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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

CHECK OUT TIME



WILL QUALE PHOTO

Montague Public Libraries Trustees Lydia Ievins (left) and Miryam Vesset pack children's books into boxes at the Millers Falls branch library following Monday night's meeting of the Trustees. All of the books and DVDs at the branch are being loaded into a storage pod on the library grounds, and starting this Friday, September 27, the branch will be closed for refurbishment for two or three weeks – more likely three, Trustees chair Will Quale tells the Reporter.

When the branch re-opens, Quale says, it will have fresh paint and carpeting and an adaptable new layout. A circulation desk, hand-crafted by Gill CC Woodworks, will be delivered in November. "Sprucing up and improving the food pantry is part of the refurbishment," he adds, though as Food Bank of Western MA policy does not allow temporary pickup sites, the pantry will also be temporarily closed. "We've done our best to alert families who use the food pantry that the Survival Center in Turners Falls is an alternative for them during this time," Quale says.

The planned renovations reportedly come at no cost to the town – the Trustees approved money from the Libraries' donations fund, which will be combined with state aid in what Quale calls a "nearly 50/50 split." Participants in the inmate work program at the Franklin County Sheriff's Office will do the painting.

Orange Rent Control Board Meets Mobile Home Park's Owner Halfway

By SARAH ROBERTSON

ORANGE – Residents of the Leisure Woods Estates mobile home park applauded the Orange rent control board's decision Tuesday night to approve a rent hike of about 25%, phased in over the next two years, for land at the park. The meeting at the Orange town hall, which lasted about 25 minutes, was the rent control board's fourth since June when it began to officially consider the park owners' request for a 43% rent increase.

"On the one hand, we are acutely aware that the tenants of Leisure Woods generally have limited means, and a rent increase of any amount will have a significant impact on them," rent control board chair Jane Peirce said at the meeting. "On the other hand, we must strive to provide the owners of Leisure Woods with a fair operating income."

On December 1, the cost to rent a lot at Leisure Woods Estates with water, electric, and sewer hookups for a mobile home will increase from \$410.40 to \$462, after taxes. One year later, it will increase to \$512.

After the members of the board see **RENT** page A5

Montague Has Land to Build New Housing, First Needs to Update Plan

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard, at its Monday meeting, endorsed an application for a federal grant to update the town's Housing Production Plan, an obscure but important document in the complex process of evaluating and increasing its stock of affordable housing. This has been an important goal for Montague, as well as other towns in the region, not only because of the impact of increased housing costs in recent years but because a state law, Chapter 40B, can allow developers to override local zoning regulations if the stock of affordable housing falls below a certain threshold.

Town planner Maureen Pollock, who requested the board's letter of support, said the town's previous housing plan was written in 2015 and had "expired." "They should ideally be updated every five or ten years," she said.

Montague's request for funds to develop its housing plan will be part of a multi-town application to the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), coordinated by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG).

see **HOUSING** page A7

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Mill Demo Details Develop; Trained Cops Offered Bonus

By JEFF SINGLETON

At its meeting Monday night, the Montague selectboard heard updates on the plan to demolish the historic Strathmore mill complex and approved a short-term scheme to give \$10,000 signing bonuses to police officers who have already been certified at the police academy.

The board also endorsed an application for money to help the town develop a new Housing Production Plan (see article on this page).

Town administrator Walter Ramsey updated the board on the project to demolish the historic paper mill complex using a combination of state and federal grants totaling just



Building 11 of the Strathmore (above) will not be spared the wrecking ball.

under \$10 million. He said that the project had "really started in earnest last week, with two big meetings."

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Towns Pool Settlement Cash To Fund Recovery Programs

By KEITH WATERS

The Erving selectboard met on Monday, September 23. Much of the meeting was taken up by a presentation by Phoebe Walker, community health director at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), and Erving board of health chair Jeffrey McAndrews on the subject of a national opioid settlement.

The settlement was reached between 29 states and four entities involved in the manufacture and distribution of opioid-based medications. Walker and FRCOG did a thorough job of clarifying how, why, and for what this money is being distributed.

To simplify it greatly, the four companies had been subject to a great number of lawsuits from a large number of states and municipalities for their roles in the US's ongoing opioid crisis, and they enticed the attorneys general of 29 states to take a \$26 billion settlement.

The money will be paid out over the course of 18 years, with 60% going to the states and 40% distributed to individual towns. The money for the towns was allocated first by breaking it up by county, and then by some rather less effective factors, such as number of paid staff in each town's school system.

see **ERVING** page A3

GILL SELECTBOARD

Gill Energized by Engines, But Tired of Tire Hiccups



SAVAGE PHOTO

The Gill selectboard took a break from their meeting Monday to let deputy fire chief William Kimball (center) show them the town's newest capital acquisition.

By KATE SAVAGE

At Monday's meeting, the Gill selectboard celebrated the town's shiny new firefighting brush truck, but expressed frustration about remaining truck-related expenses.

"I wonder if Pete's Tires has thought about giving Gill an award," selectboard chair Greg Snedeker mused.

"Most Likely to Buy Tires?" suggested town administrator Ray Purington.

Deputy fire chief William Kimball requested \$1,018 for six

all-season aggressive-tread tires so the new truck can go off-road, as well as \$856 to paint the rims red.

Kimball said the department had asked the outfitter, MHQ Truck Equipment, to put all-terrain tires on the vehicle, but "they failed to order it."

"If I bought a vehicle and it didn't have the tires I wanted, I'd bring the vehicle back," offered selectboard member Charles Garbiel.

Kimball suggested the town could write to MHQ with the tire complaint, "and see if they'll honor

see **GILL** page A6

High School Sports Week: Cross-Town Challengers

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – The Franklin Tech Football Eagles doled out another decisive rout this week as they knocked down the Frontier Red Hawks 36-7. Tech's hybrid girls' soccer team saw their shutout streak doused, while Tech and Turners Falls High went *mano a mano* in two sports – with the underdogs surprising the favorites in both matches.

Field Hockey

Southwick 8 – TFHS 0
FCTS 5 – TFHS 3

Last Thursday, September 19, the Southwick Rams outplayed the

Blue Thunder to the tune of 8-0.

"They're a very good team," one of the grandmothers observed. I agreed: Southwick has a crop of very skillful student athletes. The Rams have had excellent teams for years, from basketball to softball. So it wasn't surprising that the score was so one-sided, especially since Turners has eight seventh-graders.

The visitors rarely broke formation, passing the ball down the field with slap-backs, no-look passes, and shots to the open field where a teammate was racing to. They had no reserve players, incidentally, so the starters played the entire game,

see **SPORTS** page A6



DAVID HOULT PHOTO

Franklin County Tech Eagles senior captain Hannab Gilbert (left) dribbles toward the goal last Friday, closely defended by Turners Falls Thunder senior captain Ella Guidaboni. Gilbert scored four goals in the Tech's 5-3 home win.



Home of the Original Slow News Week

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The Montague Reporter

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August 2002

Autumn Leaves

A hurricane is bearing down on Florida, as of press time “forecast to grow into one of the largest storms in the Gulf of Mexico in the last century” (CNN). The National Weather Service is warning of “catastrophic and unsurvivable” 20-foot storm surges.

Finland and the Czech Republic have argued that NATO member states should provide Ukraine with long-range ballistic missiles to attack the Russian interior, and the United States and United Kingdom are reportedly seriously considering it. On Thursday morning the Biden administration announced a \$7.9 billion “surge” in support to the Ukrainian war effort, including long-range Joint Standoff Weapon (JSOW) munitions, though the US is not authorizing actually firing them into Russia.

Nearly simultaneously, Putin announced that Russia will now view any conventional attack on its territory backed by a nuclear state as akin to a joint attack by the sponsor state.

Israel, having failed earlier this year to goad Iran into a cycle of retaliatory escalation by bombing its embassy complex in Syria and killing one of its generals, has finally found better luck with Hezbollah, and the war is exploding. Israel has carried out thousands of airstrikes this week and is now preparing for a ground invasion, and a half a million Lebanese people so far have fled their homes. The Institute for the Study of War additionally reported on Wednesday that a coalition of militias appears to be mobilizing as many as

40,000 fighters along the Syrian border with the disputed, or occupied, Golan Heights.

The US is calling for a cease-fire. Netanyahu, who it is widely acknowledged can only stay in power as long as his country remains at war, forcefully dismissed this and bombed Beirut again.

Here in the States, the 45,000 workers at 36 East Coast and Gulf Coast ports responsible for handling about 72% of all goods imported into the country are threatening to strike on Tuesday. Negotiations on the “master” contract between their union, the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA), and the entity representing the shipping lines and terminal operators, the US Maritime Association (USMX), broke down in July, and the two sides are eyeball to eyeball as the October 1 strike date approaches.

The workers are seeking substantial wage and benefit increases, but they argue that their compensation accounts for just 1% of the price US consumers pay for goods, and that the global shipping companies have taken advantage of COVID-era pricing and supply-chain disruptions to engage in serious price gouging.

The Biden administration maintains that it would not flex its executive anti-union power to seek an injunction against the strike, and since this is an election year, the GOP has picked up hungrily on the issue and is making hay accusing Biden of weakness, a “failure” to crush the union.

The “October surprise” is starting to seem old-fashioned.

Misunderstanding ‘No’

The broad brushstrokes in the September 12 letter “Getting Beyond ‘No’,” in which seemingly an entire generation practices anti-developmentalism, cries out for some tweaking.

Is it not true that some developments are simply not good? On the other hand, some developments are quite good. I believe the lowered cost of solar voltaics is a good thing. I also believe clear-cutting a mature forest for industrial solar installations is not. There is science out there that leads me to believe that.

I also believe offshore wind energy is a good thing if done properly. If poorly sited or implemented, it can be a bad thing – Cape Wind was an example of the latter.

The writer closes his piece with this: “We must embrace challenges – and opportunities – of the future, and admit that local compromises are necessary.”

Why just “local” compromises? How about state or national compromises?

Using poor solar siting as an example, when will state and national governments realize clear-cutting mature, naturally carbon-capturing forests – which do the work of drawing CO₂ emissions out of our beleaguered atmosphere 24/7/365 for free, among other things – is counterproductive?

Don Ogden
Florence

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Pam Allan installed her art exhibit, Wax, Water and String, at the Rendezvous in Turners Falls on a recent Saturday morning. The show includes 30 recent encaustic pieces, ten watercolors culled from sketchbooks over the years, and five embroidered samplers – examples of pandemic lockdown patience. A reception is planned for Sunday, October 20, from 4 to 6 p.m.

Letters to the Editors

Headline Misleading, Article Too Long

Regarding your September 19 front-page article about US Representative Jim McGovern headlined “INVESTIGATION: Corporate Cash Still Flows Toward Rep, Despite Pledge,” I fixed the headline for you. If I may, “BLOCKBUSTER: McGovern Keeps Pledge to Refuse Corporate PAC Money, Continues to Champion Campaign Finance Reform, Still Has To Function Within the Current Broken System!”

Question, did the person who wrote the headline read the lengthy article? If so, they made a decision to be deliberately misleading, which pisses me right off, since many people scan newspapers reading and remembering the headlines only, and this piece was so lengthy that I would guess most people did not read it to the end.

In fact, the article confirms that McGovern has kept his pledge to not accept corporate PAC money. Does he accept other contributions? Yes, as do all other reps. Why? Because they have to function within the existing broken system.

McGovern’s very first speech as a US Representative was for the need for campaign finance reform, which he still pushes for, but to be a champion of progressive causes, he has to keep his seat and needs money to do so. As he said in his September 19 interview on *The Fabulous 413*, “If people think I’m being

influenced by corporate interests, then I would suggest that they look at my voting record.”

By the way, he funnels a large amount of his campaign donations to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee “for one reason, I want us to win the House back.” As should we all. We can’t pass progressive legislation, much less push back against the threat of Republican authoritarianism, if we don’t win a majority in the House.

Let’s all work to elect Democrats up and down the ballot in November to move progressive policies forward.

Anne Jemas
Turners/Great Falls

An editor responds:

Thanks for the feedback! Dusty Christensen’s article, which appeared first at The Shoestring, highlights a loophole in a pledge announced by many progressive lawmakers including Rep. McGovern to reject “corporate PAC” contributions: it rests on the Federal Election Commission’s official classification of trade association PACs as distinct from corporate PACs, even though the former often bundle contributions from corporations and even from corporate PACs, and even though some are simply corporate trade associations.

We think this is a newsworthy issue, deserving of better public understanding and scrutiny.

Headlines on the topic in other publications include: “Corporate cash leaking into Democratic campaigns despite ‘no-corporate-PAC’ pledge” (OpenSecrets, April 2019); “These House Democrats Pledged Not to Take Corporate Cash – but They’re Using a Loophole to Do It Anyway” (The Intercept, April 2019); “Business money flows through gaps in anti-corporate PAC pledge” (Roll Call, March 2020); “Despite no corporate money pledges, Democratic federal candidates keep taking it” (New Mexico In Depth, July 2020); “\$6M flows through loopholes in pledge against corporate PACs” (Roll Call, April 2021); and “Jared Golden gets increasing special interest money despite ‘no corporate PAC’ vow” (Bangor Daily News, July 2024).

On the other side of the aisle, the press is also giving attention to companies which vowed to stop donating to candidates who supported overturning the 2020 election results, but have continued to do so indirectly through the same trade-association-PAC loophole.

In both scenarios, we believe the preposition “despite” is warranted. (To your question, the author of the headline read the article.)

“I believe the perception of corruption, even where it doesn’t exist, must be addressed if we’re going to restore faith in our government,” Rep. McGovern wrote in a CNN editorial back in February 2019. “[W]hen voters see economic policies that favor the rich, and inaction on climate change despite all the evidence of its impact, they’re left wondering who politicians are working for. I don’t want there to be any question about whom I’m working for.”

Out of curiosity: Do you see any reason for lawmakers to eschew corporate PAC money in the first place? As you describe it, the more money Democrats accept from business, the more likely they will be to win majorities in Congress, putting them in a better position to pass legislation to end the “current broken system.” Was the pledge wrong-headed in and of itself? – Ed.

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The North Quabbin **Garlic & Arts Festival** – “the festival that stinks” – is this weekend at Forster’s Farm in Orange. Visit the farm between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. to enjoy music, entertainment, crafts for sale, food vendors, games, and free art-making, and learn about local resources, healing arts, and renewable energy during some of the 50 or more workshops offered. There will be electric cars on display, and folks can learn about building and cooking in a wood-burning oven.

Weekend admission is free for kids 12 and under; \$5 for students, seniors, and EBT, WIC, and Health Connector card holders; and \$10 for general admission for adults. Learn more at garlicandarts.org.

This Sunday, September 29, at 2:30 p.m., Jim Terapane of the Museum of Our Industrial Heritage will give a talk about **the origins of Franklin County’s most influential industries** at the Discovery Center in Turners Falls.

Enjoy refreshments starting at 2 p.m. while DCR staff introduce the new Great Hall exhibit, *A First Class Machine Shop*. Terapane will talk about how the industrial heritage endures today through the descendants of these early pioneering industries, and how the region’s creative culture continues to evolve.

The Wendell Historical Society has announced the release of *Farm on the Common*, a **video about agriculture in Wendell**. “We know you will love it!” they write.

The description of the film on YouTube states: “We share the story of when the European settlers first came to our rural town and the challenges they faced. We then visit with Martha Senn, owner of the Summit House on the Town Common, where we learn the history of her home and about the people who lived there. Finally we say thank you to all our neighbors and friends

who pursue love for the land in a way that benefits us all.”

View it at tinyurl.com/wendell-farms.

Senior Tech Time is back at the Gill-Montague senior center in Turners Falls, starting Tuesday, October 1 from 12:30 to 2 p.m. and following Tuesdays. Go in with questions about your cell phone, laptop, or tablet, and get help. No appointment is needed for this free service.

The Greenfield Library has an opportunity for youth to be part of its **Teen Room Mural Project**. Youth in grades 7 to 12 are invited to help develop the theme of the mural by working with the two local artists who will create and install it.

Youth do not have to live in Greenfield, all are welcome. The library suggests that participation would be great for teens who need to log community service hours, and they hope those with an interest in visual arts will join the group.

The first meeting will be held next Wednesday, October 2, at 5 p.m. with pizza and artists Jess Marsh and Jack Brown. Register for the event by taking this survey: tinyurl.com/mural-helpers. Teen librarian Francesca will answer any questions: (413) 772-1544 x5120.

Next Thursday, October 3, at 12:15 p.m. the Episcopal Church of Saints James and Andrew in Greenfield is hosting an informational event on **“Heat Pumps: Moving Away from Oil and Gas for Heating and Cooling.”**

Bart Bales of Bales Energy, who has years of experience in designing heating and cooling systems using heat pumps, will discuss the possibilities they provide, while Peter Wingate of Community Action will explain supports available for lower-income residents wishing to make the conversion.

