaim, his poems are often included in anthologies of noted American poets.

Each entrant may submit a maximum of three poems, which must be

unpublished. No one poem may exceed three standard pages. Previous first-place winners are not eligible to reenter in the same age category.

Entries can be dropped off at the Greenfield Public Library, emailed, mailed (**Poet’s Seat Poetry Contest, 412 Main Street, Greenfield, MA 01301**; include a stamped self-addressed envelope), or submitted at forms.gle/KLKK612KDwD4ZZhE6.

Poems should be printed in plain typeface, or clearly in pen, on white paper with no extraneous marks. Multi-page poems must have page numbers clearly marked. Do not staple. No identifying info should be on the same side of the paper as the poem(s), though youth entrants should write their ages at the bottom. Write your name, address, and phone number on the back. Youth must also include contact info for a guardian.

Entries must be received, or postmarked, by February 26, 2024.

For further information, email poetsseatcontest@gmail.com or visit www.friendsofssl.org.

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Montague Community Television News

Ever Curious?

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Ever curious what Montague’s cable advisory committee is up to? Come be a fly on the wall, and listen in to this past week’s meeting.

We also have new meetings available from the Montague selectboard and Montague finance committee. Try them all and see which is your favorite! Let us know by emailing infomontaguetv@gmail.com.

And never forget, dear residents and readers, that all community members are welcome and encouraged to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 9 and featured on the MCTV Vimeo page. If you have

any ideas for films, MCTV is always available to assist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for checkout, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

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

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

EVENT PREVIEW

Greenfield’s 2024 Winter Carnival



Gilmore & Farrell’s float in last year’s Parade of Lights.

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – Greenfield’s Winter Carnival began 101 years ago, and today includes events such as a chili cook-off, fireworks, ice sculpture contests, and a Parade of Lights. One year, I covered the K9 keg pull event. With the Carnival coming up again this weekend, February 2 through 4, I decided I wanted to cover one of its events again.

I ended up getting a hold of someone who was in the Parade of Lights last year, and will be again this weekend: Gilmore & Farrell Insurance. Their employee, Lora Graves, ended up giving me some info.

The Parade of Lights and fireworks have both been moved to Saturday evening this year – the parade will begin at 6 p.m., with fireworks at 7 p.m. Decorated vehicles will go from Newton Street along Federal Street, onto Beacon Street, and end at Beacon Field for the parade.

Graves told me it will be Gilmore & Farrell’s third time being in the parade. They had a float in the event last year that won the Artistic Illumination Award.

“Last year’s was the Ice Cube, with characters to match the theme of the Carnival,” Graves told me, “and the Snow Queen riding in the

Jeep.” She had this to say about being in it again: “Yes... we are planning a float for this year... Hope to win a prize, but we do it for the fun!”

Past floats from other places include a bus and a fire truck, both covered in lights. Tanner Ames of Ames Electrical won the parade’s Best and Brightest Award last year with a truck, decorated with lights, pulling a trailer with an inflatable snowman on it. A float from the Department of Public Works, decorated similarly to the bus and fire truck, won the City Council Award.

It apparently takes a month to plan and assemble a float. According to Graves, all of the company’s employees are responsible for helping do that.

I personally think any event with light decorations is very cool. You should have seen some of the lights on houses in my neighborhood for the holidays. One of them was pretty fancy.

Lora Graves’ opinion on the Parade of Lights event is that it “is an awesome addition to the carnival. We all love being in it, but unfortunately, it’s usually super cold.”

So, people like the Snow Queen from last year’s float must really enjoy doing this! I hope for them to win a prize again this weekend, and enjoy it just as much.



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BOOK REVIEW

Paul Lynch, *Prophet Song* (2023)

By EASTON SMITH

TURNERS FALLS – Paul Lynch’s 2023 Booker Prize-winning novel, *Prophet Song*, offers a bleak and suffocating allegory of fascism, civil war, and displacement. It is an ominous – though hopefully not prescient – book for readers in the United States right now.

