

The Montague Reporter

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\$2

editor@montaguereporter.org

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

State Awards \$100,000 For Library Expansion



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

By the end of the one-year design phase, the library trustees are expected to choose between expanding the Carnegie Library and building a new library downtown.

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – “You guys, we got the grant!” Montague public libraries director Caitlin Kelley announced to the town selectboard on Monday, referring to a \$100,000 grant from the state Board of Library Commissioners to design either a renovation of the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls or plans for a new main library downtown.

Kelley said Montague was one of just seven towns in the “medium tier” of design approvals this year. She thanked the library trustees and town administrator Walter Ramsey for helping put together a “really competitive proposal that has paid off in dividends.”

While the award is for the project’s design, she explained, the town will not have to reapply

for construction funds, “provided that we pass through the design phase.” The \$100,000, in combination with \$150,000 approved by town meeting last spring, will pay for “schematic design, cost analysis of our site options, site investigation, and project management services.”

The deadline for completion of the design, she said, is probably one year after the application’s approval. After plans have been finalized, and if the town agrees to move on to construction, the state will provide aid under a formula based on building costs, covering 60% of the first \$5 million, 45% of the next \$5 million, and then 35% of the next \$10 million.

“I don’t think we’re going to end up with a \$20 million project,” Kelley said.

see **LIBRARY** page A5

Businesses Hear Proposal For Downtown ‘Coordinator’

By LILIAN AUTLER

TURNERS FALLS – The town of Montague and Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FR-COG) hosted a meeting of Turners Falls businesses and organizations on Tuesday at the Shea Theater, seeking input on an ongoing project to support downtown businesses in Turners, Shelburne Falls, and Northfield.

Using an Efficiency and Regionalization grant from the state’s Community Compact program, a team of consultants led by BSC Group was hired to figure out how businesses in the three downtown areas can be supported, and examined different models to provide this capacity. An initial meeting was held in September 2023, and this month marks the culmination of the project’s first phase.

The event was attended by approximately 30 local business owners and residents. Montague town planner Maureen Pollock and FR-COG economic development planner Ted Harvey welcomed them and introduced BSC Group consultants Heather Gould, Jeff Bagg, and Anne Burke, who presented an overview of their study results and recommendations. A written report is expected by February.

“After the pandemic,” Bagg explained, “one of the highest priorities identified during the Local Recovery Planning process in all three participating towns was the need for

see **COORDINATOR** page A8

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Facilities Director Decries ‘Retaliatory’ Union Vote

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Tuesday’s regional school committee meeting was long, featuring a review of the district’s preliminary FY’26 budget, information about math intervention in the elementary schools, discussion of last month’s overwhelming vote of no confidence in superintendent Brian Beck by unionized staff members, and a large donation by an alumnus.

Nearly a half hour was given to facilities and safety director Heath Cummings, who presented extensively about improvements he has implemented since 2018 and read a statement condemning the “very hostile work environment” he faced.

“Sometimes if there is something good happening in the school, it’s not really noticed, but if something bad happens it’s the first thing that’s noticed,” business manager Joanne



MOTV IMAGE

Facilities and safety director Heath Cummings touted an extensive list of upgrades made in his six-year tenure.

Blier, Cummings’s supervisor, said as she introduced him. “And that is true with the facilities.”

Cummings described “rebuilding the department from the ground up,” spending his first years fixing improperly implemented capital

see **GMRSD** page A4

Con Com Seeks Second Opinion on Dam Removal



ROBERTSON PHOTO

The con com’s quarters were crowded Tuesday with consultants and pond abutters.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

WENDELL – Plans to remove the Bowens Pond dam and restore the uppermost section of Osgood Brook were presented to the Wendell conservation commission Tuesday night. The meeting room was almost too small to hold the 16 people in attendance, and another dozen watched virtually.

Osgood Brook is a coldwater stream that runs along Wendell Depot Road and into the Millers River.

For well over 200 years the stream has been dammed with earth and stone, just before it crosses beneath Wendell Depot Road, to form Bowens Pond.

Today the dam is considered to be in poor condition and at risk of failure, and the property owners have contacted the state Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) for help removing it. Chris Hirsch, a DER dam removal program manager, began Tuesday’s meeting

see **DAM** page A3

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Status of Tree Warden Role Will Go to Winter Meeting

By JEFF SINGLETON

“Do you guys have any problems with these?” member Matt Lord asked near the end of the Montague selectboard’s Monday meeting. “I say we could just move to recommend the slate of them, and get on with our lives.”

Lord was referring to an eight-article warrant for the February 12 special town meeting, which the board had been discussing for over a month and was scheduled to discuss again January 27.

The original warrant contained seven articles, including \$20,547 for tuitioning and transporting a student to the Smith Vocational and Agricul-

tural High School in Northampton, \$48,500 for creating conference and break rooms at the Clean Water Facility (CWF), and a provision to accept Sandy Lane as a public way.

On the advice of town administrator Walter Ramsey, on Monday the board added an article to change the tree warden from an elected to an appointed position. This had originally been considered for the annual town meeting in May, but was moved up to the special in order to make the decision well in advance of the spring town election.

The board also appointed public works employee Jason Kingsbury to the position until the spring, at

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

Neighbors, Donor ‘Angel’ Preserve Four Corners Site in Montague



WILL QUALE PHOTO

Neighbors worked for two years to persuade the family to sell its 47 acres to a local land trust.

By BEN GAGNON

MONTAGUE CENTER – Just south of Montague Center at the junction of Old Sunderland and East Taylor Hill roads, a 47-acre property known as Four Corners was sold last month by the Watroba family to the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust for \$825,000.

The story began to unfold in 2022 when local residents out for a walk in the bucolic area noticed “For Sale” signs along the road, and began to talk among themselves about the fate of the neighborhood. After neighbors approached Peter Watroba to talk about the imminent sale, he agreed to pause his plans and take down the signs.

Neighbors Jennifer Atlee, Walker Korby, and oth-

ers began to meet and talk about banding together to preserve a property they all enjoyed for its open space, views, wildlife, and a 15-acre patch of working farmland. Located within the Connecticut River Farm Scenic Byway Corridor, the property features expansive views of Mount Toby.

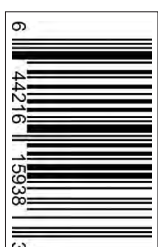
“When the signs came out, we jumped at the chance to start a conversation in the neighborhood,” said Atlee, a sustainability consultant in the commercial green building industry. “We let Peter know that the neighborhood was really interested in the property, and he was very appreciative of that idea.”

Before long an anonymous donor in the area came

see **CORNERS** page A6

Welcoming All You TikTok Addicts Back to Local Print News

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The Montague Reporter

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August 2002

With Bated Breath

Once again, dear readers, into the future. One of Earth's most famous – and yappy – beings, Donald Trump, manages paradoxically to be an unknown quantity on the eve of his second inauguration. He hovers at the center of the storm even as streams of detractors swarm to suck up. Endless depraved repositionings.

Trump remade the GOP party apparatus into a wrecking ball aimed at old institutional edifices – the orders of experts who'd constrained and saved capitalism through the chaos of the twentieth century. They were either no longer needed or just temptingly vulnerable enough to take a swing.

The Democrats gave one promising year and then three bad ones, reflexively chasing their opponents rightward and winning nothing by the compromise. The coming years may be shaped by conflicts between state and federal governments, with some openings for new politics at the level of the state party, but at the federal level it's just going to

be hard for America to take seriously the people who both screamed that *fascism* was coming and then shrugged and capitulated to it.

It's disorienting for everyone, including the winners. We'll see what happens next, but the opening moves of various American political factions in 2016 – on the left side, a celebration of the anonymous puncher of white-nationalist talking head Richard Spencer on Inauguration Day, followed by spontaneous airport occupations in protest of the proposed Muslim ban – are unthinkable now.

Will the TikTok ban go through? (Seems like small potatoes, but it's a mass communication platform shut down after lobbying by its competitors. One of our own Senators is putting out press releases condemning it. His office didn't respond to an inquiry from this paper as to why he voted in favor of it.) Will the Israel-Hamas ceasefire hold? Will the wildfires end? Will something new take root? Here we go...

A Treasure Trove

I wish a filmmaker would make a biographical movie, or biographical TV series, on the life of Alvah Crocker. Crocker was a Jack of all trades: a manufacturer and railroad promoter who served in the Massachusetts general court and the US Congress.

Crocker was responsible for factories, dams, and much more, including the experimental White Coal Farm, which was owned by the Turners Falls Company, which he founded along with the industrial community in Turners Falls.

It would be interesting to see something like this come to life, because it's part of the history of our industrial heritage.

I have been interested in history since the age of 5, and enjoy learning about it. It's one of the reasons I wanted to become a photojournalist – I wanted to combine writing a story with photos and captions, because I felt like historians of the past with a box of film and a camera in the 1890s through 1900s.

I want to preserve our history with my photography. In the past I have contributed both 35mm photography and digital photography to the historical commission in my home town of Gill, and other historical society sites, along with local historian Ed Gregory. I still do this, while I multitask as a freelance contributor to the *Montague Reporter* and other local, regional, and national publications.

I am a firm believer in trying not to erase history, but I see both sides of the story and listen to different points of view, because we need balance in life. I remain neutral but open-minded. I and my family get along with everyone.

I remember the first time I met the late Harriet Tidd of the Gill historical commission, back in the day. She used to help out at the Slate Memorial Library, and I learned a lot of local history from her.

Harriet was also a Jack of all trades – she worked as a reporter for the *Greenfield Recorder*, and helped out at the town hall. I remember her helping me find books at the library I was interested in reading, and I would always ask her about our local history.

I've learned a great lesson about the importance of preserving history from hands-on experience, thanks to Harriet, other Gill historical commission members like Kit Carpenter and the late Pamela Shoemaker, Greenfield historian Peter Miller, and many others. I've enjoyed local history talks at the Great Falls Discovery Center, too, including by Ed Gregory and Chris Clawson.

You never know what you will discover about your backyard. There is a treasure trove here of memories and research.

Joe R. Parzych
Greenfield



Roberta Potter has served as the director of the Council on Aging and the Gill-Montague senior center for 15 years – ten more than she expected to be in the position when she started – but she loves helping people and solving problems. These days she has put a lot of energy into building digital equity for seniors, since so many services like Medicare and Social Security now have to be accessed online.

Letters to the Editors

Response to Last Week's Science Page

While perhaps entertaining or intriguing to anyone without a stake in the communication skills of non-speaking Autistic individuals, to anyone else, any promotion of *The Telepathy Tapes* as a potentially valid form of therapy or science is misleading and dangerous.

As a pediatric Speech and Language Pathologist, I have worked with non-speaking and minimally verbal Autistic children since 2007, and I have witnessed the grief, hopelessness, and desperation that countless parents have felt regarding their child's inability to communicate. This "research" is preying upon these vulnerabilities, and guiding caregivers in this direction could steer families away from actual evidence-based practices with documented potential.

There is no one solution which helps children to develop functional communication. However, what is clear is that methods such as Facilitated Communication, Rapid Prompting Method, and Spelling to Communicate (as promoted in *The Telepathy Tapes*) are unreliable, do not produce replicable results, and have

the potential to cause harm to those whose "words" are being interpreted. The American Speech Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) has a clear standpoint on the matter, and these methods are not endorsed.

There are many forms of Alternative and Augmentative Communication which offer opportunities for individuals with varying (dis)abilities to point, scan, use eye-gaze, spell, activate switches, exchange picture cards, and more as a means of sharing information with communication partners.

If someone in your family is unable to reliably communicate verbally, please look into evaluations and services with a professional – Speech Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Specialist, etc. – who will look comprehensively at your child and their abilities.

Jasmine Smith
Turners Falls

The Montague Reporter Investigates!

I read the article in the most recent issue (January 9) about Montague obtaining a flag. I noticed a discrepancy between Montague's slogan on the official town seal and the way it was recorded in the article and how it appears on the new flag.

The slogan appears on the seal on the town website as "Five fingers *on* one hand," while the article wrote it as "Five fingers *or* one hand." The latter sounded bizarre to me, which prompted me to look it up.

I then looked more closely at the image of the new flag, which also appears to say "*or*." It has a slight difference in appearance due to the nature of the script, but I consulted two friends who also agreed the flag says "*or*" while the seal says "*on*." But it is hard to tell from the picture!

Can the *Reporter* investigate? Thanks!

Molly Mooney
Turners Falls

The editors respond...

Oh yeah, geez, look at that. Arguably a better slogan.

– Eds.



Above: the seal. Below: the flag.

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LOCAL BRIEFS

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Last weekend I saw an amazing and heart-wrenching documentary, *Porcelain War*, at the Amherst Cinema. I didn't attend with the aim of writing about it, but it was so unexpectedly moving that I want to mention it here and encourage others to see it.