The church is located at 8 Church Street in Greenfield. Please enter at front doors on Church Street.

The first week of October is

the American Library Association’s “Banned Books Week.” Next Thursday, October 3 at 7 p.m., the New Salem Library is offering a **discussion on book challenges and censorship** in local communities, presented by Javier Luengo-Garrido and Olivia Santoro of the ACLU of Massachusetts.

Refreshments will be served, and the speakers will share their insights working with various communities on the topic of book banning and censorship in schools and libraries. For more information, call the library at (978) 544-6334 or email nsdirector@cwmars.org.

The Village of Light Ashram in Leverett reached out to let us know they are sponsoring a second Walk for Peace next Sunday, October 6, and that the public at large is invited.

“It is a testimony of the heart to seek an end to war and violence wherever it may occur, and to stand with those who are presently suffering in Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, Sudan, and elsewhere,” they write. “War involves loss for everyone, and we stand with those who are grieving, no matter where they are.”

Participants are asked to arrive at Leverett Elementary School at 10:45 a.m. The walk begins at 11 a.m. and ends, 45 minutes and 1.6 miles later, at the Ashram. Those who feel they cannot walk for the entire time can ride in one of the cars that will accompany the walk. More information is available at www.lightomega.org/walk-for-peace.

This will be quite a sight: **over 20,000 dominoes toppling** in a carefully constructed installation next to the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, at 28 Vernon Street in Brattleboro. The annual event is back for the 17th year on Sunday, October 6 at 5:30 p.m.

Lily Hevesh, a professional domino artist, and her team will begin construction on October 4. Members of the in-person audience on Sunday can win the chance to push over the first domino and start the whole chain reaction by guessing the correct number of dominoes used in the building process.

Admission is free for children 8 and under, and \$5 for all others. Tickets are available in advance or at the door, but because space is limited, advance purchase is advised. Buy them at brattleboromuseum.org or call (802) 257-0124 x101. There will also be a free Facebook livestream.

The first-ever movie adaptation of *Sherlock Holmes*, a **silent film released in 1916** and recently rediscovered, will be shown on Monday, October 7 at the Garden Cinemas in Greenfield with live musical accompaniment by Jeff Rapsis, a New Hampshire-based composer who specializes in creating music for silent films.

The movie was considered lost, like many films of the silent era, until a nearly complete copy was discovered in 2014 at the Cinematheque Française in Paris. It features the only screen appearance of the stage actor William Gillette, whose interpretation of the title role provided the foundation for subsequent portrayals of Holmes by Basil Rathbone and Benedict Cumberbatch.

Admission, available online or at the door, is \$10.50 for adults and \$8.50 for children, seniors, and students.

The **Communities That Care Coalition** invites the public to a lunch meeting at Baystate Franklin Medical Center in Greenfield from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Friday, October 18. They will present findings from the Coalition’s 2024 student health survey on school climate, substance use, mental health, screen time, and more.

The free lunch will be provided by the hospital dining service, with vegan and gluten-free options, and attendees may register for childcare if needed. Register to attend at tinyurl.com/lunchctc. The Coalition provides information on resources for raising healthy families in their monthly newsletter.

Are you wondering how to get **flu and COVID vaccines** this fall? I just registered to get mine through frcog.org/project/vaccine-information. There are several Montague clinics on the list, including the flu-and-COVID combo at the town hall on October 24 that I signed up for, and links to pharmacies and other places where you can schedule free vaccinations, with or without health insurance.

If you have mobility issues, contact your local public health nurse about getting a vaccine in your home, or contact the state Department of Public Health. Most clinics allow walk-ins, but it is best to make an appointment.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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ERVING from page A1

This formula has produced some uneven results, in part because regional school districts were not factored in. In the case of Franklin County, for example, Erving will receive \$194,000 and Greenfield will receive \$1,713,000 while Gill, whose elementary school is part of a regional district, will only receive \$12,000.

Walker said FRCOG is trying to make sure the communities in the county work together to further the effectiveness of the settlement money. Erving is already part of an agreement with 14 other communities in the county to do this, in the form of FRCOG cooperative public health service.

FRCOG and the Erving board of health have proposed four programs to be funded for the next two years, as well as further community input during that time to assess what is working, and whether there are other services the community would benefit from.

The programs proposed for the initial round of funding are the Recover Project, Moms Do Care, a peer recovery coach at the Center for Human Development, and a yet-to-be-deter-

mined system to support families of people impacted by opioid use disorder, or OUD.

Erving would be asked to contribute a total of \$16,327 per year for these programs; as it has already been receiving the settlement funds, \$30,000 was also already appropriated at the annual town meeting in the spring.

Selectboard member Scott Bastarache proposed approving the \$16,327 for the current fiscal year, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Other Business

The selectboard also approved a \$90,000 contract with the engineering firm Tighe & Bond to design and get the permits for the water and wastewater systems needed to build the new senior housing complex on Care Drive.

The Erving senior and community center applied for and received a grant for \$2,500 to pay for David Garrity and Martin Gitlin to do a magic show. (The status of the originally promised “community center” aspect of the facility was evident in the omission of the word “and” from the legal name of the center, which is the “Erving

senior community center” according to the authorized signatory listing registered with the state.)

Ralph Semb is seeking to separate the water supplies to two entities he owns on Semb Drive near the bowling center. The entities, the Weatherheads Convenience Store and Weatherheads Apartments, currently share a water supply, and Semb is considering selling one of the properties.

The board, in their capacity as water commissioners, discussed Semb’s request with water and wastewater superintendent Pete Sanders. Sanders said he had considered separate meters with the existing plumbing, but recommended installing a new service line from the road.

“This would involve a fair amount of excavation?” member James Loynd asked.

Sanders confirmed that it would, at Semb’s expense, and it was agreed that Semb would need to apply for the service line as if he were engaged in new construction.

Patricia Semb is resigning from the board of library trustees.

Joseph Newton was appointed to the open space committee.



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SAT. OCT. 5 • 5:00PM

66 AVENUE A • TURNERS FALLS

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Stove Wood; Well Water; Mice; Trains; Secret Squirrels

By SARAH BROWN-ANSON

The Wendell selectboard meeting on September 18 started with an hour-long working session on setting policy for the use of town hall, and the open portion of the meeting ended after almost two and a half hours with an executive session.

Project coordinator Phil Delorey gave updates on ongoing projects. All trees and brush have been cleared from the site chosen for the wood bank, and the next stage is pulling stumps and adding fill to level the space.

Delorey reported that the Lewis company, which plans to collect trees and branches cut down by National Grid and Verizon, had asked him where the town would like them.

“I’ve been having to tell folks that we don’t have a site ready yet,” Delorey said, but then added that he had set up a meeting to look at a potential interim solution. “It occurred to me today that the state is letting us use their land off Montague Road,” he said, “and they also have that huge field down there by Ruggles Pond.” Delorey said he would ask if this could be a temporary site for cutting and splitting logs for the wood bank.

Selectboard member Gillian Budine said that an expired grant for the project might be reissued, but that she was awaiting details and would follow up. The grant required a 50% town match, either in funds or volunteer time.

Delorey reported that the project to move the metal and construction debris containers at the Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station (WRATS) is taking a lot of time, and so far has cost \$29,000. So far the site has been leveled and drained, but the project will eventually require paving part of the site and building a bridge.

Delorey said it might be a good way to use up the town’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. “If there’s any ARPA money available and that comes up in your conversations, I’d like you to keep the WRATS renovations in mind,” he said. All ARPA money must be committed by the end of the year.

“There isn’t the spending of the money, there’s the issue of knowing how it’s going to be spent,” replied Budine. “Part of that is having that final number about the [Farley] bridge, and what will be billed for the bridge.”

Delorey said the bridge project still needed to go out to bid, but that the town had received the final engineering costs already.

Public-Private Partnership

Budine and selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato spent the first hour of the meeting working on town policies. The board is trying to clarify the policy on the use of town hall by non-governmental groups.

The hour-long session was spent brainstorming topics to address, including storage, cleanup, parking, access and keys, equipment, power usage, and the potential length of an agreement.

DiDonato and Budine agreed the board should reach out to the food pantry Good Neighbors and the Wendell Full Moon Coffeehouse, the two private entities that regularly use the town hall space,

to begin a discussion about what would be workable.

The selectboard had received information from town counsel regarding the proposal for the Wendell Country Store using a town well for its water source, but members said they needed more time to digest the information.

DiDonato was designated to check in with Country Store owner Patty Scutari to get a sense of her plans. The board also said they would consider a policy for what to do if the well were to run dry.

Wild Things

Delorey suggested that the town consider more intense maintenance at the town offices, given the issues of mold on the siding and rodents in the building. He said he planned to power-wash the building and would look at any painting and sealing that needs to be done.

The issue with rodents was highlighted about halfway through the meeting, when a mouse ran across the floor of the meeting room. Budine asked if the issue could be added to a future meeting’s agenda.

The board discussed entering into a contract with the Franklin County sheriff’s office for animal control services. Finance committee co-chair Meagan Sylvia said that the fin com had discussed the possibility and had generally found it to be reasonable, but had not voted on the issue.

The selectboard voted unanimously to approve a draft contract, then voted to appoint Budine as the town’s representative to the animal control services advisory board and member Paul Doud as the alternate.

Plumbing & Gas

“It seems like a good time to take a fresh look at the inspection services, with having the vacancy with our plumbing and gas inspector,” said town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad. He said he had asked the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) about the possibility of joining its cooperative inspection program for plumbing and gas.

“In general, it would be easier for them to [have Wendell join] at the start of a fiscal year,” Johnson-Mussad said, adding that FRCOG may be open to negotiation, but that the town should look for alternatives in the meantime.

“It is important,” Johnson-Mussad said, citing a resident who had come in earlier that day needing a plumbing inspection for their fuel assistance application. “We do have to fill this position soon somehow.” He said he had reached out to the plumbing and gas inspector for New Salem, who was willing to take on the role on an interim basis, but based on travel time would charge a minimum of \$100 for each inspection.

At a special additional meeting on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 25, the board voted to instead appoint Pete Diamond as plumbing and gas inspector on an interim, emergency basis, through January 2025. They agreed to interview candidates for a permanent inspector in the meantime, as well as a permanent alternate inspector.

The board also approved a new schedule with a \$75 minimum fee.



Alistair MacMartin works on the Wendell Meetinghouse bell tower.

Wiring & Cleaning

At the September 18 meeting, the selectboard interviewed Steven Canning for the position of alternate wiring inspector. Canning said he had been an electrical contractor for over 34 years, and currently serves as an electrical inspector in Orange and an assistant inspector in Athol.

No vote was taken, but when they returned September 25, the members voted unanimously to appoint Canning to the position.

Much of the special meeting was taken up with a discussion of the town custodian position. Eric Schufelt, the current custodian, had previously submitted his resignation, but indicated a willingness to stay on with a reduction in hours.

After much deliberation, the board agreed to ask Schufelt to continue working with reduced hours on a short-term basis; to reimburse him at the federal rate for mileage for hauling trash to the WRATS; and to hire a separate custodian to clean the library for four hours per week.

Solar Solicitors

The board and Leverett police sergeant Steven Gould discussed the issue of solicitation in town at the September 18 meeting, including a recent incident with a salesperson from Trinity Solar. Budine asked Gould what action the town should take when such issues arise.

Gould said the town could consider enacting an ordinance banning solicitation, since Wendell may currently only restrict individuals from entering town. “There’s really no language in there for banning a company,” he said.

“I guess that’s a conversation for us at some point, if we want to go that far,” said Budine. “Or, if we just let the townspeople know that if there is an issue with a solicitor like this, to contact the police.”

“That should do it,” said Gould.

Other Business

The selectboard voted unanimously to endorse a letter to the state Department of Transportation expressing support for “Northern Tier” passenger rail service. The letter was submitted by Wendell’s state legislators, senator Jo Comerford and representative Aaron Saunders.

The board voted to split mon-

ey from the CONNECT program, which provides a rapid response to support after an opioid overdose, between the Wendell fire department and Leverett police department. In total, \$1,298.88 was received from the program, which is administered by the Opioid Task Force of Franklin County and the North Quabbin Region, and which compensates participating towns by funding first responders.

The board appointed Don Bartlett to the zoning board of appeals.

Doud reported that he had visited the town hall to find a good place for the newly returned World War II memorial. He proposed hanging it just to the right of the stage.

DiDonato asked if town veterans should be consulted about the memorial’s placement. “The veterans who were there when we opened the box on the memorial,” Budine replied, “said they liked the idea of the town hall.” The board voted to authorize Doud to install it there.

The board discussed several unanticipated issues. It was agreed that WRATS would be open on Sunday, September 22 instead of Saturday, September 21, the date of Wendell Old Home Day.

The board agreed to write a request for the next town newsletter for interested residents to join the Wendell Economic Thinktank (WET).

At the end of the open portion of the September 18 meeting the board convened into an executive session in order, according to the agenda, “to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body, and to discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual.”

Three members of the public – Nina Keller and Chris Queen of Wendell and Al Norman of Greenfield, all members of the citizens’ group No Assaultin’ Battery – stayed for the executive session.

The selectboard’s first October meeting is rescheduled due to Rosh Hashanah. The board will meet a night earlier, on Tuesday, October 1.

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RENT from page A1

explained their rationale for the increase, Arthur Hicks, a retired firefighter and a Leisure Woods resident of 28 years, stood at a microphone in the middle of the auditorium to address them.

“I feel like this is as fair as we can be to both parties without turning the tenants upside down on their heads,” Hicks said. “They do need to get their money to catch up with things, but we are very limited on what we bring in, too.... so this is very fair. I thank all of you for the considerations you put in.”

Several people applauded at Hicks’s comments.

“Thank you,” Peirce said. “We have agonized over this, and I’m so appreciative of your support.”

“I was satisfied with the increase,” Alfred Henderson, Hicks’s neighbor and father-in-law, told the *Reporter*. “I was quite pleased with how they went about it.”

Last October, Leisure Woods management submitted an application to increase rent at the park by 43%, the second significant hike they had sought in two years after a decade of stagnant rents.

At the first public hearing in June, several residents testified that they could not afford \$588 per month for lots at the park, and complained that the amenities and maintenance at the park were so lacking that the hike was not justified.

Since then the rent control board has met monthly and requested more detailed financial information from Leisure Woods management.

“I was really pleased with the way our meetings went, mostly because the residents were so appreciative,” Peirce, also a member of the Orange selectboard, told the *Reporter*. “The only thing that would have been a significant help would have been higher-quality financial information. We spent an inordinate amount of time trying to reconcile the various reports that had calculation and formatting errors.”

Leisure Woods co-owner Glenn Gidley was not present at the town hall Tuesday night when the decision was made. His son Adam Gidley, the park’s operations manager, was there, as was the company’s lawyer John Kuzinevich, who questioned the board’s decision.

At the August meeting, Kuzinevich had warned that Leisure Woods may seek legal action against the town.

“We’re happy with all the work the board did, but are disappointed that the numbers were not closer to what we requested,” Kuzinevich told the *Reporter* on Tuesday. “The clients are going to have to look at their budget closely to see if it’s livable, or if we’re going to have to take further steps. Until we sit down and do that analysis, we don’t know what’s happening next.”

Neither Kuzinevich nor Glenn Gidley responded to follow-up questions emailed on Wednesday afternoon.

At Tuesday’s meeting, members of the rent control board explained that their rationale for the increase was based on multiplying the assessed value of the property, \$3,416,500, by what they saw as a “reasonable rate of return” of 8.25%. They therefore determined a “fair net operating income” for Leisure Woods’s owners would be \$281,861 annually.

Over the last several months, the board scrutinized budgets submitted by Leisure Woods, and eliminated or reduced a number of estimated expenses related to maintenance, payroll, and depreciation. These reductions brought the park’s estimated annual operating expenses from \$727,150 this year to \$576,500, a decrease of about 21%.

“The main variable in this formula is the operating expenses, and we are obliged to look at these carefully,” Peirce said. “We found discrepancies in the formats and substance of the information, and we struggled to understand the breakdown of the finances between Leisure Woods and Salem Manufactured Homes.”

A New Hampshire-based business that builds, transports, and sells mobile homes, Salem Manufactured Homes is also co-owned by Glenn Gidley, though he has testified that its finances are kept entirely separate from Leisure Woods Estates.

“When you have reduced expenses, you have now caused a serious deficit in the operating portion,” Kuzinevich said at Tuesday night’s hearing. “Are you expecting the owners to subsidize that by not effectively getting a fair net operating income?”