Prophet Song begins with a knock at the door. It’s the GNSB, the secret police force of the fascist National Alliance, who have seized control of Ireland. They want to speak to Larry Stack, a teacher and trade union leader. His wife, Eilish, tells them he is not home.

It is an alarming incident for Eilish and Larry, who worry about the encroaching power of “the party” and its followers. But, even as the society tightens around them like a noose, they console themselves with allusions to laws, norms, and the pressure of the international community.

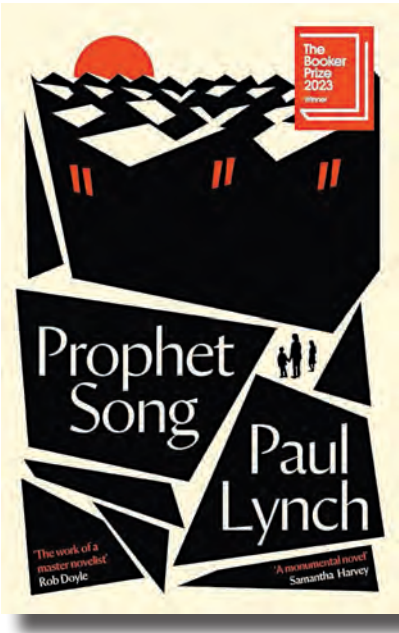
“They cannot stop a democratic march, just you wait and see,” says Larry.

Within 30 pages, Larry has disappeared. He’s been detained by the GNSB, Eilish believes, though it is impossible to verify. She is left behind to care for her four children and her father, who is rapidly falling into the grips of dementia. The story builds along this single line: the power and cruelty of the regime grows as Eilish’s options shrink.

Most books would build such a web only to show readers the way out. But in *Prophet Song*, the escalating atrocities that Eilish’s family witnesses and experiences are met with a staunch, at times delusional, denial and passivity from our protagonist. By the time events are undeniably unfolding before her eyes, it is too late.

If this plot isn’t enough to make you feel trapped, then the claustrophobic prose will. Lynch writes in a lyrical, overwrought style that does more to obscure than to illuminate details.

One chapter opens: “The noise blooms into sleep, upward and adrift through two worlds hearing footsteps sound on gravel, a laugh beneath the bedroom window as though a shadow had been let fly from dream. She is saddened into the dark room, the awareness cold and quick in the blood that something has struck the glass door downstairs, hearing the sound carry in hollow shock through the house, the slow weight of the body as she



runs from the bed.”

The sentences are long, stacking on top of themselves, becoming far too heavy for any sense of freedom, comfort, or autonomy. There are no paragraph breaks, a choice that seems intentionally designed to disorient the reader. Look away from the page for a moment, and you will lose your place. Look back, and it’s just a wall of text, impenetrable and unstoppable.

Prophet Song never yields. Eilish does not find her power. The international community does not intervene. The reins of history seem far beyond reach as Ireland falls to pieces. It’s a clever inversion of narrative convention. Lynch sets the stage for a hero’s arc or, at least, some political intrigue, but then he delivers us a feckless protagonist who can do nothing to stop the slow grind of bureaucratic violence or, eventually, civil breakdown. It is difficult to witness. This difficulty is the book’s central strength, but also its biggest failure.

As Eilish continues to refuse to act to save her family, the reader’s empathy gives way to frustration, then anger. But there is no escape. Eilish is a proxy for the reader, our only entryway into this world. We can only see what she sees, only do what she does. Why does Lynch want us to see and do so little? If he wants to teach us a lesson about the dangers of complacency, then that is accomplished in the first 50 pages. After that, Lynch’s great wall of text becomes a blunter instrument that hammers the same point, again and again. It begins to feel like Lynch doesn’t trust his readers to get it and that he wants to punish us for our ignorance.

