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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

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Federally Backed Upgrade Will Ensure Local Sewage Keeps Getting Screwed Up



LEVAVI PHOTO

Right to left: Jesse Lederman, regional director for US senator Ed Markey; Markey legislative aide Claire Kaufman; Montague wastewater superintendent Chelsey Little; town administrator Walter Ramsey; USDA rural development director Scott Soares; and Koby Gardner-Levine, district representative for US representative Jim McGovern, at the repair project's official launch Wednesday.

By BELLA LEVAVI

MONTAGUE CITY – The screw pumps are getting a much-needed upgrade.

On Wednesday morning, October 23, town and federal officials celebrated the “groundbreaking” of the project at Montague’s Clean Water Facility (CWF), located at 34 Greenfield Road.

“This facility is going to benefit Montague for decades to come,” said Koby Gardner-Levine, representing US Representative Jim McGovern (D-Worcester). “Waste-

water treatment has major environmental benefits, as we know this allows the water to be used safely for other purposes... [which] also supports economic opportunity.”

The construction they were celebrating will ensure the CWF stays in compliance with environmental standards by upgrading the primary effluent screw pump station. The upgrades include new screw pumps, a lubrication system, 40-horsepower motors, and motor starters, as well as structural, electrical, and HVAC improvements see **UPGRADES** page A6

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Study Group Urges Town To Welcome Gift of Forest

By GEORGE BRACE

At Tuesday’s Leverett selectboard meeting, members of an *ad hoc* study committee handed in a report recommending that the town accept a 150-acre gift of land from retired forester Bruce Spencer for the purpose of creating a town forest.

“It’s not just any old 150 acres,” began committee member Eric Donnelly, who provided a summary of the committee’s findings. Highlighting the “unique” nature of the property, he reported that Spencer was the head forester for the Quabbin forest district before he retired and has been personally managing the “model lot” for decades according to “progressive and idealistic” principles.

Spencer first offered the land to the town in June 2023, and the committee was created last fall to study the proposal.

“In the forestry industry, people know about this property,” said Donnelly. “It’s a topic of interest in the profession.”

Addressing the board’s question of who would manage the property, Donnelly said the committee had

see **LEVERETT** page A5

GILL SELECTBOARD

It Seems Like Everyone In Gill Is Trying To Be Helpful

By KATE SAVAGE

Monday’s feel-good Gill selectboard meeting was full of positive news and residents volunteering in various ways to make things better for their neighbors.

In news for the young ones: a gaga ball pit is coming to Gill Elementary School. In gaga ball, which has been dubbed “a kinder, gentler version of dodgeball,” players run and jump around a hexagonal or octagonal court surrounded by a low wall, trying to hit opponents’ feet and shins with a ball.

The game, which was a staple of Jewish summer camps in the 1970s, has gone mainstream in the last decade. In 2012 the *New York Times* reported kids were teaching gaga ball to their parents, and not vice versa. “It’s not like baseball or football or tennis, where they have to emulate someone else,” a camp official told the *Times*. “Kids own it.”

In a letter to the selectboard, Gill Elementary principal Walter Huston explained the importance of the see **GILL** page A4

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

More Murals for Montague

By JEFF SINGLETON

Monday’s Montague selectboard meeting was dominated by news of grant-funded infrastructure projects, including a costly electrical connection at the wastewater treatment plant, a bid for work on the Eleventh Street bridge that vastly exceeded the money set aside for it, and a potential roundabout at the dangerous intersection of Routes 63 and 47 near Montague Center.

But wedged in between these projects was a proposal by River-Culture director Suzanne LoManto to attach temporary “wheatpaste murals” to six buildings next spring

and summer. Whether this counts as “infrastructure” LoManto did not say, but the board approved the proposal with no opposition, perhaps due to the apparent success of the larger and more permanent Shea Theater mural project.

“We had learned a lot from that,” LoManto said, referring to the Shea. “I think this is going to be a piece of cake after that.”