The film shows Ukrainian artists Anya Stasenko and Slava Leontyev creating art while surviving in a brutal war zone. The delicately-decorated porcelain figurines inspired by nature that the couple creates stand in contrast to the raw destruction all around them, and the detailed painted scenes on the sculptures at times come to life to tell their story through the magic of digital animation. The soundtrack by DakhaBrahka nails the mixture of anxiety, joy, and sorrow experienced by the artists who also train for, fight in, and support the civilian army.

The film won the 2024 Grand Jury prize at the Sundance Film Festival among many others, and is on the Academy Awards shortlist for Best Documentary.

Michael Kline will present "New Lights in the Dawnland," a two-hour audio documentary history of Northfield as told by Indigenous voices, at the Wendell Meetinghouse this Sunday, January 19 at 1:30 p.m. Kline's presentation will be followed by a discussion led by David Brule, president of the Nolumbeka Project and one of the narrators in the production.

The documentary is based on "recordings of five Indigenous narrators recounting 13,000 years of Indigenous history in Northfield leading up to the arrival of English colonists in the 17th century and the impacts of colonialism that followed their arrival. The narrators not only carry the stories and memories of their own culture, but also weave in knowledge from a decade of archaeological research on their homelands and battlefields, as well as information from old letters, diaries and other written colonial records."

The event is free, with donations encouraged.

The Episcopal Church Of Saints James and Andrew in Greenfield provides free meals through their **Sunday Soup & Sandwiches** program. Guests receive a warm cup of soup, a deli or PBJ sandwich, and other goodies. Meals are bag lunches offered through the parking lot window.

The church also hosts a free community sit-down meal on Mondays from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. in their Parish Hall. Contact office@saints-jamesandandrew.org or (413) 773-3925 for more information.

A **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration** will be held Monday, January 20 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Greenfield Community College dining commons.

This year's event, the 26th annual, features a program appropriate for all ages with dance, arts and crafts, education, music, food, as well as a keynote presentation, "Advancing our Beloved Community in a Time of Uncertainty" by Dr. Calvin Hill, Vice Chancellor for Inclusive Excellence and Belonging at UMass Boston.

Registration at gcc.mass.edu/events is strongly encouraged.

Beginning in the 1870s, drawn by the promise of work at the John Russell Cutlery factory, almost 300 Bohemian immigrants left farms in central Europe to start life anew in the industrial village of Turners Falls.

An illustrated talk by local historian Jim Bridgman titled "**Forgotten Immigrants: The Bohemians of Turners Falls**," at the Great Falls Discovery Center next Saturday, January 25 from 2 to 3 p.m., will cover 35 years of research exploring the lives of these immigrants. Find out what motivated Bohemians to leave their ancestral homes, and what they found once they arrived in Western Massachusetts.

The talk is based on Bridgman's recently published book, *Forgotten Immigrants*. The talk is free, and there will be refreshments and copies of the book for sale.

You may have heard the news of major cuts to the **Healthy Incentive Program**, or may already have been impacted by the reduction of this monthly benefit from \$80 to \$20. The program received only \$15 million in the state budget for 2025 despite estimates that \$25 million was needed for the year. The impact is felt not only at the household level, but by farmers and markets, which struggle with financial losses to income stream after shaping their plans to serve neighbors through HIP.

The Campaign for HIP Funding is asking the governor and legislature to dedicate an additional \$10 million to HIP, and there are a variety of ways that you can help – find out how at tinyurl.com/HIPhelping.

Are you a **resident of Montague's Precinct 4**, which includes the northern section of the Hill and a section of downtown Turners? Ella Ingraham writes: "Come to discuss your concerns and the February 12 special town meeting with Precinct 4 town meeting members. We will meet at the Gill-Montague senior center on Fifth Street at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 30."

Anyone with questions may contact Ella at (860) 684-4420.

The **Adult Education department at Franklin County Technical School** is now enrolling for their free spring courses. They offer 12-week certification courses in Automotive Technology, Carpentry, Electrical, Horticulture, and Welding and Metal Fabrication. The next semester begins February 24. To learn more, contact cti@fcts.us or (413) 863-6980.

Send your local briefs to editor@montagureporter.org.

DAM from page A1

explaining the public safety and ecological benefits of restoring the riverine ecosystem to its natural state.

"There are over 3,000 dams in Massachusetts, many of which have outlived the purpose for which they were built," Hirsch said. "Dam removal, this project included, is really about getting water flowing again and restoring those processes and functions that built that river ecosystem in the first place."

Dammed streams alter the natural movement of sediments and wildlife, increase water temperature, and harm fisheries downstream, Hirsch said. The Bowens Pond dam also poses a flood hazard to Wendell Depot Road.

"The dam is at risk, and climate change is going to raise that risk," Hirsch continued. "The reason we are involved with this project in particular is that the Bowens Pond – or Osgood Brook Restoration Project – is a priority project."

The work is considered an ecological restoration project because it would restore continuity to a section of Osgood Brook. The state Department of Conservation and Recreation considers the brook to be a coldwater fishery for trout, sea lamprey, and American eel.

Thomas Robinson, co-owner of the dam and an adjacent property, was at Tuesday's meeting. For years, he said, he has been taking steps to take down the dam, which was assessed to be a "low" hazard by the state Office of Dam Safety in 2009.

"My wife and I have been working... to make sure [water] has a free flow across the spillway, and is not putting additional forces on what is already a cracked dam," Robinson said.

Engineers from the Springfield-based firm GZA GeoEnvironmental shared technical plans for the dam removal and subsequent habitat restoration. Work would begin in the summer or fall when stream flows are low in order to minimize downstream impact, project manager Adrienne Dunk said, with planting and invasive species removal beginning the following spring. The stones that make up the dam today

would be repurposed to build a channel underneath Wendell Depot Road, and downstream sediment would be monitored throughout the project.

"There's a lot of elements when considering a project of this importance," said senior project manager Jennifer Burke.

Con com chair Ward Smith suggested the town hire a third-party environmental engineer to review GZA's plans. He also said the commission may have to approve a variance for the project, and could set certain conditions under the local wetlands protection bylaw.

Matthew Watsky, an environmental lawyer representing the Robinsons, said he did not believe the con com needed to take any action. "It's an ecological restoration project, and the whole program for dam removal is a state-sponsored program," he said. "In my view, you don't have the authority to deny it, because that would be inconsistent with state law."

"We can deny it. We can take it to court," Smith said. "Maybe it won't hold up, but we can."

Thorny Problem

After the hour-long presentation, residents in favor of and opposed to the dam removal shared their thoughts, including neighbors of the pond.

Abutters Beth Jakob and Adam Porter were among the members of the public who expressed concern that an invasive plant, glossy buckthorn, could take over after the pond waters recede. "It is a rich and functioning habitat right now," said Jakob, a biology professor at UMass Amherst. "We believe the revegetation plan will not have the intended impact, and will not slow the glossy buckthorn like you want it to."

Hirsch expressed confidence in GZA's plan to manage invasive species for two years and establish a habitat with at least 50% native species, especially considering the impact beavers are expected to have on the wetland habitat.

Wendell resident Adam Kohl asked how the engineers had arrived at that percentage, and what the ratio of native to invasive species is currently at the pond.

Hirsch said the agencies did not assess the current species makeup, but arrived at the 50% figure based on the existing pressure from glossy buckthorn. "We're trying to do the best with what we have," he said.

Thomas Lautzenheiser, a senior conservation ecologist with the Massachusetts Audubon Society, spoke in favor of the dam's removal. Mass Audubon manages the Whetstone Wood Wildlife Sanctuary, parts of which are in Wendell where the Osgood Brook headwaters begin.

"One of the most exciting things about stream restoration, and projects like these, is it gives the opportunity for nature to drive the process forward," Lautzenheiser said. "I think that the mix of habitat types driven by beavers in this landscape of largely natural land cover really does drive biodiversity, so I'm strongly in favor of this type of work."

Representatives of the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, Millers River Watershed Council, and UMass Amherst spoke in favor of the project's ecological benefits, as did other Wendell residents and environmental advocates.

The dam was first built around 1790 by Luke Osgood, the son of one of Wendell's first settlers, according to Wendell Historical Society president Edward Hines. Hines shared with the *Reporter* a news article from August 1936 celebrating the decision to rebuild and preserve the "old landmark."

The Robinson family transferred the land around the pond in 2016 to a business they registered that year, Bowen's Pond LLC, and in 2017 the Office of Dam Safety issued a dam registration certificate.

Last August the Office granted a dam safety permit to GZA Geo-Environmental to proceed with the removal plans. Burke said the firm is still waiting to receive two more permits.

The con com unanimously approved a motion to send the firm's notice of intent to a different consultant for review, and to revisit the matter at its March 11 meeting.

"It's a controversial project, and I just want to make sure everything is fine," Smith said. "And if it's fine, it's fine."

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Board Starts New Year Slow

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard chose not to meet the night of New Year's Day as their normal schedule would have them meet. Instead they met a week later, on January 8, and at 4 p.m. instead of their normal 7 p.m., and by Zoom. The agenda was short, and so was the meeting. They planned to meet again January 15.

The board agreed to use ARPA money to buy a new fax machine for \$219.99 and a new runner carpet for the office building entryway for \$810. The town clerk is required to use the fax, a tax collector uses one often, and town coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad said he uses one occasionally, as it can serve as a convenient printer in the office.

Town custodian Eric Shufelt said the old runner in the front hallway was ripped, so he took it out and moved the one from the back entrance to the front. A brown stain on the floor in the front hall showed how much mud the original runner had taken in and kept off the main floor. Shufelt told Johnson-Mussad the new carpet should be no shorter than 19 feet long.

Johnson-Mussad relayed an estimate of \$375 for the first visit by Minuteman Pest Control of Northampton, followed by a \$120 monthly charge. He said a Wendell company, Zero Tolerance, had finally returned his call. Town engineer Jim Slavos and project manager Phil Delorey reportedly found and repaired mouse damage

in the meeting room heater.

Selectboard member Paul Doud agreed to attend the next police oversight committee meeting as an observer, along with member Gillian Budine, if the meeting happens before the end of April. Budine has been the board's representative, but does not plan to run for her present position on the selectboard in May.

If the next oversight meeting is after the May election, Doud said he would serve as the board representative.

A special town meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Wednesday, February 12, the same night as a normal selectboard meeting. Johnson-Mussad said the warrant is relatively straightforward, mostly bills of prior years.

The board tentatively set Wednesday, June 4, at 7 p.m. for the annual town meeting. Town moderator Katie Nolan is open that day, but the board had not heard definitively from clerk Anna Wetherby.

Selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato reported a complaint of illegal activity in Wendell Depot, and said she relayed that complaint to police chief Scott Minckler. The board discussed a parking ban there, but noted that people also use the parking area for legitimate reasons, such as fishing and carpooling.

Board members postponed decisions on how to address that issue, on parking on the common, and on one-day liquor licenses until their January 15 meeting. [Ed. note: A report on the latter meeting was not available as of press time.]

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GMRSD from page A1

projects, triaging work, and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. He built up a fleet of 11 vehicles, set up a proper radio network, put elaborate maintenance and staff training schedules and inventory-management systems in place, and began documenting his projects on the district website.

He instituted an automated work-order system, through which he said he had received 2,351 orders in the last year, a volume far exceeding districts of comparable size. He also completely overhauled the door lock system, creating single master keys for each building, and last year installed 96 cameras in the middle and high school that feed into a biometric facial-recognition system.

"It's a fantastic system," Cummings told the committee. "It has license plate recognition, too."

In May 2023 the district awarded a \$265,653.73 bid for a security camera system to Galaxy Integrated Technologies, Inc. of Waltham. The school committee approved payments of \$197,303.73 on July 25 and \$68,350 on August 8. A further payment of \$6,374.69 was made to the company on April 9, 2024.

Cummings described using the software to identify an individual and automatically "roll back" the video, tracing them back to the point of their entry. This was only one of a number of automated systems Cummings described setting up for monitoring and control of the district's facilities.

The Department of Labor, Cummings said, told him no other district in the state has a training program for custodial staff, "especially one that's as robust as [ours]."

"The general oversight that is required of my role is far beyond what other districts near us are actually doing," he said, recounting working late at night, on weekends, and during his vacation time. "This dedication came at a high cost this past year... I began to feel an immense amount of burnout, and the acute stress took its toll."

Cummings said he was put on a leave of absence in October "to get treatment for significant physical ailments and to enter a psychological recovery program," and was "extremely shocked" when the Gill-Montague Education Association (GMEA) announced during public comment at a December school committee meeting that 167 of its 181 Unit A and C members had voted "no confidence" in his performance.