“Every one of those reductions we took we had exhaustively discussed,” Peirce replied, adding that the formula the company had originally used to justify the 43% increase was “completely wrong.”

Kuzinevich also pointed out that the board had not responded to his clients’ request to grant the increase retroactive to the date of the initial application last October, noting that it had taken the board several months to hold the first public hearing in June.

“I had cancer,” Peirce said, to more applause from the room. “I was in the hospital. I apologize for taking a long time to get the meeting together.”

Henderson and Hicks had previously told the *Reporter* that if they felt the approved increase was unfair, they planned to put the difference into an escrow account and take the matter to court. This week, both residents said they do not feel that step is necessary, but that they would refuse to pay any additional fees towards a retroactive increase.

“I won’t pay retroactive. It’s not my fault,” Henderson said. “It’s their fault, because they didn’t supply all the information the rent control board needed.”

When rent control was banned statewide in Massachusetts in 1994, exceptions were written in for mobile home parks and public housing. As one of about two dozen communities in Massachusetts with active mobile home park rent control boards, Orange will continue to review and oversee any future increases requested by Leisure Woods Estates.

A home rule petition to establish a mobile home park rent control board in neighboring Athol has failed to pass for the last two legislative sessions.

Peirce said the Orange board hopes the granted increase, which “falls short of attaining fair net operating income in Year One, but exceeds it in Year Two,” will address the owners’ concerns and “put them on a course for reasonable future increases, while not being overly burdensome for Leisure Woods tenants.”



The Orange mobile rent control board – from left to right, Andrew Smith, chair Jane Peirce, and Julie Davis – issued a decision this week about a rent hike first requested nearly a year ago by Leisure Woods Estates. All three members of the rent control board also serve on the five-member town selectboard.

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Montague Cultural Council Seeks Grant Proposals

MONTAGUE – The Montague Cultural Council is accepting proposals for community-oriented arts, humanities, and science programs, with an application deadline of October 16. The grants are available to organizations, schools, and individuals for programs that support cultural activities in our community.

These grants can support a variety of artistic projects and activities in the town of Montague including exhibits, festivals, field trips, short-term artist residencies, performances in schools, workshops, and lectures.

The Montague Cultural Council is part of a network of 329 Local Cultural Councils serving all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. This is the largest grassroots cultural funding network in the nation, supporting thousands of community-based projects every year. The legislature provides an appropriation to Mass Cultural Council, which allocates funds to each community.

This year the Montague Cultural Council will distribute about \$16,000 in grants from the state and local matching funds. Previously funded projects include the Pocumtuck Homelands Festival, Música Franklin’s Community Concerts, the 2024 SHEakespeare Series, and *Mother Tongue* by First Generation.

For more info and to apply, see the Cultural Council’s page at montague-ma.gov, the “Montague Cultural Council” page on Facebook, or www.massculturalcouncil.org/local-council/montague/. Please contact the Montague Cultural Council at culturalcouncil@montague-ma.gov if you have questions.

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GILL from page A1

that and order and replace them for us.” He also admitted that his preference for red rims were “more aesthetics than function.”

The board approved spending up to \$2,087 for tools and fitting holders for the truck, but tabled any further tire expenses.

Gill’s former fire trucks – a 1986 Chevy D30 pickup and a 1987 KME engine – were declared surplus at the meeting, and will likely be sold by auction online.

In related news, Eddie Curtis was appointed as a firefighter through June 2025, contingent on receiving the “usual clearances.” Curtis held this position in previous years, Kimball explained, but took time away when his baby was born.

The group then took a quick recess to the parking lot to marvel at the new truck, which was impressive even with gray rims.

Bright Futures

The board signed a letter in support of the proposed Northern Tier passenger rail. When asked why the project was important to Gill, Snedeker answered: “Most of the towns around here are suffering a decline in population. We’re finding it hard to get families to move out here. The increased ability to commute to the eastern part of the state, and potentially other areas, would be huge. Economically it would be a big plus for us. Hopefully it might bring out more people.”

“I just figured when I’m governor I won’t need to bring the chopper home,” added selectboard member Randy Crochier.

The board also signed a letter in support of an application for a grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, “to advance housing that is affordable in our cities and towns.” Purington explained that this work was particularly important as state regulations around accessory dwellings change, to ensure that the town bylaws comply.

Other Business

Gill was awarded a \$13,000 grant to work with UMass Boston’s Collins Center for Public Management to update its wage scale, job descriptions, employee grades, and salary ranges. Twenty-one town positions will be scrutinized by the experts to help local officials understand what changes the town needs to make to attract and retain talented workers.

The town donated a surplus chest freezer to the Franklin Area Survival Center.

The board approved a purchase order for the highway department to spend nearly \$2,500 for a switch repair kit for its John Deere backhoe.

Many events are happening in Gill: a Community Contra Dance this Saturday evening at town hall; the Gill Harvest Festival, this Sunday afternoon on the town commons; and the Gillbilly Paddle, which will be held Sunday, October 6, departing from the NMH boat docks at 10 a.m.

For those looking for even more fun, Bulky Waste Recycling Day will be held on the morning of Saturday, October 19 at the Erving highway garage.



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

October 10 at the Shea Theater: Hydro Relicensing Input Session

FRANKLIN COUNTY – The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) will hold a public information session on Thursday, October 10, 2024, to seek public input on FirstLight Power’s 401 Water Quality Certification application. The session will be held at 6 p.m. at the Shea Theater Arts Center, 71 Avenue A, Turners Falls.

Individuals can attend in person or join the session virtually. Virtual attendees are allowed to submit written questions. Online registration (see www.tinyurl.com/401info-session) is required for those wishing to attend virtually, and encouraged for those attending in person.

During the public information session MassDEP, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife), and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will present information pertaining to the state’s Water Quality Certification process, share what has been learned from public comments to date, and answer questions.

FirstLight Power filed an application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to relicense the Connecticut River hydroelectric facilities in Turners Falls and Montague and the pumped storage facility in Northfield under the Federal Power Act.

As a part of the federal relicense application filed with FERC, FirstLight also must apply for and receive a Water Quality Certification from the state.

The public information session is the second of three opportunities for public participation regarding the FirstLight Water Quality Certification application. MassDEP held a 35-day public comment period in April and two virtual public hearings in May seeking comments on the application. A draft decision will be issued by late 2024 or early 2025, with another public hearing and public comment period to take place at that time.

Copies of the FirstLight Power Water Quality Certification application, supporting documents, previous public comments and recordings of previous public hearings are among the items available on MassDEP’s FirstLight webpage (see www.tinyurl.com/firstlightdocs).

Individuals who are interested in language interpretive assistance or other assistance at the public information session should, by October 3, email Nishaila.porter@mass.gov; call Melixza Esenyie at the EEA Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at (617) 626-1282; or use TTY# MassRelay Service: 1(800) 439-2370. This information is available in alternate format upon request (see www.tinyurl.com/altformat401 for details).

SPORTS from page A1

driving up the score.

Blue had some chances, which usually consisted of one or two players breaking loose down into Ram territory. But it was fun – the crowd never stopped cheering, and the kids never stopped trying.

(I have to make one correction: Jesi Berry’s mom mentioned that we misspelled her name after she scored in the Smith game. “It’s just one S,” she explained. Sorry, Jesi! We’ll get it right in the future.)

The next afternoon, Turners crossed the Road and challenged the Franklin Tech Eagles. Although Tech is at the top of the conference while Turners is heavy with middle-schoolers, both matchups have been competitive. Back on September 6 Franklin won a close 1-0 match, and last Friday they won by two goals, 5-3.

Friday’s game was knotted at 3-3 until late into the fourth quarter. In the last three minutes, Tech slapped two goals into the net to ice the contest.

Ledwin Villafana scored two of

Turners’s goals while Berry scored the third. Hannah Gilbert scored four goals for Tech while Kenzie Sourdiffe-Phelps had a goal and an assist and Lili Inman and Kailey Steiner had an assist each.

Since Friday’s game Tech has gone 2-0, shutting out Mahar and Mohawk 3-0 and 6-0 respectively. Turners played Northampton on Wednesday, but the results were not yet available as of press time.

Girls’ Soccer

FCTS 1 – Gateway 0
FCTS 3 – Pathfinder 0
Greenfield 4 – FCTS 0

The Franklin Tech girls’ soccer team has improved significantly. It took four games before they scored their first goal, but after that they went 3-0, with three consecutive shutouts. On Wednesday, that winning streak crashed to a halt against Greenfield.

Last Thursday the Eagles blanked the visiting Gateway Gators, 1-0. I couldn’t stay long because I wanted to make the Turners volleyball game, but what I saw

was a pretty physical game. Bodies were crashing into each other, and the goalies were stingy.

Prior to Thursday’s skirmish neither Zoey Duda nor Carly Walsh had scored a single varsity point, but midway through the first half, Walsh kicked the ball to Duda who proceeded to knock it into the goal for the afternoon’s first and only score. Goalkeeper Kylee Gamache, finally back from an injury, ensured the win by stopping seven shots on goal.

The Kicking Eagles kept their shutout streak alive on Tuesday by strong-arming the Pathfinder Pioneers 3-0 out in Palmer. The Eagles managed to keep the ball in the Pioneers’ end, allowing Gamache to skate by with just a single save. After a scoreless first half Tech let loose, scoring three unanswered goals to complete the shutout.

Mia Marigliano scored two goals and Duda kicked in the third, while Kaelyn Mclean gave assists on all three.

On Wednesday, Tech crossed the River and saw their winning streak end as the Green Wave won going away, 4-0.

Volleyball

TFHS 3 – Pioneer 0
Amherst 3 – TFHS 1
TFHS 3 – FCTS 2

Last Thursday night, the Turners Falls Volleyball Thunder bested the Pioneer Black Panthers 3-0. The first two sets were one-sided, with Turners winning by double digits in both matches, but the Cats played pretty well in the third.

While Turners was hitting the ball sharply, Pioneer was scoring on soft pats just over the net. The visiting families were just as loud as the Turners students, and the Panther players never stopped smiling although they were outmatched.

Janelle Massey finished with seven kills, Maddie Dietz had 13 assists, Tatiana Carr Williams served five aces, and Madi Liimatainen racked up five aces and six kills.

The Thunder dropped a home

match against Amherst, 3-1, on Monday. The first three sets were close and hard-fought games, but Blue ran out of gas and dropped the fourth 25-15. In this match Janelle Massey had six kills, Dietz had 13 assists and four aces, and Liimatainen made seven kills and seven digs.

And then, on Wednesday, Turners and Franklin Tech duked it out at the Tech school.

On paper this might have seemed to be another one-sided battle, but the Eagles came out firing and took the first set by a wide margin, 25-13. It was extremely loud in the Tech gym, especially after that first set. Unlike the Pioneer match, it seemed that every single spectator was cheering every serve, every volley, and every hit.

The Thunder came back in the second set, winning just as impressively, 25-14, but the third set it was Tech again, 25-18. Facing elimination, Turners won the fourth with another decisive 25-14, and the rubber match was set.

Turners seemed to have their way early on, but Tech climbed back into it. Finally, with the score 14-11 and Tech serving, Turners scored the game point to win the battle 15-11.

Football

FCTS 36 – Frontier 7

After last Friday’s cross-town field hockey game, many Tech fans trekked south to watch the football game against the Frontier Red Hawks.

I asked a colleague if he had any predictions, and he said “pain.” It was pretty painful, all right – at least for the home team. Several Hawks had to be helped to the sidelines, and two were sent to the EMT to bandage wounds. But it was a clean game and only two penalties were called into the fourth quarter.

Last week, after Franklin dismantled McCann, football pundits chalked it up to McCann’s loss of their coaching staff. But after the Frontier rout, no such excuses were offered.

It didn’t take long for the Eagles

to score. On the opening drive Tech methodically drove down the field behind the linemen, who tore huge holes in the Hawks’ defense, leading to a 6-0 lead. Franklin could have scored again, but a fumble inside the Red zone gave the home team the ball deep in their own territory.

In the second quarter, Tech did hold onto the ball, and soon went up 12-0. There was an incidental break in the action because of a scoreboard malfunction, which was hilarious – at one point, it made the score 20-0 in favor of the home team, it displayed fifth down and 42 from the 4. Then it flashed again, and Frontier was on top 80-0. It was now sixth down, with nine to go from the zero-yard line. It was also the eighth quarter.

The players tried to stay focused while the board was corrected.

In the fourth quarter, with the score actually 20-0, a Frontier player broke loose and was off to the races. But the Tech D never let up. They raced down the field and finally tracked him down, giving Red a first-and-goal from the 9. It took them four plays, but with 10:30 left in the game, Frontier was on the scoreboard 20-7.

That’s when Tech took back control. In the game’s last 10 minutes, they scored two more touchdowns and two 2-PATS to leave a final score of 36-7.

Tyler Yetter completed two passes for 23 yards, scoring a touchdown and a two-pointer. Josiah Little carried the ball 27 times for 186 yards, made a catch, and scored a touchdown.

Maxon Brunette also hit triple digits with 105 rushing yards, and scored three TDs and an extra point. Nathan Sabolevski rushed for 60 yards and scored a 2-PAT, while Nolyn Stafford caught one pass for 20 yards. Defensively, Hunter Donahue and Wyatt Whitman were in on eight tackles and Madix Whitman made seven.

On Friday the Eagles travel to Palmer, where they will take on the Pathfinder Pioneers.



Turners Falls senior Ledwin Villafana (left), defended by the Eagles’ Mckenzie Sourdiffe-Phelps, drives the ball at Franklin Tech. Villafana scored twice last Friday.

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MONTAGUE from page A1

The first, with representatives of the engineering firm Tighe & Bond and Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, a subsidiary of a Canadian firm, focused on how to stabilize a building within the complex owned by Eagle Creek which contains a working hydroelectric turbine.

Plans developed several years ago by Tighe & Bond indicated that the demolition of the rest of the complex would destabilize the hydro plant, the only section of the former mill the town does not own.

The meeting last week, Ramsey said, focused on whether the building with the turbine can be stabilized despite the demolition of surrounding structures or if it will need to be demolished and rebuilt.

The second meeting was with the engineers and representatives of FirstLight Power, which owns the canal adjacent to the complex as well as a closed footbridge over the canal. The footbridge is slated to be demolished but, Ramsey said, “we’re working out the timing [of] permit-related issues.”

Ramsey also confirmed that the freestanding Building 11, long seen as the best candidate for redevelopment, would be included in the demolition plans. “The engineers were inside that building doing their assessments as well,” he said.

Two weeks ago the selectboard rejected a proposal by Ramsey to spend \$4,000 on a “subdivision survey” of the complex that would allow the town to seek last-minute bids for Building 11.

Juiced-Up Incentives

Acting as the personnel board, the selectboard unanimously approved a proposal by police chief Chris Williams to offer \$10,000 bonuses to officers transferring to the department who do not need to attend the police academy.

At a previous meeting, Williams had argued that the cost and disruption to the department of sending new hires to the academy outweighed the value of the bonus, which would be paid out over the course of a year.

Board members at that meeting had expressed skepticism, particularly Matt Lord, who said he opposed the proposal.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz suggested that the board approve bonuses in order to fill the two currently open positions on the force, and then “plan long-range.”

Lord said he had talked with Williams and had come to agree that the proposal was financially advantageous, but added that “we can’t count on [it] forever.”

The board also appointed Rachel Emerson to the dispatch office of the police department as a “dispatcher in training,” beginning September 29.

Illuminated Recreation

Parks and recreation director Jon Dobosz gave updates on projects to upgrade the lighting at Unity Skatepark and install new playground equipment at the Montague Center park.

Dobosz said the skatepark lighting project would probably take a few more weeks to finish, and that he would like to schedule an “illumination ceremony.”

Dobosz said the lights at the skatepark “are up, and we’re just waiting for Eversource to do the interconnection.” He said the project would probably take a few more weeks to finish, and that he would like to schedule an “illumination ceremony.”

Kuklewicz noted that there had been delays in interconnections during some streetscape improvement projects along Avenue A, and suggested that Ramsey “put a bug in their ear.” Ramsey agreed to look into doing so.

Dobosz said he had expected the

Montague Center playground project to start in October, but had visited the park just after Labor Day, and found that “lo and behold, the contractor, Mountain View Landscapes and Lawn Care out of Chicopee, had already started.”

The new playground equipment is scheduled to be delivered on October 4, he said, but despite this the deadline for finishing the overall project will remain in mid-May 2025.

Dobosz also requested, and received, approval for the use of public property for two events – the annual New Year’s Day 10K Sawmill River Run, which starts and finishes at the Montague Center common, and the Soap Box Derby, next June 1 at Unity Park.

