

The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JULY 11, 2024

THE BIG PICTURE

‘It’s an Exciting Thing to Have a Bit of Uncertainty’



Steve Ellis (left), seen here on a visit this week to the Great Falls Discovery Center, reflects on seven and a half years at the helm of a very busy town government.

BY MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – After an seven-and-a-half-year stint as Montague’s town administrator, Steve Ellis has handed over the reins, and is taking a break. Readers may have caught the Hill resident, billed as “Steve Ellis of AfterGlo,” playing a set last week to the pre-fireworks crowd across teh river at Beacon Field.

I caught up with him this week for what we jokingly called an “exit interview,” and he seemed a little giddy at his newfound free time. Steve’s wife Dianne Ellis has also stepped down from her role as the pupil services director in the Gill-Montague schools. As readers will learn, Steve has no next job lined up just yet, and was in a prime mode for a long, reflective chat.

To jump right in:

MR: With these interviews I usually just sit down and talk with someone – generally it’s a longer conversation, and then an incredible challenge to chop it down and remix it. “Edited for clarity” is the thing that should allow reordering, so that the reader can follow into conversation in ways that it didn’t necessarily transpire.

SE: Right – a re-articulation of the story, in a sense, because stories can be organic and chaotic, and that’s not easy for a reader to understand.

MR: And with a town, you’re always coming in at the middle of the story.

SE: I think so. Because so much of the story, and the business, is ongoing as you enter, persists with different stories sort of closing and opening throughout your tenure.

And on the back end, as you depart office, there are many stories that have been there and remain, new ones that have just formulated and are moving forward...

That is it: you inherit a history, and you try to understand it, interpret it, and in making meaning also make progress, relative to that community story.

MR: Your predecessor had a clear enough kind of narrative arc. Frank did a lot, as we all know, but it’s also really easy to look at 1980, when he first showed up at town hall, and 2016 –

SE: It’s a huge arc. It’s a generation, it’s two generations. Things can transform in really substantial ways over that period of time.

MR: And it was also a story that people have more language for – that whole strategy of revival or revitalization, and reuse. Throwing everything at the wall to see what would stick.

It’s felt like a corner has been turned since then, in the period of time you’ve been running things at town hall – when the floodgates opened for grants from the federal and state levels, this town really seems to have been... “Well-positioned” is the term I keep hearing.

SE: I came out of a different organization. Working for the see **BIG PICTURE** page A2

Conservation Concern in Two Towns As New Farm Struggles to Hold Dirt

By WILL QUALE

MONTAGUE – “It’s not very often that we get a crowd,” chair Mark Fairbrother observed at a June 20 meeting of the Montague conservation commission. The town hall annex room was full, and more attendees joined the hybrid meeting via Zoom. On the agenda was a discussion of possible Wetlands Protection Act violations at Falls Farm.

After the commission’s official presentation describing the possible violations in detail, town planner Maureen Pollock noted to Fairbrother: “You’re not a public hearing, so it’s really to your discretion.”

“I think I would be remiss if I didn’t,” he replied, before allowing a period of public conversation between a dozen Montague and Sunderland residents – voicing concerns both wetlands-related and not – and the farm’s owner, Dr. James Arcoleo.

Falls Farm is situated on the town line between Montague and Sunderland, with roughly half of its 110 acres in each town. Until 2019, most of the land was a mix of dense white pine and hardwood forest. Arcoleo, a cardiologist, purchased six contiguous parcels in 2019 and 2020, with the goal of creating a new vegetable farm and orchard.

Visible change came rapid-



MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION PHOTO

Land clearing on the border-straddling farm appears to have sent silt into streams.

ly: trees were cleared, earth was moved, land was graded, sand was stockpiled, and a strip of apple trees was planted along Old Sunderland Road, the farm’s northern boundary.

Invisible from the road are two intermittent streams flowing from south to north, passing under Old Sunderland Road, across neighboring properties, and through culverts under Meadow Road to the Connecticut River. The farm’s southern boundary includes Whitmore Pond, from which flows the waterfall which gives the farm its name. Each of these wetlands has been affected

by the developments on the farm.

Montague and Sunderland’s coms have both conducted site visits with increasing frequency and concern since May, and during that time Falls Farm has appeared on the Sunderland commission’s agenda four times and Montague’s once. Each board has cited Falls Farm for several wetlands violations.

Arcoleo, guided by engineer Mike Pietras, says he has deployed several erosion and sediment control measures with substantial and increasing success: the areas with

see **FARM** page A6

ERVING SELECTBOARD

New U28 Super Inherits Crisis Over Public Communication

By KATIE NOLAN

On Monday night, recently-hired Union 28 superintendent Shannon White-Cleveland and the Erving selectboard discussed the Erving Elementary School administration’s handling of a student threat in April.

Though she had only been superintendent for five days, White-Cleveland said, “It’s on my watch now.”

At the start of April vacation, a student reported a threat from another student involving use of a parent’s firearm. An Erving police department investigation later determined that “there was no access to a firearm and in addition, there was no evidence of a firearm at the Elementary School.” However, the selectboard has criticized the response by school staff and then-superintendent Jennifer Culkeen, and their lack of communication with police and the community.

According to a May 8 statement from police chief Robert Holst, some school and Union 28 staff knew about the threat for a week before reporting it to the police department. According to the investigation, three to 10 families “allegedly did not send their children to school” on the first day after vacation, having heard of the gun threat

see **ERVING** page A9

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

New Public Works Boss Tapped; Trash Haulers Off to Good Start



MAGGIE SADOWAY PHOTO

Casella Waste Systems began curbside trash and recycling pickup this month.

By JEFF SINGLETON

Montague has secured a new superintendent for its public works department, or DPW: Sam Urkiel, who has served since March 2022 as the deputy director of public works in Greenfield. Urkiel was chosen for the job by the Montague selectboard at a brief meeting on July 1, and the board approved a formal contract when it met again on Monday.

At the July 1 meeting the DPW superintendent hiring committee, which had met earlier in the day, recommended Urkiel over one other finalist: Hannah Tustin, who has worked in a number of public and private agencies in Vermont and with this state’s Department of

Transportation on the reconstruction of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, a project completed in 2014.

Brandy Patch, DPW office administrator and a member of the hiring committee, told the Reporter that Urkiel was recommended over Tustin because he had greater experience in a department comparable to Montague’s, located right next door.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz noted that six of the 10 candidates who applied for the position were seen as eligible. “One day we did five interviews,” he said.

The contract negotiated with Urkiel officially begins on July 29. The tenure of the previous superintendent, Tom Bergeron, ended on

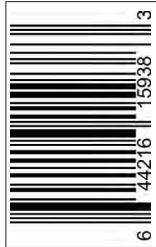
see **MONTAGUE** page A5

SUMMER SCHEDULE:
VOL. 22 #33: JULY 25
VOL. 22 #34: AUGUST 8
VOL. 22 #35: AUGUST 22

Yes, The Heat Is Cooking Your Poor Little Brain!

Illustration: Behind the Counter.....A2
Local Briefs.....A3
Ainsworth At Large: Pot Boils Over.....A4
Wendell Selectboard Notes.....A5
Our Monthly Science Page.....A8
Gill Selectboard Notes.....A9
Leverett Selectboard Notes.....A10
Valley View: Locating Hostage Site.....B1
Preview: Dementia Dance-Theater.....B1

Food Court Blooms Beside Skate Park.....B1
Along a Wendell Pond.....B2
Montague Police Log Highlights.....B3
True Love Will Rack Up a Roster.....B4
M/M/M: One Of Those LPs.....B5
10, 20, and 150 Years Ago This Week.....B6
A&E Calendar and Four Comics.....B7
The Sawmill Fifty Years Ago.....B8
The Montague Cryptojam.....B8



The Montague Reporter

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Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August 2002

Every-Other

Summer mode is much needed at the *Reporter*, but it's also tough – following the example set by local selectboards, since our first summer in 2003 we exist biweekly through July and August. The breaks are much needed, and we hope we're not too badly missed by our readers. But these on weeks – sheesh!

As soon as these pages are sent to the printer and uploaded to the website to be sent to digi-

tal subscribers, the next order of business will be a series of calls and emails to hopeful contributors apologizing that despite our going to an 18-page jumbo size, we just couldn't fit everything we wanted to, and they'll have to wait another two weeks to run.

If you're wanting newspaper services, we beg your patience and forbearance. It's hot out, and really, no one should be working at all!



Granger Smith-Massa, behind the counter at the Whistle Stop Café in Millers Falls. The café is a relaxing, homey, affordable spot to grab breakfast, lunch, or a snack – and you can pick up the *Montague Reporter* there, too. Smith-Massa also delivers this newspaper to subscribers in Millers, and contributes articles from time to time.

BIG PICTURE from page A1

UMass Donahue Institute, my business unit – which had a service mission broadly to do good – was wholly dependent on grants to survive. And when I came here, what became very apparent to me quickly is that we have a constrained tax base. We're not growing rapidly, on an industrial level or population level – certain utility assets' valuations have increased and that's been very important for us, but ultimately we needed a strong development strategy.

We had many pieces in place, because of great work from my predecessors and my contemporaries, to build broad but also fairly clear visions for moving forward. I saw that there was a platform for intensifying our development efforts, and I feel like in many ways we were able to achieve that.

I feel one of the most significant things I was able to accomplish was to build a political understanding that through capacity, we can build prosperity for the community. I used whatever political capital and what I felt was common sense to convey this to town government and the public.

Creating the assistant town administrator position was a real game-changer, in terms of building that capacity – the other side of development has to be execution, you have to be able to actually manage and implement all of these projects.

And so it was very clear to me as I walked in that the game had changed, that state and federal funds were flowing to the places that had the capacity to reach out strategically, with good technical skill, and grab those funds. And COVID absolutely accelerated that reality.

I was fortunate that I had partners in town government who had the shared commitment and belief that we needed to do whatever we could to bring resources, to realize opportunities, and to stave off challenges and problems.

And COVID began for me what was the most intense professional ride that I had ever been on.... It's one thing to be technically competent and to ask for things. It's another to be politically engaged, and to make sure that people had tremendous faith, that the needs that you were presenting were genuine and compelling, and that you had the wherewithal, the organization, and frankly the energy to take what they gave you and make something of it.

And I remember being so dismayed when we lost Stan [Rosenberg] and Steve [Kulik],

because they were stalwarts for this community. But I quickly found that Jo [Comerford] and Natalie [Blais] were unbelievably energized, and looked to Montague as one of those places where all those good things could happen – where there was a convergence of aspiration, vision, energy, and competence.

MR: *When you're talking about the political framing – how much of your job in Montague has been trying to find the business proposition and pitch it, and how much is about other values?*

SE: Everything has to start with what the needs are. In the case of a town administrator, you don't necessarily get to define the agenda wholly – the selectboard and other elements of the community build the agenda, and sometimes you have to highlight things to make sure people are aware of them.

But when you're talking to Housing and Economic Development, they literally want to know the business case: How many jobs? How much revenue? How much private sector investment?

State and federal funders have adopted a lot of those metrics as their criteria for who gets money, but hey're not the exclusive ones – we did not just achieve the success we did in securing the \$9.2 million [in grants for the demolition of the Strathmore paper mill] based on a business case.

MR: *It is a little bit of a business case*



Ellis (right) referred to the raccoon in this diorama as a "trash panda."

when you say "This might fall into the river."

SE: I suppose that's right, but doesn't that just get to the framing of it? For one person it's a business case, for another, it's an ecological case. For me, it's "what in the world will our community do, or be forced to do – economically and otherwise – if this falls into the river before we find money to keep that from happening?"

I guess there's probably a commingling of those principles. And you have to reach out and engage people and find which of those resonate for them. You've got to convince different people with different sensibilities, who respect different criteria as important, and bring it all together.

MR: *In the time I've been editing the paper it's been interesting to see certain themes come up over and over: People are constantly taking a step back and saying 'Okay, we need to figure out how to quantify, or at least represent, conservation as something more than just the absence of anyone having done something in a place.'*

What is the value to the state of providing clean surroundings for the Quabbin? What is the value of forested land – this ongoing and volatile debate over the exact ecological contribution of leaving trees up versus taking them down for a little while, and grappling with some of those trade-offs.

SE: And the trade-offs are really tricky, because so many of the things that enable to-

day's life required trade-offs that would probably be unacceptable today. The very shape and form of this community.

MR: *People died extending the canal!*

SE: Yeah!

MR: *Italians!*

SE: It's hard to know who's right, especially when science is involved – it's very easy to manipulate facts and truth by selectively choosing what you want to say about something.

Everybody's got an opinion, and the closer something is to where they live, the stronger that opinion is going to be – and the more powerful they become, if they are a person who is motivated to advocate.

MR: *How long have you lived in Turners?*

SE: Next November will be 30 years.

MR: *What landed you here?*

SE: I was a kid who got chased out of his rent-controlled apartment in Brookline when I was 14 years old, and wound up living in a dilapidated house by the river in Conway. It was a great move for me.

Dianne and I found each other in our college years – we had an apartment in Leyden Woods. When I was a senior in college I lived in Spain for a semester, and when we came back the junkies next door had kicked in our door and stolen all our stuff. It kind of set us on the road – bouncing. We were not homeless, but we didn't really know where we were going to land.

We wound up in a house on the highway, next to what's now Cielito Lindo. We had \$200 rent. That house put us through graduate school, and when got to the other side of graduate school we were on a hiking trip in the White Mountains and we both got call-backs for job opportunities. For me it was the Donahue Institute.

We didn't get our hiking in, so we said "Well, let's go across the bridge and walk in Turners Falls." Because we really didn't do that! We took a hike, and we found the Hill, and we took a turn around the corner and we saw this house with tall weeds and a For Sale sign in front of it.

We were just two poor kids who had never assumed we could own a home, you know? And that house had been sitting on the market

see **BIG PICTURE** page A7

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Make way for ducklings on Avenue A this Friday, July 12! Thanks to the Ripley Farm’s Duck World folks, there’ll be quackers and quacklings at the Carnegie Library between 3 and 4 p.m. as part of the Intro to Spanish lessons Jen Lambert is providing to children and caregivers under the big tent on the library’s front lawn.

Learn about ducks, and how to say “duck” in Spanish, too. A bilingual story stroll featuring the children’s book *Call Me Tree* by Maya Gonzales can be followed on the lawn. The rain date is Friday, July 26.

There’s a double **Gumball Machine Takeover** at Sadie’s Bikes this Friday, July 12 from 5 to 8 p.m. Shop owner Nik Perry was on vacation last week when Turners Falls held its First Fridays event, and says he is making up for it by featuring two artists for his 15th takeover: Nick Carroll, with “Chance Encounters,” and Sarah Reiter’s “Handmade Viewers.” Bring quarters!

Learn how to **make natural inks** from ingredients in your kitchen at the next Art Naturally event at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls this Saturday, July 13 at 10:30 a.m.

There’s no charge to attend the session, entitled “Painting with Inks from the Garden,” and it’s geared for kids over six years old with an adult as well as teens and adults. All art materials are provided; meet in the Great Hall.

The next volunteer day at **Great Falls Books Through Bars** is this Saturday, July 13 from 1 to 5 p.m. at 104 Fourth Street in Turners Falls. Volunteers respond to letters from incarcerated people and pack up

books to send them.

This month the group is looking for donations of paperback books in Spanish, and of solid-colored t-shirts and long-sleeve shirts for a future printing project. These can be dropped off during open hours at the space on Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Fridays from 3 to 6 p.m. Masks are required in the indoor space.

The Deja Brew Pub in Wendell has put together another **Reggae Fest** for this Saturday, July 13. The outdoor stage behind the pub will host three DJs and eight live acts from 2 p.m. to midnight. Enjoy Caribbean food, ice cream and baked treats, merchandise from local vendors, tarot readings, and kids’ activities, plus a bonfire. Bring chairs and blankets. Admission is \$20 at the door, but you can buy tickets at the Wendell Country Store up until 9 p.m. Friday night for \$15.

Singer-songwriters Claire Dacey and John-Michael Field will be the featured performers at the **Montague Common Hall Open Mic** this Saturday, July 13, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Dacey is an award-winning folk singer/songwriter and instrumentalist, and Field plays guitar and has been a prolific songwriter for 40 years.

Those who sign up for the open mic should be prepared with five to ten minutes of material to share. There is no cover charge, but donations are appreciated.

Check out an exhibit of photos from 2010 of the **empty Strathmore paper mill** and the **now-demolished Griswold cotton mill** – the former Railroad Salvage building on the Patch – at the Discovery Center during the month of July.

A reception will be held this Sunday, July 14 from 1 to 3 p.m.

for *Remnants*, by photographer Joe Wallace. At 1:30 p.m., the event will feature Wallace discussing photographing the mills and Montague town administrator Walter Ramsey talking about the past and future of those industrial sites.

Refreshments will be provided, and there is no charge to attend.

“Do it Now” is back at Peskeompskut Park in Turners Falls this Sunday, July 14 from 2 to 4 p.m. The announcement says that the trio – poet Paul Richmond, percussionist Tony Vacca, and guitarist John Sheldon – “create a funkadelic and free-flow concoction of cool Beat Poetry, soaring melodies and irresistible percussion. Equal parts magic carpet ride, mesmerizing sound-web and outspoken words.”

The performance is free, and coincides with an independent book fair at the park featuring regional publishers and authors as well. Bring a lawn chair or a blanket. The rain date is Sunday, July 21.

The annual **Point 5K fundraiser** for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Western Mass takes place next Thursday, July 18 from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Franklin County Fairgrounds in Greenfield. The event features a third-of-a-mile walk, or run, with dinner served along the way – a 546-yard dining experience featuring food and drink from local businesses including Buckland Pizza, the Food Booth, Ciesluk Farmstand, and the Brewery at Four Star Farms.

This year there is a rodeo theme, and participants are encouraged to dress to match. Local youth and artist DJ Lazer Chicken will also bring his musical talents. For tickets and more information, visit *bigbrothers-sisters.org*. All proceeds support the organization’s youth mentoring programs.

The free **Movie in the Park** at Peskeompskut Park next Friday, July 19 will be *Labyrinth* (1986). Jim Henson directed the movie, and many of the strange characters in it are puppets created by his Creature Shop. David Bowie plays the Goblin King, and Jennifer Connolly plays 16-year-old Sarah, who must rescue her baby half-brother by wandering through a twisted maze of deception.

The movie will start at 7:45 p.m. Hot dogs and drinks will be available by cash donation in support of the Turners Falls Thunder Music Boosters.

Betty Tegel, a local resident and champion for folks with disabilities, will provide **information about disability laws** and various opportunities available for those attending her program on Saturday, July 20 from 1 to 2 p.m. at Greenfield Savings Bank in Turners Falls. Ms. Tegel brings years of advocacy on the local and state levels, and a passion to bring needed change through grant-funded programs. Her audience can expect to be provided with tools to pursue and address their personal needs.