This critique, the TFHS graduate and former police officer said, was "very troubling," and reflected a "workplace culture... turned discriminatory and retaliatory."

District policy prohibits criticism of employees during public comment - except of Beck, the only employee the committee directly supervises - and chair Jane Oakes had immediately stopped GMEA president Heidi Schmidt from any further mention of Cummings.

A draft of the no-confidence announcement obtained by the Reporter from a rank-and-file GMEA member, who shared it on condition of anonymity, said the union wanted a facilities and safety director who "is collaborative or approachable," and who "does not monitor and surveil staff with cameras for non-safety issues."

Information technology director Tina Mahaney said she was unable to answer questions about the facial recognition software - who has access to the data, whether logs are kept of its use, if the district obtained parental consent for the biometric data collection, whether the cameras record audio - as it "fall[s] under Safety which is Heath's purview."

Reached for comment on his statement and, if he wished, the camera system, Cummings said his "biggest concerns" were "the defamatory comments made about my performance while I have been out on a documented, medically excused leave..." and added that he "hope[s] the school district administrators and appropriate state agencies that will be investigating this situation take appro-

priate action toward those responsible..."

On Tuesday, Beck said he had had a "lengthy, productive meeting" with Schmidt before the winter break. Oakes announced that the committee will restart the joint labor-management committees (JLMCs), in which its members, GMEA representatives, and administrators can discuss workplace problems short of formal grievances.

"If we were regularly doing those, I don't think we'd be sitting here talking about a vote of no confidence," said Montague member Wendy Thompson.

"One never knows," said Oakes.

Other Business

The committee voted to accept a gift of 2,500 shares of Apple stock, valued at over \$600,000, from Turners Falls Class of 1951 alumnus William Carlisle. Carlisle earmarked the gift for a Roxanne Carlisle Scholarship Fund, giving financial aid to graduates pursuing medical studies. Roxanne, his daughter, died of cancer.

Blier and Beck ran through the preliminary FY'26 budget. Blier projected small enrollment growth, a \$703,488 increase in state Chapter 70 aid, and a 10% increase in insurance costs; if \$540,000 is spent on all ten new positions requested by principals, she said, the working budget is showing a \$1.3 million deficit.

"I know that we heard from some [town] finance committee members last year saying 'ask for what you need,'" Blier added. "I don't think they have \$2 million to give us, but I don't think they have an extra million to throw our way either. If we can get the budget down to a more palatable number, maybe they'll be interested in kicking in more than just their affordable assessment."

The committee is meeting again next Tuesday, January 21 to discuss the preliminary budget line by line, and is expected to vote on it January 28.



NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Property Taxes Grow a Little, Ambulance Costs a Lot

By KATE SAVAGE

The Gill selectboard set the new property tax rate on Monday, and discussed upcoming cost increases for ambulance services.

Following the board of assessors' recommendation, the selectboard set the property tax rate at \$14.66 per thousand dollars in value, which will make the average single-family home's tax bill \$4,695. This is a lower rate than last year, which was \$15.48 per thousand, but in that time the value of property in Gill has increased nearly 12%, so even the average household will pay \$282 more.

As usual, the board voted to maintain a single tax rate, rather than adding in an open space discount, residential exemption, small commercial exemption, or split rate between residential and commercial property.

The amount that will be raised by these taxes is estimated at \$3,381,699, which is \$121,400 below the amount the town could legally tax, a figure called the levy limit. Board of assessors chair Bill Tomb pointed out that the margin between the actual levy and the levy limit is growing smaller, which could give the town less flexibility to cover surprise costs moving forward.

Ambulance Costs Rising

Gill's costs for receiving emergency medical services from the town of Northfield are expected to rise by 123% in FY'26.

"This was kind of expected," said selectboard chair Greg Snedeker. "We knew going into this that there were going to be double-digit percentage increases over the next X amount of years."

Northfield EMS also serves

Bernardston and half of Erving. In FY'25, each town is paying \$25,000. Moving forward, each town's contribution will be determined by a formula that combines its population and number of service calls. Gill's contribution is estimated to be \$55,745, which is 18% of the total.

Northfield EMS chief Matthew Wolkenbreit said the cost increases will allow his department to hire two more full-time staff members, with the goal that two staff can be present at the station at all times. He said this will make the work "more sustainable" for all, and reduce reliance on on-call staff.

Wolkenbreit said one challenge the department faces is increasing difficulty in hiring skilled paramedics. "We used to talk about a hiring pool," he said. "That turned into a puddle about eight years ago. Now it's really a kind of moist spot on the sand."

Gill fire chief Gene Beaubien said the increased costs are already a compromise between what Northfield EMS wants and what the towns can pay. "These assessments were actually higher earlier in the year," Beaubien said. "Three of us were very vocal, at the meeting, that we cannot have this - I have a budget I have to follow."

In 2024, Northfield EMS responded to 173 requests for service in Gill. "We have been able to provide pretty comprehensive service to the community, and have really enjoyed our relationship with the Gill fire department and the police department," said Wolkenbreit. "It's been a great working relationship."

Wolkenbreit said he is focused on creating an intermunicipal agreement to formalize each town's responsibilities and create a structure for "how

Northfield EMS will be overseen so that each community has a say in our operations." While the town of Northfield will remain in charge of hiring, firing, and oversight of staff, he said, other members will "be able to weigh in on strategic planning, development, and operational considerations going forward."

Gill Students at Franklin Tech

In a joint session with the finance committee, the selectboard received a preliminary report on the FY'26 Franklin County Technical School budget from superintendent Rick Martin. Martin explained that the final budget will be determined after aid figures are released by the state legislature at the end of this month. After that, the school committee will have a month to deliberate, and the final budget will be voted on in March.

Currently, 16 students from Gill are enrolled at the school. In a formula determined by the state, Gill pays \$15,329 per student. This is higher than the average rate for member towns of \$12,200. Martin said three of these students are graduating, while five new students have applied to attend next year.

Martin said district towns saw an average 3% annual increase in their assessments over the last eight years, a number he said the district was able to keep low due to tuition funds from non-member towns.

The superintendent touted the school's new animal science and aviation maintenance programs, which he said were largely funded by competitive grants. "We have saved our member towns hundreds of thousands of dollars over the last four years that we put this program in place," Martin said.

Before the school made the program, if Gill students wanted to focus on these subjects, "they were required to be accepted to Smith Vocational School at a transportation cost of around \$40,000 to \$50,000, not counting the tuition cost, which is another \$30,000," he said.

Other Business

Town administrator Ray Purington presented the board with a list of potential support projects from District Local Technical Assistance, a state program administered by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

The possible research areas include preparing for floods and other climate change hazards, supporting more economic development, increasing public art and cultural programs, training local officials on new technologies, exploring regionalization of various services, making plans for better transportation options, and analyzing zoning bylaws regarding accessory dwelling units.

Purington said the town's likely top choices are assessing the impact of the Turners Falls dam and Northfield Mountain pumped-storage project on the town, as well as updating Gill's hazard mitigation priority plan. He said he would send the list to the town's various committees and departments for their feedback, and bring a list of priorities to the next selectboard meeting.

The town put in a buy order for 5,100 gallons of diesel fuel and 2,200 gallons of heating oil for FY'26, locking in pricing at current rates. "Both of those figures are about 20% below what a full year's usage is," said Purington.

The board's next meeting is Monday, January 27 at 5:30 p.m.

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LIBRARY from page A1

Kelley said the “first order of business” will be to create a steering committee at the next library trustees’ meeting. Following that, the town will hire a project manager and an architectural firm.

A renovation of the Carnegie, constructed in 1903, has been a long time coming. An expansion and remake of the building was studied in 1999, which led to an application to the state for building funds.

According to a chronology prepared by library trustee Will Quale, the state offered Montague \$1.8 million for a \$4.6 million project in 2001, provided that the town come up with the remaining \$2.8 million by May 2005. But the offer was set aside in the face of other major capital needs, including a federally-mandated project to reduce the combined sewer overflow, and perennial budget shortfalls.

Proposals were later floated to construct a new library as part of a multi-service center next to town hall, in 2007, or to install one in the vacant Saint Anne’s church, in 2017, but these ideas never got beyond planning steps.

The most recent chapter, according to Quale, began nearly eight years ago. Initially the trustees were hesitant to bring a Carnegie renovation to town meeting because “we didn’t feel the plan was fiscally responsible based on the town’s budget scenarios.”

But by 2022 a new public safety complex and highway garage had been built, Montague was receiving major grants and other sources of support for infrastructure projects, and the town budget was no longer a source of contentious debate. The success of a movement for a new library in Greenfield may also have

energized supporters in Montague.

The status of the town’s branch libraries in Montague Center and Millers Falls may have increased that support. Previous discussion of an expensive renovation in Turners Falls was often met with fears of the closing of the branches. The current library trustees have been strongly supportive of keeping the smaller libraries open, and the application to the state reflects that pledge. Significant renovations to both branches were also made this year.

The stage was thus set for a new application, and town meeting approved \$150,000 for the design phase of either a renovated Carnegie or a new library.

Kelley told the selectboard that the design process will determine which option is preferable. It is possible that the trustees will opt for a new library, leaving the historic Carnegie building vacant. “It’s still possible,” she added, “that the state could come and tell us that they don’t think that building off of the Carnegie will be feasible.”

This would leave an empty building, and one in which the town invested significantly this year: to the tune of \$163,488, according to assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller, to make the basement a safe and viable office space.

Capital improvements committee (CIC) member Ariel Elan, who attended Kelley’s presentation, told the *Reporter* that neither the CIC nor any other town board has an “official policy” about the future of the Carnegie building should the trustees choose to build a new library, “but there is a widespread recognition and love for this building as a precious and valuable historic resource.”



NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Streetlights Threaten to Tip Over

By **KATIE NOLAN**

“This was not on our radar, not on our plate,” Erving highway superintendent Glenn McCrory told Monday’s joint meeting of the selectboard, finance committee, and capital planning committee.

Last week, inspectors from the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) looked at the 40 decorative streetlights along Route 2 in Erving Center and found cracks in the bases of 13 of them, a potential hazard for the lights falling onto traffic. In a memo, McCrory wrote that the inspectors felt the streetlights “are in immediate need to come down.”

McCrory said MassDOT did not give the town a deadline, but would probably include one in a written report. He said he had inspected the other streetlights and found hairline cracks higher up on some poles. He provided an estimate of \$9,000 per light for their replacement.

“Safest recommendation would be removing them all,” McCrory wrote in his memo Monday, “and install the same arms and LED fixtures we have throughout Town on National Grid poles if they allow it.” He explained that because of the way the lights are wired, it wouldn’t be safe to only remove some of them and “have an electrician daisy chain them together and hook them back up.” The wiring for the current lights goes through conduits encased in the concrete at the structures’ bases, with a stub coming out of the concrete for each light.

Fin com chair Debra Smith suggested removing the damaged lights and replacing them with fewer lights, more spread out. Member Daniel Hammock suggested the town might be able to get grant money to replace them with solar lights.

Town administrator Bryan Smith told the meeting that replacing the lights would take at least six months after securing funding from the town.

Considering the amount of time until they could be replaced, selectboard chair Jacob Smith said

the town would need an interim solution, such as lights mounted on utility poles.

Bryan Smith said that solar lights would not require working with the current electrical wiring, and that there would be no engineering costs for re-designing the wiring. He said he would contact lighting contractors to get estimates for replacing the fixtures.

The board asked McCrory to consult with an electrician to get more information about safety issues in replacing some or all of the lights.

Meanwhile, the town had previously planned to install 18 additional overhead lights at intersections of town roads and Route 2, using money already in the streetlight account. The board and committees instructed McCrory to proceed with obtaining permission to use utility poles, and procuring and installing the additional lights.

Police and Fire

The three boards questioned the heads of the fire, wastewater, water, and highway departments, as well as the cemetery commission, about their draft operating budgets and capital requests for FY’26.

The police department’s only capital request was for a new hybrid cruiser, at a cost of \$70,000, to replace the 2017 cruiser.

Police chief Robert Holst said the police and animal control budgets were level-funded, except for contractual salary increases. The town has not had its own animal control officer for several years, and has been working with Athol’s, but Holst said there was a recent application for the position.

The department’s only capital request was for a new hybrid cruiser,

at a cost of \$70,000, to replace the 2017 cruiser. Selectboard member James Loynd said this request was passed over for FY’25, and recommended it be approved.

Fire chief Philip Wonkka also reported a level-funded request for an operating budget of \$408,231, except for an increase of \$18,726 for wages and salaries. The assessment from Northfield Emergency Medical Service, which provides ambulance service to the west end of town, showed an increase of \$80,000. Jacob Smith said the EMS task force was working on finalizing the assessments, and Wonkka said he had chosen the highest proposed figure as a placeholder.