Prophet Song opens with an epigraph that the German poet Be-

truldt Brecht wrote in 1939 (the same epigraph that Tommy Orange chose for his similarly grim novel, *There There*):

*In the dark times
Will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing.
About the dark times.*

If we accept the lazy framing of *darkness as evil*, which Lynch clearly does, then we have to admit that *Prophet Song* is dark. It’s insistent in its darkness, opening with the lines: “The night has come and she has not heard the knocking, standing at the window looking out onto the garden. How the dark gathers without sound the cherry trees. It gathers the last of the leaves and the leaves do not resist the dark but accept the dark in whispers.”

Yes, there is darkness. But where is the singing? Brecht, who wrote so many songs of struggle and revolution, was not writing in metaphor. He was acutely aware that even in the most difficult circumstances people will sing. He knew that no one is ever completely hemmed in. There is always room for a paragraph break; for art, for joy, and for resistance.

Prophet Song is without song. We do not get to see Larry in a union meeting, planning the protest that would lead to his arrest. When Eilish’s son joins the resistance, we don’t get to hear his reasons or meet his comrades. Eilish doesn’t even hum a song to herself as she navigates the bureaucratic violence. There is no humor, not even *dark* humor.

This dissonance between Brecht and Lynch raises a larger question about the role of art in these times. As catastrophe lurks all around – climate chaos, openly tyrannical politicians, genocide – what good is art that reflects, but doesn’t inspire? What good is dystopian fiction in dystopian times? Does a premium on gritty “realism” obscure other facets of reality, other possibilities for liberation?


Reviewers have called *Prophet Song* an urgent book. *The Guardian*’s Betsy Reed wrote that the book “echoes the violence in Palestine, Ukraine and Syria” and “should be placed into the hands of policymakers everywhere”. While it is unlikely that those in power get their book recommendations from *The Guardian* or the Booker Prize judges, it definitely couldn’t hurt. But the rest of us might be better served by a book that makes us feel more powerful, rather than less.

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MEDICINE

More Medical Residents Turning to Unions

By CATHERINE DODDS, MD

TURNERS FALLS – The first organized strike in US history predates the country’s existence – in 1768, when a group of tailors in New York banded together to protest a drop in their wages. The first official trade union was subsequently established by a group of Philadelphia shoemakers in 1794. The labor movement and unions continued to build throughout the 19th and 20th centuries until they reached a peak in the late 1970s. Unions since then have been in decline, though the past few years have brought an upswing in favorable public opinion toward unions.

Physicians have historically been excluded from unions and strikes, though physician strikes do rarely happen, including one in May 2023 at Elmhurst Hospital in Queens, New York, the first one since 1990. It is still largely seen as unethical for physicians to walk out on the job, even if that action is to protest unfair or unsafe working conditions.

However, that mindset is starting to change.

I trained in internal medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital from 2010 to 2013. While I was in my residency training there was increasing awareness about burnout in medicine, including among resident physicians (residents), who are still in training and in the first few years of their medical careers.

In 2011, in the middle of my time as a resident, the national Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) made changes to the work hours allowable for physicians in training throughout the US. After decades of expecting young physicians to regularly work 30-plus hours in a row and 100-plus hours per week, shifts were suddenly capped at 16 hours of continuous work for residents in their first year and 24 hours for those in later years of training, and total work hours capped at 80 hours per week.

As residency programs around the country scrambled to adapt to these changes while still staffing

their hospitals, we residents wondered what difference these changes would make. Would we be happier and healthier with shorter work shifts and fewer hours? Would we end up with less training time and patient continuity, and be less skilled in our later careers, because of it?

Fast forward to just a decade later, and those questions are still unanswered, but residents are increasingly fighting for better working conditions and rejecting the “old school” way of working insanely long hours just because “that’s the way it’s done.”

pensive areas such as Boston, New York City, or California, where the cost of living can be outrageous for a resident physician.

According to a 2022 Medscape survey, the average resident physician in the US makes \$64,200 per year. For a typical resident work schedule of 48 weeks per year and 70 hours per week, that comes out to under \$20 per hour. This is the hourly pay rate for someone with a college and medical school education, eight years beyond high school.