Reservations are required, and can be made either in person at the Turners Falls branch or by calling (888) 324-3191; the deadline for reservations is Friday, July 19 at 5 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided.

Turners Falls residents Anne Harding and Michaela Henry have been asking the question: *What’s being made in Montague today?* They have gathered answers for the past

few months, and are ready to make a presentation at the Discovery Center on Saturday, July 20 at 2 p.m.

Some companies in town have a long local history, and some are on the cutting edge of technology. Businesses include food, farms, beverages, factories, music, movies, electricity, arts, photography, fabric, and fashion. Meet in the Great Hall and find out about the wide variety of products made in Montague.

Like all programs at the Discovery Center, this is a free event.

Join the Millers Falls Community Improvement Association for a **Millers Falls Pub Crawl** on Saturday, July 20 at 7 p.m. “Gather with friends, make new friends, support our village improvement association, and drink local!” reads the announcement. T-shirts will be available. Find the group on Facebook for more information.

Everyone is invited to the Carnegie Library on Tuesday, July 23 from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. to ogle and learn from Tom Ricardi’s **Birds of Prey**. Ricardi will share information about certain species with a live, hands-on demonstration with the birds and take questions. All ages are sure to enjoy this close encounter with big birds usually seen from afar.

Wendell Historical Society board members Pam Richardson, Edward Hines, and Joseph Coll will present the **history of the Athol-Orange Power Plant** on Tuesday, July 23 at 6:30 p.m. at the Wendell Free Library.

The plant was a major construction project in 1909 and 1910, and supplied electricity to communities along the Millers River for nearly 30 years until the hurricane and flooding of 1938. Its destruction nearly destroyed Wendell. Seating is limited, so email *info@wendellhistorical-society.org* to reserve a spot.

The Brick House, at 24 Third Street in Turners Falls, is hosting two workshop events of interest.

The first is an **internet safety session for parents and caregivers** to learn how to protect their kids (of all ages) on the internet. Brendan from Everything Computers will present this workshop on Thursday, July 25 from 10 a.m. to noon; there will be free childcare and refreshments.

The Brick House is also starting a **monthly craft session for families at the Millers Falls branch library** on the fourth Thursday of each month from 4 to 5 p.m. This month’s session on July 25 will feature Janel Nockleby from the Discovery Center showing how to make “paper quilts” with a local waterways theme.

Register for either event by Tuesday, July 23 by contacting Stacey at *slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org* or (413) 800-2496.

The Leverett Library is holding a **summer giveaway with local prizes**. Enter online or in person for a chance to win gift certificates for restaurants, stores, and museums, a kids’ camping hammock, kids’ wearable butterfly wings, and a Root Viewer science kit.

The giveaways are open to everyone to enter by August 15, and winners will be chosen on August 20. Enter online at *tinyurl.com/lev-giveaway*, or stop by the library.

Send your local briefs to *editor@montaguereporter.org*.

Memorial Hall Theater

POTHOLE PICTURES

July 12 & 13 at 7:30 p.m.

FESTIVAL EXPRESS

This 2003 documentary follows the 1970 train tour across Canada by the Grateful Dead, The Band, Janis Joplin, Buddy Guy, and others.

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Week of July 22

in Montague



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MOVIE NIGHT

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SEAN BAKER

SHORTS BY

YOKO ONO & TEJAL SHAH

FRI. JUNE 28 • 7PM

POETRY

Emily Hunt

STRANGER

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AT LARGE

Northfield Has Itself a Tea Party

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – Selectboard meetings are sparsely attended, hours-long affairs only a bureaucrat would love, but the June 25 session put the town’s dysfunctional governance on full display.

The two-act drama started when selectboard chair Bernie Boudreau asked for citizens’ comments. Several hands went up, and Brian Bordner strode forward and introduced himself as a lifelong resident, local manufacturer, and founder of the Northfield Taxpayers Protection Association (tax01360.org).

“I am here tonight to present a letter of request to the selectboard that was signed by over 150 residents,” he said. “We are asking it not to renew the town administrator’s contract.”

Pulling a sheaf of papers from his leather pouch, Bordner added, “One-hundred fifty signatures, [compared to] only 109 people at this year’s town meeting, is significant.”

Barbara Brassor was Northfield’s town clerk, tax collector, and treasurer for almost four decades, and her lead-off signature was large enough for the queen to read without her spectacles. Sewer commissioner Karen Boudreau added her John Hancock, as did a substantial cross-section of businesspeople, farmers, and firefighters.

“My work is done here,” said Bordner, leaving the stuffy second-floor room.

Grassroots initiatives to bounce a town manager aren’t uncommon. Somerset residents sought to remove theirs for “irresponsible spending and poor judgment selling town property,” and Falmouth and Pittsfield residents petitioned to oust their respective TAs over similar money issues.

Several Northfield residents defended Llamas, including Susan Wright, who read a prepared statement. “I served on the town administrator search committee when Ms. Llamas was hired in the Fall of 2018,” said Wright. “She was far and away the most qualified person we interviewed.”

Max Marcus reported in the *Greenfield Recorder* that only three candidates were interviewed, culled from an applicant list by an eastern Mass. headhunting agency: “The process was closed to the public and Selectboard until [those] final three were chosen.”

Dan Campbell and Tammy Pelletier were the only employees who defended their boss. Wright’s husband Bernie Parada said he was “appalled” anyone wanted to remove Llamas, and Sylvia Cummings wrote on BNCTV’s online chat sidebar that anyone who didn’t like Llamas should consider leaving town.

Reasons Outlined

The case against Llamas was prosecuted by her two longtime nemeses, Joe Graveline and Virginia “Jinx” Hastings.

“We have a roll of paper up in the map room with a rubber band around it that cost us a million dollars,” said Graveline, referring to design plans for a \$13.5 million emergency services facility that was voted down last year at a spe-

cial town meeting. “The piece of property near the library that was purchased to facilitate that ESF – what did we pay for it, \$178,000 or something like that?”

Actually, it cost \$170,000 for 150 yards of frontage and 23 acres of overgrown trails, a broken dam, and a collapsed walking bridge. Llamas bought the land five months before the special town meeting from Ed Snow, who had bought it from Northfield Mount Hermon in 2014 as part of the Northfield Golf Course purchase for \$450,000.

Llamas said the property had been appraised by Crowley & Associates of Wilbraham, but the Northfield assessors’ office currently lists its value at \$100,200.

“People ask me how that happened, and I say I have no answers,” said Graveline. “But I have no confidence as well, and I’m encouraging you not to renew the town administrator’s contract.”

The board’s options were to let Llamas’s contract roll over for another three years, vote not to renew and bid her *adieu*, or, per Hastings’s recommendation, “not renew, and review.”

Issues to be reviewed could include comp time, for instance, or remote work. The contract stipulates she can take comp time provided she notifies the selectboard chair. “Never did,” texted former chair Alex Meisner. “We don’t have a comp time policy for anyone in town.”

Llamas’s contract won’t expire until July 1, 2025, but the board needed to make its decision a year in advance, and a reliable source said the board took Jinx’s advice.

Roberts Criticizes EDAC

Heath Cummings arrived in time to join his colleagues Bee Jacque, Sarah Kerns, David McCarthy, and Boudreau to hear an update from the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC).

Kerns chairs the seven-member committee, which includes Jinx Hastings as well as Steve Stoia, who owns the Centennial House Bed and Breakfast with his wife Joan. In February the Stoias hosted two guests from the Springfield-based WestMass Area Development Corporation who said they had been hired by the town to work on economic development.

What Roberts thought would be a quick and easy get-together became a learning lesson in small-town politics.

The feasibility study – and likely the B&B stay – is being funded by a \$40,000 grant, according to the town website’s grant dashboard, procured in November by former grantwriter Mallory Sullivan.

Stoia was stunned. “Think about that for a minute,” he said. “We’re working as an economic development committee, and we find out this consultant’s in the area – and let me be clear, he had never heard of us either. We came back to the committee and we talked about it

The Conflict Inside Town Hall

Another recent kerfuffle involving town administrator Andrea Llamas happened on June 12 during a planning board Zoom meeting.

The controversial Idyllwood campground on Pierson Road has been a four-year slugfest between the property owner D.L. Moody, its architect/developer Christian Arnold, and the neighborhood it is disrupting.

At that planning board meeting, Llamas accused the board of health of slow-walking the permit processes that come under its auspices.

The BOH responded with a three-page letter to the planning board that reads, in part: “Town

and we were unhappy that they never knew we existed.”

At this point in the narrative I must inform you that unless in quotes, the information that I’ve garnered from people for this article was either off the record or in conflict. Jane Doe, for instance, says she never spoke with John Doe, who says he couldn’t get her off the phone.

Therefore I’m merely theorizing that somebody at Town Hall didn’t want the EDAC to know they were using WestMass as a lynchpin for developing a cluster of old NMH maintenance buildings near Thomas Aquinas College (TAC) into a business park. Llamas has always had her sights on Moody-owned property for its tax potential, regardless of the impact it would have on the abutters.

The EDAC waited to play its hand, and the moment came at a “listening session” hosted by Sean O’Donnell of WestMass and Leslie Roberts, the new grant development director. Roberts is a conscientious 20-something with a bachelor’s degree in public health and a master’s in public administration – both from UMass – who has worked for social-service agencies such as Tapestry and Safe Passage. She is on a two-year contract funded by ARPA money and makes \$75,000 a year.

As the EDAC was wrapping up its report, Boudreau said, “At this time, Leslie asked to speak.”

“I want to take a few moments to speak about my experience with the economic development advisory committee,” she read from a prepared statement.

Roberts said she had met with the EDAC on March 23, five days after she was hired, and invited them to the feasibility listening session.

What she thought would be a quick and easy get-together became a learning lesson in small-town politics. “There were nine town residents in the audience,” she said, “as well as the director of planning for the Franklin Regional Council of Government (FRCOG).”

She said she was grilled by neighbors and people from the college who spoke against the proposed development. “You’re barking up the wrong tree,” a TAC rep told her.

“At the conclusion of my presentation, Sarah and Steve accused me of excluding their committee from the business park project,”

she said. “I was surprised and frustrated, and felt I had been set up to be reprimanded in front of the town residents.”

She began to weep, and Llamas said, “Leslie has come to me multiple times and I have told her she absolutely should not attend those meetings if she is going to be treated in such a way.”

Boudreau Pops Cork

The puff of white smoke coming from town hall was Bernie Boudreau’s temper.

“Now I’m going to speak,” he said. “I was shared a longer letter that Leslie sent to the town administrator. I found it really disturbing, and frankly, I was pissed when I read it. I called the WestMass consultants and they didn’t have kind words to say about the behavior of the [EDAC] – they felt you were trying to shoot down their work.”

“I support Leslie 100%,” he added. “I don’t want this happening again with any employee. I was very disturbed – I was freakin’ pissed. Karen even said I was more pissed than she is.”

“That’s saying something,” Jacque chuckled, referring to Boudreau’s loquacious spouse.

“Yeah, I take this personal,” said Boudreau.

Jacque injected some D.C. verbiage into the dialogue: “I feel it’s unfortunate the committee’s been weaponized by two people.”

Whatever sanctions the selectboard imposes on the EDAC will be determined at its next meeting on July 16.

The Instigator?

The whole mess seems to have been scripted from an episode of *Parks and Recreation*.


Roberts did not have a clue what was happening, or why. She was manipulated by her supervisor, who wanted to get back at the EDAC for undermining her effort to develop the barns on Winchester Road.

The smart and professional thing to do would have been to pull all parties aside and work it out behind closed doors. She did not, and her failure to mediate what was fundamentally a personnel problem is yet another blemish against her name.

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

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MONTAGUE from page A1

June 27, so the department is being managed for a month by Patch and foreman Will Stratford.

“We’ve been doing fine,” Patch told the *Reporter*.

Urkiel told us that the gap was due in part to his need to give the city of Greenfield 21 days’ notice before leaving. “I’m excited to start working in Montague on the 29th,” he said, “excited to meet new faces, and take over some of those projects.”

Plant Still Smells

Though Montague’s selectboard tends to meet biweekly in July and August, the primary reason for its brief extra meeting on July 1 was a deadline to approve a new host community agreement (HCA) with the cannabis firm Flower Power Growers. The agreement eliminated previous “impact fees,” no longer allowed under recent legislation.

The new HCA with Flower Power, which operates a large grow facility in the airport industrial park, generally follows the model developed for the town’s other cannabis firm, 253 Pharmacy, which is sited at the park’s entrance, but includes more extensive requirements concerning odors emanating from its operation.

These provisions followed complaints from several neighbors about frequent strong cannabis smells – particularly the Ja’Duke Center for the Performing Arts, which operates a preschool in the industrial park and which reported that at one point in March the odor prevented outdoor recess for young children.

Though the new HCA was approved on July 1, these complaints were raised again by Ja’Duke co-owner Nick Waynelovich at the July 8 meeting during a “follow-up discussion of cannabis odor complaints.” Waynelovich said he believed the special permit allowing the construction of the Flower Power facility had been based on a promise at a November 2020 hearing that no odor would emanate from the farm.

“What is the process for the town to enforce the special permit?” he asked.

Town administrator Walter Ramsey said he would discuss the question with town planner Maureen Pollock, who provides support to the planning board, but that his “recollection” was that the special permit was to be enforced by the town board of health and the state Cannabis Control Commission (CCC).

Ramsey suggested that Montague consider requiring an independent investigation, as allowed in the HCA, to evaluate the smell. Flower Power co-owner John Stobierski asked that the town wait until the company had completed its own internal investigation.

When Kuklewicz suggested putting a “progress report” on the agenda for the board’s next meeting, Stobierski said his company’s evaluation would probably not be completed by then.

The board appeared to informally agree to add the issue to its July 22 agenda, and Kuklewicz asked Ramsey to provide a copy of the special permit. Kuklewicz said he wanted to “remain optimistic” that Flower Power would address the odor complaints soon, but “I don’t know what that time frame is... At some point we might come to ‘Enough is enough.’”

A *Montague Reporter* review of the planning board’s detailed minutes of its November 24, 2020 hearing did not find confirmation that Flower Power’s representatives claimed that there would be “no odor” emanating from the plant. Owner Josh Goldman was paraphrased as indicating that the building’s odor control system “is certified as 98.7% effective in neutralizing odors in an independent test.”

The special permit issued by the planning board on that date also does not appear to require a complete absence of cannabis odor, but rather states that “[n]o odor may be noxious or cause a nuisance,” and that a “written violation issued by the Montague Board of Health or the Cannabis Control Commission shall constitute a violation of this special permit.”

Drawing a BEAD

Monday’s meeting featured a presentation by Ted Harvey, a senior planner at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, on a public survey called the “BEAD Challenge,” which stands for “Broadband Equity Access and Development.”

Harvey said \$147 million in federal money will be made available to aid Massachusetts neighborhoods where residents are either “unserved” or “underserved” by internet access, as measured by download speed.

Showing a local map with orange and red dots, where internet service is assumed to be poor, and green dots where it is assumed to be “adequate,” Harvey said that until

July 20, residents of locations with green dots can “challenge” that assumption by logging onto an online portal to measure their download speeds. Montague’s map was filled mostly with green dots.

Kuklewicz said he had taken the challenge. “It’s relatively easy to figure out,” he said.

Harvey mentioned one “little caveat”: where a broadband provider offers adequate service but a resident cannot afford it, the provider has met the “challenge.”

“This particular process doesn’t really have anything to do with affordability,” he said. “The affordability piece will come later.”

The Power Brokers

At the request of parks and recreation director Jon Dobosz, the board approved a \$265,150 contract with Mountain View Landscapes and Lawn care for rebuilding the Montague Center Park playground. The work is being funded by a state grant and a town meeting appropriation.

Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, which oversees Montague projects funded by federal Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), requested a first payment to Clayton Davenport Trucking for rebuilding the “community playground” at Hillcrest Elementary School. The board approved the \$51,850 request.

McHugh then requested two change orders for work on the Hillcrest project. The first was a “no-cost” change, resulting from the elimination from Davenport’s original bid of the cost of installing the playground equipment. These funds were reallocated to pavement repair.

The second, an increase of \$16,455, covered the installation of a new catch basin/dry well within the playground. McHugh explained that water drains from the playground’s existing catch basin to another basin on Griswold Street which is currently blocked, a problem that cannot be addressed using CDBG funds.

The board approved both change orders.

McHugh also requested greater authority to approve time-sensitive change orders and invoices, particularly during the selectboard’s summer schedule. Without taking a formal vote, the board agreed to grant him this power, as long as he consults with Ramsey first and later returns for a formal vote.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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, July 18, 2024 to review the Request for Determination of Applicability RDA #2024-03, filed by Samuel Stafford, to determine whether the proposed septic system and associated site improvements at West Chestnut Hill Road (Parcel #52-0-130) are subject to the Wetlands Protection Act.

A hybrid meeting will be held at the Town of Montague Annex, 1 Avenue A in Turners Falls, MA. Remote meeting login information and the filing are available for review at www.montague-ma.gov/calendar.



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Other Business

Ramsey reported back on the first week of service by Casella Waste Systems, the town’s new trash and recycling hauler. “In this case, no news is good news,” he said, noting few complaints of missed pickups. He added that one resident whose house had been missed “reached out to Casella, got immediate feedback,” and the truck, still in the neighborhood, was notified and turned around for the pickup.

Kuklewicz said he had contacted Casella using the company’s app. “It was pretty generic,” he said, “but I did get a response saying ‘If there is anything you need, let us know.’”

Wearing its personnel-board hat, the board approved a number of requests in addition to hiring the new public works superintendent.

At the Clean Water Facility (CWF), the board changed the status of Adam Kleeberg from lead opera-

tor to the lower grade of wastewater technician and promoted Samuel Stevens to Kleeberg’s former role. CWF superintendent Chelsey Little said that Kleeberg had asked for a less “stressful” position for personal reasons, and Stevens was “perfect” for the operator job, having just been awarded a license. The board appointed Andrew Skiff to fill a “laborer/operator” position at the facility.

At the request of town clerk Kathern “Beanie” Pierce, the board appointed Abigail Moore as an extra staff member during elections, “as determined by the election schedule.”

An eight-week unpaid parental leave from the library department was approved for Stephen Orloske, as was a \$5.77 weekly cellphone stipend for newly-hired assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller.

The selectboard’s next scheduled meeting will be held July 22.



NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Non-Profit’s Use of Public Hall Raises Favoritism Flags

By **JOSH HEINEMANN**

The Wendell selectboard met in a hybrid formation July 3, with member Gillian Budine under the weather and remote. Treasurer Carolyn Manley often connects to selectboard meetings from her office just down the hall, where she has reference records and a computer.

Town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad brought up a policy issue with use of the town hall. He said Good Neighbors, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, takes over the building every Sunday and stores supplies there through the week. He acknowledged that while Good Neighbors provides significant benefit for Wendell and New Salem residents, there might be a problem with how they occupy the space under Massachusetts procurement law.