The fire department is requesting \$900,000 for a new custom pumper/tanker truck to replace the 1989 pumper tanker.

Highway Department

“It’s very simple,” McCrory said of the FY’26 highway request for \$967,549. “Everything is all level-funded.” However, wages and salaries were increased in accordance with the step and grade system for wage and salary increases.

McCrory requested a capital expenditure of \$49,000 for engineering the Complete Streets work on North and Church streets. The Bridge Street and Maple Avenue reconstruction project is already underway, funded by state Chapter 90 money and a special appropriation already approved by the town, so is not considered an FY’26 capital request. However, further phases of work on these streets will be capital expenses in future years.

Wastewater and Water

Water and wastewater superintendent Peter Sanders also reported level-funded requests for both departments. For capital expenditures, he recommended \$11,106 for laboratory equipment for testing for nitrogen and phosphorus in wastewater, \$492,000 for repairs to concrete cracks in a tunnel near the aer-

**THE TOWN OF LEVERETT BOARD OF HEALTH
NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING**

The Board of Health will hold a public meeting February 3, 2025, at 7:30 p.m. at the Leverett Town Hall, 9 Montague Road, Leverett, MA to act on a request for variances under Chapter 218 of Leverett Code provisions 218-6.1, 218-6.2, 218-9, and 218-9.1. The applicant is the **Friends of North Leverett Sawmill**, PO Box 57, Leverett, MA 01054 for work (construction of a new onsite sewage disposal system) at **63 North Leverett Road**. Copies of the request, exhibits and plans can be obtained by contacting Foresight Land Services at (413) 499-1560.

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ation tank at POTW#1, and \$26,110 for a new computer to replace the 13-year-old computer that controls the wastewater plant operations. “It does real funky things,” Sanders said of the old computer.

Questioned about the concrete repairs, Sanders said the estimate was from Tighe & Bond for engineering and repair, but that it might be possible to do the repairs without the engineering. The board and committees asked Sanders to get more information and refine the estimate.

For the water department, Sanders requested a \$12,000 utility trailer to transport equipment and materials for water line repairs and a \$13,680 upgrade to the Neptune 360 water management software. The current software, he said, is not being supported by the company.

Sanders also requested \$84,115 for new radio frequency water meters and a meter reader. However, the selectboard and fin com wanted a clearer idea of the actual number of meters needed, because the cost was based on changing meters for all water customers, and at least 20 new meters had already been installed.

New Cemetery Proposed

Cemetery commissioner Holly Fitzpatrick presented a level-funded operating budget of \$26,000. For capital expenditures, the commission is requesting \$1.5 million for developing a new cemetery and \$20,000 for cemetery records man-

agement software.

Of the software request, Fitzpatrick wrote: “Currently tracking of cemetery data is done on an Excel spreadsheet to capture deed information while the layout of the cemetery and what is available is being done with handdrawn layouts on paper that is then taped to cardboard.”

Fitzpatrick also reported that only 22 plots are available for sale in town cemeteries, and the town needs to find additional space for burials.

Working with Merrill Engineers and Land Surveyors and Ryan Associates Landscape Architecture and Planning, the commission has developed a plan to develop a new cemetery with 300 plots on town-owned land on Mountain Road, across from the Center Cemetery. The initial costs would be for clearing trees, remediating water drainage, and building an access road and a parking area.

Fitzpatrick said an area for green burials was included in the plans, and added that considering the cost of developing the new cemetery, plot prices there would be higher than at the Center Cemetery.

Hammock provided historical perspective. “When we were trying to build the police station years ago, we suggested that as a place to build the station,” he said. “People came out in force – ‘Absolutely not! That land was purchased for a cemetery, and that’s what it should be!’ If people have memories, they should be pleased.”

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CORNERS from page A1

forward and pledged funds toward a possible acquisition.

"The property brings a sense of both tended and untended land that I really value," said Korby, a firefighter with the Turners Falls fire department. "The wild spaces are great as a view shed, for wildlife and bird watching, and there are great spaces where people interact with the land for gardening and farming. It's a central location for the whole community."

When "For Sale" signs went up again, the neighborhood group reached out to the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and the Franklin County Community Land Trust for help in planning the transaction.

"Everyone we worked with has been really great in making this happen," said Atlee. "We are very grateful that we had the time and space to work through the process. We're celebrating the first phase, and just beginning the next phase when we can take some time and include more voices, to do the analysis and community outreach that will establish new relationships."

Tyson Neukirch, the farm conservation manager for Mount Grace, will be part of the planning process.

"This acquisition was a great win," said Neukirch. "We're excited to work with the Franklin County Community Land Trust to start identifying a broad range of stakeholders and actively designing a process that will work creatively on a stewardship plan to define what conservation of this property can look like."

Although the fields have been fallow for two years, there are 15 acres of Prime Farmland – or Farmland of Statewide Importance – at Four Corners, meaning the land meets a set of specific criteria including available water, well-textured and non-rocky soil, minimal slopes, and the absence of regular flooding. These official designations make the site eligible for federal and state resources.

Neukirch said potential uses of the land include recreational trails, sustainable forestland production, farming, and possibly a small amount of housing, as well as out-buildings related to the farming use. There are currently no structures or trails on the land.

Although it's a modest-sized property, Four Corners is a microcosm of a much larger story unfolding across Massachusetts. Since 1997, farmland in the state has declined by 113,000 acres, and the aging of the Baby Boomer generation is posing a major challenge for maintaining what remains, according to the *Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan 2023-2050*. About 40% of Massachusetts's agricultural producers were 65 or older in 2022, and many farms have no plans in place to continue producing in the future.

Without additional investment and policy changes, Massachusetts is projected to lose 1,200 farms and up to 89,000 acres of farmland by 2040, according to the American Farmland Trust's *Farms Under Threat 2040* report.

"There's a real generational shift



An aerial view of the parcels preserved, visible above, below, and to the left of the intersection of East Taylor Hill and Old Sunderland roads.

that's unprecedented in this country," said Neukirch. "A lot of farming properties are potentially hitting the market in the next 20 years, and there's a monumental opportunity for new approaches to conservation. How these lands are owned, stewarded, and accessed will define the ability of communities throughout the Commonwealth to respond to the converging challenges of the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and inequitable access to farmland, open space, and housing.

"Mount Grace is eager to cultivate collaborative relationships with communities, donors, and strategic partners throughout the region to

build more resilient and equitable communities through thoughtful land conservation and stewardship."

Farmland is often financially out of reach of aspiring farmers, and farms struggle to remain viable because the average cost of production is greater than the value of goods produced, according to the *Massachusetts Farmland Action Report*, which noted that in 2022, the average farm earned 95 cents selling crops for every dollar it spent on production.

A state spokesperson offered a statement on Mount Grace's acquisition of the Four Corners property. "The Massachusetts Depart-

ment of Agricultural Resources looks forward to collaborating with stakeholders to implement the Farmland Action Plan, an ambitious long-range strategic initiative that addresses Massachusetts's farmland needs," the spokesperson said. "A suite of grant programs is available to farmers and the farming community that promotes agricultural land preservation to meet the challenges of the 21st century."

Anyone interested in receiving updates on the Four Corners planning process can provide their contact information at www.tinyurl.com/FourCornersList.

**NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD**

Stern Words as Meadow Developer Gets Back in Touch

By **GEORGE BRACE**

At Tuesday's Leverett selectboard meeting, chair Tom Hankinson reported that Kittredge development manager Joshua Wallack has asked the board to restart talks on his informal proposals to build senior and affordable housing on Juggler Meadow Road.

Numerous concerns with Wallack's proposals for the estate of Yankee Candle founder Michael Kittredge, which were discussed at previous meetings, were brought up again in reaction to the request, and the board decided to invite him to their next meeting.

Hankinson said the recent meetings had shown "unequivocal" town-wide opposition to Wallack's two brief proposals for a development on the 60-acre parcel, which straddles the Leverett and Amherst town lines.

One of the proposals, which involves the construction of 48 units on the Leverett side under the state's Chapter 40B affordable housing process, would bypass local zoning approval. The second would see the construction of 150 units in Leverett, possibly under the Local Initiative Program (LIP) or "friendly 40B" process, in which the town would collaborate on the plans.

Both proposals also call for a large number of units to be built on the Amherst portion of the land, creating a total of up to 400 in the overall development.

Carol Heim, who lives across the street from the property, said many residents are in favor of building affordable housing on the land, including herself, but she questioned the number of units being proposed, and whether Wallack had the background and experience for the project.

Despite voicing these reservations, she noted that Leverett has been unable to get any low-cost housing built in the last 20 years, and said she would like the town to "figure out some way to get some appreciable amount of affordable housing on that site."

Isaiah Robison said he agreed with the gist of Heim's comments, adding that the region's needs should also be considered.

Selectboard member Patricia Duffy said she did not think the regional housing shortage should be solved "on the backs of our taxpayers" in a small rural community.

Resident Tanya Cushman expressed concern over taxpayer impact, but from the opposite perspective, saying that the estate was currently the town's largest generator of property tax revenue and that she was "worried about the revenue that's already existing" if a project of some type does not move forward.

Planning board member Richard Nathorst said that Wallack has not provided information that the town had already asked for, and in fact had not yet submitted any formal plan. "There is no project," he said. "Until they come up with a proposal – friendly or unfriendly – which answers our questions, I don't see that there's anything to talk about."

Jacob Park said he had researched Wallack's history and believed he may not have the "track record" or "credibility" for the project. It was important, he said, to look at Wallack, Mick Kittredge – son of Michael Kittredge, and current owner of the property – and the affordable housing issue separately, and that other affordable housing developers may be more suitable to Leverett's needs.

Board member Jed Proujansky proposed the town inform Wallack that it is interested in low-income and affordable housing, but not the 40B proposals he has floated, and provide him with an outline of the information required for the board to consider it a formal proposal.

Proujansky noted that the selectboard has the power to approve or deny LIP proposals, and said the town should decide on a process independently from considering the current draft proposals.

Hankinson added that the selectboard can also veto the provision of water and sewer infrastructure from Amherst, seen as a key to any

large-scale housing development on the land.

He also suggested a citizens' committee be formed to come up with a plan acceptable to the town and developer, as he did not see the selectboard "hammering this out with Wallack, or anyone else."

"The position," Hankinson summarized, "is we are not interested in seeing development there based on any of the terms he has presented to us."

The board agreed to tell Wallack he was welcome to attend the next meeting on January 28. Duffy emphasized that this would be an opportunity for him to talk with board members, not a negotiation session.

Big Money Players

The selectboard and fin com held a joint hearing to review draft FY'26 budgets from the library and transfer station.

Head librarian Hannah Paessel presented a budget which followed the boards' guidance of a maximum 2.5% increase over the current year. She said \$575 of the increase would go towards materials, partly to help meet state-mandated spending levels to qualify for matching funds. The remaining \$272 would go to salaries, helping the library conduct an experiment in having two librarians on duty at all times.

Transfer station coordinator Annette Herda showed up without a hard copy of her budget, but said it was the same as the current year except a 2.5% increase needed to cover rising hauling costs. "Nothing has changed for us," she said.

Hankinson and Proujansky said they had a responsibility to review an actual budget. "That's fair," Herda said, and agreed to bring one on January 28.

School committee chair Jya Plavin reported that due to an accounting error, \$185,000 in school choice funding from the state had been incorrectly "coded" into the town's general fund. Town administrator Marjorie

McGinnis informed her that moving the money to the proper account would require a town meeting vote. Plavin said the school could wait until the annual town meeting in May to access the funds.

Plavin also reported that an accounting error from several years ago involving employee benefits had been resolved, but was told that this, too, would require a town meeting vote for the final step of reallocating \$19,000 from one account to another.

Other Business

Proujansky summarized four measures he would be asked to vote on as the town's representative at an upcoming meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA).

The board voted in favor of the MMA seeking state aid for towns in dealing with PFAS chemicals, modernizing local regulations and procedures, and supporting "multimodal transportation systems," as well as a measure supporting fiscal partnerships to promote school funding improvements.

The board agreed the town should partner with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to pursue a state energy efficiency grant rather than doing so independently.

The board also discussed what fee it should set for the Leverett Village Co-op's liquor license. The fee was reduced to \$0 early in the COVID-19 pandemic, but may have been raised last year – members could not recall.

Duffy said she felt the decision should be re-examined in fairness to other businesses that pay fees. Proujansky said the Co-op is an "important local institution" and a not-for-profit which provides a community service, and favored waiving the fee.

Members agreed to look up what was charged last year, and set the fee at a future meeting.

The board declared a recently-replaced highway department truck as surplus. It will be sold at auction.

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THE SPIRIT SHOPPE

MONTAGUE from page A1 which point a permanent warden will be either elected or appointed.