Among the residents surveyed, only 27% felt they were fairly com-

and makes it difficult to continue towards a career as a physician. Grueling schedules and emotionally exhausting work can lead resident physicians to neglect their health and their families and friends. This type of work-life imbalance is not good for anyone, least of all a future healthcare provider.

The movement towards resident physician unionizing has existed at a low level since the 1930s. In 1999, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) reversed a prior statement that residents are students, instead deeming them employees when it comes to federal labor rules, and thus said that they do have the right to unionize. However, resident physician unionizing has only gained momentum in the past few years due to hardships placed on frontline healthcare workers by the COVID-19 pandemic, including overworking and inadequate staffing and support.

Residents leading the calls for unionizing hope this step will give them a seat at the table to advocate for themselves, and also to help improve patient care. By coming together and unionizing, residents gain some power and control – at a minimum, they are on a more equal footing with hospital leadership and have a better chance of achieving their goals without risking their careers.

The large hospital corporations that run most teaching hospitals, meanwhile, are generally against residents unionizing, largely based on concerns about escalating costs of paying more salary or benefits to residents, which may limit the number of residents per hospital, compromising patient care and further exacerbating the current physician shortage.

It should be noted, however, that replacing residents with other staff to do the same work typically costs much more than the increased salaries that residents are asking for. Hospital leaders also argue that it’s more flexible to tailor solutions to individual residents’ concerns, though history shows that one individual is easy to ignore, while unionizing has

thus far given residents a more powerful collective voice.

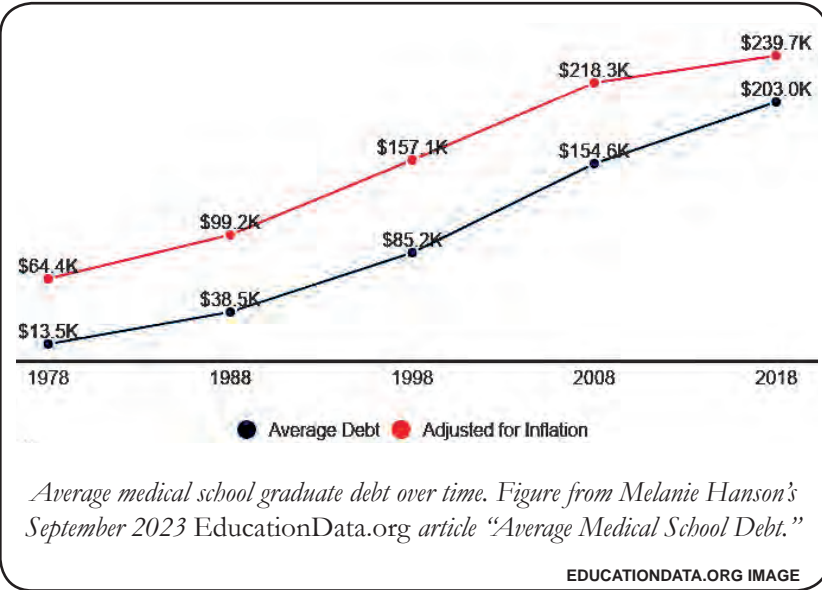
So what to make of all this? Will resident physicians walk out of hospitals *en masse*?

Unlikely. Physicians fundamentally believe that patient care is our highest duty and is the most important thing we do. When we are in our residency training, and beyond, we expect challenging work and long shifts. But we are also humans, who need to be able to take care of our bodies and provide for ourselves and our families so that we can also take good care of patients. I personally gained 30 pounds during my residency from late-night eating and minimal exercise, and ten years later I still have not been able to lose that residency weight again, causing permanent impacts to my own health.

While the unique stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic have accentuated the need for reforms, the changes that resident physicians are seeking are a long time coming. When I was in training, there was no discussion about joining a union – it was unthinkable. Some physicians still worry that going on strike – or unionizing at all – could undermine patient and community trust in physicians, particularly if hospital systems demonize the physicians as greedy and demanding. But over the years, residents have also consistently felt ground down and burned out by the long hours and low wages, surviving rather than thriving during those tough training years.