Good Neighbors originally had other distribution sites that were harder to use: outside the highway garage or senior center, with refrigerators and freezers in the library basement. The town hall was their first secure home, and getting settled in there allowed them to buy more efficient refrigerators and freezers and keep supplies and records in one place. With grant money they also bought a refrigerated van, which is temporarily parked next to the town hall front door.

No one at the meeting remembered the process that had allowed Good Neighbors to store materials and equipment in the town hall, or have exclusive use of it every Sunday. By rights, any 501(c)3 organization may apply to use the building, and there is no policy in place.

Responding to a question from

selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato, Johnson-Mussad said the organization may not be grandfathered into the arrangement. “No one is challenging them now,” said selectboard member Paul Doud.

Budine asked what would happen if Good Neighbors got incompetent managers. She pointed out the situation had parallels to the deposit container collection at WRATS, where a series of volunteer organizations came and went, but eventually sorting those containers and driving to exchange them for money was done by a WRATS employee, who split the revenue with Good Neighbors.

Johnson-Mussad said the town needed to have policy in place that would allow another organization to use the space, and said he would check with town counsel.

Manley said she agreed completely, and that the town would not want to show impropriety or favoritism.

DiDonato said she would be willing to be part of a policy subcommittee, meeting a half hour before the first selectboard meeting of each month. Budine said she could participate, which would make a selectboard quorum on the committee, and the need to post its agenda two days ahead as a public meeting.

She said the town’s building use policy should be tightened, and that coffeehouse committee members should be made aware of any changes that may involve the Full Moon Coffeehouse.

Other Business

Budine reported that town clerk Anna Wetherby had digitized most of the town bylaws. When she fin-

ishes, the bylaws will be made available on the town website.

Johnson-Mussad recommended that Wendell drop Highland Press of Athol as publishers of the bound copies of the town report. The 2021 and 2022 issues are still waiting for printing. He said open space committee chair, Dan Leahy suggested using Collective Copies in Amherst.

The electrician who came to improve the office building’s ethernet connections is working on an estimate for the parking lot lights, Johnson-Mussad reported. He would install LEDs, which requires a device, and he said the exit signs need attention.

DiDonato said she had attended an economic development group formed to address Wendell’s need for a larger tax base. The group plans to stay informal, still brainstorming.

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FARM from page A1

observed erosion issues are “90% secure,” he told the *Reporter* this week.

But the last 10% of any problem is the hardest part, and as anyone with a basement in Montague knows, water will find the gaps.

Lines on the Map

Each town’s con com has investigated its own specific concerns, but there are physical, geographic, and jurisdictional limits to each commission’s ability to address its concerns.

First, water doesn’t observe political boundaries, so the town line running through the farm is a substantial complication. “All we deal with is Montague – all we *can* deal with is Montague!” Fairbrother exclaimed at the June 20 meeting, after other commission members observed with frustration that one of the intermittent streams of interest starts in Sunderland.

There’s also a question of where, exactly, the town line *is*: it’s crystal clear on a map, but from the middle of a 100-acre farm on which the earth has been cleared and recontoured since the most recent aerial imagery, it’s only as clear as a sediment-filled stream.

Then there’s the problem of figuring out where the wetlands are. With a simple click, inventoried wetlands appear as a layer on the state’s GIS maps, but Pollock noted that prior to the June 20 meeting the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) had warned her that “only 20% of wetlands in Massachusetts are recorded on these sort of mapping tools.”

Many “intermittent” or “ephemeral” streams – where water may or may not flow depending on the weather, or on the season – might be shown only in part, or not at all, and in any case the course of rivers and streams changes over time. To properly delineate the land a wetlands scientist must visit, plant flags in the ground, and update the digital maps.

Finally, the authority of local conservation commissions is strictly limited to land within a certain distance of a wetland. From an intermittent stream, that distance is normally 100 feet, though on agricultural land the buffer zone is halved to 50 feet.

Tree clearing, excavation, and other activities within that zone are regulated by conservation commissions, but activities further away are not – even if they wind up causing problems to wetlands. A con com may therefore observe that sediment filling a wetland is originating from a recently clearcut hillside just outside the buffer zone, but can only require measures to keep the sediment out of that zone.

Tree cutting further from wetlands may fall under the jurisdiction of other regulatory bodies, and in some cases may be unregulated.

Running Downhill

“We were thrilled with the idea that a farm would be here,” one Falls Farm neighbor, who asked not to be named, told the *Reporter*. “We don’t have a problem with a farm, and it’s better than 30 houses – or five McMansions.”

But for several years, neighbors say they have endured the noise, smell, and sometimes earthquake-like vibrations of giant machinery on Falls Farm: not simply farm equipment like tractors and balers, but tree-clearing machines, an excavator, a bulldozer, large dump trucks, and an old asphalt roller-compactor used to pack down resculpted earth. One compared Falls Farm to a giant sandbox of Tonka trucks.

Much of that activity has been to regrade one enormous field on the Montague side of the line and install an irrigation system – in order, according to Arcoleo, to plant 6,000 apple trees there in 2025. After an earlier round of planting apple trees ended with most of the trees dying due to poor soil, he said, it became clear that for an orchard to succeed at Falls Farm, the land had to change.

But the giant piles of sandy soil created by leveling the field sit uphill from one of the intermittent streams, and heavy rains appear to wash sand into that stream, which in turn carries it into one of the culverts under Meadow Road. The farm installed erosion barriers, but unexpected weak spots and gaps have revealed themselves during increasingly frequent inch-per-hour rain bursts.

Meanwhile, behind a vegetable field in Sunderland, land has been cleared for a 25,000-square-foot barn in a tight space between the other intermittent stream and the Whitmore Pond wetlands. That intermittent stream, Sunderland conservation commission chair Jennifer Unkles says, is receiving sediment from both the barn site and a nearby irrigation installation. The stream flows to the second culvert under Meadow Road.

The two culverts become clogged as they fill with silt, and after heavy rains it has been ending up on top of Meadow Road instead of under it. When this happens, the Montague public works department (DPW) has to clean the sandy, muddy road and unclog the silt-filled culverts, which neighbors have observed several times.

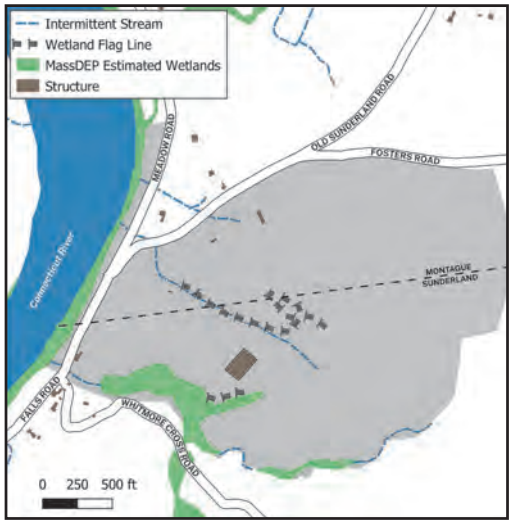
It’s a big job: “They were there for eight hours one Sunday,” a third neighbor reported.

Town planner Maureen Pollock told the *Reporter* she is compiling data from the DPW to determine the number of events, specific dates, and hours spent on work that can be attributed to sediment coming from Falls Farm.

At its June 20 meeting, Montague’s con com identified four potential violations within wetlands zones: unpermitted earthmoving and sand stockpiling; “substantial erosion” due to those activities; unpermitted tree clearing; and an unpermitted well and irrigation lines.

After a presentation by Pollock and Fairbrother and a response from Arcoleo, and before the floor was opened for public comment, the commission directed Arcoleo to have a wetlands expert re-delineate his Montague parcels. With that map in hand, the con com can then consider what sort of mitigation plan, restoration plan, or other measures might be appropriate.

Both the re-delineation of the Montague section of the farm and Pollock’s analysis of the DPW’s resources may be discussed at the Montague con com’s next meeting.



Vessels and Roots

Arcoleo’s decades of experience as a cardiologist unexpectedly prepared him for his new adventures in erosion control. Water busting through a silt fence and creating a new, undesired, channel carrying sediment in the wrong direction, he told the *Reporter*, is “very similar” to blood breaking through an aortic dissection, passing through a tear in the blood vessel’s inner lining and creating a new “false lumen” pathway between its inner and outer walls.

“The way to treat an aortic dissection,” he said, “is you have to find the entrance of the dissection and secure it, so blood can’t go through the crack between the walls.”

In both cases, in other words, fix the problem at the top of the hill, not the bottom: “It’s basic fluid dynamics. It holds true everywhere.”

That said, trading stents and sutures for straw wattles and silt fences has presented a learning curve.

Deployed well, a straw wattle can be an effective speed bump for water flowing down a hill. Essentially a long tube sock filled with straw that sits in a shallow trench running level across a slope, and often held in place with stakes, a wattle lets water percolate through as it flows, slowing it enough that the silt settles out. A series of evenly-spaced wattles can keep a sheet of water from building up enough speed to cause damaging erosion.

A silt fence, by contrast, is an impermeable



During a site visit last month, Montague con com members tried to determine what was moving where.

barrier, typically a 30-inch wall of black plastic tarp that stops both water and sediment.

Each has its uses, and in many situations the solution involves a combination of the two. Each can also be misused, potentially redirecting water like a gutter and letting it carve a new channel or flow along it until it finds a loose end. And over time, without maintenance and repairs, each will fail. (Again, see water-logged Montague basements.)

In the longer run, the most sustainable solution – which takes the most time – is to let strong vegetation take root.

When a project will take place in the vicinity of wetlands, step number one is for the owner to contact the town’s conservation commission and ask whether the project is close enough to the wetlands that they need to supervise it. If it is, a hearing must be held, after which the con com may approve the project provided certain conditions are met, which may include putting up erosion control measures – as well as maintaining them.

“It’s not a ceremonial homage to the conservation gods – ‘Just feed them once and they’re good!’” said one local construction contractor, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Mitigate and Restore

Perfecting erosion control can be a slow, iterative process with frustrating plateaus at 90% or even 95% efficacy, and while engineers are skilled problem solvers, some experts have specific training and years of experience in erosion and sediment control. At its most recent meeting on July 2, the Sunderland conservation commission strongly requested that Dr. Arcoleo hire one.

Sunderland’s con com had already issued two enforcement orders against Arcoleo, one on May 9 and the second on May 25. The first was related to the building site for the 25,000-square-foot barn, which is now mid-construction with a poured concrete foundation and a steel-beam frame; the order demanded the stabilization of the site’s “upland” area as well as a restoration plan “to deal with the impacts done to the wetland with all the sediments.”

The second order, pertaining to erosion caused by the removal of trees and installation of an irrigation system within 50 feet of the intermittent stream, requires the farm to stabilize the land and produce a mitigation plan “to address the loss of wetland resources and remove sediment in the stream.”

The orders had deadlines in June and early July, respectively.

On July 2, Arcoleo and his farm manager Diane McClellan told the commission that Pietras, the farm’s engineer, was still working on the two plans for Sunderland “in conjunction with the work that’s required by the Montague conservation commission,” which had caused the delay.

Both orders had specified that the plans must be written by environmental consultants recognized as qualified by the commission. “I totally appreciate all the full attention you’ve

been giving for at least two months to the erosion issue,” Unkles observed, “and yet, sand is still getting through.... Does Mike have this erosion control specialty?”

“He does,” Arcoleo replied, but after further discussion the con com came to understand that Pietras’s many professional qualifications were all in the fields of structural engineering and land surveying, rather than erosion control or wetlands.

“You need a specialist with real background in wetlands,” clerk Nancy Pick emphasized. “We’re otherwise flying by the seat of our pants.”

Ellie Kurth, who recently joined the commission, agreed. “I have a master’s in hydrology and work in environmental consulting,” she said, “and I looked at your property, and it’s complicated. The certification you need is a CPESC – Certified Professional of Erosion and Sediment Control.”

Cover Crops

Reached for comment on Tuesday, Arcoleo said that he had not yet retained a CPESC, but that he plans to do so. He added that over the weekend he and Pietras had improved the farm’s layout of wattles in a way that he was confident would prevent washouts going forward.

Arcoleo also told the *Reporter* he had started on a plan to plant sorghum-sudangrass as a cover crop on the Montague fields slated to become the orchard. The specialized grass, which looks like corn, germinates within five days in the heat of summer, preventing its seeds from washing away in rainstorms, and quickly grows big stalks and wide leaves, ultimately creating “six to eight tons per acre of biomass.” This would be mowed in autumn, he said, and replaced with another cover crop for winter, and then with the 6,000 apple trees next spring.

“We want to make sure that we get this right, and more importantly, that you get this right moving forward,” Pollock told Arcoleo at the Montague meeting. “We’ve received so many calls from both communities, and we want to make sure that you figure out your overall plan, and that you do it respectfully for the environment and the neighborhood.”

Twelve days later, neighbor Gary Briere expressed his frustration to the Sunderland con com, echoing several comments residents had made in Montague and urging the commissioners to be “as forceful as you can” in enforcing their orders.

“There’s no plan,” Briere said. “It’s that story with this entire project – it’s ‘Let’s try this, let’s try this, let’s do that.’ And we get the same assurances each time: ‘This is going to work. It’s 90% up to snuff.’ Well, it’s not working.”

Montague’s next conservation commission meeting will be held Thursday, July 18 at 6:30 p.m. in the town hall annex, and the next meeting of the Sunderland con com is Thursday, July 25 at 6:30 p.m. at the Sunderland town offices.

(Watch out for turtles.)

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BIG PICTURE from page A2

for two and a half years. It was 1994.

That house, and this community, always gave us everything that we needed. We raised both of our kids here – we really never envisioned another place. What appealed to us was that it wasn’t an ostentatious community. It felt vibrant, but it hadn’t grown into itself.

Now Liam is 27 and Chloe is 24 – Chloe is an educator at the National Space Foundation museum, and Liam was an engineer at General Dynamics in Pittsfield. Turners Falls High School products, and happy people, thankfully.

MR: *In your job at the Donahue, were you consulting with public sector organizations all the way through?*

SE: I joined the Donahue Institute as a graduate student intern – I was the guy that would drive into the office in Boston on a Monday morning in a snowstorm, and I made an impression on some people actually worked for the Director of Government Relations there, a former state legislator from Chicopee. And so I was introduced to the world of Beacon Hill.

I was introduced to public sector service in the context of the university, and when I finished my graduate work they hired me on as a professional staff member. I kind oworked my way up within what was then the research and evaluation unit, and later became the applied research and program evaluation unit. And, ultimately, to the top of that organization, as its business unit leader.

MR: *What have you learned, in your time on this job, about how the state sees this area that you don’t think people realize?*

SE: I gotta be honest with you. I think they look at Montague, and Turners Falls, very, very favorably.

The challenge for small communities is that even when we what we ask for makes a lot of sense, it’s not the same thing that many communities in more populated areas of the state may be asking for.

They say politics is sort of like sausage – I’ve always thought that was a terrible analogy, but you have to find enough people with a common interest to get something done.

Our legislative delegation has done a great job highlighting the importance and the fragility of rural schools. I think that Berkshire County and northern Franklin County in particular are kind of the canaries in the coal mine for population decline, and the accelerated aging that comes when you lose your working-age core of residents. Now that’s affecting the entirety of the state, so suddenly there’s much more understanding of it.

There’s oftentimes an understanding gap – “we just don’t have enough votes” – but by and large, I do feel that they’re interested in hearing from us. The best evidence I had of that was in March of 2023, when I got a call from Secretary of Economic Development Yvonne Hao, saying “Would you please be the voice of rural communities as we develop our next Development Plan?” Just the fact that we got that invitation – there had never been a rural representative representing this interest.

I do think that not just Franklin County, but rural Massachusetts, has gotten a stronger toehold. Former auditor Suzanne Bump also really

helped – she was very, very critical of a lot of policies and formulas and the way those were impacting rural communities, western Massachusetts communities in particular.

MR: *Did COVID make that stuff easier? How big of an impact did you see remote hearings having?*

SE: Generally speaking, COVID and remote meetings made it much easier for *everyone* to participate in a meeting with key personnel.

We now have a rural affairs director, Anne Gobi, who has a meeting every single Wednesday with every rural town administrator who is interested in participating. Sometimes it’s just a Q&A, updating them on legislation or the budget process, and other times she’s proactively identifying a grantmaking agency or an important new initiative or regulation that’s coming down. And she does all of that largely remotely.

But back to your question of what they think of us – I think they have come to realize, broadly, that rural Massachusetts is of great consequence.

My line from the first day I got here was that the Commonwealth needs to differentiate its strategy for communities in places like northern Franklin County in particular. You can’t have us competing on the basis of our ability to attract capital investment, jobs, the housing market, because we lack the economic incentives in this area to spur that because of our low relative valuations.

I’m not sure they’re there yet with a differentiated strategy, but they’re now at least listening, and understanding.

MR: *Can I ask your opinion on six-town school regionalization?*

SE: I’m not afraid of having a larger regional district – I don’t look at that as inherently negative. You know how many high schools we have in a 20-mile radius, for a relatively small population, and we have what I feel is a very misguided application of market principles to school choice.

Whether the six-town region is the right longterm solution is difficult to know, but schools that are too small can really limit the flexibility and the opportunity that kids have, and I do worry about that. I don’t know how I can close my mind to something that may provide substantial educational benefits to kids.

Let me ask you a question, if I could: What were you hoping and expecting from me, seven years ago? What did I do or not do to meet your hopes and expectations?

MR: *Looking back at that time, I think I was mostly apprehensive of watching the institution go through a transition like that, so I was thinking “Okay, here’s a management person – someone with comparative organizational skills, who’s seen a lot of different organizations. If change needs to happen under that roof, they’re probably in competent hands for that.”*

I wasn’t thinking of it much in terms of Montague versus the state, or Montague versus the world – which, looking back at it now, is more how it’s played out. So many programs coming in, and the bottlenecks also becoming a lot more palpable, whether that’s transmission lines or whether it’s rental housing, which has really been brutal.

SE: Housing has become increas-



Above: Ellis points to the Montague town hall, until recently his place of employment, after being asked to do so by the photographer.

ingly unaffordable.... The thing that’s really interesting and disheartening is that you can read about this in Portugal, Spain, Great Britain, Scotland – it’s happening everywhere, all at the same time. Part of me feels like maybe people should only be allowed to own one house.

MR: *How’d you like the internal stuff, managing a team?*

SE: Overall, amazing. I couldn’t have asked for a better set of colleagues, and I’m extending that to my professional colleagues but also the people on the boards that I interacted with the most: the selectboard, the finance committee, the capital improvements committee, but also, you know, the energy committee and the cemetery commission.

I just felt like I was dealing with so many good-faith actors. I came here to do great work with great people in service to our community, and to forge real partnerships, and there were very few people who did not approach me with that good-faith attitude. Even if they disagreed with me.

This is a great community to do the kind of work that I signed up for.