Lord's push to vote the warrant also came after a somewhat contentious discussion about a request from the town airport for \$24,000 to supplement its current year budget. The money would come from the facility's "retained earnings," money certified as having been saved from last year's budget.

Lord asked why the airport had not brought an accurate budget to last spring's town meeting, and suggested that airport manager Bryan Camden should have alerted the finance committee to the short-fall sooner.

Camden said the airport had been under pressure from town officials last spring to keep its request low, and that much of the shortfall could not have been predicted.

Airport commission member Josh Lively asked if there was a formal process for requesting a supplemental appropriation. Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said the "first step" was communication with Ramsey.

Kuklewicz, while agreeing with Lord that the town should have been alerted sooner to the shortfall, noted that the airport "has never looked better." When he recently stopped by the facility to pick up fuel for his snowblower, he said, "I saw a plane sitting there, and I think the plane is more than Bryan's entire budget."

The airport's approved budget for the current fiscal year is \$255,238.

The board eventually voted to "accept and recommend" all articles on the STM warrant, in theory making more discussion in two weeks unnecessary. On Tuesday Ramsey told the *Reporter* that another vote might still need to be taken on the 27th, after review by the finance committee and town counsel.

The Big Budget

The selectboard reviewed preliminary figures for the FY'26 town budget. Assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller focused on potential capital expenditures, and Ramsey reviewed revenue projections as well as the town, CWF, and airport operating budgets.

Nolan-Zeller presented a working list of 15 capital requests, totaling \$4,719,300, currently under review by the capital improvements committee (CIC).

Lord asked about \$200,000 for guardrail and culvert work, proposed by public works superintendent Sam Urkiel, which is not on the town's capital plan. Nolan-Zeller said these funds would be for engineering and making repairs to rails "particularly in the Meadow Road area." He showed several pictures of rails with rotting wooden posts along that road near the Connecticut River.

Lord suggested he talk with town planner Maureen Pollock about potential funding sources for the project. The assistant administrator agreed, and said he had recently met with officials from the state Division of Ecological Restoration, part of the Department of Fish and Game, about funding.

CIC member Ariel Elan said that the proposal was part of a long-term plan to replace dangerous guardrails throughout the town, but that the Meadow Road rails were the "most significantly dangerous."

Ramsey noted, however, that "the town did a major guardrail repair project last year," using state Winter Recovery Assistance Program funds,

to address "the worst of the worst."

After Camden jostled with Lord over the special town meeting request, he presented an airport budget for FY'26, a 6.2% increase driven by the cost of an intern and higher electric and maintenance costs. The facility is moving to air-source heat pumps for heating.

Lord asked about airport revenues and Camden responded optimistically, noting a projected surplus. He reported "really good" discussions with the Eversource electric company, which is "moving forward with their redesign and reconstruction of the industrial park [transmission wires]," addressing a major obstacle to leasing airport land out for a solar array. He said he was optimistic about Eversource entering an inter-connection agreement with EDF Renewables, the company that won a bid to construct an array, though work would probably not start until 2026, meaning the new revenue would not appear until FY'27.

Other budget requests discussed included staffing growth at the Carnegie Library estimated to cost about \$28,000, as well as a staff upgrade at the CWF that would cost \$6,700, though the latter would not fall under the town's main operating budget.

Ramsey reviewed these, as well as a part-time administrative assistant at the Council on Aging (COA) estimated to cost about \$19,000. He said that a "level services" budget would produce a \$93,000 surplus, and that the requested library and COA increases would leave roughly \$47,000, "a good place to be in."

But, he also noted, this did not count potential raises. New contracts are currently being negotiated with three town unions, and a recent wage and classification study has yet to be implemented.

"We need to save some money to pay for that, and it would likely be more than \$47,000," he explained, adding that the town may need to look at "different funding sources and get creative with budgeting."

Pumping Sewage

CWF superintendent Chelsea Little informed the board that her staff had recently scrubbed graffiti off a sewer pump station in Montague Center, and planned to build a fence around the structure. She showed photographs of the graffiti, which included the statements "Free Gaza" and "We love you," the latter of which she said was "very nice, but not great to put on the building."

Little said this pump station was the only one in town with no fence around it, and estimated that the fencing and barbed wire would cost about \$8,000.

Little also said the CWF was in the process of removing the current alarms on the grinder pumps in Lake Pleasant. The loud alarms, which can go off at all hours of the night to warn of system "backups," will be replaced by units that directly alert CWF staff. This cost, she said, "fits in the budget and our pump-station line item."

Little discussed the year-end bill from the town of Erving, which processes sewage from Millers Falls under a contract between the two towns. Last year Montague paid a significant "overage" charge because the volume of sewage flowing from the village exceeded the contractual limit. In April the public works department attempted to address major sources of groundwater infiltration along Route 63, which Little

said "dramatically" reduced inflow during the summer and fall.

Despite this work, the 2024 billing reflects high inflow during the first four months of the year as well as other sources of the problem, including major rain events. Montague is therefore being charged an overage charge of \$136,229.42, significantly higher than last year.

Farren Delays

Ramsey said one issue originally planned for the annual town meeting – rezoning the town-owned property in Montague City where the Farren hospital used to sit, to allow a "village center" development – may have to wait until the fall.

After town officials toured the property with Innes Associates, the firm hired to create a rezoning proposal, he said, they concluded there would not be enough time "to go through the zoning amendment process" before the spring meeting, while still ensuring "adequate opportunity for public engagement."

Kuklewicz raised concerns about a building once used for offices and housing that remains standing on the property. He said the building has been "sitting idle for two winters," and that the town needed to consider proposals for redeveloping it or tear it down.

"If we don't have an obvious use for the building," Lord said, "I don't really care about keeping it," but he agreed to direct Ramsey to issue a request for statements of interest.

Other Business

Libraries director Caitlin Kelley announced that the town's application for funding to design a new library, or an addition to the Carnegie, has been accepted by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. She reviewed "next steps" in the process. (See article, Page A1.)

Kelley also discussed her proposal to beef up the Carnegie staff by dividing a library technician position into two new full-time positions – an adult services coordinator, who would oversee the interlibrary loan program and collection development, and a technician-assistant who would take on cataloging as well as "library assistant" responsibilities.

The proposal would increase the libraries' budget by \$27,978. The current year's budget is \$518,233.

Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) planning director Jessica Atwood announced a meeting on Tuesday at the Shea Theater to hear input from local businesses on a grant-funded program to address the needs of downtown Turners Falls, Northfield, and Shelburne Falls.

According to Atwood, the proposal is to hire a full-time coordinator for a "pilot" period of 12 to 18 months, and FRCOG would likely request \$4,000 each from the towns of Buckland, Shelburne, Montague, and Northfield to help fund the position. (See article, Page A1.)

Parks and recreation director Jon Dobosz and Música Franklin executive director Orice Jenkins requested an entertainment license to hold the non-profit's annual Family Fun Fest at Unity Park on May 10. The selectboard approved the request.

At the end of the meeting, the board retired to an executive session to discuss collective bargaining strategy with town unions. The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be held Monday, January 27.



**LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK**

Here's the way it was on January 15, 2015: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

Anti-Islam Graffiti

Turners Falls downtown residents awoke Saturday to find the brick wall on the side of the town-owned Colle Opera House building had been defaced with an anti-Islam slogan in blue spray paint.

On Saturday afternoon or evening, the slogan's meaning was altered with black paint, and sometime Sunday the display was covered over, in chalk, with images

of flowers and the words "Love," "Peace," and "Justice!"

The incident came in the wake of a spree of attacks in France last week by a group of French-born men who had allegedly received training and support from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Over the weekend, rallies were held in Paris and around the globe in solidarity with the attacks' victims, particularly political cartoonists and other staff at the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. A rally in downtown Greenfield on Sunday evening drew nearly 40 supporters.

20 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 13, 2005: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

To Buy or Not to Buy

The Montague selectboard has set the date for a special town meeting to focus on the town's proposed purchase of the 134-year-old Strathmore mill.

On February 3, the 126 elected town meeting members from the six precincts of Montague will gather to deliberate the same question that split them nearly down the middle last October, namely, whether the town should spend \$300,000 to purchase the 250,000-square-foot complex in order to resolve, if possible, the infrastructure problems that are

standing in the way of private redevelopment of the site.

Another Assessor Resigns

Amy Williams has resigned from the Gill board of assessors, citing personal reasons. Williams is the second assessor to resign following the creation of the new Riverfront property tax assessment district, pegged to rising property values along the Connecticut River, which provoked controversy and led to heated meetings between residents, the assessors, and the selectboard.

Some of the 30 or so affected landowners' property values rose more than 200%, as opposed to an average rise of 25% in the rest of Gill.

150 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 13, 1875: News from the Turners Falls Reporter's archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

Cold moon!

The sleighing is now excellent, and a little warmer weather will make the merry tinkling of bells sound the merrier.

The coldest weather for many years was experienced on Monday and Tuesday. Monday, the mercury fell twenty degrees below the cipher at Cheapside, and fifteen below on High street. The schools had to be dismissed Monday, it being impossible to keep the rooms warm throughout.

The young men of Riverside, at a meeting last evening, decided to organize a little brass band for a cent.

Mr. A.W. Stevens received a telegram yesterday announcing the death in Salem of his wife's father.

On account of sickness in the house at which the sociable was appointed to be held, Mrs. Gillman kindly placed her house at the disposal of the society, and the sociable will be there this evening.

The Clark & Chapman machine company have been casting a great number of points for piles

to be used by Mr. Farren on the Troy and Greenfield railroad. Cast iron points are quite a new idea in pile driving and admit of greater rapidity of work, the piles going down smooth and clear.

One of the most faithful town officers is Joseph F. Bartlett. Since his election as road commissioner last March, he has made good use of his time. The construction of the bridge over the ravine on Prospect street was brought about by him, relieving the town of the possibility of an action for damages, liable at any moment, should an accident occur from the want of a bridge. Gentlemen, give these live and capable young business men the management of that part of the town affairs which they are willing to take, and no fears need be had for the welfare of the town.

Three or four copies of the *Reporter* find their way to San Francisco regularly.

A number of English swallows have been attracted to the Farren House stable, this winter, by the attention of the hostler, who has fed them regularly since they made their appearance in the village.

Last year over two hundred tramps were sheltered by the town, and this year promises a larger number.



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COORDINATOR from pg A1

additional administrative support, to help businesses coming out of the pandemic – some human infrastructure, more people time, to help businesses grow and accomplish projects that lift up the downtown. Our [goal] was to come up with a model that can help to make that happen.”

Bagg said the project aimed “to complement the municipal efforts, and coordinate with the business community – you are an essential component of making the downtown thrive.”

Researching the three communities, the consultants sought to identify elements necessary to creating a sustainable program. They found that businesses and foot traffic are critical to vibrant downtowns, and that both require constant support and effort; that additional coordination is needed to effectively promote Franklin County to visitors with time and disposable income; and that while other local groups such as volunteer business associations are already doing good work, these are often narrowly focused and underfunded, leading to fragmentation and burnout.

“In this day and age, coming out of the pandemic, it’s really a competition to attract people to your town,” Bagg said. “A lot of communities in Massachusetts are already investing in this – they’re a little bit ahead – so the time is now to keep the momentum going here in Turners Falls.”

As a next step, the consultants recommend a 12- to 18-month pilot project in all three downtowns, using grants from the state’s Downtown Initiative and Rural Development Fund as seed money. They specifically recommend hiring a full-time “downtown coordinator,” housed as a staff position at a regional host organization.

This coordinator would be shared among the three communities – Turners Falls, Shelburne Falls, and Northfield – in order to “leverag[e] cooperative opportunities.” The coordinator would be responsible for working with businesses and other organizations to identify needs and opportunities, directing them to appropriate resources and technical assistance, adding value to existing efforts, and helping to advance new initiatives in each downtown.

Other recommendations include forming a steering committee in each town, which would set goals and work with the downtown coordinator to implement one to three

“priority activities.” At the end of the pilot phase, all stakeholders would evaluate the model’s effectiveness and determine how to proceed.

If the partnering organizations want to continue the initiative, increased contributions from municipalities and businesses, additional grants, and sponsorships from larger organizations would likely be required in order to continue key projects in each town.

During the question-and-answer session, attendees requested greater clarity about the coordinator’s role and expressed skepticism about the value of creating a new process with more meetings. Some concern was also raised about ensuring an equitable distribution of project time and resources among the three downtowns.

“What would success look like for the pilot phase?” Rendezvous owner Chris Janke asked.

“That really depends on the priorities and benchmarks of success in each community,” Jessye Dean, executive director of the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce and Regional Tourism Council, replied. “We are looking to communities to define those metrics, whether that’s increased foot traffic, licensing certain kinds of businesses, working with RiverCulture to do something...”