Other Business

At Ramsey’s request the board approved a \$2,456.79 transfer from the community development discretionary fund to cover cost overruns in the project to replace the siding on the senior center on Fifth Street. Ramsey said the unexpected costs were caused by the need to remove and replace a mini-split, and to address more damage to the siding than had been anticipated.

Prisoners from the Franklin County jail will repaint the building this fall.

Ramsey told the board that the state Cannabis Control Commission had ruled that Montague’s recently revised host community agreement (HCA) with the firm 253 Farmacy violated its regulations. The board voted to remove the offending provision, which would have required the cannabis grower and retailer to pay damages to the town for any material left at the site if it closes.

At the end of the meeting, the board retired into an executive session to discuss its collective bargaining strategy related to proposals in the pay and classification report produced recently by the UMass Collins Center.

The next board meeting will be held Monday, September 30.



LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on September 25, 2014: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

On the Nature of Recess

On September 9, the Gill-Montague school committee listened to parents about the “structured recess” in place at Gill Elementary. Some were concerned that it does not permit students to engage freely in chosen play activities during the 30-minute recess. Parents’ spokesperson Christina Postera said that historically recess functioned as a break from “structured learning time.”

In an email to the board, parent Susannah Lerman spoke about the value of children exploring the natural world. She said she saw the large and varied landscape of Gill’s playgrounds as an asset to her child’s interest in playing.

In another email, Wendy LaPointe described recess as not only a time for kids to burn off energy, but also to change their minds, meet others, and resolve issues.

The People’s March

September 21, 2014 will be remembered as the largest climate march in history, with more than 400,000 marchers in New York City and over 2,600 parallel events in 156 other countries. They marched for many reasons, but all seemed to agree that Mother Earth has had enough of pollution, profiteering and pontification.

Over 500 buses descended on the Big Apple, carrying students, elders, pipefitters, teachers, and farmers. Pioneer Valley activists, many of whom were marching to protest the Kinder-Morgan pipeline, left Greenfield at 6 a.m. in two 54-passenger Peter Pan buses.

Back in Greenfield at 10 p.m., marcher Chris Queen said, “Whether the ‘largest climate march’ will stand as a record depends on the history we will witness and make in the coming years. But it is hard to imagine a march that will capture the hopes and dreams of so many at such a critical moment in our journey.”

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on September 23, 2004: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Habitat Homes Blessed

On Sunday, September 19, representatives from a dozen Franklin County churches came together to bless the site and break ground at

Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity’s (PVHH) newest home building project.

The two homes will be built in the spring on the corner of Second and L streets, which was long a blighted corner of town. The derelict structure that had formerly occupied the site was demolished earlier this year.

150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on September 23, 1874: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

Local Matters

The “Papermakers Clam Bake” came off to their entire satisfaction, at Cold Brook. A very enjoyable time was had.

A Match for \$100 in a foot race has been made between Mr. Andrew Rock of our town and a Mr. Shay of Holyoke. It will come off here Saturday afternoon, Oct. 3. Both are good runners.

Messrs. Malley and Haggerty will have another contest on the river on Saturday afternoon, Oct 3, at 5 o’clock. Same course as before. Stakes \$50.

A painful accident happened to John Leary at the Cutlery on Friday. A piece of steel broke from one of the dies he was working and striking him in the eye destroyed his sight.

It has become almost a popular delusion that a carriage spring cannot be mended if broken. Mr. J. P. Morgan guarantees to reset, mend and warrant every such brought to his shop on K street. Remember this little fact.

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fresh every day. He does his own butchering and buys none but the best grade of cattle. Choice fresh and salt meats, headcheese and sausages always on hand. Saur kraut 5 cents a pound. Call. Schuler block, Second Street.

One of our prominent as well as oldest established business men told us on Saturday that he took more money last week than during any one week for the past four years. Glad somebody gets some.

Constable Seth J. Stone received a letter from officer Stone of Fayetteville, Vt. this week, saying that he arrested a fellow there, Tuesday of last week, supposed to be a horse thief. The chap, however, slipped through his fingers, but left a bay mare and a Brattleboro made buggy. He said that he had traded his horse and buggy in Belchertown and Warwick. Any parties having property of this kind missing can avail themselves of this chance of looking it up.

The latest addition to local sensations is the discovery of a hermit, who makes his home in the woods in the vicinity of Cold Spring. He avoids conversation if possible, and hides when he notices any person approaching. He has been there all summer.



HOUSING from page A1

Pollock said FRCOG is partnering with a variety of organizations, including the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Rural Development Incorporated – the redevelopment arm of the county housing authority – and the UMass Collins Center for Public Management.

The letter, which the board endorsed without discussion, is addressed to Acting HUD Secretary Adrienne Todman in Washington. The grant which could provide the funding is called Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing), a program funded by a \$100 million Congressional appropriation last March.

PRO Housing seeks to address the “lack of affordable housing” by removing barriers such as outdated local zoning regulations, deteriorating or inadequate infrastructure, and “increasing threats from natural hazards,” according to the HUD website. Montague’s portion of the grant would not fund specific projects, but would rather be used to update its housing plan.

The town is at various stages of a number of projects that would create affordable housing. A Hab-

itat For Humanity project to build five units of owner-occupied affordable housing on First Street in Turners Falls, on what was until recently a town parking lot, was about to begin when hazardous fill was discovered under the lot. The town is now seeking an estimate for removing that fill.

The former Farren Hospital property on Montague City Road, which has been targeted for mixed-use development including affordable housing, is in its early planning stages. The town has been presented by consultants with a range of design and funding options, and is now considering rezoning the parcels on the site to allow housing construction.

At an even earlier stage is the land across the Turners Falls power canal where the former Railroad Salvage department store building long sat crumbling. Town officials have portrayed that property, which was cleared at the expense of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, as the eventual site of another mixed-use development, and have rebranded it as the “Griswold District” after the original cotton mill on the site.

Ramsey told the *Reporter* any designs for the Railroad Salvage parcel would need to wait until after the state Department of Transportation finalizes its plans to replace a number of nearby bridges.

Montague’s intention to build more affordable housing is driven by a decline in its stock of such housing, as measured under state law Chapter 40B by a complex formula known as the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). The law allows developers to circumvent local zoning restrictions in some cases if a town’s SHI level is below 10%. The number of Section 8 rentals in a town does not affect its SHI.

Montague’s SHI in 2015, according to its previous housing plan, was 9.95%. The most recent data provided by the state Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, in June 2023, has the SHI level at 9.18%.

Pollock, in a conversation with the *Reporter*, speculated on possible reasons for the decline, including a loss of subsidized units or an increase in market-rate housing. “Updating the old housing plan will help us understand that,” she said.



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NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

MCAS Scores Decline; Gutter People Plow Ahead

By GEORGE BRACE

The Leverett selectboard has added a new element to its meetings by formally asking each town department head to appear periodically for a “check-in.” The move is intended to improve communication and foster mutual assistance. On Tuesday, the board heard from school committee chair Jya Plavin and highway superintendent Matthew Boucher.

Plavin began her update by saying she was “really, really happy and impressed” with Leverett Elementary School (LES)’s new principal, Siby Adina. Plavin said Adina has “jumped right in” on projects already underway.

She also commented that the hiring of new Union 28 superintendent Shannon White-Cleveland has been helpful, and that she was “happy with the progress” overall after “a really tough period” for the superintendency district.

On a less positive note, Plavin announced that MCAS test scores had been released the day of the meeting, and that “Leverett saw a significant drop.” She said the results were “notable” compared with past LES scores and those in other towns in the district, but added that they were “not surprising,” given the leadership changes at the school in the last year and insufficient support for MCAS and other programming.

Plavin assured the board that Adina and White-Cleveland were “completely committed to remedying the issue.” She said she understood it was a “big deal to a lot of families,” and she is anticipating a “well-attended school committee meeting in October.”

Selectboard member Jed Proujansky commented that he had never been a fan of the MCAS tests, and that he “doesn’t want to make a bigger deal of it than it is.” He acknowledged that the scores needed to be looked into, but said it wasn’t the end of the world, and that he expected to see better results in the future.

Plavin said she was not a fan of the standardized tests either, but that her “main concern” was that the scores “reflected on the school in general, and school choice, et cetera.” “Hopefully it was a one-year anomaly,” she said.

An effort to reconcile two school budget accounts which have shown deficits over a period of years was proceeding, Plavin reported, but was not yet complete.

Proujansky said he would like to hear progress reports at every selectboard meeting until the issue with the accounts is resolved. The problem has “dragged on for years

and years and years,” he said, “and feels like an ugly sore we would like to let heal.”

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said she would “own” part of the problem and could help provide the updates, but Proujansky said he wanted to hear them from the school.

Blacktop and Beavers

Boucher reported that the highway department budget was on track, and that his staff was busy with drainage, mowing, and tree removal work, but thinking about snow and getting trucks and equipment ready for winter. He said he likes to have two trucks ready by October 15 in case of an early storm.

Boucher highlighted paving work on Montague Road and the safety complex and elementary school parking lots, all of which was finished in time for the town’s 250th anniversary parade, as three of the larger jobs completed this year.

Boucher said he had recently met with the cooperative education coordinator at Franklin County Technical School about hiring a student to work in the department. There was “plenty to do and plenty to learn,” he said, and he hoped to hire a candidate within a few weeks.

Both he and another department employee, he added, went through such programs as youths.

Resident Steve Weiss complimented the department on its “at least temporary victory in the beaver battle” on the corner of Montague and Cave Hill roads.

“They’re gone for now,” replied Boucher.

Hopefully Not Rattlesnakes

Two members of the steering committee for the Rattlesnake Gutter Road restoration and improvement project, Weiss and Eva Gibavic, said the committee is pursuing at least six grants, but has run into a technical question posed by a planning board member.

Rattlesnake Gutter Road was discontinued as a public road this year and is to be designated as a “trail,” and the question pertains to whether the restrictions of a zoning overlay district now apply to the route. Weiss and Gibavic said they were seeking a statement from the selectboard to assure the planning board that they didn’t see any conflict between the proposed work and the overlay restrictions.

Selectboard members said they were willing to provide such an assurance, but questioned its necessity, suggesting the planning board should be able to resolve the issue itself one way or another.

Gibavic also reported that there was a new “hoop to jump through”

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Sunday, September 29 from 12 to 3 p.m.
(Rain date October 6)
The Common, Town Center, Gill

after the discovery that the Gutter is within a “Rare Habitat Species Area,” requiring forms to be filed with MassDEP for any trail work.

Hankinson asked what endangered species were involved.

“We don’t know,” Weiss responded. “They don’t publish it.”

Gibavic commented that at one point a “rare woodland orchid” was seen in the area, but she “would hope they will tell us” what is believed to live there currently.

“You folks are plowing ahead,” observed Hankinson, “just as you said you would.”

Other Business

The select and planning boards voted unanimously to appoint Jacob Park to the latter board.

It was speculated that Park might need to recuse himself from any matters related to the redevelopment of the Kittredge estate due to the proximity of his residence, but Park said he wanted to serve either way. McGinnis suggested he contact the state ethics commission to resolve the question.

The board agreed to sign a letter of support for an application being organized by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments on behalf of a number of towns for a federal Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) grant.

It also voted to endorse Community Preservation Act grant applications for the affordable housing trust, the refurbishing of a map on the front of town hall, and the restoration and display of a set of weights and measures from 1848 at town hall.

The board also signed a letter to state officials supporting the Northern Tier passenger rail project.

Christine Mcdannald was appointed to the school committee, and Isabella Yeager was appointed as the town’s conservation agent.

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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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Above: Cows do cow things at Upinngil Farm in Gill.

BOOK REVIEWS
Great Lives, and Their Great Contexts

- Andrea di Robilant, *This Earthly Globe A Venetian Geographer and the Quest to Map the World* (Knopf, 2024)
- Charles King, *Every Valley: The Desperate Lives and Troubled Times that Made Handel's Messiah* (Doubleday, 2024)
- Daisy Goodwin, *Diva* (St Martin's Press, 2024)

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

LEVERETT – Everything from resués to biographies, memoirs to obituaries assume that the first-this-then-that account of a life accurately charts it. Of course, there are other things to consider, but the one-damn-thing-after-another certainly helps readers of traditional biography because we intuitively understand the format.

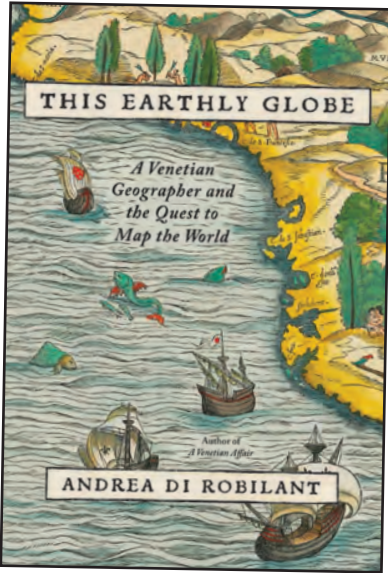
Yet biographical writers often widen their focus to capture the historical circumstances of their subject, as Andrea di Robilant does in his *A Venetian Geographer and the Quest to Map the World*, which traces the life and work of Giovambattista Ramusio (1485-1557).

Ramusio's day job was in the civil service of the Republic of Ven-

ice. He rose quickly through the ranks partly because of his talent for languages. He became an interpreter for the Doge – the head of the Venetian government – and eventually Secretary of the ruling Council of Ten. He was also a hands-on property owner.

His busy life notwithstanding, as a humanist scholar Ramusio was eager to learn more about the world of the past and enthralled by the newly discovered worlds of his own era, so he became devoted to cartography. His loyalty to Venice was engaged because he knew that as a wealthy maritime power dependent on trade Venice needed accurate maps for its merchants and sea captains.

Ramusio, always a perfectionist, was punctilious about the material



characteristics of books as well as scholarship. In accounts of distant lands he favored “an encompassing description of a territory,” di Robilant writes, “that might include observations of local crops, on manufacture, on trade patterns, on systems of transportation, irrigation, communication, on the social and political organization of villages and towns, on religious practices.”

see **BOOKS** page B5



WEST ALONG THE RIVER
ESCAPE TO
PLUM ISLAND

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – There came a time for a getaway, fitted in between the long string of beautiful summer days full of morning fog that later lifted, revealing warm golden light until dusk.

We counted nighthawks and brown bats in the twilight, and reveled in the glow of green lush late-summer vegetation of Valley days.

But be that as it may, there was a restlessness that came over me, and like Ishmael in Melville's book, I knew it was high time to get down to the sea as soon as I could.

For us in this household, the sea is the North Shore, and the destination is always Plum Island and Newburyport, only a few hours away. We can go and come back the same day, and the dog will hardly notice that we've been gone.

The Parker River National Refuge provides comfortable sanctuary for we Valley folks: limited access, uncrowded beaches, and lots of birds.

Mornings on the back porch have been a summer-long immersion in the writings of Henry Beston. You may recall that something lured me up to the northerly chamber of this old house where I had long ago stashed my 1950s paperback edition of his classic book of nature and beach writing, *The Outermost House*.

So evocative and perfectly written it is that I had hardly finished my first read-through when I started back again on page one, increasingly astonished at how much I had missed the first time.

So it became inevitable that I'd want to get back to the beach, although as I said, we head to the North Shore, whereas Beston had written of his year-long stay in the dune house he built looking out over the Atlantic shore between Nauset and Eastham.

Household and social imperatives kept our sojourn on the shore

to a relatively brief eight hours.

We pulled into the first parking lot with a leap in already fast-beating hearts, thrilled to be out in the bright salty sunshine and sound of breaking waves just beyond the boardwalk and over the dune.

Our first objective was to try to catch sight of the last lingering purple martins finishing their nesting season in the synthetic hanging gourd colony there in the parking lot. These imitations have long since replaced the real gourds people used to hang in J.J. Audubon's days. The martins, impossible to see in our valley, can be counted on to linger and nest on Plum, and become part of our year's list of sightings.

But our real destination for the day was a bit further down the paved road. Arriving at this particular parking lot, unloading the car full of beach necessities, we were determined to trek along the boardwalk that stretched for a quarter mile across the inner dunes before arriving at the last crest.

But just at the beginning of that boardwalk, we were greeted by a sight we had never witnessed before.

The air was filled with thousands of migrating tree swallows swirling and swooping only a few feet above our heads, quietly chattering and calling, gathering up their forces to begin their trip south. In a few days they'd be gone.

Tree swallows have become increasingly sparse in our part of the Valley, due to the dwindling populations of our common insects. But here, on this day, there was plenty to eat.