MR: *It’s funny to be the “head of an organization” where the organization itself is small in terms of numbers, but it’s also the town government so it’s 8,700 people.*

SE: Running any organization is surprisingly complicated. A municipal government, where everybody has a right to an opinion – and it’s a true right: everyone has a statutory basis for asking their question they’re asking of you, or a moral basis, or an economic basis. You have to take everything seriously.

And so, if you care enough to actually want to resolve and address all of those things, it’s going to be a demanding job.

There are some people who are probably a lot more tunnel-vision as they approach this work than I would be. Part of me is jealous, and part of me doesn’t actually want to be that way. I want to see the whole job, and I want to try to do the whole job.

And it gave me everything I asked of it. It was amazing.

MR: *I know you’ve had plenty of handoff time with Walter [Ramsey], but what’s advice that you’ve given*

him that you want reiterate publicly?

SE: Well, first and foremost, Walter is a great learner. He has all of the right intentions, coupled with all of the right skills and aptitudes for the job.

It’s been very easy working with him – the two of us have actively learned from each other for several years, and he is willing to ask for input, and smart and self-aware and critical enough to interpret that input with his own values and sensibilities and apply it at his own discretion.

I never said this directly to him, but I think the most important thing as a leader is to know who you are – know what your sensibilities are, be willing to be challenged in those sensibilities, but in the end use that set of values that you have to be true to as you do your work.

If you’ve got a person who’s got the right values and is coming into the position for the right reasons, it will tend to steer you right. Even if something goes sideways on you and you don’t like the outcome, you will know that you did it the way that you believed was right.

You know, it’s not just Walter. I know Frank was proud, when he left the office – he felt like he was leaving me a great staff to work with.

And I feel like that is equally true now as Walter takes the reins. The hiring that we’ve needed to do as people have left us has led to some really remarkable people. It gives me great confidence about where this community’s going to be in five to 10 years.

MR: *A town “punching above its weight.”*

SE: Always. Always.

You know, this is an aspirational community. And that separates and differentiates us from communities that are unwilling to take a risk and invest in themselves. I won’t name those communities, but we see examples of communities that can’t find their way to believe in themselves, and to continually invest and strive....

When I came here, I sort of did a threat assessment: what were some of our biggest risks? I’ll spare you the full list of things that I defined, but at a certain point in time it became very apparent that the Strathmore Mill complex was one of those tremendous risks that we had.

Some things slip beyond our abil-

ity to make right, and that mill was one of them.

And there were so many times when I almost felt preposterous in what I was asking people – the millions of dollars that I was asking for to tear something down. There is no money for that.

But I started to get a sense in January that we had real traction – that we had put together a team of stakeholders who believed in the importance of this project, and that it all might come to fruition.

And I had a conversation with someone in the governor’s office in February and they said “This really could happen – it might even happen before you’re done.” And you know, it was emotional.

Hopefully it’s going to allow something beautiful to emerge. The world does change.

MR: *Do you have your eye on something for your next job?*

SE: I think it’ll be very easy for me to work as a consultant supporting people in roles such as the one I just left... There’s a lot that’s appealing about that, but I really want to take a step far enough back where I can just watch my natural organic interests bloom a little bit, so that I don’t just go back to doing the same thing.

Because, you know, I’m 58, and I have plenty of time ahead of me to write some more interesting chapters. And I want to leave the themes that are going to drive that script open long enough to actually feel it come to me.

The easy thing in life is to keep doing things you’ve been successful with in the past. Sometimes you’re successful in those things because you find them gratifying and you are comfortable pouring your soul and your energy and your talents into them, but that doesn’t mean that there aren’t other things.

So I’m really wide open to what my future holds – that’s a sensibility that I had a year ago as I was making this decision, and it’s only firmed up as I’ve gotten closer to this moment.

I just really need to pause, and to experience being me without the demands of leading an organization. See who I am outside of that again

It’s fun. It’s an exciting thing to have a bit of uncertainty when your roles have been so defined for so many years.



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MEDICINE

Hair Loss: Can Anything Be Done?

By CATHERINE DODDS, MD

TURNERS FALLS – Hair. Some people have a lot, others have none. Some people add artificial hair extensions, others shave their heads. Some have hair where they don’t want it (hirsutism), and others don’t have any where they do (balding). Hair is a fundamental part of our self-image, something we notice whenever we look in the mirror or take a selfie.

Hair loss is one of the most common concerns patients bring up during primary care visits with me. It’s often thrown in as a sheepish afterthought, even though it can be quite distressing to patients.

Perhaps they’re in the office for a routine visit, and they mention that they think their blood pressure medication is causing hair thinning. Or they’re seeing me for a depression follow-up and they’re noticing that their hair is falling out in clumps, with much more coming out when they brush or shower than they’re used to seeing.

So what causes hair loss, and what can we do about it?

On average, scalp hair grows 2 to 2.5 inches per month, and a single hair will keep growing for two to six years before shedding. Normal hair loss ranges from 50 to 150 hairs per day, depending on baseline hair thickness.

There are many possible causes for hair loss, so it’s important to parse out whether someone has visible scarring or bald patches, whether their concern is more an overall thinning versus thinning or receding in particular areas, and whether identifiable external factors might be damaging the hair, such as chemical relaxers or other products, a curling or straightening iron, or even a tightly pulled-back hairstyle.

It’s also important to know how long the hair loss has been going on, and how they describe the extent of it. Patients may describe that their ponytail feels thinner, or that their part is more noticeable. There is also a distinction between hair shedding – falling out from the root – and hair breakage, or “split ends.”

Sometimes hair loss is associated with scalp itching, pain, or burning, and these symptoms can help guide towards specific causes. Each bit of information leads down a different road in diagnosis and treatment of hair loss.

Scarring and inflammatory scalp conditions that lead to hair loss are rare, and those specific conditions need consultation with a dermatologist; injections of steroid medication into the scalp may be required to treat the inflammation. Some whole-body conditions can cause hair loss if they involve the scalp – examples include lupus, psoriasis, eczema, seborrheic dermatitis (“dandruff”), and allergic dermatitis due to hair or skin products.

Alopecia is a general term for hair loss that results in a bald spot or multiple bald patches. Alopecia can be caused by autoimmune disease (called *alopecia areata*), by pressure on the hair such as as in hospitalized patients who lie flat for a prolonged period, or by traction or pulling, as in gymnasts, swimmers, and other athletes who repeatedly keep their hair pulled back tight.

Less common causes of patchy bald spots include syphilis infection and *trichotillomania*, an anxiety-related condition in which a person repeatedly pulls their hair out.

Occasionally, patients come to see me after a highly stressful event and are concerned that their hair is falling out. This condition, called *telogen effluvium*, can be seen after any major physical or psychological stressor. We commonly see it in the setting of pregnancy and childbirth, but it can also result from dietary restrictions

– particularly inadequate protein intake or very low-calorie diets – major illnesses, surgeries, rapid weight loss, thyroid disease, and heavy metal exposure.

Hair loss due to telogen effluvium is temporary: the hair will usually start growing back within three months after the stressful event has passed. Treatment is aimed at treating the underlying cause.

Balding, sometimes referred to as “male-pattern balding,” is more accurately called *androgenetic alopecia* and is very common, affecting up to 50% of men over a lifetime and 5% to 20% of women, typically after menopause. This classic pattern of hair loss along the forehead, temples, and crown of the head is driven by testosterone in both men and women.

Generally, men have more severe hair loss, potentially having total loss of hair on the top and back of the head, whereas women have overall thinning or a receding hairline around the forehead and temples. Androgenetic alopecia is determined by genetics and family history, and also becomes increasingly common as we get older. No treatments are curative, and the loss usually worsens over time.

If treatment is started and effective, it must be continued long-term to see ongoing benefits. Treatment usually makes hair loss worse during the first two months, with increased hair shedding, then starts to improve with hair re-growth by six months after starting treatment. If no re-growth is seen after 12 months of consistent use, a different approach should be tried.

Stopping treatment for androgenetic alopecia generally leads to resumed hair loss. Treatment comes in the form of topical liquids or foams, which unlike a shampoo should be applied directly to the scalp rather than the hair.

Many different medications can worsen hair loss. Chemotherapy regimens are often associated with extensive – though temporary – hair loss, and testosterone supplementation can worsen androgenetic alopecia. Other potential culprit medications include seizure medications, statin cholesterol medications, blood thinners, a gout medicine called colchicine, a bipolar disorder treatment called lithium, an antifungal medication called ketoconazole, and the heartburn medicine Tagamet (cimetidine).

With all these potential causes to think through, treating hair loss is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Stress management and a healthy diet with adequate protein are good first steps. Over-the-counter topical minoxidil 5% – sold as Rogaine – is reasonable to try for most causes, though it makes hair loss worse before it gets better.

While biotin supplementation is often marketed to treat hair loss, there is no medical evidence to support that it helps. In my personal experience, different dermatologists have argued strongly both for and against biotin. Overall, biotin is likely a waste of money, and it can interfere with thyroid blood test results, so it’s best avoided.

Other treatment options require a medical visit, including prescription oral finasteride (Propecia), steroids applied as a cream or injected into the scalp, laser therapy, platelet-rich plasma injections into the scalp, and hair transplantation. These treatments and procedures become increasingly expensive, and the costs are often not covered by insurance.

If all those initial approaches do not help, or if there is concern over one of the rare scarring and inflammatory conditions of the scalp, patients should consult with their healthcare provider, as they may need lab testing, a detailed medication and family history review, or a referral to a dermatology specialist to determine a diagnosis and treatment for their hair loss.

FRONTIERS

Reiki and the Emergence of A ‘Post-Materialist’ Science

By SPENCER SHORKEY*

MILLERS FALLS – Reiki, a form of biofield therapy originating from Japan, has gained considerable attention in recent years for its potential to improve both physical and psychological health. Many hospitals currently offer reiki services to patients.

Dr. Natalie Dyer launched her research career with her graduate work examining the role of molecular signals and receptors in rat brains, and their implications in anxiety behaviors, at Queens University in Canada. She defended her neuroscience thesis titled “Lateral Septal Regulation of Anxiety” in 2012.

Afterwards, Dr. Dyer continued her studies in behavioral modification, branching out in her approaches by investigating the effects of yoga, herbal tea, and reiki on human wellbeing. Working as a post-doctoral researcher at Harvard, she investigated the effectiveness of reiki in a study of 99 practitioners over 1,411 sessions with volunteer clients. The results were published as “A Large-Scale Effectiveness Trial of Reiki for Physical and Psychological Health” in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* in 2019.

This single-armed (non-placebo controlled) study found “Statistically significant improvements were observed for all outcome measures, including positive affect, negative affect, pain, drowsiness, tiredness, nausea, appetite, shortness of breath, anxiety, depression, and overall well-being (all p-values <0.001).”

More recently, while working for the Center for Reiki Research in Southfield, Michigan, Dr. Dyer investigated the effects of reiki on medical practitioners in the UK. This was published last year in the journal *Global Advances in Integrative Medicine and Health* as “Evaluation of a Distance Reiki Program for Frontline Healthcare Workers’ Health-Related Quality of Life During the COVID-19 Pandemic.”

In this study, frontline healthcare workers were offered reiki services on demand, scheduled through an online app. Reiki was then administered in real time, remotely, by up to eight practitioners simultaneously. A questionnaire was taken by participants before and after the session took place, which was based on the Measure Yourself Medical Outcome Profile (MYMOP), a general health reporting tool.

Although 79 participants took the pre-session questionnaire, 39 participants did not complete the post-session questionnaire, which could be seen as a possible selection bias of the study participants. Of the 40 participants completing both questionnaires, significant improvements in stress, anxiety, pain, wellbeing, and sleep were observed. Interestingly, relatively more improvements in these measures were seen in nurses and other workers compared to physicians.

These investigations conducted by Dr. Dyer and her colleagues show an effect of reiki, but are limited in that they did not use control groups, which would be a placebo treatment consisting of fake or sham reiki sessions.

Other reiki studies, however, have used control groups. For example, a 2015 study in the *European Journal of Integrative Medicine* titled “The effect of Reiki therapy on quality of life of patients with blood cancer: Results from a randomized controlled trial” showed that there was indeed a significant difference in quality-of-life assessments of between 58 patients in real reiki groups and 42 patients in sham reiki groups.

“Post-materialist science” advocates for an expanded view of reality that includes consciousness and non-material influences on the material world. The apparent ability of reiki to produce significant physiological and psychological changes – even administered at a distance – gives support to the post-materialist view that consciousness is not confined to the brain, but is a broader aspect of reality.

Although materialist perspectives might seek to classify the beneficial effects of reiki as some sort of placebo, it’s important to note that materialist perspectives are largely unable to define the underlying mechanisms of the placebo effects seen in modern medical studies.

To understand the effects of both placebos and biofield healing such as reiki, as well as other phenomena that don’t fit materialist paradigms, Dr. Dyer and many other researchers are advocating for the growth of post-materialist scientific paradigms. Search for the “Manifesto for a Post-Materialist Science” to learn more about the researchers, and rationale, driving this movement forward.

* Text written 90% by Spencer Shorkey, 10% by ChatGPT. Research contributed by Olivia Macrorie.

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ERVING from page A1

before the police were notified.

On Monday, selectboard member James Loynd and town administrator Bryan Smith presented a draft letter to the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) expressing serious concern about the incident, asking for a thorough investigation, and requesting DESE “take any action that is deemed appropriate.”

White-Cleveland said the school’s response was either an error in following procedures or the result of unclear procedures, and that she wanted to review school policies and meet with the Union 28 joint supervisory committee. She also reported she had “a lengthy and candid meeting with some members of different Erving entities,” and saw a need for “bridge-building.”

As bringing DESE into the school “might muddy the waters and make things more difficult,” White-Cleveland asked the board for more time to investigate the incident and meet with the joint committee. Board members agreed. Loynd said he would rework the letter to DESE after she has completed her investigation and developed policy responses.

IP Mill Demo

Bryan Smith provided estimates from engineering consultant Tighe & Bond for various repair and demolition options at the former International Paper Mill, ranging from \$124,000 for re-roofing the boiler room building to \$813,000 for demolishing two buildings and rebuilding a wall to support the remaining structures.

In May, voters rejected a \$3.7 million debt exclusion for demolishing the entire complex. The town has a \$600,000 MassDevelopment grant toward partial demolition.

The insurer has threatened to cancel the town’s policy if the buildings are not maintained as sound, weather-tight structures. However, selectboard chair Jacob Smith said the policy had been renewed for the last four years even though roofing and repair had not been done.

Board members opposed spending money on walls or roofs that might be demolished in the future. They proposed various options for demolition, mixing and matching from the estimates to determine what might be accomplished with only \$600,000.

After about 15 minutes of discussion, finance and capital planning committees member Debra Smith remarked, “We’re going in circles.”

“That’s what we do on this project,” Bryan Smith commented.

“And I want it stopped,” Debra Smith replied with a smile, continuing, “We have a lot of conflicting goals.” She proposed a discussion among the selectboard, fin com, and capital planning committee of the town’s objectives for the property.

Selectboard member Scott Bastarache agreed. “We need to get our ducks in a row first,” he said. The board agreed to discuss goals with the finance and capital planning committees on July 22.

North Street Repaving

Highway supervisor Glenn McCrory asked to use \$200,000 of Chapter 90 funding – out of about \$490,000 available to the town – to mill and repave sections of North Street. The road was resurfaced in 2014 using “hot in-place reclaiming,” which McCrory said “did not

work out well.” He reported that the road was delaminating, and repair patches weren’t holding.

After meeting an estimator from Green International, the contractor currently working on Route 2 through Erving, McCrory determined that while milling and paving the worst 600 feet of North Street would be costly, additional work on the rest of the road could mean “getting more done for the money.”

McCrory and board members proposed that the lowest section of North Street near Erving Center could be paved by the state under the Complete Streets program instead, and that a stretch near Swamp Road Bridge could be repaired as part of a future project at Swamp Road.

The board asked McCrory to get one estimate for milling and paving all of North Street except those two sections, and another for the entire roadway, and report back.

Farley to Erving Center

In June, MassTrails awarded Erving a \$30,000 grant to study the feasibility of building the Blue Heron Greenway, a hiking and biking path that would connect Bridge Street in Farley with Riverfront Park in Erving Center by improving former trails and roads along the Wendell side of the Millers River. The grant requires \$4,500 in local matching funds.

At the time the grant was written it was assumed that town planner Mariah Kurtz would oversee the project, but before it was awarded Kurtz left the position, and it has not been filled. In June the selectboard expressed concern about whether Bryan Smith would have time to oversee the grant. He contacted the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) and learned they would be able to oversee it, at a cost not to exceed \$8,500.

Bryan Smith said the planning department has a \$10,000 consulting line item that could cover that cost, and that money budgeted for an as-yet-unhired planner would cover the matching funds.

Bastarache said that once the study was complete, he hoped the project could be “folded into the MassDOT Route 2 upgrade.”

Debra Smith questioned what benefit the trail would bring to Erving. “The town has other more pressing projects,” she said. “I don’t see our audience filled with supporters of this project.” She also wondered if the study might sit on a shelf until it was outdated.

Loynd said he supported the trail, and could imagine biking to a concert at Riverfront Park, stopping afterward in Erving Center for a bagel or ice cream. He asked Bryan Smith to find out if MassDOT was interested in trail construction, as “they have a bigger budget than we do.”

Speaking as a member of the recreation commission, Jacquelyn Boyden said she was in favor of the project, as the commission wanted to see more use of Riverfront Park. She also said they would discuss helping pay for the matching funds.

“I’m concerned about safety,” Mark Blatchley told the board. He said many people bike Route 2 from Farley to Erving Center, where the road is narrow, and that it would be “a wonderful thing to get more cycling in Erving.”

Bastarache said he favored accepting the grant.

Jacob Smith said he was “in the middle,” and would be more in fa-

vor if other town departments had money in their budgets to help cover FRCOG and the matching funds. If the planning money was not spent on this project, he said, after a year it could become “future capital funding” for other projects.

The board decided to discuss the project at the July 22 meeting with the finance and capital planning committees.

Secret Ballots

Town clerk Richard Newton presented a petition signed by 127 voters requesting the board place an article on the warrant for the next town meeting that would require the moderator to act on any motion to vote by secret ballot.

At the annual town meeting in May, several voters called for a secret ballot without making a motion, but the moderator proceeded using a public standing count.

Newton said the petition spurred him to speak with Meridia, a supplier of handheld electronic voting devices. He presented a capital request for \$12,000 for an electronic voting system which would make every vote secret. The company has sold systems to 69 towns in Massachusetts including Orange, Newton said, and he had spoken with the Orange town clerk who was satisfied with the system.

Newton said the package offered by Meridia includes 200 devices. He noted that there are approximately 1,500 voters in Erving, but that since 1980 only two meetings had more than 200 voters. The Orange clerk offered to lend additional units if Erving expected exceptionally high attendance at a meeting.

“Voter turnout would go up,” Loynd suggested, “without fear of a death stare or side-eye for voting your conscience.”