“Are you saying that we have to hire a person for this to happen?” asked Sadie’s Bikes owner Nik Perry. “I talk to everyone in this room – we have tons of ideas about how to bring more business and vitality to this downtown. Do we need another process?”

“I think this is the path forward, because we are building this into existing regional structures,” Dean told him. “We have hundreds of thousands of dollars each year that we use to promote Franklin County, and visitation. As a result, tourism is up nearly 12.5% over the past two years. We want this person to come in and meet with the businesses and coordinate your ideas, and tie that in with the existing structures so we can leverage what already exists.”

A diagram on BCS’s presentation showed the Chamber as the host organization for the downtown coordinator position, while a footnote added: “The Chamber of Commerce is one option for an existing organization.”

Harvey clarified that the host organization would be chosen through a bid process, and would then be re-

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This program is funded in part by a grant from the Gill Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency

sponsible for hiring the coordinator. In response to questions from Pollock, he confirmed that representatives of Montague can be part of both the bid process and the hiring committee for the position.

“I support this!” John McNamara, co-owner of Loot, said of the overall proposal. “We lost a lot of businesses during COVID; things are starting to come back. The town [staff] is busy, there’s a lot going on. This person can help the downtown businesses.”

McNamara said that in Turners Falls, these businesses already know and support each other, and now “have an opportunity to show

up and decide what this position is going to be. That’s up to us.”

Some participants expressed concern about whether the coordinator’s time would be distributed equitably among the three towns. “I’m afraid that Shelburne could take the lion’s share of their time,” one audience member said. Both Dean and Pollock assured residents that they would make sure this would not happen.

The final comment came from Loot co-owner Erin MacLean. “I want to emphasize the importance of hiring the right person and deciding on the host organization,” she said. “I think this should be determined by

the businesses... Rather than hiring and then having the steering groups meet, let’s meet now and identify what the ideal candidate looks like before the hiring process. My instinct is to slow it down... It’s really a big deal to hire the right person.”

Harvey replied that he appreciated her comments, and would look at where the process might be slowed down to address her suggestions.

Pollock told the *Reporter* that she thought “very good questions and interesting discussions” were raised at Tuesday’s forum, and that notes will be shared with the selectboard at its January 27 meeting.

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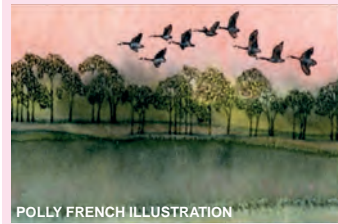
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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

JANUARY 16, 2025



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

JANUARY BLUE

POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

*The poem of next year –
every week a line,
every month a stanza,*

*and a tiny sun
rising and setting
in every numbered square.*

“New Calendar,” a small poem by Billy Collins

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – Finally. A January morning worth writing home about, if this were a letter to friends far away.

The familiar snow started just before dawn. And like the snow of James Joyce in “The Dead,” falling all over Ireland, or the constantly falling Russian snow of Karelia, it sifts steadily down into the morning.

Gently it covers the porch with light whiteness.

No indoor easy chair for me this morning, but the Adirondack pulled up in the open air. I am just out of reach of the wayward flakes, under the woodshed roof. But some snow does drift onto my scribbling on the page, blurring the ink of my special Pilot P-700, the translator and transliterator of my thoughts, my pen of choice.

Far below in the cellar, I hear the furnace rumble to life. In the parlor, the Glenwood C cookstove is patiently awaiting the match. But for now, the reliable furnace begins its cold-weather chore, keeping the upper rooms warm and the pipes from freezing.

In spite of the snowfall, and likely because of it, I faithfully ful-

fill my daily winter offices, crucial to the feathered folk. Early in the dusk-like dawning of the morning, the fleeting shadows of our birds flutter at the feeding stations around the yard.

Out I come with coffee cans full of seed, and a jug of warm water for the bird’s basin. I pause to wonder to myself what name these wild creatures have given me. Surely they must know me by a name, but of course I’ll never know what they call me. They do come up to me as close as they dare, pouncing on the scattering of seeds I toss beneath the rhododendron branches.

The cottontail, who has been in and out of the yard for the past two years, having been born in a nest under the porch, hops up to me, nose twitching, expecting his morning handful of cracked corn. He gets what he wants.

Chickadees and titmice swarm around me, and white-throats and song sparrows flit in, each to his or her own favorite feeding spot.

The woodpeckers queue up overhead in the heirloom Baldwin apple tree, while I hitch up their suet basket. The suet chunk, bought at Food City downstreet, gets brought in each night, to keep it safe from marauding raccoons and the possible bear. I do believe the risk of the bear arriving here in January is slim – I’d like to think Awasoos is snug asleep somewhere on Mineral Mountain, in one of the many caves up there.

Give us this day our daily eagle.

He wings through the falling snow, high up on the edge of the visible. Our Native friends tell us

see **WEST ALONG** page B4

Above: Sun and ice this weekend on Ruggles Pond, like it does sometimes, in Wendell State Forest.

NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE

by Trouble Mandeson



MANDESON PHOTO

Artichokes, though not native to our area, are available year-round in our local grocery stores as we have become so globally linked. Here one is enjoyed with melted butter.

GREENFIELD – Do you ever wonder, dear reader, about the first human who discovered the delicious edible flower bud of the artichoke in the middle of all those prickly thistles?

Were they so driven by hunger that they desperately consumed every part of the plant, only to be surprised by the sweet, tender heart inside once they moved past the barbed leaves and the pointy florets?

And honestly, who thought of scraping off the ends of the leaves with their teeth to enjoy that soft green meat? When it comes down to it, who thought of dipping them into mayonnaise or melted butter?

Although these questions aren’t something I lose sleep over, I do spend some small amount of time wondering about weird things like this.

Cynara cardunculus, also known as French artichoke, globe artichoke, and green artichoke, is a variety of thistle in the *Asteraceae* family, which also includes asters, daisies, and sunflowers.

Today’s domesticated artichokes come from the wild *cardo*, or artichoke thistle, native to the Mediterranean region. Cultivation evolved over time from the classical Greeks in Sicily, to the Romans, then Muslim Spain, and on to Italy and southern France in the late 15th and early 16th centuries.

The Dutch introduced them to England, where they grew in 1530 in Henry VIII’s garden. Considered a luxury in European courts, they were rumored to possess aphrodisiacal properties. In the 19th century they arrived

see **HEARTFELT** page B8

TFHS Sports: Still Fun & Exciting

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – Basketball teams from Franklin Tech and Turners Falls High School went head to head this week. Although none of the teams are skyrocketing, the contests are still fun and exciting.

At most Tech home games, Kevin Hollister belts out his rendition of the National Anthem while the student section loudly challenges every team that comes into the Eagles’ Nest. For Turners, Abby Talbot has sung her own version of the “Star-Spangled Banner” while the pep band and cheerleaders keep the crowd rowdy. Not to mention that there’s been some very exciting JV scraps.

Unfortunately, neither varsity boys’ team has had a great deal of success this season. Coming into Tuesday’s mashup, they only had three wins between them.

And while Turners still does not have a girls’ varsity basketball squad, their vastly improved JV team went on the road to challenge Franklin’s JV.

Girls’ Basketball

FCTS 40 – TFHS 24 (JV)

Last Friday, the Franklin Tech JV girls defeated Turners 40-24 in an intra-town game.

Even though the Thunder lost, it was still nice to see girls playing basketball for Turners Falls. And someone close to the coaching staff informed me that the school may just be able to field a varsity team next year.

Friday’s game was much closer than the January 7 drubbing, which Franklin won going away 41-10. With

see **SPORTS** page B3



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Franklin Tech’s Tangiab Kosbinsky (left) shields the ball from Turners’ Shayly Martin Ovalle as the Eagles hosted the Thunder in a junior varsity match last Friday.



KEVIN BRULE PHOTO

An eastern bluebird (Sialia sialis), seen in the author’s yard.

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

'SNOWBALL,' 'BLUE,' & 'BLUEBERRY'

Meet Snowball, Blue, and Blueberry, a terrific trio of parakeets who spend their days playing with swinging toys and bells.

Parakeets are a social species and love to chat, meaning the company of their own kind is critical to their well-being. They need time outside the cage to relieve boredom, and should be fed a variety of pellets, seeds, and fresh veggies and fruits.

This trio is adjusting to human handling, so patience is a must. The adoption fee for one parakeet is \$25, and any additional parakeet adopted at the same time has a discounted

fee of \$20. Most housing sold at pet stores is too small for small pets. For one to two parakeets, cages must be 22 inches wide by 16 inches deep and 27 inches high, with bar spacing no wider than a half inch. With more birds, the cage must be larger.

If you're ready to adopt now and want to learn more about, meet, or adopt this pet, you can start the process by coming to the Dakin Humane Society in Springfield during our open adoption hours, Tuesdays through Saturdays from 12:30 to 3 p.m., or calling us at (413) 781-4000, or visiting www.dakinhumane.org.

Senior Center Activities JANUARY 20 THROUGH 24

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 1/20

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Kitchen Club
6 p.m. Cemetery Commission

Tuesday 1/21

9 a.m. Chair Yoga
11 a.m. Money Matters
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday:
Drop-in Tech Help
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 1/22

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

Thursday 1/23

10 a.m. Montague Villages
Board Meeting

1 p.m. Pitch

Friday 1/24

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

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. Next clinic is February 5, 2025. 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 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.

ERVING

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

Monday 1/20

9 a.m. Good for U
10 a.m. Seated Fitness
12 p.m. Pitch

Tuesday 1/21

9 a.m. Stretch & Balance
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringers

Wednesday 1/22

9 a.m. Interval Training
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bingo

Thursday 1/23

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

Friday 1/24

10 a.m. Quilting Workshop

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Soapbox Committee Planning 2025 Race

TURNERS FALLS – The soapbox committee met in early January to begin planning this year's race, to be held Sunday, June 1, 2025 at Unity Park in Turners Falls. This will be the eighth soapbox race in Turners Falls since it first began in 2010, when a crowd of 1,600 spectators were wowed by 35 racers.

Committee members Jon Dobosz, Dan Burke, Seth Rutherford, Thomas Bullock, and Mik Muller discussed many topics, including safety and marketing. The event is a fundraiser for the Montague Parks & Recreation Department scholarship fund, which is distributed to families who need financial assistance to send their kids to summer camp programs. In years past we have raised \$5,000, and brought crowds to town.

The soapbox committee invites town and business leaders to help expand the event beyond just the race itself in an effort to broaden its impact and increase the fun to more of Turners.

The possibilities are endless when it comes to

cross-promotion and soapbox-ing up the whole day, or even weekend. Can you say Piston Punch, Checkered Flag Fizz, or Turbo Tea? How could your business capitalize on the event? Come talk to the committee!

We invite anyone interested in the race, including curious residents, to help make the event bigger and better. This is the only regularly held derby in the tri-state area, and could potentially bring a few thousand people to spectate. Some of these people may want to come the night before, or stick around after the race is over. What can we offer them?

Please join us at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 11 at the Recreation Field House in Unity Park to help spitball ideas to expanded village participation and enthusiasm for this iconic 35 mph rubber-meets-road spectacle, like only Turners can do it. All are welcome.

The Montague Soapbox Committee can be reached at plan@montaguesoapboxraces.com or c/o MPRD, 56 First Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376.

AT LARGE

The Auteur Upriver Spills

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – Filmmaker Ken Burns lives 50 miles upriver in Walpole, New Hampshire, a small village north of Keene named for British nobleman Sir Robert Walpole.

National League umpire Bill Jackowski was from Walpole. Jackowski was behind the plate when Bill Mazerowski's home run beat the Yankees, 10-9, in the seventh game of the 1960 World Series. Jackowski retrieved Mazerowski's batting helmet and kept it until 1996 when he gave it to the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

After he left umpiring I asked him if he'd ever missed a call. "No!" he bellowed. "Not here! Not from the heart!"

Burns would likely have the same response. We know from the breadth and quality of his work – the biographies of Benjamin Franklin, Ernest Hemingway, Jack Johnson, and Jackie Robinson, the documentaries about prohibition, baseball, and country music, the histories of the Mayo Clinic, Dust Bowl, the Shakers, and the Statue of Liberty – that he is fastidious.

"It was the best decision I ever made. Second best was moving up there, first was to stay."

– Ken Burns

In November, Burns sat down for an 80-minute interview with author and podcaster Doug Brunt to promote his biography of Leonardo da Vinci.

"I'm always living in the past," said Burns, who will be 72 on July 29. "I ended up going to Hampshire College in Amherst, a new experimental school that was and still is fantastic. I wouldn't be talking to you if I hadn't gone there. All of their teachers were social documentary, still photographers and filmmakers, and all of a sudden I was with this wealth of unbelievable feature film information."