LoManto began her presentation by describing a program the town is participating in called “Making It Public,” administered and funded by the New England Foundation for the Arts and the Boston-based see **MONTAGUE** page A7

Mobile Home Park Owner Files Superior Court Appeal Of Orange Board’s Ruling



ROBERTSON PHOTO

Leisure Woods Estates, comprised of nearly 150 mobile home lots between the Orange airport and the Millers River, has been the site of a contentious rent dispute.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

ORANGE – The owners of Leisure Woods Estates are challenging the Orange Mobile Home Park Rent Control Board’s decision to allow a rent increase of about 25%, phased in over the next two years, instead of their request for a 43% increase retroactive to last fall.

In an appeal filed on Tuesday in Franklin County Superior Court, an attorney representing the park owners argued that the town’s decision was “unreasonable, arbitrary and wholly unsupported by the evidence,” and should be overruled. It took too long for the board to schedule a hearing and rule on the

proposed rent hike, attorney John Kuzinevich argued, and the permitted increase will not be enough for the owners to earn a “fair rate of return” on their property.

“The Board ignored real numbers and eviscerated the budget simply to keep the rent increase low,” Kuzinevich wrote in the appeal. “It was unsupported by any evidence and it will not cover operating expenses nor provide funds to provide the owners with a fair rate of return as determined by the Board.”

After four public meetings, many clarifying questions and requests for additional financial records, and intensive deliberation, the board voted see **APPEAL** page A8

High School Sports Week: Regional PVIAC Tournaments

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – The regular fall high school sports season concluded this week, and the Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Conference (PVIAC) tournaments began. Franklin Tech’s field hockey team competed in Class B while Turners Falls was placed in Class C.

In volleyball, Turners was seeded third in Class D, and Franklin third in C. The hybrid girls’ soccer team at Tech was unable to make the tourna-

ment but will compete in the consolation bracket, and the school’s football team played a complete game to preserve its perfect record.

Major milestones were also achieved this week by players in football and field hockey.

Football
FCTS 38 – Greenfield 8

The Tech Football Eagles remain perfect on the year, erasing the Green Wave of Greenfield last see **SPORTS** page A6



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Franklin County Technical School senior Josiah Little (left) has a clear lane into the end zone for a touchdown last Friday. Little surpassed 1,000 yards rushing during the play, a record he has now achieved all four years at Franklin Tech. The Eagles soared to a 38-8 win over the visiting Greenfield Green Wave.

Source Not Yet Confirmed Of Distant Droning Sound

By SARAH ROBERTSON

WENDELL / ERVING – The source of a distant humming sound some locals have reported hearing recently may be coming from the railroad tracks, where heavy equipment is being used to perform track maintenance, according to a *Montague Reporter* investigation.

Tom Ciuba, vice president of communications for Genesee &

Wyoming Railroad Services, told the *Reporter* this week that he could not confirm whether ongoing work is the source of the reported sound, but said that it may be coming from equipment being used to work on the railroad lines.

“Machinery for track work typically includes backhoes, geometry testing vehicles, a tamper, etc.,” Ciuba wrote. “The equipment is see **SOUND** page A8

Leaves Are Best Peeped, Not Blown

Remembering Mark Stevens.....A2	1874: The More Things Change.....B1
Local Briefs.....A3	Max Provides the Transit News.....B1
Sixty-Four Reps Speak Out.....A3	Your Sick Friend Bears Witness.....B2
Highlights from the Erving Selectboard.....A4	Montague, Gill Police Log Highlights.....B3-B4
Highlights from the Wendell Selectboard.....A5	Our Monthly Spanish Page.....B5
10, 20, and 150 Years Ago This Week.....A7	Three Comics & the Montague Cryptojam.....B6
Ed Provides the Bridge Report.....A8	Arts & Entertainment Calendar.....B7
West Along: Someone Put Them There.....B1	Old Head Prepares for Halloween.....B8