Bastarache expressed hesitancy about having all votes be secret. “I think people should stand up and be counted,” he said, but he acknowledged that many people come to town meeting but don’t vote, so “we’re not hearing the voice of some residents.”

The selectboard suggested increasing the number of units to 250, at about \$40 each. Capital planning will consider the request at its next meeting.

Other Business

Following the recommendations of the patrol officer screening committee and Holst, the board approved rehiring Mitchell Waldron as a full-time officer. Waldron had formerly been full-time, but had left for a private-sector job while still working part-time for the department.

“After spending time in the private sector,” Waldron wrote in a cover letter, “I quickly realized that my desire to pursue a police career was stronger than ever.” Holst noted that he had completed police academy training at no cost to the town.

The board held a hearing on a joint petition from Eversource and Verizon for installing three poles on River Road. They approved the placement of two, but because the petition listed an incorrect address for the third, the hearing was continued to July 22.

As it was the first meeting of the fiscal year, the board re-elected Jacob Smith as chair.

“You’re doing a fantastic job,” Bastarache told him.

“It works well this way,” said Loynd.

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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Gill Agrees to One-Year Compost Pickup Pilot

By **JERRI HIGGINS**

A sparse agenda for the Gill selectboard’s meeting on Monday, July 1 included voting on a community composting program, approving fire department purchase orders, and appointing two firefighters, as well as approving a new hire for the highway department.

Jan Ameen, executive director of the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District (FCSWMD), and Vicky Jenkins, Gill’s representative to the FCSWMD, presented their proposal to the selectboard for a pilot community organics collection program to be located in the back of the town’s Riverside municipal building.

Ameen explained that worker-owners Revan Schendler and Eli Smith of the Greenfield-based Compost Cooperative had contacted the FCSWMD to help site a community composting program in Gill. The group currently contracts with Shelburne, Charlemont, and Conway for their composting service.

The Compost Cooperative has been picking up food waste from 12 Gill households for a weekly fee of \$12 each, but that revenue is no longer sustainable, and the Cooperative’s household service will end on August 1.

Ameen noted that she had been trying to stir up interest in a community composting program since at least 2018, but that there had not been a strong enough response to make the program feasible to pick up, store, and transport food waste to a commercial composting site, and that this could be a more cost-effective way to help eliminate compostables from household trash.

“The idea is that we would inform residents, and start particularly with Riverside,” said Ameen, “that there is an option that you could reduce your food waste, and you do not have to have a compost bin in your yard. There would be a combination, and it would be locked.”

“These containers will get picked up [by the Compost Cooperative], and go to Martin’s Farm in Greenfield [for] commercial composting,” added Jenkins. “They can take meat and bones – they do more than backyard composters.”

The selectboard voted unanimously to approve and fund the program for a year, and reassess it after that. The program will be paid through the town’s Recycling Dividend Program (RDP) grant account. Ameen said that the composting program would likely use most of the \$5,600 of the town’s RDP funds, which are granted

through the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for qualifying municipalities.

“Hopefully, in a year,” said selectboard member Randy Crochier, “if we can get enough people using it, we would see a decrease in weight of what is going into Casella’s trucks that would offset the rubbish disposal cost.”

Ameen said there would be some cost savings, but added that “it is not going to be a whole lot.”

“It would just be more responsible in our waste management,” said selectboard chair Greg Snedeker.

After discussing potential issues such as bad odor, animal control, and misuse of the site, Ameen recommended that the town purchase an eight-by-eight-by-six-foot dog kennel and lock to house two 64-gallon compost carts, but that an elevated shed with a ramp could also be purchased and used. The bins are collected and maintained by the Compost Cooperative.

Other Business

Town administrator Ray Purington was authorized to sign an agreement for Gill’s participation in the regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection day, with a budget of \$1,250 in RDP funds. This year’s collection is scheduled for Saturday, September 21, at Greenfield Community College and the Orange transfer station. Registration is required and opens on August 14; more information is available at www.franklincountywastedistrict.org.

Miles Keefe and Billy Whitaker were unanimously approved as firefighters through June 2025, and Diane Sumrall was unanimously approved as an election worker through the same month.

Brian Reardon was unanimously approved as a new hire for the highway department at Level 5A on the pay scale, starting with two weeks of vacation time.

The selectboard approved by consensus the fire department’s annual purchase order for expenses over \$500.

Rose Ledge’s charge for chassis service to four fire department vehicles is \$4,000. “I’d like to know what the chassis service involves,” said selectboard member Charles Garbiel. “It would be interesting to know what they do for \$1,000 per vehicle.”

Crochier added the caveat of continuing to seek out more businesses that provide chassis service now that Rose Ledge is the only provider in the service area. “I just want to stay on top of not having just one place,” he said.

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NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Idea of Using Repair Liens As Collection Tool Frowned Upon

By GEORGE BRACE

At its most recent meeting on July 2, Leverett’s selectboard discussed a proposal to use a state program which mandates repairs of distressed abandoned residences as a means of collecting delinquent property taxes.

Chair Tom Hankinson said the subject came up a little over a year ago, following a discussion with tax collector Ryan Mailloux and town administrator Marjorie McGinnis about ways to reduce delinquent property tax accounts.

Hankinson said a program Mailloux established to offer payment plans to residents behind on their payments had been “effective” and “successful,” but that there are some properties with past due accounts which are also in disrepair, and “there is nobody there to pay the money.” The question remains, he said, “What to do with them?”

Under a program run by the attorney general’s Neighborhood Renewal Division, abandoned properties in violations of the State Sanitary Code can be put into receivership, and the receiver ordered to bring them into

compliance. The receiver is then granted a lien for the cost of the repairs, which takes precedence over all but municipal liens, such as those for property taxes. If the liens go unpaid by the owner, the receiver may foreclose on the property.

Because some Leverett properties that are delinquent in taxes may be eligible for the program, board members agreed to learn more about it and consider whether it made sense to use it for collection purposes.

Board member Patricia Duffy said that while the town could “look at the program in the future,” she did not think it was something that should be “aggressively or proactively” pursued. She commented that the program seemed like more of an “urban-type thing” and was “a bit predatory.”

She added that she did not want to speak for Mailloux, but did not believe he was in favor of taking property either.

Board member Jed Proujansky said he was “very reticent” to take people’s property. “It’s not a great thing to want to do to your neighbor,” he said.

Proujansky added, however, that “a very specific case” that involved something “close to an abandonment” was a different situation, and might be appropriate for the program. He also said he felt an owner able to pay off the receiver’s lien and retain the property would effectively be benefiting from a publicly sponsored loan. “You wind up funding their rehabilitation of the property,” he said.

Prior to the meeting, historical commission members had also floated the idea of using the program as a preservation tool by putting eligible distressed historic properties into receivership in order to mandate their repairs.

This idea was also met with negative sentiment at the meeting, with resident Richard Nathorst saying he felt it would be an “inappropriate” use of the program.

Hankinson closed the discussion by reiterating Mailloux’s success in collecting delinquent property taxes while being “not-ruthless in his methodologies,” and adding that it was mainly just one property which had led to consideration of the neighborhood renewal program.

Bylaw Boost

The board signed a letter to Massachusetts assistant attorney general Margaret Hurley in support of a general bylaw adopted in Wendell, but still under state review, asserting more control for the town over licensing large “battery energy storage systems,” including those using lithium-ion batteries.



SARAH ROBERTSON PHOTOS

The town of Leverett held a 250th anniversary parade and barbecue last Saturday. Celebrants included (top to bottom) a contingent from Leverett Crafts & Arts; Edith Field, riding in a classic baby-blue convertible as the “Queen of the Leverett Historical Society,” and Bub’s Barbecue, who catered with copious grilled chicken.



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The letter points out that the bylaw was approved by a Wendell town meeting in a 100-to-1 vote, and states the Leverett board’s “mutual concern over the fire safety issues and air pollution impacts surrounding large scale lithium-ion batteries thermal runaways.”

It cites proximity to Wendell, as well as the mutual aid agreement requiring Leverett firefighters to respond to emergencies in that town, as reasons Leverett is “directly affected” by the issue. “Decisions with this magnitude of risk,” the letter concludes, “are better evaluated by those people most intimately familiar with the area and risks involved and this proposed bylaw places the responsibility locally, where it belongs.”

Other Business

During public comment, Proujansky reported that the new superintendent of the Union 28 elementary school district, Shannon White-Cleveland, had started work. He also said the search committee

looking for a new Leverett Elementary School principal had been conducting interviews with “enthusiastic candidates,” and was working towards a hiring recommendation.

“All very positive goings-on,” he said. “That’s what I wanted to let people know.”

The board appointed several representatives to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG): Sean Conner as emergency management and response coordinator; Van Stoddard to the Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program; Richard Nathorst to FRCOG’s planning board; and Hankinson to the planning board as well as the FRCOG council.

The board decided to remove an old piano from town hall. Town clerk Lisa Stratford said it had last been used at a Council on Aging Christmas party “decades ago.”

The piano is to be listed on the Leverett Connects listserv for two weeks as a free item, and if not taken, relocated by the highway department to the transfer station.

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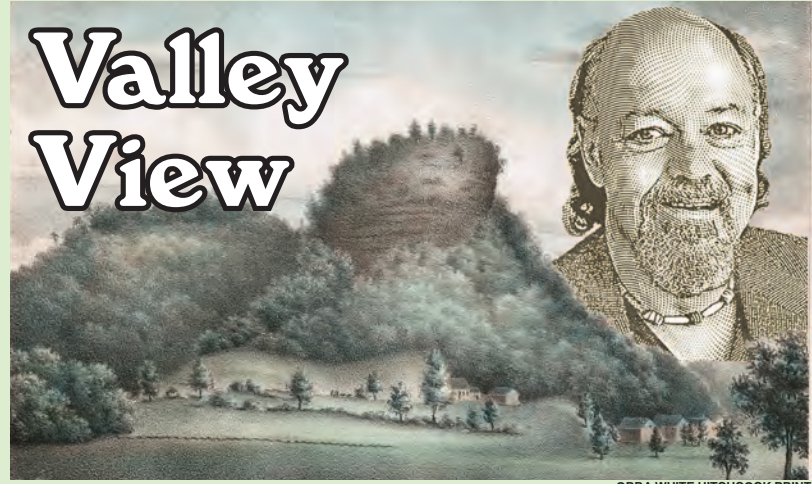


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The Captives’ First Camp

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Although it’s probably too late to prove the location of an important colonial Greenfield landmark, it never hurts to ponder the possibilities.

The place under consideration is the first overnight encampment occupied by captors and captives retreating from the surprise pre-dawn attack on Old Deerfield by French and Indian raiders on February 29, 1704. The aftermath left much of the small, isolated colonial settlement in smoking ruins, with 47 colonists dead and 112 missing. For the purpose of this probe, we’ll focus on the missing – captives, young and old, tattered and torn, marched to Canada in winter cold by their captors.

Experts and ancestors alike have concurred for centuries that the campsite touched down in the Greenfield Meadows. The question is: Where? In reviewing this question, I’ll use modern place and road names to avoid confusion.

Actually, during the first couple hundred years after the attack, people were secure on a location. Community memory placed the first campsite less than four miles from the Deerfield stockade in wetlands along the base of Greenfield Mountain – “west of the old Nims farm,” according to Greenfield historian Francis M. Thompson. The Nims farm he refers to was built by Revolutionary War veteran Hull Nims and is today, minus the old farmhouse, owned by the Butynski family at the Lower Meadows address of 370 Colrain Road.

Buttressing Thompson’s claim is an obscure Greenfield map on which an X marks the spot of “De Rouville’s Camp.” The site is between two spring brooks where now lies a small pond dug by the Butynskis for their cows in the mid-20th century. In 1704, the spot would have been ideal for an overnight stay, with a wetland providing thick shelter from the elements along with clean, sparkling water.

The map identifying this and other historic Greenfield sites appeared as a two-fold pullout in a now hard-to-find pamphlet published for the June 26, 1905 unveiling of the

Capt. William Turner Monument at Nash’s Mills. Then a tidy neighborhood that included the North Parish Church, a silver factory, a large millpond, and Mill Brook Falls, the Nash’s Mills compound was erased in the early 1960s to clear the way for Interstate 91.

Indians killed Turner, the English Falls Fight commander of King Philip’s War fame, as he crossed the Green River below, just downstream from the so-called Greenfield Pool.

But let’s not confuse matters with Turner. He died a generation before the Deerfield attack. Back to 1704 and, for that matter, to the aforementioned Francis M. Thompson, who with the 1904 publication of his *History of Greenfield* introduced uncertainty into the previously-accepted location for the first campsite.

The Greenfield historian, who became a “Turner Monument Field Day” organizer the following year, offered this tidbit on Page 90:

“Until recently, the place of their encampment upon the night of the fatal day has been supposed to be in the swamp west of the old Nims farm, but later the discovery of an ancient broad axe (believed to be a portion of the Deerfield plunder) at the former junction of the Hinsdale and Punch brooks, makes it seem more probable that the first camp was made in the middle of the north meadows in Greenfield.”

More probable. Hmmm? Really? On whose authority? But with that statement, the damage was done.

By now, Thompson’s hypothetical has been so often repeated in conversation and writing that it has grown from lean speculation to common knowledge. I have read of it elsewhere, including in a history of my own tavern home, and been informed of it by friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Until recently, I accepted it without further scrutiny. Took it hook, line and sinker. But when I revisited it recently, I realized Thompson’s off-the-cuff theory was thin indeed on justification.

Let me explain.

First of all, Hinsdale and Punch

see VALLEY VIEW page B2

Farm to Table in Twenty-Five Feet: A New Food Truck Vibe at Unity Park

By BEN GAGNON

TURNERS FALLS – For Ismail Assad and Rob Lordi, the distance from farm to table is about 25 feet.

The two men and their food trucks are livening up the parking lot at the end of Second Street by the ballfields at Unity Park with Palestinian food and vegan pizza, and some of the herbs and spices come from a row of raised garden boxes.

“I grew up on a farm in the West Bank,” said Assad. “We had sheep, goats, cows, we grew figs, olives, everything. I loved it.” Assad misses his seven siblings and his mother Rasmieh, 87, who are all back home, but he continues to make the fresh food he enjoyed through childhood in the small town of Idna near the city of Hebron.

“We had a happy family despite everything that was going on, eating with each other, visiting with each other,” Assad said. “I would love to be there now but unfortunately I have political issues with the Israeli government.” Despite being far from home, Assad is quick to flash a friendly smile. It helps that he’s found a perfect spot to share his love for Palestinian food and the mix of spices that make it unique.

“I’m much more comfortable here with the picnic tables, the water and electricity,” said Assad, who struggled to operate his food truck near the skate park in Greenfield



Picnic tables and two food trucks are set up at the end of Second Street.

last year. “And I love gardening. When you are closer to the land, you are closer to people.” In a string of garden boxes next to the parking lot he’s growing zucchini, eggplant, tomatoes, lettuce, and cucumber.

A sign on the side of the truck advertises Mohawk Falafel & Shawarma, but there’s also a sign inviting people in need to eat for free.

“In our culture, the prophet Muhammad said if you have, you give,” said Assad. “I like feeding people,

it’s good for me and for the community.” He’s now working with Lordi to buy a “free fridge” where both will keep fresh, healthy food.

“I don’t want people to feel uncomfortable to ask for food,” said Assad. “This is an idea that’s worked in other places, because if you just put food in the fridge with a sign, it makes it easier.”

Meanwhile Assad hasn’t forgotten what’s happening back home.

see FOOD page B5

THEATER PREVIEW

Rehearsing for an Incredible Challenge

By BELLA LEVAVI

TURNERS FALLS – The journey of caring for a loved one with Alzheimer’s disease is shared by

countless families, marked by moments of heartache and resilience amidst the relentless progression of memory loss and its impacts on both caregivers and their loved ones.

This month, Real Live Theatre aims to illuminate the challenges of Alzheimer’s caregiving with their new original show of devised dance-theater, *When The Mind’s Free*, at the Shea Theater.

“There is a critical need to increase representation of those living with Alzheimer’s and caregivers in media and works like this,” said Alzheimer’s Association regional manager Meghan Lemay, who has worked as a consultant for the show. “This disease continues to affect more families, and we need artistic works to help the broader public understand it.”

Inspired by Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, the show follows a contemporary lesbian couple and their adult daughters as they navigate both early-onset Alzheimer’s disease and addiction, seeking hope through adversity. Each performance



Real Live Theatre members Myka Plunkett (left), as Gwen, and Carolyn Goelzer as Sharon, star in *When The Mind’s Free* at the Shea Theater later this month.

see THEATER page B6

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

‘HOLDEN’

Meet Holden, the king of his own castle after being booted from his brothers. If we’re being honest, Holden and one of his brothers hated each other, and it was for the best. For this reason Holden is on his own now and he’s hoping to land a new friend in a home – one that will let him remain his all-high-and-mighty self. He can be very sweet with people, and with time and patience he will make your home complete.

Guinea pigs need lots of space to run around in, and toys to keep them active and enriched! They should

get daily “floor time” outside of their cage. This time outside of the cage will be great for bonding and growing closer with them!

Holden’s adoption fee is \$35. If you’d like to learn more about, meet, or adopt him, call Dakin Humane Society at (413) 781-4000 or visit www.dakinhumane.org.

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Along a Wendell Pond

REFLECTION

By RAY DIDONATO

WENDELL – White blossoms dot the lily pad laced surface of the pond. Flycatchers dip and dive above the water, aerialists catching unwitting insects. Later in summer, swifts and swallows will glide through the air, feasting on a recent hatch of flies. In the distance, a hawk cries shrilly.

The scarlet tanager visits the mulberry in our front yard, feasting on its ripening berries, before shyly retreating high into the green tree canopy along the edge of the yard. A red-winged blackbird, which nests along the pond, visits the backyard to feast on seeds in the grass before flying off to follow a clucking female. The red-eyed vireo, whose call I sometimes mistake for the American robin, makes its presence heard from within the woods.

While the chipping sparrow sings, a chipmunk scours the ground for food. The Eastern cottontail, a regular visitor, chews on a plantain leaf, unconcerned by my watching eyes. Dragonflies dart around the backyard overlooking the pond and sun themselves on kayaks left by the edge of the pond.

The stately white pines guard the pond edge, but are slightly browned this year, an effect of temperature and opportunistic fungi. A few weeks ago, the sky above the pond filled with billows of yellow pollen released by these giants. Through the woods I hear the “who-cooks-for-you” call of a barred owl.

The milkweeds in the front yard are in full bloom,

their pinkish bouquets visited by bumblebees and butterflies, though I have not seen the monarchs yet. Tiny, dark red ants survey the landscape for their next food source. Small flies dance in spiraling circles in the morning sun.

The phoebe has nested again this year above the floodlight on one corner of the house, and the puffy tufts of gray feathers just above the nest rim indicate young inside. The crow, a sentinel which guards the pond perimeter, caws before joining another calling in the distance. The hermit thrush plays a melodic tune with its pan flute voice.