Perhaps the US healthcare system will see medical training improve, while physicians also feel more control over their own well-being throughout the entire span of their careers, with union representation as a crucial part of that system transformation.

Dr. Dodds is a locum tenens physician who works as a self-employed independent contractor. Views expressed in this article are her individual opinions based on her experiences as a practicing primary care physician.



Last June, resident physicians across the Mass General Brigham system voted to unionize, with 75% of respondents in favor of joining the Committee of Interns and Residents (CIR/SEIU). The CIR/SEIU represents around 30,000 doctors-in-training across the country – about 20% of all residents – and is growing rapidly, up from 16,000 members in late 2019.

Mass General Brigham was far from the first system to have residents unionize, but it is one of the largest and most recognized systems to join the growing union movement. Better pay, better working conditions, and benefits such as stipends for food, housing, childcare, and transportation are primary reasons that residents seek union representation, particularly for those who live and work in ex-

pensated, and half had more than \$200,000 in medical school debt. Early-career physicians are struggling to pay their bills despite being highly educated – and despite working themselves to exhaustion.

Resident physicians work long hours for relatively low pay, with minimal input into their schedule, and are generally locked into their positions for two to eight years, depending on their program and specialty. Residents have very little power or choice. After medical school, a physician must complete residency training in order to have a career as an attending physician.

Residency spots are also limited and competitive; if a resident is unhappy with their program, it’s not easy to leave and find a spot at a different program. Leaving a residency is seen very negatively,

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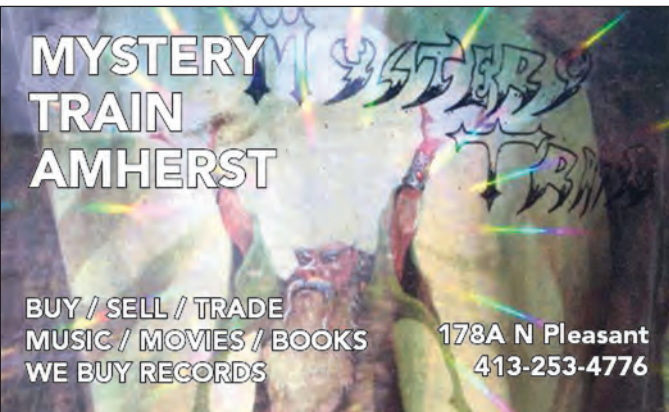
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2

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

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Square Dance* with caller Sarah Gibson and the Ruth and Ben Band. \$ 7 p.m.

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Coverchella: Cover Band Night*. \$ 8 p.m.

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

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3

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

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

First Church, Amherst: *Song & Story Swap* feat. *Bill Shontz, Mitch Chakour*. By donation. 7 p.m.

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

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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Town Hall, Orange: *Quabbin Valley Pro Musica* plays *Purcell, Haydn*, psalms by *Charpentier, Caldera*, more. \$; children under 12 free. 3 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Peter Blanchette & Friends*. \$ 4 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

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

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Nova Arts, Keene: *Jason Anderson, Jak Mikal Thomas*. \$ 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9

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

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

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Zydeco Connection, The Bourbon Street Blasters*. \$ 6:30 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Surrealist Party Games with Roger Clark Miller*. \$ 7 p.m.

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

8 p.m.

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

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

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

90 King St., Northampton: *Landowner, Pons, Programmique*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

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

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

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16

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

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

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

10 Forward, Greenfield: *Cadmi-um, Blandest, Bug Slam, I Have No Mouth, Film and Gender*. \$ 6 p.m.

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

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Chris Goudreau, The Frost Heaves & HaLeS*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Bombyx Center, 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.

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: *Tomas Fujiwara's 7 Poets Trio, Tomeka Reid Quartet*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23

The Drake, Amherst: *Native Sun, Dead Tooth, The Baxbys*. \$ 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Ezzy P, Hardcar*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

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

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

looking forward...