The dratted greenhead flies and biting sand flies were reaching their high season, so the tree swallows were everywhere. Like a school of fish they swarmed as one body, pivoting, swirling, landing in unison in the low bush trees, and then abandoning their perches and launching into the

see **WEST ALONG** page B8

MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

Interview by J. BURKETT

TURNERS FALLS – Wow! How cool to interview the great Erica Pomerance, who lives up in Montreal. I basically just knew Erica from her mindblowing LP on the ESP label, *You Used To Think* (1968), but what an album it is! Imagine, if you will, one of the coolest, most diverse, crazy albums on maybe *thee* coolest, most diverse and crazy label... and yes, it's kind of a time capsule of the year it came out, but it's also that year blasted into another dimension, with a unique cast of characters led by the greatest voice on the label. Picture Melanie meeting Patty Waters.

If this record was all that Pomerance was known for,

LXXIII: Erica Pomerance



she will stand out in the history books. But she is also a filmmaker, has done a great deal of humanitarian work in Africa, has now put a cool second LP out, and is writing songs and playing shows again.

It was so great to get to know her a little in this interview, and to be inspired by her all over again – I wish I had half her enthusiasm! – and hopefully you will get something out of reading the interview as well. Please check out her great music ASAP!

By the way, we tracked down a copy of her newer record after the interview. We highly recommend it, though it seems like it would help if you know French. Hopefully we can get her to play out here one day!

MMM: Hi Erica! So, I mostly just know your first album on ESP. Is it OK to talk about that?

EP: Sure... I have another record out now, too! It was put out by a Quebec company.

MMM: It's a live album?

EP: It's live. “*En Concert À La Commune Le P'tit Québec Libre.*” It's on a label that put out a lot of Québécois music and does a lot of archival stuff, called Trésor National, Tour De Bras, which means like an arm... his master's voice/turning/twisting with your hand/on a crank turntable.

They found an old tape of a concert I had given in 1972 at this farm. There was this independent jazz group in Quebec called “the Jazz Quebecelle” or something, who had a farm in Quebec where a lot of acts performed. They had this stage built outdoors.

This time this jazz band would perform... it was a gang that would perform free jazz! And I would perform with them occasionally, and I would do a lot of

see **MUSIK** page B4



The author reads as a herring gull looks on.

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

‘SCOTT’

Meet Scott, a 7-month-old hound mix who’s ready to find his new family! Scott made his way up from Alabama, and he’s been stealing hearts ever since. This friendly guy is a social butterfly who loves being around people, kids, and other dogs. With medium energy, Scott is the perfect balance – he’s always up for a nice walk, but is just as happy curling up on the couch for some relaxation. Like any young pup, Scott is still working on mastering his manners, including leash walking and house training. But with his eagerness to

learn and grow, he’s sure to catch on quickly with some guidance. Interested in adopting Scott, or another worthy pet? Call the Dakin Humane Society at (413) 781-4000 or visit www.dakinhumane.org for information. Now through this Saturday, September 28, Dakin is reducing adoption fees by 50%. Want your pet featured in *The Montague Reporter*? We accept reader submissions! Just email a high-resolution photo to editor@montaguereporter.org along with a paragraph or two about why your pet is simply the best.

Senior Center Activities SEPTEMBER 30 TO OCTOBER 4

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 9/30

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

Tuesday 10/1

9 a.m. Chair Yoga
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 10/2

9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Outdoor Yoga (weather permitting)

11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 10/3

10:30 a.m. Brown Bag
1 p.m. Pitch

Friday 10/4

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

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

Monday 9/30

9 a.m. Interval
10 a.m. Chair Dance
1 p.m. Yoga
1 p.m. Hand Therapist

Tuesday 10/1

9 a.m. Good for U
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer

Wednesday 10/2

9 a.m. Strength & Conditioning
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics

Thursday 10/3

9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow

Friday 10/4

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.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

This Weekend: Help Clean Our River

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC)’s 28th annual Source to Sea Cleanup is this Friday and Saturday, September 27 and 28, with flexible opportunities for groups to help. The goal is to remove as much trash as possible from waterways, riverbanks, and communities to reduce the impact of pollution across the 410-mile Connecticut River watershed, including the tributaries that feed the mainstem river in New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. What began in 1997 with a small group of student volunteers dedicated to healthy habitats has grown to a massive community action trash removal event throughout the Connecticut River watershed. Group leaders organize events at high-need sites, while volunteers donate time and effort to haul and clear tons of waste. CRC invites registration at SourceToSeaCleanup.org. Last year’s cleanup included over 1,200 volunteers throughout the watershed, who removed 34.2 tons of trash from rivers and riverside areas, including bottles, cans, cigarette butts, fishing equipment, food packaging, tires, appliances, mechanical objects, and even a hot tub. Over 9,000 beverage containers and over 13,000 pounds of scrap metal were tallied in 2023. Take a photo or video when you are at the river, participating in the Cleanup or just enjoying time

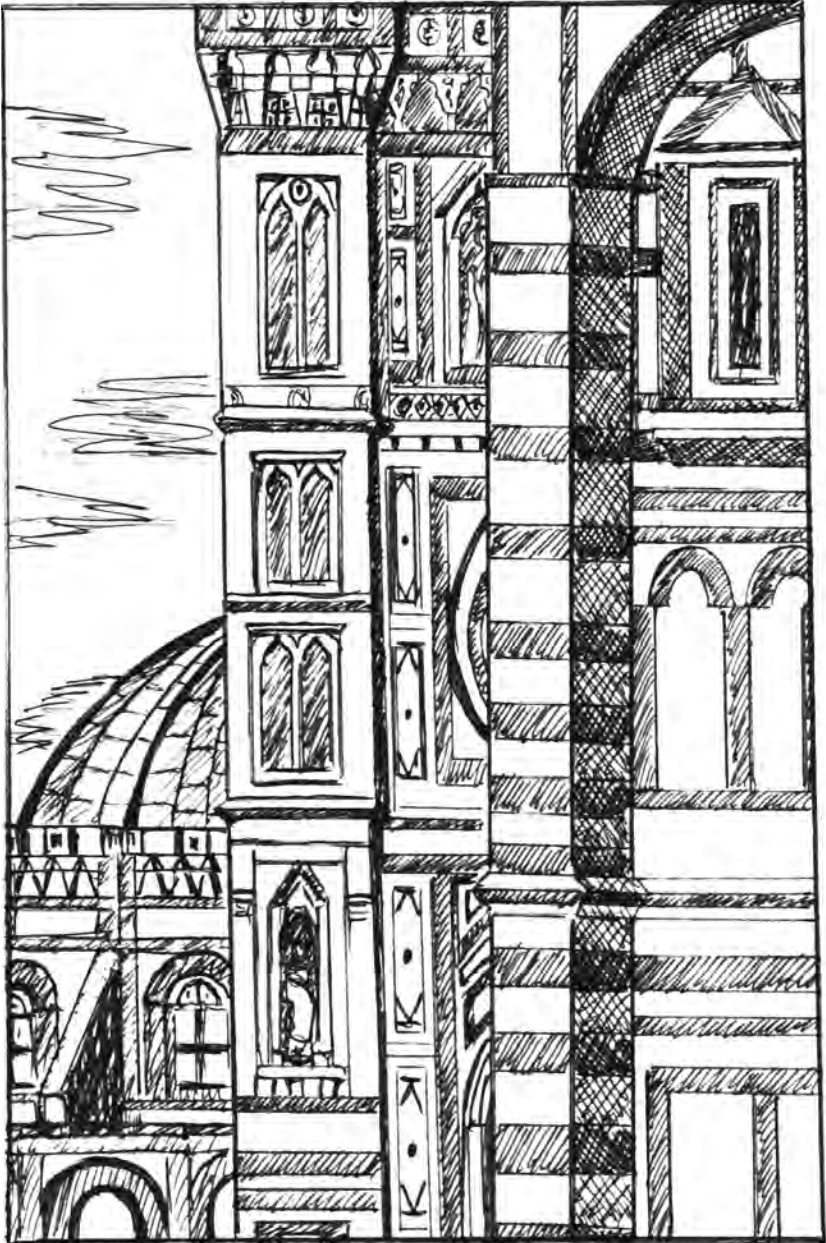
outside, or make art inspired by river beauty or river pollution. Share on Instagram, include [#RiverWitness](https://www.instagram.com/RiverWitness/), and tag [@ctriverconservancy](https://www.instagram.com/ctriverconservancy/). “The Source to Sea Cleanup is a fabulous opportunity to roll up your sleeves, work with others in your community, and clean up our waterways and city streets,” says CRC cleanup coordinator Stacey Lennard. “When you pick up trash you are diverting that waste from going down storm drains and into the river system, which eventually flows into the ocean. You are ensuring that we keep this debris out of our rivers and oceans.” Groups that want to adopt a site can check out CRC’s map at SourceToSeaCleanup.org, or choose one of their own by submitting a “Report a Trash Site” form. Parks, city blocks, boat ramps, and neighborhood hangouts are typically great spots to clean. Leaders are encouraged to scout the site out beforehand to determine if it’s suitable; a Group Leader Guide available for download on the website provides all the necessary information and forms for a successful cleanup. For more information, visit CRC’s cleanup info page at www.ctriver.org/our-work/source-to-sea-cleanup/. To sign up as a volunteer or group leader, view the Sites Map at SourceToSeaCleanup.org. For any other questions, contact Stacey Lennard at cleanup@ctriver.org.

EXHIBIT PREVIEW

Mercati Returns to Montague ... This Time in Person!

By **RICHARD ANDERSEN**

MONTAGUE CENTER – Fabio Mercati is a self-taught, internationally renowned Italian artist. His expansive *oeuvre* of primarily oils and watercolors can be found in galleries, private collections, and corporate offices, but you wouldn’t be surprised to find them gracing pizza parlors and furniture stores, and serving as wedding favors for well-heeled Tuscans. His most ambitious project – an oversized triptych of Seina and its pastoral surroundings – welcomes all who enter the halls of the medieval city’s prestigious medical school. And not to put too fine a point on all this, but a collection of Mercati’s brilliantly colored gouaches of contemporary Italian life inaugurated the revolving series of art exhibits at the Montague Center Library. Mercati’s individual works are as wide-ranging as his geographical reach. Take the pen-and-ink drawing that accompanies this article. It features in Florence Giotto’s 14th-century *campanile* and, behind it, Brunelleschi’s famous 15th-century Church of San Lorenzo, universally known as the “Duomo.” We’ve seen many representations of these two architectural masterpieces before, but never have they been portrayed in this specific juxtaposition. Why not? Because their actual physical locations didn’t coincide with the sightlines in the artist’s imagination. Mercati, who has never been interested in reproducing the camera equivalent of reality, has focused instead on creating an original work of art. Perhaps to underscore this point, Mercati gives pride of place not to the magnificent house of worship – the first domed building erected in Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire – but to the bell tower. In most representations of Florence, the Duomo dominates. Not here. It’s almost as if Mercati wants to give overdue credit not only to the great Renaissance painter Giotto,



F. Mercati '24.

Fabio Mercati, Duomo Battistero di Firenze, pen and ink, 2024.

who designed the *campanile*, but to the architect who completed the elegant structure and whose name appears today on an American-made brand of gelato: Talenti. Mercati can’t remember how old he was when he began to draw, but he still has his first painting: a copy of one by Monet that features the great Impressionist’s garden and villa. Mercati was 14 at the time. In an exclusive interview with the *Montague Reporter*, the artist tells us: “My art is a journey towards the infinity and mystery of

life. Being able to create something that was not until shortly before, with a simple ink pen or oil paints, is amazing, fantastic!” The Italian *maestro*’s continuing journey toward infinity and mystery through pen-and-ink drawings of iconic and sometimes not-so-iconic Italian Renaissance architecture will be on display at the Montague Center Library from October 16 through the 28th, with a reception to be held on Monday, October 21 from 6 to 7 p.m. Refreshments will be served. *Salute!*

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EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

The Gillbilly Paddle On the Connecticut River

GILL – Your favorite Gill water event returns for a fall foliage outing next Sunday, October 6. The Gillbilly Paddle, sponsored by Gill’s recreation committee, features canoes, kayaks, rowing shells, and other small watercraft, launching from the Northfield Mount Hermon School’s boat docks on the Connecticut River and paddling to the destination, the confluence of the Millers River and the Connecticut River.

A highlight at the end of this scenic trip is the view looking up as your vessel passes under the magnificent French King Bridge.

Transportation for boats back to their cars upriver will be provided. If you want to bicycle back to the starting point, your bike can be transported from the launch area to the destination. As an extra treat, the launch will start with a bang, provided by Ray Steele’s cannon.

Boaters should arrive at the Northfield Mount Hermon School docks at 19 Speer Way at around 9:30 a.m. The boats will launch at 10 a.m. Those paddling are expected to reach the finish around noon.

Liability release forms are required for all participants, and consent and release forms must be signed by parents or guardians for all children under age 18. The release forms are located in the “Files” section of the Gill recreation committee web page. Life jackets are required for all participants.

The event is free of charge, and is open to Gill and non-Gill residents alike.

AT THE FAIR

The Melha Shriners Clowns

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – The Melha Shriners Clowns have come to the Franklin County Fair in Greenfield a couple of times, so when the fair came around this year, I decided I wanted to write about them. I didn’t think I would get a hold of anyone from the group at the fair, so I tried to get a hold of a clown during the parade, and I did do that.

I ended up having even better luck while I was at the fair, because I went into one of the buildings and found some clowns there making balloon animals and giving them out to people. Of the handful of clowns that were there, I ended up talking to Richard C. Bosworth, a senior clown, for the interview.

Bosworth’s clown name is Bubba, though his previous clown name was Crispy.

I also saw a Volkswagen Beetle at the fair that was nicely decorated like a clown car and said “Melha Shriner Clowns” on it.

“I have been a member since I was 21,” said Bosworth. “Since 1968,” he added.

I learned that there are three senior clowns in the group, and Bubba is one of them. The official website said Bubba was a chief clown in 1979. One of the clowns has been a part of the group since 2009.

“When I came in there were 250,” he mentioned, when I asked him about members.

The other clowns that were making balloon animals with him were a hobo called Patches, one called Chow, and another named Mis-Matches. Along with fairs, Bosworth told me they do birthday parties, bar mitzvahs, and parades. They are clowns for the Shriners Hospital, which does a lot of charitable work.

“We support two Shriners hospitals – Boston and Springfield,” he explained. The real names of the clowns I mentioned are David “Patches” Mereshuck, Christopher “Chow” Howe, and Rob “Mis-Matches” Cote.

One cool fact I also learned from Bubba is that this group has an actual clown college to its name. You would expect something like that to be a work of fiction, but it is not. “It used to be just for the Shriners, but it’s open for the public,” he told me. The college was started 36 years ago for people who wanted to be clowns.

The official website mentions an award the clowns have gotten. On May 1, 1968, the Beth-El-Youth Award was given for service to the youth of the community. Before, this award was just given to individuals, but they were the first group to get it. To me, that tidbit is as cool as them having a real-life clown college to their name.

The Melha Shriners Clowns were very fun to watch in the parade, and to see at the Franklin County Fair.



Some of the Melha Shriners Clowns, seen here at a previous event.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Death Threat; Camper Leak; Leaf Blower; Gun Theft; Spoon; Goose Chasers; Bleach Assault; Scooter Crash; Crime Here That Goes Beyond Denunciation; Sorrow Here That Weeping Cannot Symbolize; Failure Here That Topples All Our Success; The Fertile Earth, the Straight Tree Rows, the Sturdy Trunks, and the Ripe Fruit; And Children Dying of Pellagra Must Die Because a Profit Cannot Be Taken From an Orange; And Coroners Must Fill In the Certificates–Died of Malnutrition–Because the Food Must Rot, Must Be Forced to Rot

Monday, 9/16
10:28 a.m. 911 caller from Wentworth Congregate Housing reporting that another resident just spit on her and was yelling in her face. Mutual disagreement; advised of options.
10:55 a.m. Representative from housing agency would like it on record that she received an email this morning from an anonymous person stating that they were going to handle problems in an East Main Street building on their own, and that the residents of one apartment were “going to be dead.” Officers advised.
12:05 p.m. Walk-in reporting that his vehicle was struck while at the North Village Smokehouse and the driver of the truck that hit him took off. Investigated.
12:55 p.m. Housing director would like to speak to a supervisor about weekend activity at the Moltenbrey Apartments and why the police are not arresting people who enter other people’s apartments. Advised of options.
8:34 p.m. Report of two or three subjects on bikes creating a disturbance in the O Street area. Subjects are smoking cigarettes at the end of people’s driveways, being loud, and swearing at residents. Caller advises that this has happened several times recently. Area search negative.
11 p.m. Vehicle repossession on Green Pond Road.
11:40 p.m. 911 caller from Moltenbrey Apartments advises that a female party who lives across the hallway is currently yelling and throwing items into the hallway and at his door. Caller is unsure why she is doing this. Officer advises both parties spoken to about issue. Female advises she was cleaning out her apartment and moving stuff into the hallway. No further issues at this time.