In the early morning and at dusk, beavers patrol the pond and, drawn by the sound of the trickle of water from the pond outlet, survey work to be done. The white-tailed deer is a frequent visitor to the pond edge, stopping in the hot summer for a drink, while a great blue heron stealthily hunts frogs and minnows, and stops to perch on a tree that has fallen on the water for a better view.

When evening descends on the pond and the air cools with the setting of the afternoon sun, a chorus of frogs emerges, an ancient rhythm singing songs older than human existence. The water splashes as a pickerel surfaces to eat a target swimming on the water surface. Crickets trill into the night air, seeking mates, while fireflies call their consorts with their blinking lights. As the summer progresses, katydids, with their loud song, will join and complete this nighttime chorus.

At sunrise, the cycle begins again, inviting us to immerse ourselves in the nature we too easily or too busily pass by in our daily chores.

VALLEY VIEW from page B1

brooks did not meet in their original courses. They were violently joined by an 1843 flood that roared down from the western uplands to cut a new Hinsdale Brook channel to the Green River, picking up the Punch Brook bed for the final couple hundred yards.

Punch Brook did, however, cross the major Indian trail leading through the Meadows to the Pump-

ing Station and on to Leyden, Guilford, Vermont, and the eventual site of Fort Dummer on the Connecticut River’s west bank.

Hinsdale and Punch brooks were then separated by nearly a half-mile at their closest point, with the former taking a sharp southern turn a short distance east of my home. From that sharp elbow, it sliced three-quarters of a mile down the Upper Meadows between Plain and Colrain roads, joining Allen Brook for their final half-mile run to the Green River. Before Mother Nature cut the 1843 channel, Allen Brook was thought of as a Hinsdale Brook tributary.

Thompson was aware of this, and even reported it in his Greenfield book. So, he must have forgotten or been confused in his inaccurate description of the axe-head-discovery site. Remember, Thompson was a native of Colrain, not Greenfield, and spent many adult years in Montana. He wasn’t nearly as familiar with Greenfield Meadows topography as his wife, Mary Nims, or her father Lucius Nims, heir to aforementioned Hull Nims farm.

Plus, even if the axe head did date back to 1704, the possibilities are many as to how and when it arrived at the discovery site. More likely than not it had no connection at all to the 1704 captors and captives. And even if it did, it wouldn’t necessarily mark the campsite.

Something else to evaluate when considering the veracity of the two possible encampment sites is sourcing. The best sources would have been captives old enough to remember where they slept in terror that first night. Thirty-one of them returned to live out their lives in Deerfield, and at least three were directly related to Hull Nims.

They were Nims’s grandmother Elizabeth Hull Nims, who would have been 15 for the march, and his great-uncle and aunt, Ebenezer and Sarah Hoyt Nims, both 17 when captured. This trio of relatives died, in the same order listed above, in 1754, 1760, and 1761, and would obviously have been around long

enough to identify the site.

Then again, Nims relatives weren’t essential. Community pillar Reverend John Williams was freed from Canadian captivity with four of his children in 1706 and returned to Deerfield, where he died 23 years later. That left him more than enough time to mark for posterity important sites along the march.

Does anyone honestly believe this man of the cloth never returned to the Pumping Station, some 3.5 miles away, where his wife Eunice met her maker? If so, he would surely have pointed out the first encampment site in passing.

Even Williams’s valuable input would have been unnecessary. Five members of the Stebbins family who were 12 or older for the march returned to Deerfield with vivid memories, including husband and wife John and Dorothy, ages 56 and 42 in 1704. “Redeemed” sons John and Samuel were 19 and 15 when captured, and thus could also have offered helpful insight.

The reason I mention the Stebbins family – other than the fact that its eight hostages outnumbered all other captive Deerfield families – is that descendant Samuel Stebbins (1725-83) was an early Upper Meadows settler, breaking ground very near to or on the parcel where the axe was found. If the first encampment was there, within earshot of trickling Punch Brook, would he not have known it and told friends and neighbors?

Plus, how about the searchers who followed the retreating raiding party’s tracks in the snow after the siege? They obviously would have seen the remnants of the first campsite. If not on the old Nims farm, would the eyewitnesses not have quickly corrected the record?

When evaluating such questions, primary sources are always the best place to start. This is no exception. In my mind, the first encampment sat on the old Nims farm, which broke ground some 80 years after the Deerfield attack.

Senior Center Activities JULY 15 THROUGH 26

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. For more information please call 863-9357.

Monday 7/15
10:30 a.m. Brown Bag
6 p.m. Cemetery Commission

Tuesday 7/16
9 a.m. Chair Yoga
11 a.m. Money Matters
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 7/17
9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
10:15 a.m. Outdoor Yoga
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
1 p.m. Food pantry
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 7/18
10 a.m. Montague Villages Board Meeting
10:30 a.m. Senior Farm Share
1 p.m. Pitch

Friday 7/19
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Pizza Party
2 p.m. Chair Dance

Monday 7/22
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

Tuesday 7/23
9 a.m. Chair Yoga
10 a.m. Tentative Defib Class

12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 7/24
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
10:15 a.m. Outdoor Yoga
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 7/25
10 a.m. Tentative Defib Training
10:30 a.m. Senior Farm Share
1 p.m. Pitch

Friday 7/26
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
2 p.m. Chair Dance

ERVING

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

Monday 7/15
9 a.m. Interval
10 a.m. Chair Dance
12 p.m. Pitch
12 p.m. Brown Bag

Tuesday 7/16
9 a.m. Good for U
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer

Wednesday 7/17
9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bingo

Thursday 7/18
9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow

12 p.m. Cook-Out & Music

Friday 7/19
9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

Monday 7/22
9 a.m. Interval
10 a.m. Chair Dance
12 p.m. Pitch
1 p.m. Matter of Balance

Tuesday 7/23
9 a.m. Good for U
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer

Wednesday 7/24
9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bingo

Thursday 7/25
9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow
11 a.m. Tech Help

Friday 7/26
9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew

WENDELL

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

For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

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.

Contact (413) 548-1022 x2 or coa@leverett.ma.us

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EXHIBITS

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Allen Fowler*, small mixed-media collage work from several recent series, through mid-September.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Remnants*, photographs by Joe Wallace from 2010 showing Turners Falls' abandoned Strathmore and Griswold mills. Reception and talk this Sunday, July 14 at 1 p.m.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague: *Studio Feeler*, ceramics by guest artist Akilah Scharff-Teoh in July and August, with a reception this Saturday, July 13 from 1 to 4 p.m.

Montague Center Library: *Landscapes: Endangered and Preserved*, paintings by Meg Ricks. Through August, with a reception Wednesday, July 24 from 6 to 7 p.m.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Portraits and Parades: A Touch of Joy*, photographs by Lindy Whiton. Through July.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *On Our Way*, paintings by Chelsea Granger, through July 31.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *Summer Members' Exhibit*, through July 28.

Leverett Library: *Quilts of Leverett*, four quilts by LES sixth-graders plus a Leverett bicentennial quilt from 1974. Through August.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: *LCA Artists Group Show*, work by artists at the LCA including work by board members and Mudpie Potters. Reception on Saturday, July 13, 1 to 5 p.m. Through August.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Artists on Being an Artist*, portraits and interviews of Gallery A3 artists by Eric Broudy. Through July 27.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *Lazy Days of Summer*, exhibit by member artists, through July.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne: *Watercolor Whimsey*, paintings by children's book illustrator Astrid Sheckels, on view through August with a reception and book signing this Saturday, July 13 at 2 p.m.

Club George, Northampton: *Whimsical Narratives*, reflective works in pottery and printmaking by Rosie Dinsmore and Sophie Foulkes, July 13 to August 3. Reception this Saturday, July 13 from 1 to 3 p.m.

D'Amour Museum, Springfield: *Frida Kahlo, Her Photos*, images from Kahlo's personal collection which were locked up in a bathroom at the artist's residence for more than 50 years, through September. *Look Again: Portraits of Daring Women*, woodcut and collage prints by Leverett artist Julie Lapping Rivera celebrating women who defied the status quo, through February.



ON MEDIA

Bible Stories in the Movies

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – Some people like to tell or read Bible stories – maybe so much so that filmmakers try their hand at telling those stories on screen.

I know of some of the stories that have been made into movies, and I also have a fair amount of familiarity with some of the actors that have been in them, such as Neal McDonough, Dougray Scott, Russell Crowe, and Jon Voight. Bible stories that people have tried to do in film include the Book of Job, the Ten Commandments, and the story of Noah.

The Shift, which premiered in 2023, is a science fiction film based on the story of Job, starring McDonough and Kristoffer Polaha. They use the concept of the multiverse, which involves worlds where different things have happened which have made them into very different worlds, to tell a version of the story. Like Job, Polaha's character Kevin Garner loses everything when he shifts to another world – a world where the Scriptures are outlawed.

The multiverse concept works well with the story of Job. The thought is suggested that Job wouldn't still praise God if he lost everything. I assure you that Garner, who's basically Job in this film, does so despite losing everything, and is even rewarded for it.

This is a cool and unique take on this story, which is right up my alley because I like science fiction. *Noah* (2014) is a bit more interesting and enjoyable to watch. I could watch it a hundred times and not get

bored! The story has been done a couple of times in movies – this one has Russell Crowe as Noah, and Jennifer Connelly as his wife Naamah.

A miniseries, *Noah's Ark*, was made in 1999 with Jon Voight as Noah and Mary Steenburgen as Naamah. I believe the miniseries keeps pretty well on track with what I know of the story of Noah. Noah is joined on the ark by his sons and their wives.

Russell Crowe's *Noah* is a bit more interesting. It includes these rock creatures that were fallen angels. Also, Noah's family isn't exactly accurately portrayed – for example, only one of his sons has a wife.

Another story that has been done a couple of times is the story of the Ten Commandments. One well-known version is *The Ten Commandments* (1956), with Charlie Heston. A more recent one was a 2005 miniseries with Dougray Scott as Moses.

Both versions have Moses becoming a shepherd – to sheep, literally, and figuratively to the Hebrews. The miniseries also still has that scene of him going up a mountain and coming back down with the stone tablets with the commandments on them. In both of these he has a family to his name as well, and both end the same way, with Moses and his people reaching the Promised Land but Moses not being able to enter.

I believe both versions keep on track with how the original story went. When making a story like this for the screen, the tried and true way is the best way to go about it. Both versions aren't very entertaining, exactly, unless you are really into Bible stories.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

In Which Our Enemies Pump Hot Air, Put Rocks in Our Tank, Smell Like Gas, Jack Ebike, Porky Pig It, Try to Start Something, Pee in Laundromat, and Leave Strange Writing on Our Walls

Monday, 6/24

8:56 a.m. Officer conducting vehicle stop at Montague and High Streets. Chief advising no license on hand; back tire fell off wheel; expired registration. Rau's was able to get vehicle off curb. Father was able to get registration reinstated online at scene.

2:11 p.m. A 21-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license and operating a motor vehicle with a suspended registration.

4:23 p.m. Caller from Third Street states her neighbors have been pumping hot air into her apartment for the past few days. Referred to an officer.

5:17 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street states her kids were trying to take her dog out tonight and a neighbor's dog is off leash again and it charged at the caller's dog. Caller states this is an ongoing issue that has been documented with the PD and animal control officer because that dog has attacked the caller's dog once already. Officer advised; copy of call left for ACO.

9:11 p.m. Caller from J Street states she just got a call that homeless people were seen walking around the back of Hair By Phase One. Caller states she has been having trouble with people around the building leaving needles and such.

Requesting an officer move people along. Nobody in area; neighbors stated they left a few minutes ago.

Tuesday, 6/25

8:12 a.m. Walk-in reports hitting a dog at Turnpike Road and Walnut Street. Message left for ACO. Officer unable to locate dog. Owner of dog stopped in; he has taken care of the dog.

11:04 a.m. Caller reports a black Jeep crossing the white line several times on Unity Street. Operator was avoiding potholes.

1:38 p.m. Food City store manager requests an officer to stand by while they speak to an employee about larceny.

5:41 p.m. Caller reports that he was at the Turners Falls post office and someone went into his locked car and stole a bag containing bank statements and important letters. Caller states someone has a duplicate key fob to his car and he has a hunch who it is. Wants on record.

5:55 p.m. Report of a suspicious auto and possible drug activity in front of the Pizza House. Gone on arrival.

6:09 p.m. Caller states that she was in Walgreens and when she came out, her gas

tank cover and cap were open and there were rocks in her gas tank. Officer advises incident happened at 5 p.m. Store video footage reviewed. No rocks were put into the tank; no one approached or touched the vehicle. Female party is accusing a male party of doing it because she told him she does not want to be friends with him anymore. Officers made contact with male party, who denies doing anything to the female's car. Several additional follow-up calls reporting tampering with gas cap.

10:29 p.m. 911 caller reports that she was trying to return a loose dog to its owner on Vladish Avenue, and when she got there the door was open, a window was broken, all the lights were on, and no one was answering. She is nervous someone may have broken in. Officers advised. Dog returned. No breaking and entering happened. Party who lives at location called in stating it's not funny for kids to call 911 when there is obviously no emergency, that no window was broken, that the door was cracked open because he was on his porch, and that there was no need for three officers to respond. Would like officers to return and explain usage of 911 to the caller.

Wednesday, 6/26

6:38 a.m. Caller from Eleventh Street reports her neighbors are outside yelling and arguing. Officer made contact with involved female party; she was in a verbal argument with her parents, and nothing physical occurred. Advised of options.

4:20 p.m. Caller reporting a smell of gas coming from a Fifth Street property as she was walking by. Officer advises it's not a gas smell, but there is an odor in the area, possibly marijuana.

5:22 p.m. Officer reporting sinkhole in the road on Chestnut Hill Loop, going approximately halfway across the road. Has a cone in it; someone also put sticks into it. Message left for DPW.

6:34 p.m. Caller reporting that the door to the Millers Falls Library was left open past their open hours. Officer walked through library; all seemed fine. Back door secured.

9:46 p.m. Officer advising that there is a strong odor of marijuana coming from a building at Industrial Boulevard and Millers Falls Road and extending into the area.

Thursday, 6/27

6:35 a.m. DPW requesting an officer at the bandshell at Unity Park to assist

with homeless individuals and trash. Officer removed a few items upon arrival, but most have been cleaned up by the individual who made the mess. Broken chairs and other items removed. Graffiti discovered inside bandshell.

10:46 a.m. Caller reports that his electric bike was stolen from outside the Shady Glen. His cell phone was with the bike. Owner not around to provide access to camera footage; will be back tomorrow. Officers requested to be on lookout.

1 p.m. Caller states that she was walking on the canal trail about an hour ago and saw a man knocked onto the ground by two dogs being walked by another man. He got up and continued walking, but she feels this was very aggressive and uncalled for.

Friday, 6/28

4:07 p.m. Report from Migratory Way of an injured bird that was in the road and is now sleeping on the caller's leg. Caller will leave the bird nearby, out of the road.

8:47 p.m. Message received in general mailbox reporting a dead cardinal in the caller's yard on Walnut Street; caller inquiring if the ACO wants to send the bird out for testing. Advised caller of options. Caller also reported that the other day a bear looked in her bedroom window, then walked under her neighbor's balcony. Advised to call PD or environmental police dispatch if the bear returns.

Saturday, 6/29

6:52 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street states there was just a loud explosion and the power went out. No public hazard. Ever-source *en route*.

11:22 a.m. Employee from Food City reporting a recent shoplifting incident that they have on video. Report taken.

11:24 a.m. Caller reports a suspicious vehicle, with trash and alcohol bottles around it, parked out of sight near the canal walking bridge at Tenth and G streets. Services rendered.

5:06 p.m. Caller reports an injured deer in a field off Montague City Road; unsure if it was hit or tried to jump the fence, but it appears to be struggling to get back up. Second caller states a small red car hit the deer and kept driving, and that the deer is definitely suffering. Third caller advising of same. Officer states deer probably has a broken leg, but got up and ran into the woods; unable to track where it is. No longer a hazard in the road.

10:29 p.m. Caller states

someone just came out from behind the Rendezvous wearing no pants, just a military-type jacket, and headed through the parking lot towards the bar. Officer advises individual not in area.

Sunday, 6/30

3:42 a.m. 911 caller reports a loud gathering on Unity Street; multiple people outdoors with loud music, and elevated voice levels. Homeowner advised of complaint.

1:29 p.m. Caller concerned about a truck driving on Canal Road with a few cars following it. People in vehicles were looking for a place to swim; were advised that the area is private property and provided some other options.

4:57 p.m. Yellow Lab found in area of tech school. Caller transported dog to shelter; shelter employee took custody.

7:04 p.m. 911 caller from Eleventh Street reports neighbors screaming at each other in the street. One left the area; no longer any issue.

10:29 p.m. 911 caller from Bridge Street reports her upstairs neighbor was pounding on her door and trying to "start something" with her. Sates he has now gone back to his apartment and she does not need anything further.

Monday, 7/1

12:09 a.m. 911 caller advises he can hear people yelling and arguing in the Eleventh Street area; states the noise is frequent. Area quiet at this time.

4:20 a.m. 911 caller states she was told by a third party that a male party she believes resides above the Second Street bar was beat up tonight. Referred to an officer.

9:32 a.m. Caller requesting PD assistance with tenant at Keith Apartments refusing to let the management company mow the lawn. Situation mediated.

Tuesday, 7/2


6:49 a.m. Caller from Nouria states that two nights ago a female left with a bag full of items without paying. Advised of options.

6:25 p.m. Food City employee states she received a call from a party who said he was punched in the mouth by another party. Employee checked outside and the suspect was still there; she is unsure if the victim is still on the scene. Officer spoke with male party; he is waiting on food and then will move along.

11:14 p.m. Caller reports a group of kids setting off fireworks on Central Street. Second call reporting same. Officer advised parties of the complaint.

see MPD next page

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MPD from previous pg
Wednesday, 7/3
5:43 p.m. Chief requesting on-duty sergeant check on a farm truck that appears to be dumping something into a stream off Wills Ferry Road. Operator has permission from landowner to use the waterway; advised to put up safety cones if they block the road.
6:21 p.m. Vehicle stop on Avenue A. A 32-year old Springfield man was arrested and charged with possession of a Class B substance with intent to distribute and conspiracy to violate drug law. A 29-year-old Westfield man was arrested and charged with possession of a Class B substance with intent to distribute, conspiracy to violate drug law, following too close, and obstructed/non-transparent windows. A 58-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested and charged with distribution of a Class B drug, subsequent offense, and conspiracy to violate drug law.
Thursday, 7/4
9:13 a.m. Caller reporting that a female party just urinated on the floor of the Third Street laundromat, and is now walking

out, wearing a blue tank top and gray shorts. Unable to locate.
10:06 p.m. Report of group setting off fireworks from the second-floor porch of a house on Second Street. Area search negative.
Friday, 7/5
10:28 a.m. A 34-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested and charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon and assault and battery, domestic, on an intimate partner.
7:03 p.m. Report of possible blocked culvert on Meadow Road; water running over road. Caller concerned about contamination from the farm land into the runoff water. Referred to conservation commission. Officer drove length of Meadow Road; no hazards observed. DPW advised.
8:15 p.m. Report of suspicious activity at Jarvis Pools; caller's daughter observed male party rattling the chain on the fence in an apparent attempt to gain access to the property. Investigated.
8:34 p.m. Report from Randall Road of fireworks being set off over cars, houses, and trees.