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Carney Auditorium, UMass Amherst: The Performance Project's *First Generation* presents *Mother Tongue*. Free. 5 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 29

90 King St., Northampton: *Wildflower, Magick Lantern, Julia Sabbagh, Holy Basil*. \$ 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 2

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

SATURDAY, MARCH 9

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

SUNDAY, MARCH 17

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Richard Thompson*. \$ 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 26

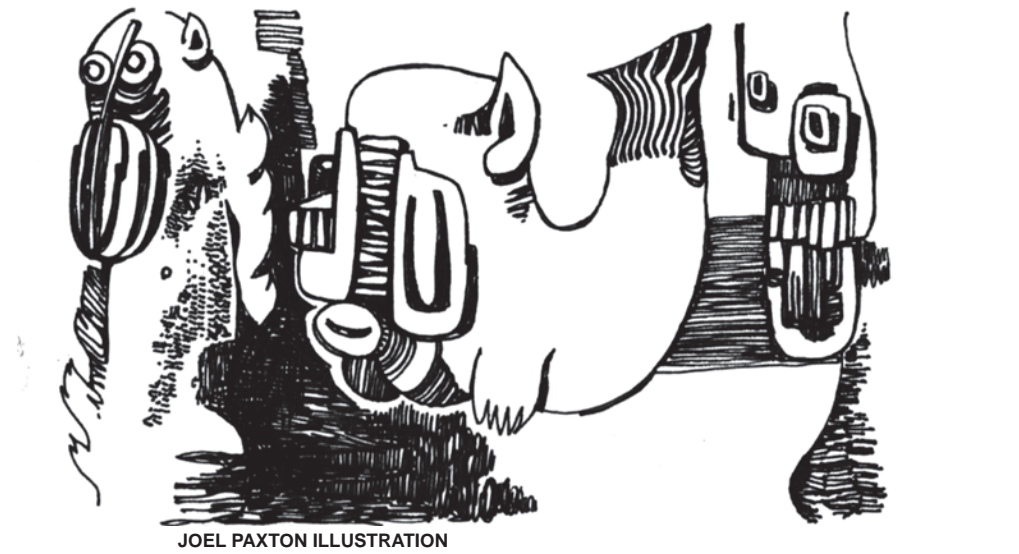
Nova Arts, Keene: *Michael Hurley, Stella Kola*. \$ 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, MAY 10

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Rickie Lee Jones*. \$ 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15

Treehouse Brewing, Deerfield: *Andrew Bird, Amadou & Mariam*. \$ 8 p.m.



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BASEBALL from page B1

But you never wait for the week-ends to play. No one does. From early morning to as late in the day as you can see the ball you are on the field, in the batter's box, or waiting your turn at the plate. Only food, sleep, and Sunday church services stop you from swinging, catching, running, and throwing.

Enter Earle Lorden. He was considered a smart guy who knew more than a little about baseball when he was hired to coach the Turners Fall High School team, but his true genius was realizing the gift bestowed upon him by the parents of the kids who showed up to play. To say they were talented is an understatement. All Lorden had to do was put them in the right positions, turn them loose at game times, and watch his team of neighborhood all-stars propel themselves to the Massachusetts State Championship games in 1937, and again in 1940.

Both times they lost.

Those losses would have been an achievement to be proud of at any time, but they were even more so then. Here's why: there were no divisions in school sports based on the size of a school's population, or the number of people in a town. All the champions of all the high school baseball leagues were thrown into a lose-and-you're-out tournament, with the final game being played in Fenway Park. The home of the Boston Red Sox was a long way from Unity Park.

It still is.

Then came the 1942 team. Lorden could tell it was a good one, but it lacked power at the plate, and not many of his younger players could be counted on to make up in talent what they lacked in skills. They needed work on the game's fundamentals. Things like not being too eager at the plate, catching the ball with both hands so you can get it out of your glove faster, running the bases and knowing when to steal one, taking advantage of the little-used bunt, and placing the ball where the opposing players weren't standing.

Earle believed the kids could get more out of amassing singles and doubles than swinging for the fences – what in today's game is called "small ball." That small ball led to big wins. Nine of them, without a single defeat.