Tuesday, 9/17
3:40 a.m. Caller reports possible use of crack and other drugs at Moltenbrey Apartments. Logged.
8:37 a.m. A 35-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a default warrant and a straight warrant.
1:10 p.m. Male party located at J and Sixth streets with illegal drugs in plain view. Male party detained; Miranda rights read via card. Report taken.
1:30 p.m. Officer checking on “sewage” leaking from a camper parked at J and Sixth streets. Board of Health responding.
1:45 p.m. Caller from Moltenbrey Apartments would like it on record that this morning he found garbage left on his doorstep that he believes came from the neighbor across the hall from him. Ongoing issue.
5:04 p.m. Caller reporting multiple disturbances at Peskeompskut Park: people publicly drinking at picnic tables; homeless people setting up tents at the park; children having bicycles at the park; people sleeping between cars in the area; people messing with the wood chips and gravel at the park. Caller wants park monitored at all times. Advised caller that it is a public park, which is monitored regularly, and people are allowed to be there. Caller feels this is not OK, as it bothers her and disrupts her well-being. Officer advises no alcohol; one male charging his cell phone in the bandshell, who then will move along. Officer will recheck the area later.
9:01 p.m. Caller reporting loud music playing from tent encampment behind property along Fifth Street alleyway. Parties advised of complaint.
11:50 p.m. Anonymous caller requesting that officers keep an eye on the Randall Wood Drive area during midday and later at night due to vehicles racing up and down the street. Caller advises this has been going on since late May. Advised caller that call would be logged and info would be passed along to officers.

Wednesday, 9/18
5:40 a.m. Received calls from two parties on East Main Street expressing their issues with one another. Officer spoke to female party at length about her concerns and what she would like to report.
7:57 a.m. 911 caller from Center Street states she is being harassed by a male party from a landscaping company who is leaf-blowing at 7 a.m.; it woke her up, and she wants something done because it keeps occurring.
6:32 p.m. 911 caller from Avenue A reporting threats that were made two days ago; didn’t call police at the time as he didn’t feel it was necessary. Caller states he went to court today and now orders were placed. He’s now upset because the party keeps threatening him; states she said she’s going to “put him to sleep” and has tried escalating it to a physical matter. He would like police to take action now against the female and everyone within her household as he states that they all have warrants, are

doing drugs, are driving unregistered vehicles, and are threatening him. Caller states that if the PD doesn’t do anything he will take it into his own hands. Additional information provided. Statement forms completed.
10:11 p.m. 911 caller from Marshall Street reporting his car was broken into within the past three hours and a firearm was stolen. Smith and Wesson Shield, compact 9mm. Serial number provided. Entered into NCIC as missing. Report taken.
10:18 p.m. Caller reporting that the cones by the raised plates on Montague City Road have been moved into the breakdown lane and it’s unsafe for bicyclists, as they have to go into the roadway to pass. Officer advised.
11:04 p.m. Caller advises multiple people actively fighting physically with each other over drugs in the Fifth Street alleyway. Officers checked area; nobody seen or heard fighting or yelling.

Friday, 9/20
1:01 p.m. Greenfield PD assisting on Avenue A. A 33-year-old Gill man was arrested on two straight warrants. A 41-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a straight warrant. A 56-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a straight warrant.
5:25 p.m. Report of a box under a shack outside Booska’s Flooring with a spoon in it, and possibly other paraphernalia. Referred to an officer.
6:17 p.m. Report of shoplifting from Aubuchon Hardware within the past ten minutes. Subject stole at least one padlock. Caller identified suspect and stated he is known in the area. Summons issued.
10:07 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls inquiring who to call about an injured porcupine that has since climbed a tree. Provided caller with number for Environmental Police dispatch.
10:41 p.m. 911 caller reporting loud music coming from a neighboring apartment. Provided caller with non-emergency number and advised that an officer will respond to the complaint. Officer advises no music coming from apartment; music was coming from an event at the Shea Theater, where the rear door is open.

Saturday, 9/21
9:26 a.m. Caller concerned about three kids chasing geese in the field at Sheffield Elementary School. Dispersed gathering.
6:02 p.m. Caller from Third Street reports four teenagers swearing at him and throwing a white-handled knife around. Teens were throwing a knife at a tree, and words were exchanged between the caller and the teens.
6:08 p.m. Passerby reported to an officer what sounded like a domestic dispute somewhere in the area of the alley between Third and Fourth Streets. Officers unable to locate any disturbance in area.
8:53 p.m. Employee from Connecticut River Liquor and Wine reporting a larceny of four nips. Officer will follow up with business owner tomorrow to look at camera footage.

Sunday, 9/22
2:03 a.m. Officer spoke with a male party dressed in black walking around Peskeompskut Park. Officer moved him along; wanted on record.
3:26 a.m. 911 open line from Avenue A; females yelling back and forth; no one would answer dispatch. Disconnected. Got voicemail upon callback.
Second 911 call received; caller states that another female threw bleach at her and it got in her eyes; she can’t see now. Control advised for ambulance. A 36-year-old Westfield woman was arrested and charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon.
12:37 p.m. 911 caller requesting ambulance to Old Greenfield Road for 58-year-old female who crashed on a motorized scooter; possibly has a broken arm and other injuries. PD responding; Shelburne Control notified by dispatch to send medical response.
1:08 p.m. Caller from K Street states that his electric bike was stolen overnight. It was locked up to a chain link fence behind his house.
2:06 p.m. Walk-in from Dell Street states that someone broke into his truck and stole two Pelican cases with tools in them along with a drill and batteries. Report taken.
5:08 p.m. Caller from Whitney’s Way states there are kids shooting guns and they are definitely less than 500 feet from her house. Unfounded.
10:27 p.m. Report of male who eloped from Baystate Franklin Medical Center while on a medical hold. Requesting MPD check our town and return party to ER if located. Copied via radio; GPD located male and is transporting him back to the hospital.

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MUSIK from page B1

improvising... jazz vocals. They asked me to do the first part of their show, like to be the first act before they did a jazz show.

I sang four of my songs. The first, “The French Revolution,” was adapted from the ESP album, and the three others I let myself improvise.

They thought it was pretty crazy, and a few years ago I was asked if they could put this out. They made quite a few vinyl albums, and I don’t know if it came out in CD form. They put it online, but it’s basically just distributed in Quebec.

But it was good, because it gave my musical career a boost. I hadn’t been performing for many years, as I’m a documentary filmmaker now, and I spend a lot of time in West Africa. So I started performing again since this album came out, here and there, mostly here where I am now, in the Magdalen Islands, which is a big tourist spot in the Gulf of St. Lawrence with a lot of musical venues.

I’m preparing a concert for next week at this Inn that has this sort of large hall, it’s like a gallery. People come and bring their own wine, and they pass the hat. They have a full program all summer with different artists coming in and performing, and this is the third year I’m doing a show there.

MMM: That’s great! So do you do a mixture of old and new songs? And do you perform cover material?

EP: I do mostly my old songs, but some that are not recorded yet, some that I wrote after that particular ESP period. Plus a lot of adaptations of spirituals and folk and blues.

I do a little Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, and a lot of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger type stuff. That whole series on trains – “Bound for Glory,” “Rock Island Line,” those type of things – because people here don’t know that much of that kind of music. Some of them translated into French as well.

I know all those things from when I was a kid. My parents were old lefties and there was a summer camp, with adults on one side and kids on the other, Brownie McGhee and Pete Seeger would come through. These are people I was exposed to as a child.

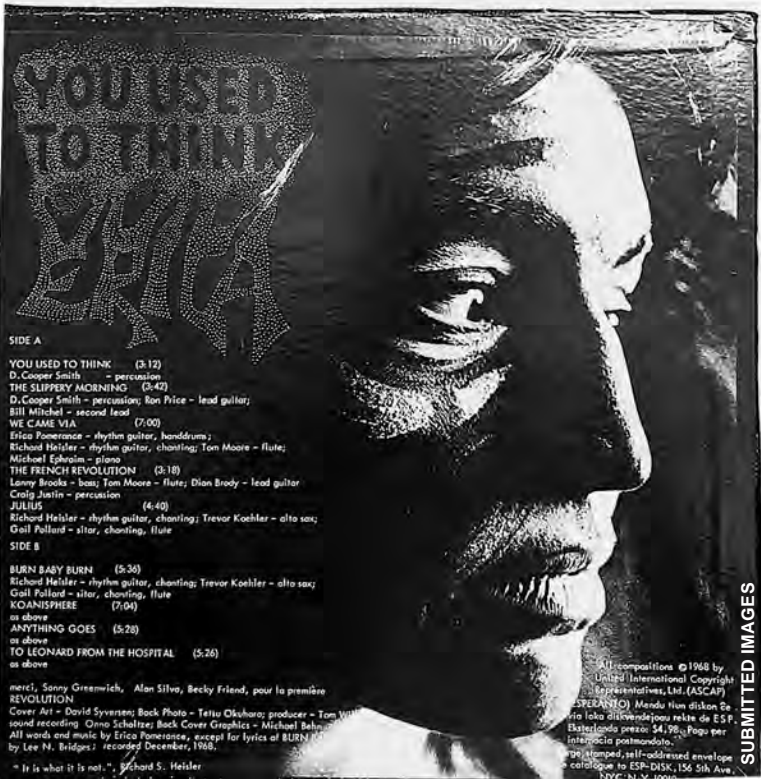
I do a whole thing on cotton – “jump down, turn around, and pick a bale of cotton” – that type of thing, too, and I get people to sing along. Because I’m kind of involved in the cotton business in Mali now, because my husband is from an indigo-dying family. He is Malian.

MMM: Where did you grow up, and how did you end up in New York City and on the ESP label?

EP: I grew up here in Montreal. I’m a “Montrealer,” and my grandparents are eastern European Jewish immigrants. I used to go to New York a lot in those days. I had an old boyfriend, Richie Heisler, who is on the album, who was doing yoga there and we sort of hung out in New York.

I had friends who had recorded on ESP: Tanya – her name was Valentine at the time – and Bruce Mackay, who had a duo and were close friends of mine. So when I went from Montreal to New York, I was gigging at some of these open mic nights, free ones in the Village. I forget the names of the clubs at this point. Bernard Stollman, who was the head of ESP, came by and heard me and sort of liked what I was doing, and he offered me a job in the offices of ESP, and while I was there, we kind of came up with the idea of me doing an album.

So we did an album, but now in retrospective I see that he was a bit tight on money, and



Pomerance’s 1968 LP on ESP Disk has attracted a cult following in the decades since its release, and has been reissued several times.

he didn’t put a lot of money into mastering or, you know, producing it. I basically just had one session in there, a few hours, and then they mixed it and then they put it out. They didn’t really spend a lot of time working on the sound and the balance, or different versions of the songs. I did maybe one or two versions of one or two songs with different musicians, and ended up recording the whole thing.

There is a whole article in an old edition of *Blastitude* where the guy who ran it at the time interviewed me about the recording, and what mental state I was in at the time. There was acid, and we had a snowstorm in New York that day, and you know what that’s like... a snowstorm in New York. They have no equipment. And trying to get to the studio, and it was snowing all night and everybody was out of their minds, and you know, we basically just recorded it live.

MMM: Do you ever come to the States?

EP: I’m actually going to the States for a month very soon! My husband and I are going to be doing a commercialization and merchandising trip for indigo textiles from Mali. We’re going to Richmond, Virginia for a month, giving dying workshops and attending festivals. I’m going to be coming from New York and he’s flying in. He’s not a musician, he’s basically somebody who is in the crafts area, developing traditional textile crafts. We have been together for a number of years and we go back and forth to Mali. Every year I spend three months there, and I do video workshops in West Africa as well.

MMM: How did you get to Africa originally?

EP: I was always totally enamored with Africa. I don’t know why. Even as a kid, I knew all the politics in African countries. I remember in high school I was in some debate or something, talking about Lumumba and Nkrumah and all those people.

And I always loved African-American music, the blues, and I used to hang out with the blues musicians who would come to Montreal, I met quite a few of them. Plus, I was enamored with John Hammond. As a young woman I had kind of a fleeting romance with John Hammond, who was, of course, deeply steeped in Robert Johnson and all those musicians his father had produced. And I liked jazz, and Billie Holiday, so first of all it was with African Americans, and then when I started discovering African

music I just became addicted to it.

So it was mostly music, but what brought me to West Africa in the first place was a documentary film project on the struggle to stop female genital mutilation. The first film I made in West Africa was called *Dabla! Excision* – “Dabla,” in the Mandingo language, means “stop” or “halt.”

MMM: What were some of your other film projects?

EP: I had this big project that never got funded called *Blues Musée*, where I was going to go up the Niger river, through Mali, Niger, Benin, and Nigeria, and hook up people who were living out of Quebec. There was a Brazilian musician who was playing conga drums, there was a Haitian singer, and then there was a blues musician named Alan Gerber who lives in Quebec, who used to play with Rhinoceros, and Dawn Tyler Watson, a Canadian blues musician.

I wanted to twin these musicians with traditional musicians who played music in similar styles to theirs, where their music found roots in different parts of Africa along the Niger River, showing the influence of the music from Niger. And, you know, Ry Cooder found Ali Farka Touré there and a lot of these bigger musicians have traveled, but I wanted no big stars – to go to the roots of the music and show that this music is very much alive, in a traditional way, it serves a function in the culture and the community – and connect it up with the musicians here, making personal and musical connections with people playing things that have inspired their music.

So I did some research, and I have a lot of footage of the groups that I found, there, but I never made the movie.

The last feature film that I did is about Malian women during the *coup d’état* that took place in 2011-’12, from the chaos that the country fell into. I became friendly with a musician from Timbuktu named Khaira Arby, they called her “the diva of Timbuktu,” who did two tours to the United States and Canada that weren’t well publicized. She did perform over here, but she had a horrible American manager who financed her tours, and he had never paid her and she had taken him to court, and she was in the middle of that then.

So I filmed her there, and the day I was here in the islands finishing the editing – I did it myself – she died! She had a tough life, and had an illness, and passed away from it. Someone else did a film about her here and

it was actually televised and did a lot of festivals, I think that one was about “two musicians that were in exile” or something. And there were a few films made about musicians in exile during the tumultuous period that is still continuing in those countries.

And I’ve been working with this other Malian woman who lives in Quebec who is doing really well now, and her mother is a famous singer who has performed with the Parisian orchestra, in the African tradition.

So I work with a lot of musicians in Quebec, and I do a lot of demos for African musicians, things to help them apply for grants... I’ve really remained connected with African musicians in Montreal, and in West Africa I’m quite connected with young, struggling filmmakers. In the States you need a lot of funds for films, but there they help each other for free, and the community is surviving.

MMM: Do you think any more of your recordings will come out?

EP: Well, there are just the two, plus I have a couple songs on compilations on records of songs from the Magdalen islands. And a few of my songs other people have recorded as well.

I’m sort of toying with the idea of putting out another record, doing songs I’ve never recorded. It’s just that I have so many different projects on my plate, and I’d have to find a way to get enough funding, or get someone with the right equipment so I can lay the first tracks down, and see if I can get some friends who are musicians to do tracks.

My grandson is a fantastic musician – he just recorded his own songs this summer, and he masters and does all sorts of things, so maybe I can involve him – but I keep thinking about it and haven’t moved very far concretely in that area.

Maybe before I croak I’ll be able to do it. I can still sing pretty well. My voice seems to have held up, and the high range is still there, and so it’s not a desperate situation.

MMM: Oh cool! Yeah, you should do another LP. Okay, so I might be in touch again with more questions about your work.

EP: Sure, no problem! I’m always full of lots of chats, and I diversify, go off on different tracks and whatever.

And so you live in Massachusetts do you – in Amherst, is that it? Is that near Boston?

MMM: Yes, I’m in Massachusetts. And no, it’s on the other side of Mass.



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BOOKS from page B1

Today’s travel books routinely try to cover these aspects of other countries, but Ramusio’s preference for this mode broke with the fantastical accounts of many earlier writers – one reason why di Robilant cites him as the greatest editor of his time.

Di Robilant grounds his discussion of Ramusio’s work in the many voyages of discovery included in his monumental *Navigazione et Viaggi*. Among these journeys are the contemporaneous Spanish and Portuguese ventures in the Americas, as well as Marco Polo’s late-13th-century travels in Asia. His descriptions are full of detail – fascinating for travelers, armchair and otherwise.