After he graduated in 1975, Burns formed a small film company and began working on *Brooklyn*

Bridge, a documentary inspired by David McCullough's 1972 book *The Great Bridge*.

"It felt like we were inventing the wheel," he told Brunt. "How to edit it and put it together... how to tell stories in old photographs, and tell stories with documents and paintings and drawings and live cinematography mixed in there."

Finding Walpole

Burns peddled the idea to distributors, broadcasters, and grant funders – and got hundreds of rejections. "It wasn't until I got any money from grants and things that I was able to begin shooting [*Brooklyn Bridge*] in earnest in 1979.

"By that time I needed a real job. I was starving, and so I moved up to the village in New Hampshire – to the house, to the bedroom I still sleep in."

Brooklyn Bridge aired on PBS in 1981 and was nominated for an Academy Award. "People assumed I would come back to New York or move to LA and I said, No I'm staying in Walpole," he said. "It was the best decision I ever made. Second best was moving up there, first was to stay."

Burns said living in Walpole has helped keep his life in perspective. "We presume if we just have the right amount of money, that if we just buy the right blue jeans and drive the right car and have the right handbag and live in the gated community, that the inevitable vicissitudes of life won't visit us. They're called inevitable for a reason – none of us get out of here alive."

Next Project is "Massive"

America will celebrate its 250th birthday next year, and Burns is doing a "massive" film about the American Revolution. Nearly finished, Burns told Brunt that narrator Peter Coyote had to be summoned back to do another take after fact checks revealed "a hundred tiny little things – it wasn't Thursday, it was Friday; it wasn't six, it was four..."

He said he disdains artificial intelligence and feels it is to filmmaking what the chainsaw was to Paul Bunyan's axe: "The shortest distance between two points is what AI is saying, and it will revolutionize lots of things, but the last thing you want to do is to have it replace what

human beings do really well. If you're a writer, let's write; if you're a filmmaker, let's film."

On the Bedstand

When Brunt asked Burns to "name your favorite book as a kid," he answered, "Encyclopedia. A garden variety that my parents bought at the supermarket. It was several volumes, like 20 volumes. I'm really good at crosswords."

He's reading a biography of Alfred Hitchcock and has Hemingway near his bedstand – *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*, together with a collection of Hemingway's short stories that include two of his favorites, "Up in Michigan" and "Indian Camp."

Brunt always asks the people he interviews what they're reading, and I'm astounded by the prodigious amount of wordage they can absorb. Burns, for example, has been re-reading Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.

"Who else have you read multiple times?" asked Brunt.

"Most of Mark Twain, and most of Willa Cather – who I still submit that when we presume a male has written the great American novel, what about Cather with *O Pioneers!* and *My Antonia!*"

His favorite movie is *Seven Samurai*, with honorable mention to Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and two directed by Francis Ford Coppola, *The Godfather* and *The Conversation*.

Two of his dinner guests would be da Vinci and Abraham Lincoln, and the third, surprisingly, would be Louis Armstrong – "the most important person in the history of music in the 20th century, to music what Einstein is to physics, what Freud is to medicine, what the Wright Brothers are to travel. He took ensemble music and turned it into a soloist art."

Asked for parting advice, Burns said: "Know yourself. People are drawn to my filmmaking out of some sense it's glamorous. It's not. It's a lot of hard work and persevering. I had those hundreds of rejections for *Brooklyn Bridge*, but none of that matters if you're true to thine-self and persevere, because nothing's going to be handed to you."

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

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SPORTS from page B1

Tech's JV squad nearly defeating Renaissance and Turners playing on a reduced schedule, Franklin was on track to win big.

But the game was hard fought, and Turners kept it close late into the game. With a slim 18-16 lead, the Eagles went on a tear, outscoring the Thunder 22-8 to coast to the victory.

Tech's Brayleigh Burgh led everybody with 23 points, followed by Abigail Dobias (6), Lilyann Baldwin (4), Tangiah Koshinsky (3), and Yolemi Ovalle-Majia and Isabella Liebenow (2 each).

Nine different players scored for the Thunder, meanwhile: Autumn DiMare (5 points), Madison Haight and McKenzie Stafford (4 each), Autumn Thornton (3), and Kortney Cummings, Bethany Whitney, Ivy Lopez, Brianna Preston, and Shayly Ovalle (2 each).

Boys' Basketball

TFHS 57 - FCTS 35

TFHS 46 - FCTS 44 (JV)

On Tuesday, the 1-7 Turners Falls Thunder trekked to Industrial Boulevard in the hope of their getting their second varsity win of the season, while the 2-6 varsity Eagles were hoping to put the brakes on their five-game losing streak.

I was unfortunately unable to attend this game because of an illness I picked up while working in the school system, but I had several sources at the game who updated me on the scores - and, it turned out, the drama.

First came the very exciting

JV game. "Tied" and "Still tied" came the texts, with accompanying pics of the scoreboard. Finally, in overtime, Turners outlasted Franklin by a single basket to take the contest 46-44.

The varsity game started late, and reportedly "seemed to last forever," as multiple fouls were called throughout the game. At the end of the first quarter, Turners was ahead 14-3 with all Tech's points coming off foul shots.

The Eagles did make some shots in the second period, but were unable to cut into the lead, and at the half Turners was on top 24-12. Tech made some noise in the third, and going into the final quarter it was an eight-point game, 32-24.

Then came the fourth and multiple texts: "Crazy 4th Period," "Huge number of technical fouls," "FT coach ejected," "A mess."

After the game, one of the Tech players' mothers told me that in her view, some of the fouls were not really fouls, and another source told me that Tech seemed to be purposely fouling "just to rebel against the refs." In the end Turners held on to win by 22 points, 57 to 35.

Jackson Cogswell led the Thunder in scoring with 24 points, followed by Alexander Quezada and Davian Bella (9 each), Caden Williams-Senethavisouk (7), David Klempner-Siano (4), Brody Girard (3), and Kainen Stevens (1).

Nolan Stafford (15) led Tech, followed by Gabe Mota (13), Hunter Donahue (5) and Mason Bassett (2).



Turners Falls's Brody Girard (left) looks to pass around Eagle defender Hunter Donahue as Franklin Tech hosted Turners Tuesday night.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Heart Wreath; Weaving Sienna; Exploding Tank; Abandoned Tent; Lost Dogs; Strangers; Manhunts

Monday, 1/6

7:19 a.m. Officer advising there is a Christmas tree on the white line at Unity and Park Streets. DPW advised.

Tuesday, 1/7

1:01 p.m. Employee from Greenfield Savings Bank reports that a male urinated in the parking lot on December 31 at 12:40 p.m. 1:08 p.m. Officer assisting with a lockdown drill at Franklin County Technical School.

Wednesday, 1/8

9:39 p.m. Walk-in requesting to speak with detective about an ongoing issue with juveniles knocking on the door and windows. Officer advises statement forms dropped off for reporting party and neighbor, who will fill them out and drop them off. Ring camera shows one individual known to neighbor.

Thursday, 1/9

7:32 a.m. Erving PD requesting officers check the Plains/Lake Pleasant area for a male who left Weatherheads in Erving on foot. Unable to locate.

8:09 a.m. 14-year-old male eloped from Turners Falls High School. Officers out with male and school resource officer on Millers Falls Road.

8:28 a.m. Report of power line down in road outside Dreamhouse on Third Street. Officer reports it is a phone line. Verizon contacted; they advise it is a cable wire. Comcast notified.

11:55 a.m. Caller reports her neighbors are constantly yelling at their dog, and she believes it may be being abused. Unknown apartment number; heart wreath on the door. Info forwarded to Animal Control.

2:01 p.m. 911 caller is following a black Toyota Sienna and the vehicle is failing to stay within marked lanes. Driver shows no signs of impairment. Verbal warning issued.

5:58 p.m. 911 caller from Meadow Road reports she came home and fire alarms were going off for carbon

monoxide. She shut the alarm off three different times, but it keeps going off. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

6:13 p.m. 911 caller from G Street reports she keeps hearing a beeping sound in the apartment above her; the alarm is saying "fire, fire," but there is no one in the residence. No smoke or flames noted. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

6:46 p.m. Control advising TFFD came across a two-car accident with airbag deployment at Turnpike and Turners Falls Roads. Officers advised. TFFD assessing for injury. Tow requested. TFFD advises two medical refusals. Officer following truck to shop to get master registration for dealer plate.

Friday, 1/10

12:48 a.m. Caller from Newton Street reports a vehicle sitting in the driveway of Malcolm's Garage. Caller states vehicles are not usually parked in that location at this time. Officer advises vehicle belongs to owner of business; no issues.

9:55 a.m. Fire alarm sounding at Sheffield Elementary School. Staff believe it was pulled by a student. Call transferred to Control.

10:32 a.m. Caller reports that while his truck was parked last night in the third spot from the intersection in front of Millers Pub, it was struck by another vehicle. Caller states his taillight is busted out and the plastic pieces are on the ground in the space he was parked in. Caller is taking photos of the damage. Caller states he contacted the pub for camera footage. Officer advises \$45 worth of damage. Caller will contact his insurance company.

4:21 p.m. 911 caller from Fourth Street reporting plumbing accident; there is now smoke in the building. Believes the hot water tank exploded. Transferred to Shelburne Control; officers advised. TFFD on scene. All units clear; TFFD re-

maining on scene. No fire; no explosion.

Saturday, 1/11

6:03 a.m. Caller from Cumberland Farms requests officer to location to move along a male party who has been outside their business since late last night. Caller indicates that the party opened someone's vehicle door and requested they buy him food or drink. Officer advises male had left prior to arrival. Employees advised to call if male returns.

6:40 a.m. E-911 caller from East Chestnut Hill Road states there is someone outside her house but does not know who it is. Caller disconnected phone line; no answer upon call-back. Caller called back reporting same issue. Officers en route. Officer advises units in area; may lose radio contact. Officer advises area is clear with no footprints or noise heard. Contact made with caller through door; advised of negative findings.

5:06 p.m. Caller from Our Lady of Czestochowa reports someone camping in a tent on church property; states the priest asked her to call to report it. Caller states it is the portion of the property across from Greenfield Savings Bank. Caller advises the occupant was last seen a few days ago, but the police had responded at the end of November or early December to move the person along. Officer advises PD has checked on the tent before and it had been abandoned. Officer is in the area and will check on it. Officer advises there are no footprints in the snow; looked inside the tent, advised there is trash inside and confirmed tent has been abandoned for a while. Request call back to reporting party to advise the church can take the tent down if they don't want it there. Caller advised.

5:41 p.m. Officer checking on state police cruiser with blue lights in front of Subway. State police all set.

6:27 p.m. Units assisting Erving PD on a warrant arrest at Weatherhead Apartments.

7:44 p.m. Caller requesting assistance with two dogs running loose in the Nouria parking lot. Officer off at gas station; states employees have the dogs there. Officer advises the dogs are friendly with females but not receptive to males; request animal control officer be contacted. Called ACO; no answer; message left. Called deputy from regional kennel; no answer. Officer advises the clerk and a customer have the dogs tied up at this time and have offered to reach out to see if they can find someone to take them for the night until an owner comes forward. Officer advises if the owner comes forward to advise them to contact Nouria to arrange for unification. At 9:07 p.m., a 911 call was received from a concerned citizen reporting that the dogs from this call are tied up outside the store. Advised caller of the initial call, and the efforts being made to try to find a suitable place for the dogs for the night. Officer followed up on call; confirmed owners have been located and they have been reunited.

8:36 p.m. Officers en route to assist Erving PD in a foot pursuit of a subject with an active warrant in the area of Prondecki's. Officers checking area. Erving K9 starting track. Officer heading to a possibly involved address in Lake Pleasant. Footprints located in the area of East Main Street, Newton Street, and the railroad tracks. Erving advises it appears one subject was picked up in a vehicle. Officers off on Montague Avenue attempting to locate. A 36-year-old Greenfield woman was arrested on a straight warrant.

9:24 p.m. 911 caller requesting assistance for girlfriend who was involved in a rollover accident on I-91 near Reservation Road in Holyoke. Caller was in process of determining location throughout call. Girlfriend was leaving residence in Holyoke en route to Turners. Conferenced caller with MSP Northampton and assisted in relaying pertinent information.

Sunday, 1/12

1:42 p.m. Officer advises he came upon a minor motor vehicle accident on Route 63; states the operators are exchanging information and did not want police assistance.

3:38 p.m. 911 caller reports a man ran out onto the porch and yelled, "Help, please, he is going to hurt someone!" as she was walking by. Verbal argument between family members. Advised of options.

Theater Profile: Arena Civic Theater Nears 55

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD - I found a theater group to write about when I went to a production of *A Christmas Carol* on December 22 at the Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center in Greenfield. I was told this company, Arena Civic Theater, has been around since 1970, so it appears to be in its 55th season.