That may not seem like much to cheer about today, especially when



A photo from a contemporary newspaper, showing "... the unrestrained glee of the small, but voluble Turners Falls High delegation" in the eighth inning at Fenway Park after the Turners team tied up the score.

three of those victories were shut-outs against lowly Greenfield High, but the schedules of all the teams in the state had been cut short by war-related travel restrictions and rationings of food and gas.

None of that mattered. Turners Falls High School was unbeaten. The team also showed a lot of promise. They may have collectively batted only .230, but they stole 51 bases, and their two pitchers, Walter Kostanski and Arthur Burke, chalked up a combined 105 strikeouts.

The playoff wins did not come so readily. Amherst High's undefeated right-hander, Johnny Rogers, threw 12 strikeouts and held the Turners nine to three hits. But those three were one more than the Amherst nine could tally against Kostanski, and all the boys in blue needed to win. Final score: *Turners 1, Amherst 0.*

Walter Fiala of West Springfield High would go on to play twelve seasons in the Brooklyn Dodgers farm system, but he never made it to Fenway Park: *Turners 5, West Springfield 2.*

In the Western Massachusetts final, the Indians' bats came alive, and Kostanski pulled a Johnny Rogers with a 12-strikeout performance against a team that included the region's Most Valuable Player, Artie Young: *Turners 8, Classical 4.*

The Big Show at Fenway Park began with a crucial decision made days before. Coach Lorden reserved rooms for himself, his assistant George Richason, and his team of 15 players at the famous Lenox Hotel in Boston.

For both of his last two trips to the state final, the teams from

two hits in each of three innings at bat. But they also left 13 players on base, and that, as much as anything else, kept the game within reach.

Turners scored its first run in the top of the seventh to tie the game, but Arlington blasted Kostanski for three runs in the bottom of the inning before Burke came in to get the final out. Going into the eighth, All-Star pitcher Jack Cunha had given up only three harmless singles. The Monatomy Towners' three-run lead seemed insurmountable.

That's when Coach Lorden's investment to stay on the seventh floor of the Lenox Hotel began to pay off. With two outs and a runner on third, Turners infielder Ted Mucha hit an easy one-hopper back to the mound, but the ball took an unexpected bounce over Cunha's head. Two hits later, one by the never-say-die Kostanski, and the score was tied at 4.

Burke shut out Arlington in the bottom of the eighth, and then, with two outs in the top of the ninth, singled to left and stole second.

The stage was now set for the Welcome Wallop.

Catcher Harvey Welcome was probably the most dangerous hitter on the Turners side, but for most of this game he'd been Arlington's secret weapon – in his last four times at bat, he'd hit into three double plays.

But that was then; this was now. Welcome calmly jacked Cunha's 2-and-0 fastball off Fenway's center-field fence to knock in Burke for

the winning run.

Turners Falls High School was the Massachusetts State Champion of Baseball.

The first to learn of their team's historic win were the hometowners listening to the live play-by-play on WHAI radio. Next was the crowd that watched the inning-by-inning score being posted outside the *Greenfield Recorder Gazette* office near the Shea Theater.

By the time the victors arrived at Greenfield Station at two o'clock the following morning, close to 1,000 fans in 210 cars were waiting to turn on their lights and parade the players home as heroes.

Which they were.

And they still are. The team, with its lone surviving member George Bush, and its legendary Coach Earl Lorden will be inducted into the Western Massachusetts Baseball Hall of Fame on Thursday, March 7.

Bush is teacher emeritus from Turners Falls High School. Lorden went on from Turners Falls High School to coach baseball at the University of Massachusetts from 1948 to 1966. His 189 victories place him third on the university's all-time baseball wins list, and the home field is honored with his name.

The induction ceremony and banquet will be held at the Twin Hills Country Club in Longmeadow. Visit www.valleybluesox.com for more information.



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The 1942 Turners Falls High School team, grinning widely after winning the championship game against Arlington High.

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