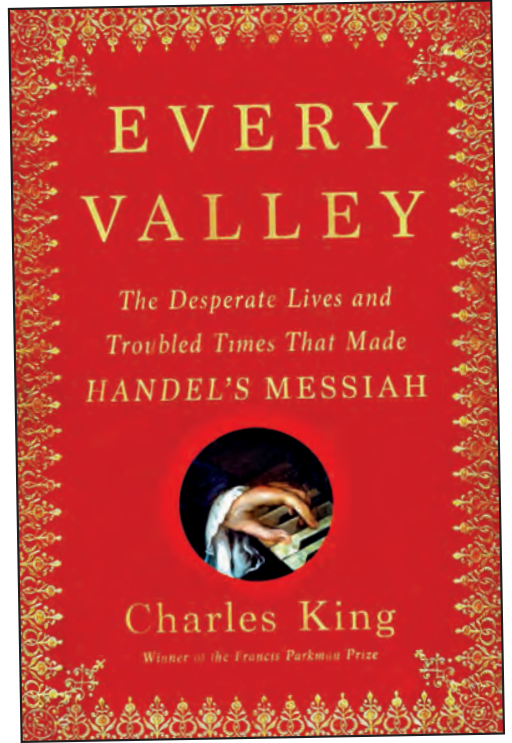
Equally fascinating are the illustrations in *This Earthly Globe*. Many are maps, usually surprisingly close to modern maps. Others include pictures of exotic things from faraway places: rhubarb from the East, an iguana from Central America, and a picture of the Inca capital Cuzco, which Ramusio said had been destroyed by the “malice and greed” of its Spanish conquerors. His own interest in distant places was “profoundly rooted in the Venetian ethos... not plunder or religious conversion but commerce,” writes di Robilant.

In *Every Valley* Charles King explores an era, the 18th-century “troubled times” of Handel’s *Messiah*, rather than simply recording Handel’s life and the creation of his masterpiece.

Born in Halle, Germany and trained in Germany and Italy, Handel arrived in England at the court of the German Hanoverian dynasty. He was such a success that he became a naturalized citizen and made his career in England, initially as a composer of Italian opera and court music. When his initial acclaim faded, he turned to a set of scripture quotations assembled by Charles Jennens, a wealthy landowner who wanted him to set them to music.

King begins *Every Valley* with a description of Jennens, and returns to him often later in the book. Indeed, having described Handel’s early life and arrival in London, he abandons him for long narrative sections describing the parlous political condition of Britain.

Many people, Jennens among them, thought that the Hanoverians had usurped the throne, the rightful Stuart heirs having been deposed by the Act of Settlement that forbade Catholics from becoming monarchs. The Stuarts raised at least two armed attempts to recover the throne, and their home



BOOK REVIEW

Rachel Kushner, *Creation Lake* (2024, Simon & Schuster)

By GEORGE SHAPIRO

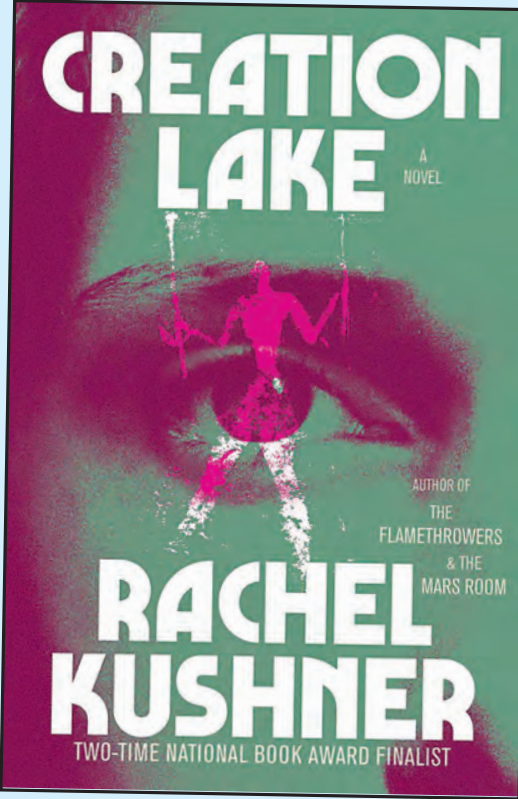
LAKE PLEASANT – In *Creation Lake*, the new novel by Los Angeles-based writer Rachel Kushner, an *agent provocateur* beds down with a group of anarchists who have decamped from the city (Paris) in favor of a rural agricultural life in the south of France, following in the footsteps of now-elderly radicals who fled the failed revolution of 1968. Sound familiar?

The novel adopts the mode of a fast-paced crime thriller with a filmic visual flair, as told by the protagonist, who speaks in the voice of a disgruntled grad student – if you can imagine a streaming “prestige TV” series with a lengthy digression on “Guy Debord: hero or monster?”

The narrator is a woman, an ex-academic who sees ideas as useful only to the degree to which the soft men who spout them can be manipulated into misguided acts of political violence and then subjected to police discipline.

At the same time, inside the thriller, there is an epistolary novel composed of the emails of an elderly revolutionary who has retreated from activism to become a literal caveman, living in the limestone caverns inhabited by early humanity and who contemplates the dialectic of *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthal, astro-navigation, and a materialized gestalt psychology.

As a noir-fantasy, you could say the heart of this novel is the conceit that doing things like destroying an eco-commune



of anarchists from within could be a professional career, like killing people is for “John Wick.” So, after a diasatisfying stint in grad school, you climb the ladder, navigate the sometimes nebulous expectations of your bosses, avoid the mistakes of your peers, and achieve success!

Whether it’s convincing a young man with unfortunate facial hair to plan to build a fertilizer bomb to save the planet or an old, sick activist to take a gun to a protest, it’s just

a job – which you do with a mordant internal dialogue disassociating yourself from what you have done. Reader: take note.

While dismissive of ideas, the novel seems animated by an old refrain: What Is To Be Done? The failure of the anti-globalization protests, the Iraq war protests, the climate change protests all going back to 1968 imagined as another 1848 but the view from LA is of a revolution which was televised and got cancelled. Radical politics, like grad school, is just another episode of boys talking about their toys. But, without politics, what is to be done?

The author seems to imagine that the question of the relationship between political violence and political non-violence can be answered like a Sunday school lesson, and there is a point in the novel when it just becomes a Coen brothers movie. Debord may have had something to say about that! And maybe that was the point, but it seems like the New New Left has preserved some naive thoughts within the candy shell of an academic seminar.

Still, the author is capable of sharp observations, and she constructs a series of antinomies – artist and activist, proletarian and farmer, radicals and bourgeoisie – though without any method of resolving them. The academic as police officer is something worth contemplating for the reader, even if the writer ultimately falls in love with her creation.

At the end of the day what you have is a weightless summer beach novel, as leaves fall from the trees and darkness gathers on the horizon. And, a refrain without an answer.

country Scotland was perpetually exercised by their wrongs.

Equally significant, Britain rocketed from one war to the next throughout the 18th century, and London, Europe’s largest city, was filled with impoverished people and homeless children. As a professor of international affairs and government, King is well-equipped to explicate these circumstances, which are central to his thesis that *Messiah* responds to its time by asserting “the staggering possibility that the world might turn out all right,” hence its first two words “Comfort ye.”

Yet the very clarity of King’s discussion of 18th-century Britain often distances Handel, who disappears for long periods as King’s limelight falls on people such as Jonathan Swift, Thomas Coram, and Susannah Cibber, who featured one way and another in early *Messiah* performances. Indeed, the focus on people and “the troubled times” takes precedence over other topics.

For example, Handel was in Italy during a period of musical innovation, but though King notes this as an influence, he does not explain what was new and what its effect was. Likewise, while he does not neglect Jennens’ role as librettist, he pays little attention to the language of his scripture selections – the Shakespearean English of the King James Bible. Nor does he consider the 18th-century literary genres that illuminate *Messiah*. He even asserts it lacks plot or narrative.

While di Robilant and King sketch the historical events their subjects experienced and the people they knew, in *Diva* Daisy Goodwin writes the life of operatic star Maria

Callas (1923-1977) as a novel. This is not a new stratagem. Hilary Mantel was a particularly distinguished practitioner of this art, and Philippa Gregory has founded a heavy industry for the production of novels about the Tudors, especially Henry VIII and his six wives.

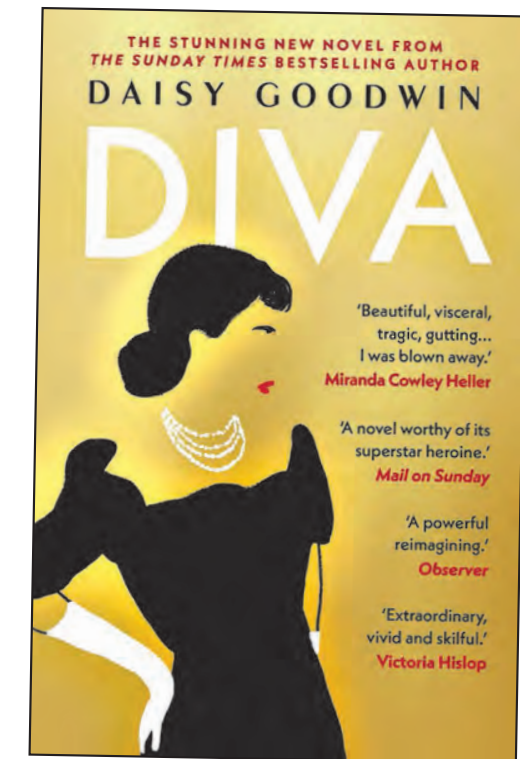
Like these other novelists, Goodwin explains that her novel sticks to historical facts. Why not, then, write a biography?

The answer is that interesting lives raise questions about motivations, including those of ancillary people. Even more important, the novelist can imagine and portray what it felt like to be her subject: in *Diva* what it felt like to be Maria Callas on the stage of a great opera house; Maria Callas her mother’s least-loved child; Maria Callas in thrall to her lover Aristotle Onassis.

Most important, though, is Maria Callas absolutely devoted to her voice and art. She needed her husband, businessman Giovanni Battista Meneghini, to negotiate her contracts, winning her extraordinary fees, though she later said he took much of her earnings for himself. She needed her friends in the opera world to help her decide what to sing, and where and with whom. She needed Onassis for passion, and to introduce her to another *milieu*.

But she never needed anyone to keep her working at her art. Between 1953 and 1954 she lost nearly 80 pounds after realizing that her obesity stopped her looking like the women she played and even made it hard for her to move around the stage. She never put that weight back on.

Readers of *Diva* may not always like Maria Callas. She was often imperious. She



refused to help her mother financially, and she seems to have been blind to machinations of many in her circle, Onassis included. But her commitment to her talent, and her well-founded fears of losing her voice, make her more heroic than Ramusio or Handel, whose portrayals contextualize them as figures in a tapestry.

Goodwin’s fine novel shows Callas as a towering but tragic woman dying alone at age 53 in her Paris apartment, her powerful voice a thing of the past.



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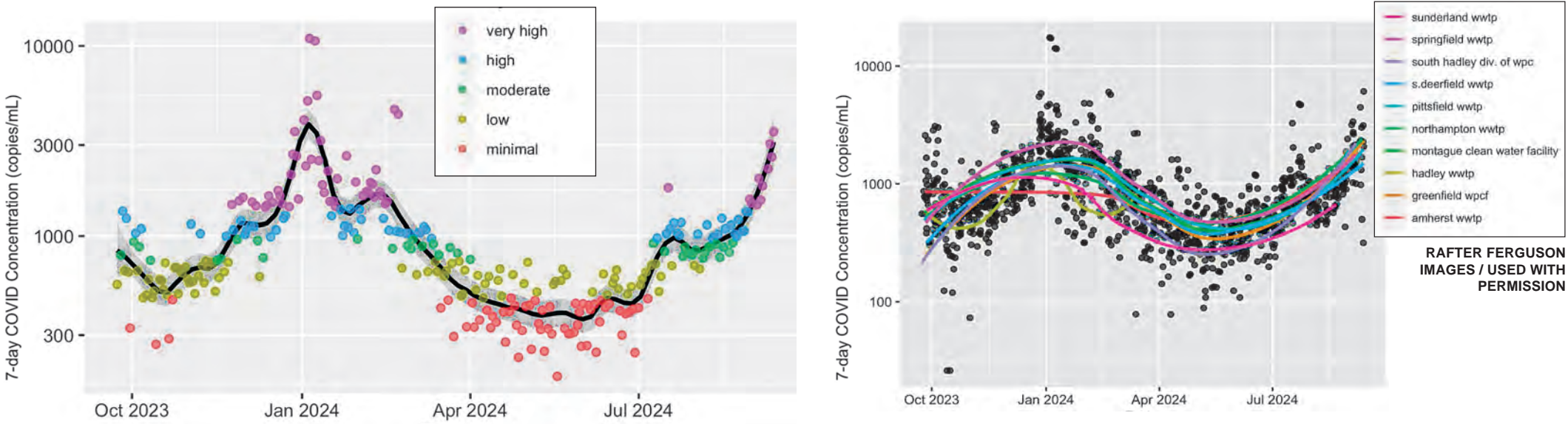
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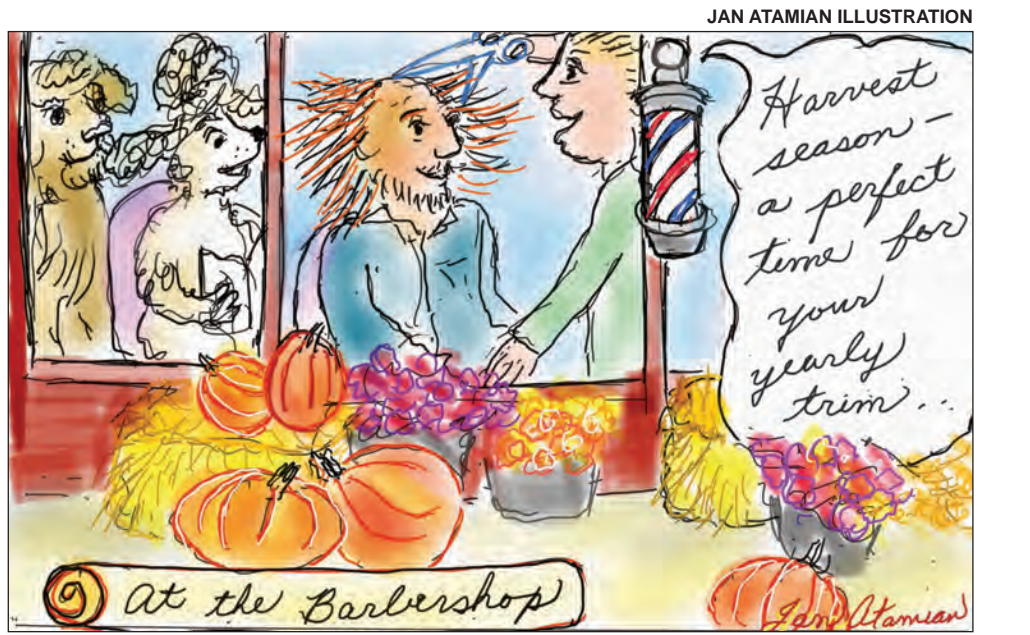
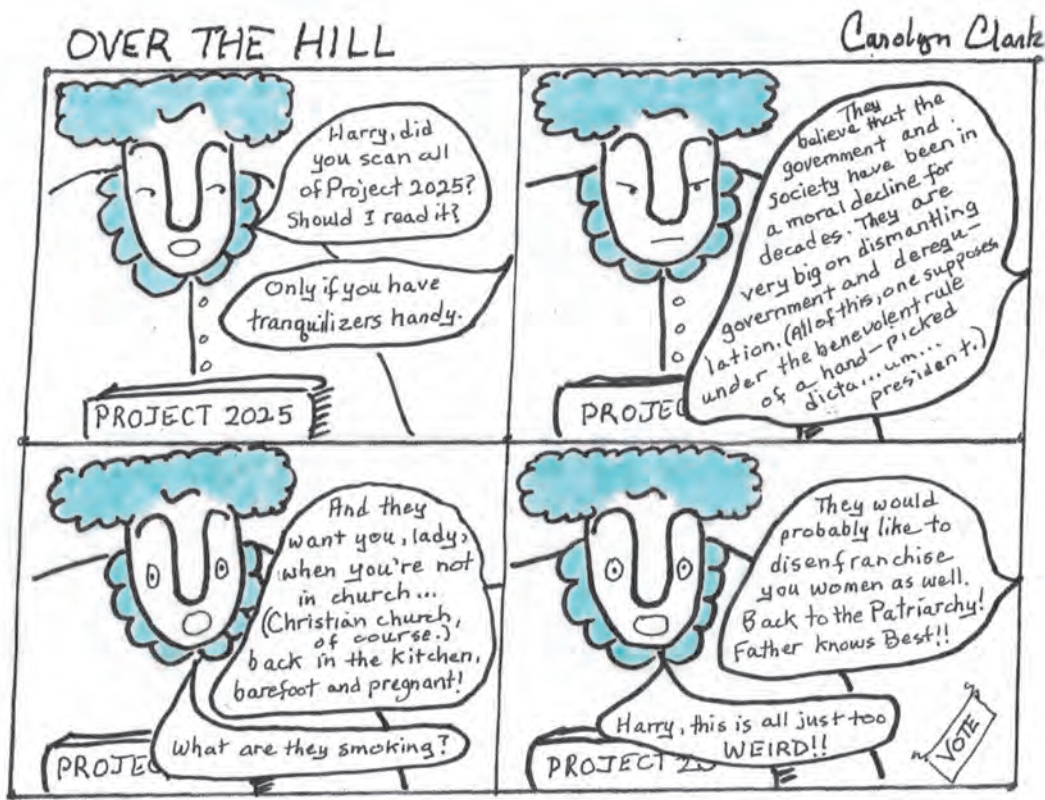
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FUN WITH DATA

Wastewater COVID Concentration and Viral Activity Levels for Western MA



Greenfield reader Rafter Ferguson (western.ma.covid.data@gmail.com) has been working to make the wastewater COVID-19 surveillance data gathered by the state Department of Public Health more useful and intelligible for western Mass residents. The graph on the left shows a mean COVID concentration for 11 sewer systems in Berkshire, Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties, weighted for population, from September 23, 2023 to September 12, 2024, the most recent available data as of Sunday. (Ferguson says he calculates wastewater viral activity levels using the Centers for Disease Control methodology, “with the exception that the 12-month baseline is updated at each calculation.”) “I was hoping this might be caused by one of two hotspots, so I looked,” Ferguson reports. “It’s not. It’s virtually across the board.” The graph on the right shows a breakdown by sewer system.