Resident advised to cease setting off fireworks. Resident advises he had already set off what he had with his granddaughter, and does not have any more. He was advised of the consequences if the PD has to return.
Saturday, 7/6
7:21 a.m. Upstairs neighbor reporting loud music coming from Montague Catholic Social Ministries. There is music playing, and it does seem kind of loud from inside the building. All doors are locked. Dispatch will attempt to contact keyholder.
7:23 a.m. Caller from Montague City Road states that she woke up to find strange writing inside her apartment on the walls. Advised to call back if any more suspicious activity occurs.
7:25 p.m. 911 caller from East Main Street reports he was assaulted by someone from the bar. He has a cut on his eye, but refuses an ambulance. Officer transporting male to Greenfield.
Sunday, 7/7
10:44 a.m. Food City employee witnessed three men get out of a gray Nissan Sentra and kick and punch a male party sitting

under a tree on the side of the parking lot near the bank. Officer requesting EMS for patient evaluation. Involved male refused medical treatment and declined to pursue charges.
3:18 p.m. Walk-in from H Street reporting his car was stolen. Form completed; information entered into NCIC.
4:16 p.m. Family Dollar employee reporting a woman has been shoplifting from all the stores in the plaza; needs an officer to come identify the woman so they can attempt to have her charged for stolen products. They have been tracking her on camera and believe she has stolen over \$300 in items. Nothing noticed on Family Dollar camera, but Aubuchon has footage of her stealing. Referred to an officer.
6:04 p.m. Walk-in reports that his wallet was stolen from a Sunderland Road address while he was at his nephew's birthday party. There have been fraud charges on the card since.
8:11 p.m. Nouria employee reporting a homeless person sleeping in one of the parking spaces. Male party moved along.

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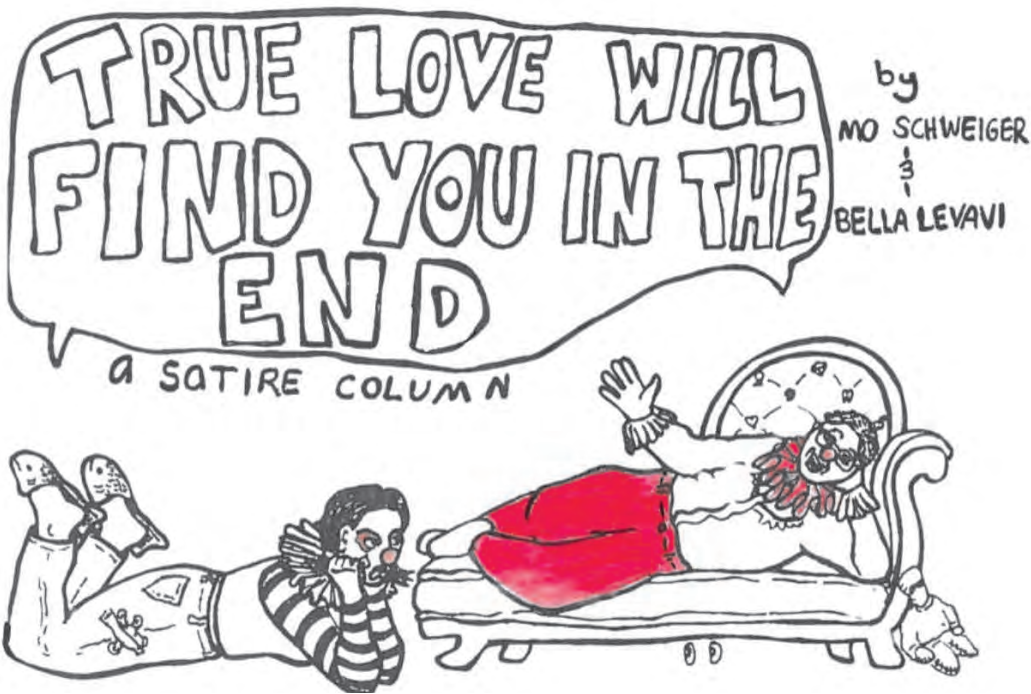
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The Montague Reporter Podcast



By MANDIE MUDBALLS

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Some call it polyamory. Some call it relationship anarchy. Some call it “we’re just talking.” Some call it a roster.
Welcome to hot girl summer: these are my boyfriends.
I firmly believe in the importance of having a roster of people that I am dating. Not because I don’t believe in heteronormative conceptions of hierarchy that perpetuate capitalist systems of oppression through the subjugation of so-called frivolous moments of extramarital joy, but because I value convenience.
Having many boyfriends ensures that I have a variety of types of dates I can choose to go on seven days a week. Feeling outdoorsy? I call my outside guy. Feeling intellectual? I call Stephen. Wanting to commune with my Yiddish roots? I call Zeizig Karl Zigler.
Having a few different boyfriends is great because it makes sure that I always have someone to compare the others to. It comes in handy especially if one of them starts slacking or slacklining (*ICK*). Why introspect about my own desires when I could pit men (gender neutral) against each other in my brain?

Another excellent reason to keep a harem of suitors around is to have a large audience sample size for the bits that I do in bed. Now I can truly know if wearing a sheet as a cape is objectively funny, or if it just tickled that one guy three years ago. (This particular bit isn’t always transferable though – they don’t always have a top sheet.)
Perhaps the best perk of having one boyfriend for every day of the week is that I always have an excuse to bow out of social obligations I am not enthusiastic about. Dinner party I don’t want to go to? Sorry, it’s me and James’ three-week anniversary! You have an extra ticket to your 19-year-old friend’s psych-rock show at Hawks & Reed? No can do, Sock is making me paella.
Without further ado, I’d like to introduce you to my roster. I hope you understand the gravity of this situation: my devoted readers are far more important to me than my family. This column is like these chumps meeting the parents, except there’s approximately one to two thousand of you rather than just my mom, other mom, and stepdad.
Shake their hands firmly, look them in the eye, and please for the love of God don’t wax poetic about your year on *kibbutz*.

Boyfriend #1: Smell
His tag: “Bag Lady.”

I knew Smell was a keeper when I saw his refrigerator. Yes, it was mostly empty except for three loose stalks of asparagus. But proudly displayed on its door, pinned to it with a magnetic painting of Robert Peter’s *Peskeompskut*, was a photo of him and his *Montague Reporter* from the “Montague Reporter On the Road” section of this paper.
Smell’s passion for green living is present in his most long-term art/gastronomic project: the Jug. At the end of every party he throws, Smell collects the dregs of alcohol left in the bottom of his partygoers’ cups and beer cans and puts them into a food-safe fermentation jug. He claims that he is trying to create a new kind of alcohol. Somehow the ABV of this substance hovers around 0.

Boyfriend #2

I don’t know his name, and at this point it’s far too late to ask. Let’s just call him #2. He is also allergic to spray paint, so he doesn’t have a tag.
#2 and I met at a mutual aid garage sale raising funds for a local freak’s pet rat’s eye surgery. (Need met!) On our first date, #2 served me ramps he had freshly foraged. On our second date, #2 served me trout caught in the section of the Sawmill River that runs through the Montague Plains. On our third date, #2 served me raccoon he had hit with his car. On our fourth date, #2 served me sliced ham. When I asked him where he got this ham, as everything else he had served me he foraged himself, he told me that he had traded it for some pork.
Meals aside, I was unsure about #2 on our first date due to the ambiance of his apartment. It was completely spare and lit by harsh overhead lighting. I wasn’t sure if it would be possible to fall in love in that light, let alone do some light kissing. I quickly moved past that, though, when I realized that #2’s apartment was an installation piece and that the overhead lighting was an ironic homage to normcore living.
We still hook up. He gets Tuesdays.

Boyfriend #3: Josh
His tag: “Spy Kid 2.”

Josh lives in Northampton. There is nothing remarkable about Josh. I keep him around for when I have business in Northampton.

Boyfriend #4: Mella
Tag: penises on Poet’s Seat Tower

Mella is actually a girl. Can’t a girl be a boyfriend in this day and age?
Mella has been described by many as a “white 23-year-old book-smart moron.” Aptly, she does standup comedy. (Funny.)
Every time we hang out, Mella wears the same decrepit white shirt, which says “Shame Shame Shame” on it right across the boobs. She tells me that she does not only wear this shirt when we hang out, but every day since she was given it at her best friend’s father’s funeral in 2017. At this point, it is more hole than shirt. When it’s in the wash, she doesn’t wear a shirt at all. She hopes that she can do a performance art piece in it before it returns to the Earth as dust.
Unlike everyone else in Franklin County, Mella has a desk job. Luckily, it’s a full hour away from where she lives, so no one knows she has one and can see her working. Unfortunately, upon starting the job, Mella experienced such harsh vibe dysphoria and restlessness that with her first paycheck she purchased a treadmill to keep under her desk and walk on while she types Instagram captions. After ordering it, though, Mella felt such shame about the fact that people might perceive it as buying into “wellness culture” that she left it on her doorstep for three weeks until someone stole it.
Mella has generational wealth. She is my Saturday boyfriend.

There you have it — these are my boyfriends. Happy hot girl summer, and if you see me playing two-person Monopoly pinball at the Millers Pub with someone different, no you don’t.
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Mandie Mudballs

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Juho Toivonen
Sisarusten
toistuva uni

MYSTRA REVIEWS #11

Review by JOSH B. & TROY C.

TURNERS FALLS – Juho Toivonen is a younger artist from Finland – still in his 20s, even – and here it is: a review of his first “long player” from this year.

I met Juho last year in Finland when we did a concert together. He also helped me on my journey across Finland, and I was really glad to have his help – I had never been. He showed me some of the sights and told me about Finland, and I told him some stories about the USA, about seeing Sun Ra play and meeting John Fahey, etc. It seemed to blow his mind that these were even real people – it seems like certain musicians from here are still very respected around the world. He was particularly interested in Michael Hurley stories... and there are some crazy ones, as most Snockophiles can attest.

I was also so thankful to have Troy’s help with this review, and am so glad to do another review together. He was psyched to hear this LP, as I told him that Juho was up his alley, and yeah, it blew him away! – **JB**

JB: Hey Troy. I’m listening to the Juho LP now! I’m also drinking a saison and pretending to be overseas, haha.

I just looked the LP title up, I guess the it means “Siblings’ Recurring Sleep.” It’s really mellow so far, but for his live set in Finland he did loud electronic stuff with effect pedals, etc. It was pretty different...

TC: “Siblings’ recurring sleep!” That’s so lovely and dreamlike. Like interwoven nature magic.

JB: Yeah, totally. So far it’s actually kind of like “self-taught” piano. It reminds me of other stuff, but he makes it his own.

There are bird noises now... definitely European ones. Maybe a finch or two?

Okay, now this song, track 4, is darker. It reminds me of my own band Tarp. This LP has a New Zealand vibe at times, too, a bit of Peter Jefferies or the Dead C. These darker tracks remind me of Sigtryggur Berg Sigmarsson, who our readers should also check out.

TC: The start is gorgeous. Right off, the first bits of sound turn into atmosphere of piano and recordings. It feels like one of those records that makes and keeps the magic and mystery of life. And those are gorgeous – they almost somehow create a feeling, like a drug perhaps, that can alter one’s world in the most profound and gorgeous way. Folks can make a bubble and just be in their own world in this music, which is a good place to explore.

JB: Yeah, it’s so cool... every year, more and more younger

people, making more music! And influencing each other... There is a guitar track, too. I didn’t know Juho played guitar.

I forgot to tell you, last year Juho told me to check out a Finnish beer made of tree bark. It was okay. Not my thing, really.

TC: I feel that this LP has a very homemade/bedroom vibe, which is refreshing. It reminds me of another time, and also as you mentioned a new time now, with many people doing many music explorations. I definitely think the vibe and field recordings are also in the same spirit as some of Siggy’s lovely music. It has a rural magic and vibe.

JB: Yeah, I love that aspect of the album – homemade/solo bedroom feels. I think it’s a good first LP. It reminds me of when I worked on my first solo album, and recorded it at home.

TC: Like the stuff that really seemed mysterious when we were younger. Yes. I love this. And just doing things – trying stuff and having fun. Also like Matt Krefting’s stuff. I’ve enjoyed Krefting’s recent LP!

JB: It reminds me of the Aguirre soundtrack, too. And, yeah... of being younger. The magic and mystery of those times.

TC: Yeah, total magic. There is that vibe with New Zealand artists who went under in the late ’80s and ’90s... and OMIT, also. Now there is more attention than ever to his works.

I love the piano and field recordings in Juho’s sound. I feel like people are able to really get lost in this music.

JB: I think if people like spacey, quiet DIY LPs they would probably like this.

TC: The Herzog/Popul Vuh really is a mind-blower. I’m grateful for that music. It’s gorgeous, and it’s all music that has this effect.

JB: I do really like this, more than I thought I would. I liked him live, though, so I figured it would be cool in some way.

TC: The LP is dreamlike.

JB: It’s very different from the show I played with him, and different than his vibe as a person... that’s OK, he has his different sides, of course, like we all do.

I like this thing he wrote online today: “As Juho approaches 27, it might seem like everything is going smoothly, but don’t worry. He is reaching his peak performance, so it will be all downhill from here.”

I am thinking very much the opposite! All the best to Juho.

TC: I’m thankful to you and folks like Juho who have channeled this music. I hope people get to hear this and other similar magic LPs.

FOOD from page B1

On his car is a map showing how the Palestinian territory has shrunk in size since 1947, and every two weeks he sets up a projector and screen after dusk to show documentaries on topics he’s passionate about, such as Palestine, permaculture, healing from trauma, non-violent communication, and yoga. He welcomes ideas and the next event is set for this Friday, July 12.

A native of the Boston area, Rob Lordi started selling vegan pizza in 2016 from his food truck in Austin, Texas, where the Small Business Alliance invented the compelling slogan, “Keep Austin Weird.” He became a vegetarian in 1994 and a vegan in 2016, “for the animals, for the environment, and for health. It’s not about being perfect, just doing the best I can do.” Lordi says he used to get sinus infections three or four times a year before becoming a vegan, but has been healthy ever since.

The name on the food truck is Stray’s, with details available at happycow.net and on Instagram @strayspizza. Over the Fourth of July weekend, the pizza special was “Bobo Feta,” with an olive oil base, shallots, garlic, cherry tomatoes, pepperoncini, tofu feta, and artichokes. He’s sharing the nearby garden boxes with Assad.

“I’ve been a pizza lover a lot longer than I’ve been a vegan,” said Lordi. “We make everything from scratch, including the dough, and it’s allergen-friendly.” In addition to the garden boxes, he’s also working with Warner Farm as a source of fresh vegetables.

Lordi realizes people can be worried about not having cheese as the main ingredient on their pizza. Instead he goes through a long process of culturing soy milk and following a recipe using pumpkin seeds or cashews.

“There’s no perfect simulation for cheese, but what we make tastes good, and that’s the important thing,” he said.

Lordi found the new spot for his food truck last year while attending RPM Fest where he met bass guitarist Pete Chilton, also co-owner of Nova Motorcycles, which owns the parking lot across Second Street. Pete’s wife Carla was vegan and loved Rob’s pizza, and Rob discovered that Nova’s mission statement emphasized drawing more activity to the area. Instant synergy.

“We were first attracted to our location here because of how active the area is, and we thought it would be cool to have more people hang out in this spot,” said Sayre Anthony, co-owner of Nova, which repairs vintage motorcycles. “We wanted to create an open and inclusive atmosphere rather than just offer a transactional service. We bonded with the kids at the skate park, and now the food trucks are taking off too.”

The foundation was laid several years ago when the Santo Taco food truck opened up at the site and electrical connections were installed. During the pandemic, Anthony’s girlfriend Marcy opened a shaved ice business, Nice. Snack Parlor, that’s still operating off and on through a window at the Nova building.

“Both Ismail and Rob have their own followings and that makes for a lot of crossover, so it’s worked out great,” said Anthony.

Lordi also found himself simpatico with Assad, his new food truck neighbor. He told Assad about his experience with the “free fridge project” in Austin, and the pair are now making plans to follow through.

“Ismail is a really impressive guy,” said Lordi. “We’re definitely like-minded. People have a difficult time asking for help, and this will be a way to make it easier.”

Similar to his experience in Austin, Lordi is a big fan of the foodie community in Turners Falls.

“Everybody’s interested in creating community here,” he said. “It’s definitely my vibe as far as politics and the social scene.”

Now, Assad and Lordi are creating a whole new vibe in what used to be just a parking lot: it’s farm to table in just 25 feet.



GAGNON PHOTO

At top: Ismail Assad takes a customer’s order at the Mobawk Shawarma and Falafel window.
Middle: Customers place pizza orders next door at Stray’s.
Bottom: Flower and herbs growing in raised beds line the edge of the pop-up food court.

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LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on July 3, 2014: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

No to the Pipeline

Montague residents will join others from towns across Massachusetts to march along the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline route on July 13.

Peter Hudyma, one of the Montague organizers, said the route follows the proposed pipeline as closely as possible, through an area where local action has defeated proposals for both a nuclear power plant and a Nestle bottling plant.

The proposed pipeline is a high-pressure, 36-inch gas pipeline that would carry natural gas, mostly produced in Appalachia by hydraulic fracturing or "fracking," through Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts. Construction would require clearing excavation and blasting in some areas. Ruptures in pipelines of this size occasionally cause extremely hot, long-lasting fires.

Yes to the Post Office

On Monday, over 25 residents of Wendell and New Salem packed the hearing room at the Wendell town offices to strategize about saving the Wendell Post Office.

This citizen action is in response to a letter and survey from the United States Postal Service (USPS) asking residents whether they preferred the post office closed or the hours cut.

Most spoke of their love for and reliance upon the Wendell postmaster, Charlie O'Dowd, who has held his post for 25 years, and who has confided in some residents that he will not be able to stay on if his hours or benefits are cut.

"When my husband was very ill," Patti Scutari said, "when [Charlie] got a box that sounded like pills, he would call me."

"In Wendell," added resident Chris Queen, "internet access is so bad, [USPS] may think we can do a lot more on the internet than we can."

20 YEARS AGO

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

Wagon Wheel Opens

The Wagon Wheel opened its doors on Route 2 in Gill on June 30. The restaurant offers picnic tables outside and a countertop with tables and chairs inside. Owners Carolann Zaccara and Jon Miller said they wanted an eatery with the atmosphere of a '50s-style drive-in. "All kinds of people come here," Miller said, "mostly local, but I often see a lot of out-of-state plates."

Night Kitchen Opens

The Night Kitchen opened on June 16, in the space formerly occupied by the Blue Heron, above the rushing falls of the Sawmill River. The interior is rustic and simple, with white walls, exposed beams, and iron works.

Proprietors Max Brody and Peter Hitchcock met while studying at the Culinary Institute of America. Hitchcock manages the operations, while Brody works his magic in the kitchen. Brody explained that they provide locally-produced foods whenever possible.

150 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on July 1, 1874: News from the Turners Falls Reporter's archive.

Local Matters

It was 102 hot yesterday. Geo. Wood has again made us his debtor. This time for a very neat rat rack. We thank him.

The Crocker Institution for Savings has declared a semi-annual dividend of three per cent, payable July 1.

A copy of the Lynn Reporter comes to us to-day dated June 13 and addressed - "Reporter, Turners Falls, Whitfield, North Me., Montague, Mass." No extra postage.

A certain hotel keeper in this vicinity was contemptible enough to tell some transient customers who happened into his house on their way to Turners Falls that Landlord Holden could not accommodate their party - some twenty-four persons, and advised them to stay at his place. Landlord

Holden had eighty-seven transient, beside his regular boarders on Thursday last, and was able to take care of all of them.

The dedication of Colle Hall last Wednesday evening was a very fine affair, and was enjoyed by all who had the good fortune to be present. An extra train from Greenfield brought a large party, the Greenfield Amateur Orchestra, sixteen pieces. Plates for over 140 couples had been laid, and a bountiful supper provided. Mrs. Colle certainly deserves credit for her management of this portion of the entertainment. Everything was so arranged that no more confusion occurred than if it were a common home tea party.

And now it is Dr. Welles and Col. D.A. Wood who have been extending strawberry courtesies. We acknowledge a couple of baskets of beauties from these gentlemen, and we appreciate them. It takes off some of the rough edges of editorial life to have our friends thus remember us.



THEATER from page B1

concludes with a facilitated community conversation.

The 90-minute performances at the town-owned theater, located at 71 Avenue A, are scheduled for Friday and Saturday, July 26 and 27, and Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, August 1 through 3, all at 7:30 p.m., as well as 2 p.m. Sunday matinees on July 28 and August 4.

Tickets cost \$25 to \$50, with a "pay what you can option" available for anyone; masks are required at the Sunday matinee performances.

"This story portrays a family enduring difficult times but also cherishing beautiful and joyful moments," Linda Tardif, the Shea's managing director, wrote to the Reporter. "All experiences and emotions are embraced by our audiences. Resources will be available for free in our lobby, and we aim to foster community connectedness through facilitated discussions after each show."

The performers developed the show over five years through improvisational workshops. The actors, coming from New York City, Ithaca, Copenhagen, and western Massachusetts, gathered intermittently to improvise together, drawing inspiration from characters, scenes and monologues in Shakespeare's play, director Tony Vera Bercovici explained.

"Some parts of the play were improvised from the start, while others I wrote separately," said Bercovici.

The group has performed readings of the work at the Shea Theater in the past. "The theater has been our artistic home for the project," Bercovici said. "We are excited to bring the finished show."

The creators collaborated closely with memory care organizations, caretakers, and families and individuals coping with memory loss.

"The impetus for creating the piece was to comprehend something unfamiliar, yet deeply meaningful to people," said Bercovici. "Most of those involved in the production have caregiving experience.... We hope to use the play to explore these experiences and foster a collective sharing of challenges, joys, and wisdom."

In an effort to involve people and caregivers currently dealing with Alzheimer's disease, the actors will also perform at the Lathrop Retirement Community in Easthampton and Day Brook Village Senior Living in Holyoke, and will hold a free community performance at the Northampton Senior Center, where a respite room will be made available for older adults with cognitive challenges or dementia, allowing caregivers to attend the play on Tuesday, July 30, at 1 p.m. The respite room will be staffed by professionals from Cooley Dickinson's Pioneer Valley Memory Care Initiative. (Space in the room is limited and will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.)

"I create theater to prepare for moments in life that I haven't yet experienced - to learn through the rehearsal process," Bercovici said. "I believe people attend theater to understand aspects of what it means to be human so that when they encounter challenges in life, they are emotionally and kinesthetically prepared for those moments. This play delves into the heart of these incredibly challenging life moments."



EXHIBIT ANNOUNCEMENT

Landscapes: Endangered and Preserved

MONTAGUE CENTER - Meg Ricks has been painting as part of Southern California Artists Painting for the Environment (SCAPE) for over a decade now. This collective of artists, along with the Oak Group, has protected over 27 miles of California coastline between Ventura and Lompoc. Artists, that is, working with activists, conservationists, research scientists, and everyone from individuals to national non-profit organizations devoted to land protection.

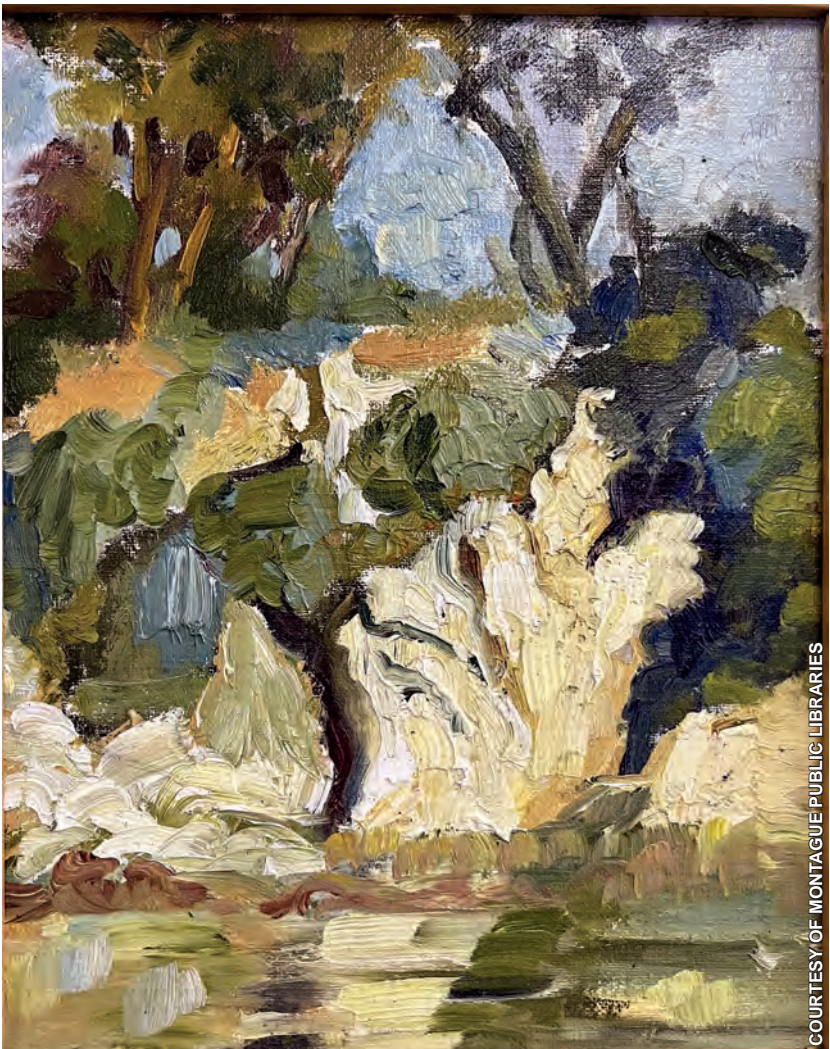
The Oak Group was founded in 1986 by Ray Strong and Arturo Tello with the goal of artists working together to support land conservation in central and southern California. It was by invitation only, to professional artists, and numbered about one to two dozen people at most over the years.

By 2002 Larry Iwerks, an original member of the Oak Group, realized that there were a lot of other artists who wanted to do something for environmental causes. He suggested forming a second organization, open to anyone but with juried exhibits to preserve the quality of artwork shown. This became SCAPE.

Now with close to two hundred members, SCAPE puts on three to five shows a year and sponsors workshops, field trips, and other artistic activities. "Saving the environment one painting at a time" is its motto. Paint-outs for members take place once a month. All important is the welcoming weekly paint-out, open to anyone, member or not.

The Oak Group and SCAPE use similar models: a piece of land that is threatened with development is identified, and artists paint there over a period of weeks or months. Meanwhile, members of the organization locate groups with resources to help buy or otherwise protect the land. Community activists, national environmental groups, scientists, and others cooperate to make the case for saving all or some of the land from development.

For example, right now in the eastern end of California's Central



COURTESY OF MONTAGUE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Meg Ricks painted *Cliff Reflections at Goleta Beach*, a county park in Santa Barbara County, California. A reception will be held Wednesday, July 24 for *Landscapes: Endangered and Preserved*, Ricks's current exhibit at the Montague Center branch library.

Coast, a Los Angeles-based property developer wants to build a luxury hotel on about 30 acres of coastal land, adjacent to about 30 acres already saved by artists as the "Carpinteria Bluffs Preserve." Before the first town meeting on the topic, dozens of artists from SCAPE and Oak Group were out there painting.

At the same time, toward the western end of the area, the Gaviota Coast - the last undeveloped coast in California - is being threatened with massive mega-mansion development. Conservation groups are working on funding the purchase of the threatened land.

It takes a lot of coordination and

experience to put all this together, but both groups have been lucky to be able to call on individuals who can share expertise, help locate interim funding, and otherwise work together to support preservation. In addition to raising funds for conservation, artists call attention to the crisis through exhibitions of the paintings made on the threatened land.

To see some of the paintings Ricks has done as part of these conservation efforts, visit the Montague Center Library this summer. The library is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 2 to 7 p.m. and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

An artist reception will be held Wednesday, July 24 from 6 to 7 p.m.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY, JULY 11

Energy Park, Greenfield: *Jim Eagan, Joe Graveline, 133 Skeele*. Free. 6 p.m.

FRIDAY, JULY 12

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Zydeco Connection*. Free. 6:30 p.m.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Isaac Fosl-van Wyke, Nick Panken, Bella Levavi*. \$. 7 p.m.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *Happy Valley Glass Juggers*. No cover. 7 p.m.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Hannah Mohan, Stefan Weiner, Ruby Lou*. \$. 7 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene NH: *Madou Sidiki Diabaté & Salif Bamakora, Princess Kikou*. \$. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *KRS-One*. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Signature Dish, Mavrodaphne*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Lowliest One, PV, Flora Algera*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 13

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Wendell Reggae Fest feat. Rhythm Inc., Wheel Out, Soul Keys, Chop City Rebelz*, more. \$. 2 p.m.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *The Sheaves, Chronophage, Creative Writing, Magick Lantern*. \$. 6 p.m.

Montague Common Hall, Montague: open mic feat. *Claire Dacey, John-Michael Field*. No cover. 6:30 p.m.; signup at 6:15 p.m.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Layaali Arabic Music Ensemble*. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Cinemastorm* double feature: *Super Mario Bros.* (1993), *Mortal Kombat* (1995). Free. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Bag Lady, Always Manic, Cora Monroe, Kim Chin-Gibbons*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Christine Ohlman & Rebel Montez*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Shawn Colvin, KT Tunstall*. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *The Bad Signs, The Greys*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 14

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: *Do It Now!* Free. 2 p.m.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Faun Fables*. \$. 6 p.m.

Clark Art Institute, Williamstown: *Ximena Bodeya, Loculus Collective*. \$. 6 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene NH: *Cecilia Zabala, Wendy Eisenberg trio*. \$. 7 p.m.

Space Ballroom, Hamden, CT: *HIRS Collective, Doom Beach*,

Fafa, En Masse. \$. 8 p.m.

MONDAY, JULY 15

Buoyant Heart, Brattleboro: *AT and the Fantasy Suites, Leaf Glitter*. \$. 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, JULY 16

Bookends, Florence: *bobbie, Georgie, Bugcatcher, Cowper-son*. \$. 7 p.m.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Chaser, Swamp God, Hauzu, Clockserum & Tempestade*. \$. 7 p.m.

Tanglewood, Lenox: *The Pretenders*. \$. 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17

Montague Common, Montague Center: *Farley Nine*. Free. 6 p.m.

THURSDAY, JULY 18

Energy Park, Greenfield: *John Stacey & Friends, Russ Thomas, Pat & Tex LaMountain*. Free. 6 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Steve Earle*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JULY 19

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Emergency Group, Psychic Temple, Contour, World Research Lab*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

Easthampton Media, Easthampton: *Tony Vacca and Fusion Nomads*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: movie in the park, *Labyrinth*. Free. 7:45 p.m.

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: Fly-wheel Arts presents *Feminine Aggression, Tempestade & Clockserum, Juana B Ontop*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 20

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Michael Nix*. Free. 12 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Bim Skala Bim, King Django, Beige, Foolish Relics, Solgyres*. \$. 3 p.m.

Turners Falls Gun Club, Millers Falls: *Afterglo*. \$. 7 p.m.

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Magpie*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *I Draw Slow*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Trans Inclusive Crime Syndicate*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, JULY 21

Just Roots Farm, Greenfield: *Burikes*. \$. Benefit for Mohawk Shawarma. 2 p.m.

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Leah Kunkel*. \$. 4 p.m.

Black Birch Vineyard, Hatfield: *Loudon Wainwright III*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Samuel Boat*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, JULY 23

Mystery Train, Amherst: *Eric Arn, Jeff Unfortunately, Head of Wantastiquet*. \$. 6 p.m.

looking forward...

WEDNESDAY, JULY 24

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Mark Femino, Haunted by Possums, Wayside Sound, Travis Heeter*. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, JULY 25

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Rong, Black Matter Device*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, JULY 26

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Madison McFerrin, Daisy Skelton, Kimaya Diggs, Kendra McKinley, DJ Badcatch*. Free. 5:30 p.m.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Tyvek, Stefan Christensen, Time Thief*. \$. 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, JULY 27

Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Ruth Garbus Trio*. \$. 8 p.m.

MONDAY, JULY 29

Iron Horse, Northampton: *M. Ward*. \$. 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1

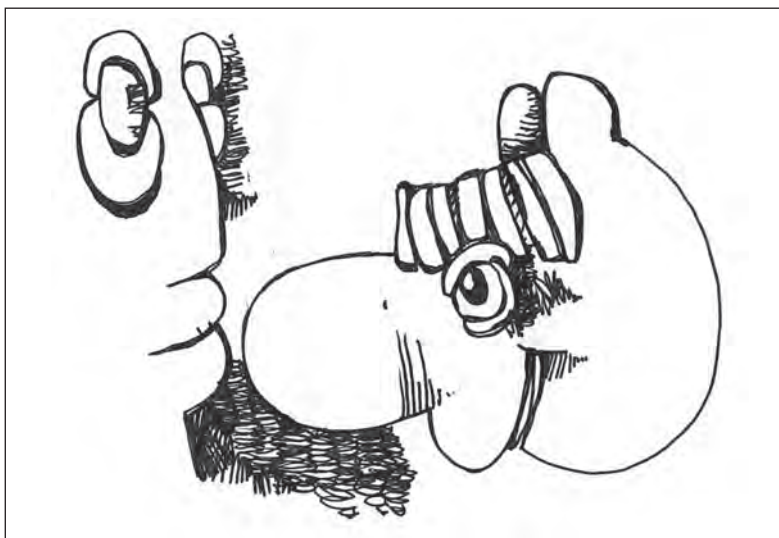
Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, Slow Pony, DJ Bongohed*. \$. 7 p.m.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 4

The Drake, Amherst: *Mannequin Pussy, Ovlov*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 9

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Marissa Nadler, Joseph Allred, Glenn Jones*. \$. 7 p.m.



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MEMORY
MEMORY

First Time at the Leverett Sawmill

By ALICE HARRIS

I fastened my helmet and threw my leg over the back of my boyfriend’s big BMW motorcycle. We had a perfect sunny day as we rode out of Amherst, past neat houses and farms, past acres of serene woodlands. It was July 4, 1974, and when Russ had read the announcements of the holiday activities, he had decided that visiting the Leverett sawmill was a must-do.

That’s guy stuff! Why would I care how planks are cut? Besides, I’m a city girl. What do I want out in the country?

But he had driven all the way from Cambridge to celebrate this holiday with me. I was a graduate student at Harvard and had come to the University of Massachusetts Amherst for the eight-week Linguistic Institute they were hosting that year.

After a while, the mill appeared – a weathered wooden barn-like building, across from a yellow house and a church at a T-intersection. We drove around the corner to get a better view of the water. The placid mill pond reflected the blue sky and powder-puff clouds. The rushing rapids of the falls raised my pulse. Maybe this could be fun.

Entering the mill, we saw that we were the only visitors. The one man running it welcomed us, then squared his shoulders and stood tall.

“This mill has been here since before the Revolution. It’s powered by the river outside. That’s the Sawmill River.” Pause. “There used to be twenty-two mills on this river, but this is the last one left.”

“Where’s the wheel?” Russ asked.

“You can’t see it. It’s under the floor over in that corner.” He pointed. “The water wheel turns this saw and makes the log carriage move, but I can disengage it with this lever here....”

He continued proudly, “See that log on the carriage now? This mill can cut one up to 42 feet long.” The carriage was a long, narrow platform carrying a straight log about

fourteen inches in diameter. It ran lengthwise in the building, and the saw blade was near the middle of the structure. When the operator turned it on, the blade whirled, and the log and carriage traveled smoothly into it, with no jolt when the log hit the blade. The saw blade made lengthwise cuts of the whole log.

“Wow! How cool!” I gushed. “Do you own the place?” I ventured tentatively, wanting to prolong the conversation.

“Nah. I just work here part time. It’s been owned by a lot of people – the Glaziers and Taylors, right now the Kirley family’s got it.”

The operator didn’t offer to repeat the cutting, but we still hung around until he seemed to grow tired of us. Reluctantly, we put our helmets and leathers back on and pulled out onto the road.

Some guy things can be really interesting, I admitted to myself.

I held on to this experience for decades, but I hadn’t paid much attention to the name of the town. Then, in 2009, my husband, Jim, and I moved to UMass as faculty members. We looked at houses in Amherst, Northampton, and Pelham before finally finding one that we loved in Leverett. A couple of months after moving in, we were driving down Cave Hill Road, when I spied the mill. Recognizing it immediately, I said to Jim, in a voice full of excitement, “There’s the sawmill I was telling you about.... Right here in Leverett!”

I was thrilled to have it as my neighbor. Though time has changed many things, the mill is still there. It reminds me that I should always be ready for adventure of any kind – guy thing or not.

Alice Harris is a professor of linguistics at UMass Amherst. She lives in Leverett. Sources consulted for this article include Michael Hoberman’s 2000 book Yankee Moderns: Folk Regional Identity in the Sawmill Valley of Western Massachusetts, 1890-1920 (University of Tennessee Press) and the Friends of the North Leverett Sawmill website.

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