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
Greenfield Community College: *Erin McKeown*. \$. 6 p.m.

Holyoke Media Center, Holyoke: *Crank Sturgeon, Victor Signore, Nat Baldwin, Eric Dahلمان, Kane Loggia Hypothesis*. \$. 7 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Southern Culture on the Skids, The Wog-gles*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27
Montague Village Store, Mon-tague Center: *Montague March-ing Band*. Free. 5:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Leon Trout, The Narcotix, Faith Ann Band*. Free. 5:30 p.m.

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: *Ask Me Now*. Free. 6 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Steve Gunn, Geologist, Blue Cactus*. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Jimmy Tingle*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northamp-ton: *Angel Olsen*. \$. 8 p.m.

Quonk, Northampton: *Dialog Talk, Roost World, Bone Bone, Jemmy B2B Ice Rassta, Barbie. Ai*. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Haunting Titans, Crowdrider, Star-bath, Demon Chrome*. \$. 8 p.m.

Big E, West Springfield: *Lisa*

Loeb. \$. 8 p.m.
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bluegrass and Beyond*. No cov-er. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
Garlic & Arts Festival, Orange: *Ray & the Lovers, Eli Elkus, The Secret Chord, Moon Hollow, Rippopotamus, Josh Levangie*, more. \$. 11 a.m.

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *Eilen Jewell, Breezy Jane & the Hurricanes, James Montgomery Blues Band, Lone-some Brothers*. \$. 12 p.m.

CitySpace, Easthampton: Queer-Core Fest feat. *Space Camp, Evvie Echoes & The Locations, Film and Gender, K.O. Queen, I Have No Mouth, Mudai*. \$. 4 p.m.

Bowker Auditorium, UMass Am-herst: *Mother Tongue*. \$. 7 p.m.

Bombyx Arts, Florence: *Yacou-ba Sissoko*. \$. 7 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Jason Ander-son, Jak Mikal Thomas, AJ Co-letti*. \$. 7 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Film screening, *Nosferatu* (1922), with live soundtrack by *Arpeggi-one Ensemble*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Big E, West Springfield: *Public Enemy*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls:

Completely Unchained, Van Ha-len tribute. \$. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Big Bad Bollocks*. \$. 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Moon Hollow, Ditrani Brothers, Bandit Queen of Sorrows*. \$. 8 p.m.

Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Winterpills, Tiger Saw*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Vi-mana*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29
Garlic & Arts Festival, Or-ange: *Tap Roots, Briezy Jane & The Hurricane, Mighty King Snakes, JJ Slater & Lexi Weege, Ch'Chunk*, more. \$. 11 a.m.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *beetsblog, Beverly Ketch, Nino, Leaf Glitter*. \$. 5 p.m.

Clark Art Institute, Williams-town: *Malik Abdul-Rahmaan, DJ Rec*. Free. 5 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Supersuckers, Hooten Hallers*. \$. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Half Shaved Jazz*. No cover. 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Safe Mind, Clock Serum, Barbie.Ai*. \$. 8 p.m.
Tourists, North Adams: *Steve Gunn*. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3
Iron Horse, Northampton: *Cari-nae, Sun Parade*. \$. 7 p.m.

Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Glenn Jones, Thalia Zedek, Da-mon & Naomi*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Belltower Records, North Ad-ams: *Minibeast, Ian St. George Band, Kane Loggia Hypothesis*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northamp-ton: *Neko Case, Imaad Wasif*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4
Marsh House, Amherst: *Woody, Skud, Ihavenomouth*. \$. 6 p.m.

Buckley Recital Hall, Amherst College: *Emmanuel Ax* plays *Beethoven, Shoenberg*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Vapors of Morphine*. \$. 8 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northamp-ton: *Graham Nash*. \$. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bearly Dead*, Dead tribute. \$. 8:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Great Falls Word Festival* feat. *Do It Now!*. \$. 12 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *The Rocking Puppies, Battlemode, Shiprock & Anchor dog*. \$. 2 p.m.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Kimaya Diggs, Dragonfly*. \$. 7 p.m.

Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Stella Kola, Bong Wish*. \$. 7 p.m.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Olive Klug, Silvie's Okay*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Spurlin*. \$. 9:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8
Belltower Records, North Ad-ams: *Kath Bloom, Lori Gold-stone, Vaguely Pagan*. \$. 5 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Falltown String Band*. No cover. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10
Nova Arts, Keene: *Lori Gold-ston, Kath Bloom, Jake McKel-vie*. \$. 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11
Palladium, Worcester: *Sepultura, Obituary, Agnostic Front, Claus-trophobia, Harvest*. \$. 6 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Oh He Dead*. \$. 7 p.m.

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: *Peter DiStefano & Mike Baggetta, Vi-mana*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Back in Black: The Ultimate AC/DC Experience*. \$. 8 p.m.

Academy of Music, Northamp-ton: *Richard Thompson, Kacy & Clayton*. \$. 8 p.m.

Daily Operation, Easthampton: *Angry Blackmen, Skech185*. \$. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *The Best of the '70s*. \$. 7 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *DJ Lucas, Woody, 22BB, Target Scam-mers*. \$. 8 p.m.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Chuck Johnson, Wednesday Knudsen*. \$. 8 p.m.

Mohegan Sun, Uncasville, CT: *Lil Wayne*. \$. 9 p.m.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13
The Hoff, Holyoke: *Film & Gen-der, Anita Velveeta, Mibble, Bugslam*. \$. 6 p.m.

Belltower Records, North Ad-ams: *The Spatulas, Jeanines, Lightheaded, Wednesday & Kryssi*. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Songs of Lucinda Williams*. \$. 8 p.m.

Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Lit-tle Wings*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14
Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Pen-tagram String Band*. \$. 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15
Iron Horse, Northampton: *Gong*. \$. 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16
Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Ben Cosgrove, Lyle de Vitry*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18
Academy of Music, Northamp-ton: *Nick Lowe & Los Straitjack-ets*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Ian Campbell*. No cover. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19
Mount Toby Friends Meeting-house, Leverett: *Friction Farm*. \$. 7 p.m.

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wen-dell: *Briezy Jane, Little Wild Bou-quet, Edward Hines*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

looking forward...

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22
Space Ballroom, Hamden, CT: *Boris, Starcrawler*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *A Happening IV: Leviathan*. \$. 7 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *De-stroyer*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *A Happening IV: Leviathan*. \$. 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Creative Writing, Sky Furrows, Marasca*. \$. 9 p.m.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27
Mullins Center, UMass Am-herst: *Dropkick Murphys, Pen-nywise, Scratch*. \$\$\$. 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31
Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Jimmy Just Quit*. \$. 8 p.m.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Guerilla Toss, Rough Francis, Aspero Siacos*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2
The Drake, Amherst: *The Ju-liana Hatfield Three, Hilken Mancini Band*. \$. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6
DCU Center, Worcester: *Iron Maiden*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7
The Clark, Williamstown: *Cir-cuit Des Yeux, Bill Nace, kite/wing*. \$. 6 p.m

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9
CitySpace, Easthampton: *Arun Ramamurthy Trio*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10
Hutghi's, Westfield: *Carnivo-rous Bells, Editrix, Landowner, Target Scammers*. \$. 4 p.m.

Daily Operation, Easthampton: *Love Child, Lupo Citta, Phroegs*. \$. 6:30 p.m.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11
Academy of Music, Northamp-ton: *Adrienne Lenker, Su-zanne Vallie*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15
Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Mariee Siou*. \$. 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16
Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wen-dell: *Rani Arbo*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1
Iron Horse, Northampton: *Jane Siberry*. \$. 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5
Nova Arts, Keene: *The Lady-bug Transistor, Lightheaded, Kendra*. \$. 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7
Bombyx Arts, Florence: *An Evening With Tom Rush*, ac-companied by *Matt Nakoa*. \$. 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Quiet Riot*. \$. 8 p.m.

EXHIBITS

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wax, Water and String*, paintings in encaustic, watercolor, and em-broidery by Pam Allan. Through January. Reception Sunday, Oc-tober 20, from 4 to 6 p.m.

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls: Work by Molly Almeida, Lydia M. Kinney, and Judith Bowerman. Drawings, paintings, and prints.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *A First-Class Ma-chine Shop*, local history exhibit with images, text, maps, and ar-tifacts in collaboration with the Museum of Our Industrial Her-itage. September 29 through December 1. Opening reception with talk by Jim Terapane this Sunday, September 29, at 2 p.m.

Sawmill River Arts, Mon-tague: *Jasper Alexander* pre-sents block prints from his Salted Snail Studio, through October.

Montague Center Library: *Meaghan Schwelm*, paintings exploring the everyday and the familiar. Through October 30, with a reception Wednesday, Oc-tober 23, at 6 p.m.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Lever-ett: *Nature Elementals*, paint-ings by Lori Lyn Hoffer and fab-ric beasts by Jacqueline Straus, through September.

Leverett Library: *Trees and Mills*, drawings and etchings by Frank Waugh. Through October 29, with a talk with curator An-naliese Bischoff next Saturday, October 5, at 1:30 p.m.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: *It's Never Too Late to Create*, work by Tim Gorts, through Oc-tober 11.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Ev-ery Vote Counts*, art installation by A.L.R. Keaton. Enter a voting booth, read the graffiti there and add your own, and cast a unique ballot. *The Art of Recovery*, art-work from participants at the Re-cover Project; through October, with a reception this Friday, Sep-tember 27, from 5 to 8 p.m.

Von Auersperg Gallery, Deer-field Academy: *limn•inal*, paint-ings and kinetic sculpture by Donnabelle Casis, through No-vember 2.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *To every-thing there is a season...*, black and white photographs by Larry Rankin. Through November 2, with a reception next Thursday, October 3, at 5 p.m.

Science and Engineering Li-brary, UMass Amherst: *Our Common Ground*, UMass work-er artist exhibition about caring for the Earth and each other. Through December 19.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shel-burne Falls: *Treasured Mem-ories*, group exhibit by member artists depicting scenes that trigger memories or emotions, through September.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shel-burne: *Wings of the Wind*, paint-ings by Margaret Lloyd, and *The New Herbarium*, cyano-types by Madge Evers, through October 28.

D'Amour Museum, Spring-field: *Look Again: Portraits of Daring Women*, woodcut and collage prints by Leverett artist Julie Lapping Rivera celebrat-ing the achievements of wom-en who defied the status quo, through February.

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Help Kids Walk, Bike, and Roll To Hillcrest and Sheffield!

TURNERS FALLS — The Gill-Montague Regional School District’s Sheffield and Hillcrest Elementary Schools are teaming up to hold a “Walk, Bike & Roll” event on the morning of Wednesday, October 2.

Families will meet up at one of two specific places in the community, beginning at 8 a.m., to walk or bike to school together. All Hillcrest and Sheffield families, including bus students and those who live in other towns, are welcome to

meet at these locations as well to take part in the fun!

This event is supported by the Massachusetts Safe Routes to School program under the state Department of Transportation. They work with school districts all over the state on safety programs and events related to safe transportation to school.

Please contact Stacey Langknecht at stacey.langknecht@gmrtd.org or 863-7473 if you would like to volunteer for this event or other initiatives in our school district.

Montague Community Television News

‘Bite’ Captured

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS — Audible Bite, a popular music and performance art picnic, took place at Unnameable Books on Saturday, September 7. Performances at this special “Unnameable Bite” event ranged from poetry to puppetry and music to movement. MCTV was there to capture the event so that you, our dear viewers, can see what you missed, though we were unable to save you any of the food. Maybe you will attend next time!

If you’re just here for the meetings, though, we’ve got you covered. The most recent GMRSD school committee and Montague selectboard meetings are both available on our Vimeo page as well.

And if you want to join in on the

fun, consider applying to MCTV. If you have any experience or interest in editing or filming, you should get in touch. We’re always looking to bring more people on board!

All MCTV videos are aired on Channel 9 as well as being featured on the MCTV Vimeo page. If there is a meeting, event, performance or happening in the Montague area that you think MCTV should capture, let us know!

And if you also have an idea for a show, MCTV is always available to assist in local productions as well. Just reach out.

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

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2024

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ORGANIZED BY THE
ERVING RECREATION COMMISSION

RECREATION@ERVING-MA.GOV

WEST ALONG from page B1

bright air. I had never seen so many birds of any species all at once. And, given the nature of our times, I may not ever again.

We resumed our trek along the boardwalk through the tawny beach grasses, scarlet red poison ivy, and waxy-blue beach plum, all safely growing a few feet below the elevated bleached boards under our feet. The skies overhead were still filled with swallows, their voices hissing quietly, and they lent us a sense of the thrill of flight, and maybe even of their impending voyage across a thousand miles.

Then came a tumult of sharper voices from a far dune. Children on the beach? A party just out of sight over the hill?

It was the sound of joyful yips and sharp cries of coyote pups, whose mum was bringing fresh prey to the door of their den at the edge of the woods and dune. Playing and leaping like true puppies, they tussled and tumbled over each other, pouncing on the hapless, lifeless, prey.

The coyotes were sand-colored like the dunes they lived in, and not tree-bark-colored brown like our Valley pack. They slipped into the brush only to emerge again on the sandy slope, and then disappeared from view completely.

Out on the beach, my chair set low on the edge of the shore, I spent most of my time

reading the rest of *The Outermost House* perched on the edge of the very sort of seascape described in Beston’s summer book.

Looking up, I realized I wasn’t alone in my quiet thoughts. The piping plovers who claim this beach and the upper zone between high tide and sheltering dune came over to

observe me, and I them. We watched each other pensively. These individuals were part of a new generation of 44 fledged here on this beach, and each represented one more small victory in the fight to bring their species back from the edge of oblivion. They moved on, minding their own plover busi-



Three of the 44 piping plovers that have fledged on the Plum Island beach.

ness after checking me out.

We ventured out a few feet into the crashing waves of the rising tide, looking for sand dollars and horseshoe crabs as the surf retreated. Salt water washed over, an occasional churning wave flipping us over as if we were caught in a washing machine spin-rinse cycle. Nothing like being reminded of how puny and mortal you are, being upended and flipped about by the power of a simple wave.

We later heard that a great white shark had been sighted a half mile away. Lucky for the seal who had been quietly watching us 20 feet out, and lucky for us!

With the tide rising and the sun lowering in the western reach of the sky, we retreated out from the beach and dunes to our favorite harbor bar where the seaport, the Merrimac River, and the Atlantic meet.

Lightly sun-burned and heavily sea-salted, on the bar’s deck we wolfed down fresh sea scallops, listening to the rigging of the sailboats chiming in the light offshore breeze. Then, totally smug and self-satisfied with our escape to the Atlantic, we proclaimed the Narragansett lager had never tasted better, and that life indeed was good.

We lingered to enjoy the view of the harbor before turning the car westward, back to our Valley home.

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM) CALL 863-8666!

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