I ended up getting ahold of Erika Clark, Arena Civic Theater (ACT)'s director. Clark told me that the company has held productions at the Franklin County Fairgrounds Roundhouse. She got started working with them when she volunteered for a youth program show.

"I spent a lot of time on the stage, and decided I wanted to experience

what happened behind the scenes," she said. "I don't have any formal training, but I have a background in performance, and I am an actress. I've performed in various Shakespeare plays, as well as a small number of off-Broadway shows."

Clark has been with the company for four years now. Some of the past shows done by ACT's youth group are *The Wizard of Oz*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, and *Clue*. The youth group goes on during the summertime.

"We will be deciding shows this January," Clark told me about what ACT will put on next. I wanted to know how long some of the actors in the group had been a part of it.

"One of our actors has been with the group for many years," I learned from

her. "Jerry Marcanio is his name. He is a legacy member." Marcanio played Scrooge in their recent production of *A Christmas Carol*. I would consider him to have been good in the play.

Clark also told me *12 Angry Jurors* was the first time a play of theirs was done at Hawks & Reed, and that *A Christmas Carol* was "our second performance at the Center." "We get good community participation," I was told, in connection with ACT getting good crowds to their shows. The community that is part of their audience is where reviews of the shows come from.

I had seen a production of *A Christmas Carol* once before in South Deerfield. It was all right. The ACT production was a pretty traditional telling of the tale - they did a

pretty good job making it that way. The lines were ones I had heard in a traditional movie version of the story. They didn't change much, except to make Scrooge's nephew a niece.

Marley's ghost was almost perfectly like he was in the book. He was covered in chains. The Ghost of Christmas Past resembled enough what he was supposed to look like. The same went for how much the Ghost of Christmas Present and the one of the Future looked like they are in the book.

The acting of all these ghosts was great. I felt they really were these characters.

I would say personally that this theater company does well when it comes to putting on plays, and I think it will probably continue to do so.

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WEST ALONG from page B1
to remember to send up a message of thankfulness every day. Today it's for this lovely snowy morning.

The eagle is the messenger. This king of the birds will carry it to the Creator. Maybe red-tailed hawk will carry back a response.

Down here on a 10-degree morning like this, back in my chair, the ink congeals in my pen, well before the coffee gets chilled. As if on cue the pen quickly captures the bluebird lilt through the yard, on the way to a breakfast of bright holly berries that line the borders of the yard.

We don't begrudge him the berries, as they've lasted through the Christmas season. Some of their branches adorned the portraits of family ancestors and decorated the doorways of the parlor and kitchen. Others were placed on the tombstones up in the Highland Cemetery. Each of the family up there gets a holly branch for the holiday season.

Bluebirds have become more frequent

down here on the Flat, below the village of Millers Falls.

Judy-Across-the-Street provides mealworms for these bluest of thrushes, and they make their way from time to time over to our holly bushes. They are bluer than blue jays, like soft blue patches of heaven fallen to earth.

They always remind me of the blue cloak of Mary, whose image used to adorn the wall behind the altar of Saint Mary's Church, painted by Noe Regali so many generations ago. Now the church has been re-named Our Lady of Peace, but it's still St. Mary's by any other name.

Sometimes the same blue reminds me of the blue sky with clouds that decorates the ceiling of the CAT scan room of the Dana Farber clinic, down in Boston. Looking up I could contemplate that far-off sky before being slid into the scan machine. Lucky for me, the results were consistently the same: cancer all gone, free I was to continue my life.

Bluebirds have always stayed around in the

winter, though not as a result of climate change. They are quite hardy in spite of their delicate appearance. Many of their thrush cousins, the robins, have spent most winters here too, living off old apples, holly berries, and the fruit of the invasive bittersweet vines.

One of the sky-blue males looks into the nesting box along the garden fence. We hope he'll be back come February. We'll have to keep an eye on the boxes, though; the English sparrow riff-raff often chase away the mild-mannered bluebirds.

Our late Cousin Annabelle often had bluebirds living in her birdhouses, over across the Flat. When she passed away she bequeathed her stock of nesting boxes to us, and we spread them around the yard like she did. Maybe she'll send a few of her former clientele our way this spring.

After the bluebird's inspection tour of our birdhouses, and after the snow, the blue is back up in the sky. The visitor is probably miles away this morning, taking his bit of

blue heaven with him.

The sun inches over the horizon on the ridgeline above our valley. It peeks between the sentinel white pines, my winter sundial. Or is it rather that we down here on planet Earth are tilting, inch by inch, towards the sun? That's more likely.

The river path beckons, and the new snow-fall will surely tell fresh stories of the passage of the night creatures and night hunters that course through our woods. Maybe there'll be tracks of coyote or fox, or maybe those pad prints are of the local bobcat?

So now I'm going down to the old pasture turned to woodlands, along the west-flowing river. I'll stop to read the tracks, to pay my respects to the venerable grandfather oak, to whistle to the chickadee.

I sha'n't be gone long. - You come too.

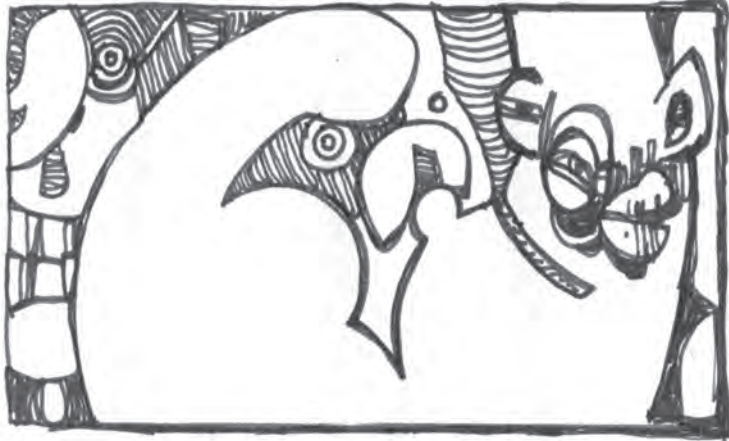
From "The Pasture,"
by Robert Frost



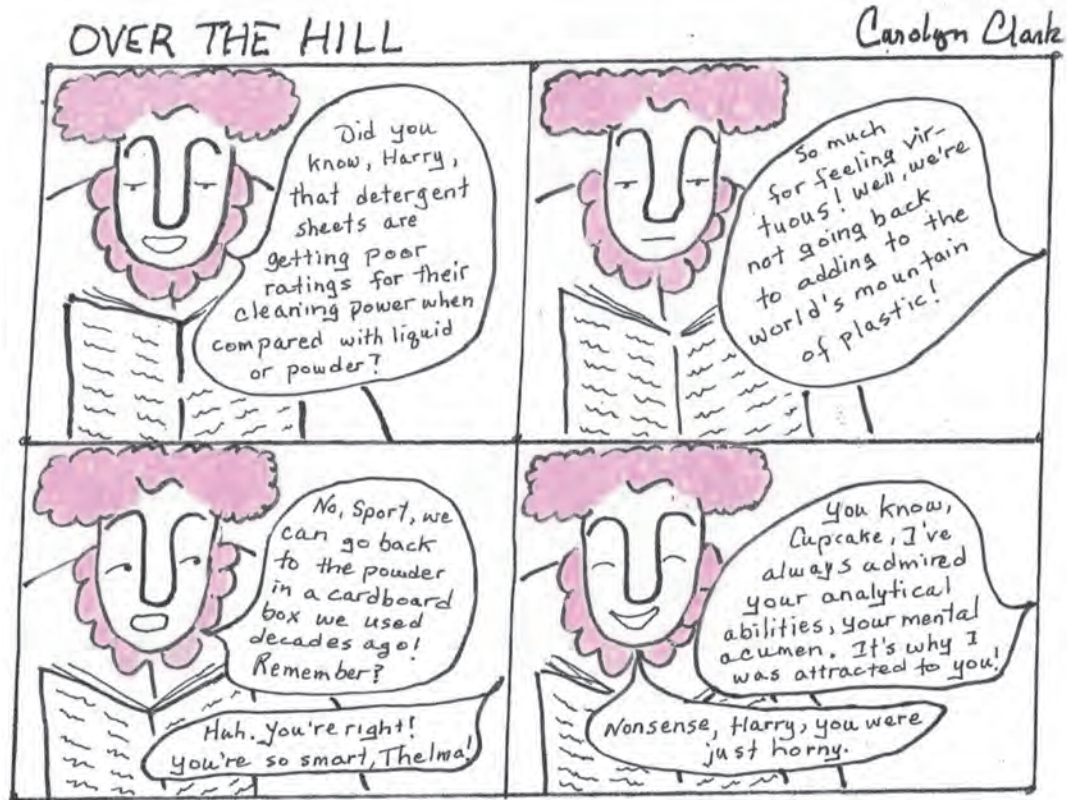
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It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.

- William Carlos Williams

edited by Janel Nockleby
Readers are invited to send poems to
the *Montague Reporter* by email at:
poetry@montaguereporter.org
(Please note we are no longer
accepting mailed submissions.)

Our January Poetry Page

- As the Leaves Fall With Grace in Autumn Winds -

As the leaves fall with Grace in Autumn winds
So do our Loved Ones softly pass from us -
Some red, some gold, some burnished orange
The varied colors of the Lives they lived -
Some fall gently, lightly to the ground
Know to let go when the time is right -
Some are ripped away by winds of change
Anguish within the rain that falls like tears...

But all Paths lead to a Good Day to die
As Autumn leaves herald the passing year
They form a bright carpet upon the Earth
A fallen banner to farewell our Loved Ones
To celebrate completion of a Life held dear
The Autumn Sun turns to gold their noble deeds
Masks flaws, illuminates their hearts of fortitude
They lived for us, and for them we must carry on...

Carry on, thru pain to healing from sorrow
Thru the darkness and light to a new tomorrow
There is a song of Life, if we could just hear it
Each day is a Gift, given to us by Great Spirit...

My Father passed on a beautiful day
In October when the sky was deepest blue
I put bright leaves in his suit jacket pocket
Some Earthly beauty on his journey to Spirit
He was laid to rest with cold rain and tears...
My Mother was born on an October day
She passed at the end of a rainy Summer
Her green burial was the hottest day of all
We put flowers in the Earth, she smiled with Love
Her Spirit Self looked down on us thru the years...

On my Mother's Birth Day, on October third, this Fall
Two wise mentors passed on that day of poetry and pain
One whose kindness had helped with Mother's passing
Six years ago, before we all were ready to let go again
The time was right for them, new journeys called their name
Friends in life, Friends in Death, all Friends united now...

The other Friend, as I call him and believe it so
He gave encouragement, a rare and precious gift
He touched more lives than mine, journeyed far and wide
He wrote poetry and song, many tales both short and long
They said he did great things, memory's acclaim will bring
But most recall his kindness, a Great Soul that could uplift...

He said, "We exist to help each other get thru" (this Life)
Shine rays of Light thru darkness and thru shadows gloom
Beyond the Circles of this World, beyond our waking sight
Tho illusions of this Earth have often been our doom
Each parting draws us closer to the Great Mystery
The Source of Being, returning always to the Light...

- Sarah Greenleaf
Wendell

How To Give It A Name, 3

Columbine used to be the name of a flower. The red, blue, & white
starred flag used to be a symbol that represented the United States of
America. My pick for Civil War/zombie apocalypse stronghold is the big
blue house on Colrain with turrets, stockade fencing, & a gully on three
sides we could fill with spikes & fire. Cain really killed Abel because they
were in love with the same sister. He became the first funeral caterer &
wedding singer. In addition to *fratricide* he named almost as many things
as his parents did. (A name is a solution to a problem it created, said the
snake.) Between seven forty & eight thirty-five the air was perfect & for
once the sunset was for me. But I set it free to slip off into its last pinks,
above a collusion of upended shopping carts sinking into the riverbed.

- Daniel Hales
Greenfield

How To Climb The Pine At The End Of The Mind

There used to be a HoJos & a mini-golf where the Applebees is.
Linda's house used to be a parsonage
& it said on the deed you weren't allowed to drink booze there.
The bike path used to be train tracks.
The homeless encampment past the tracks
used to be a thicker thicket.
The vacant lot that will soon be McGovern's Ford dealership
used to be a long succession of seedy motels
but for now it's a pile of rubble
like a city that used to be called Mariupol.
What did this shade of blue
used to be before the Prussians claimed it?
The big backyards on Meadow Lane used to be one gigantic meadow.
The Green River Swimming & Recreation Area
used to be the battlefield where that asshole Turner got his.
My house used to be our house.
The air around me used to look vacant
before this shock of startled flurries.
The snow-tipped pine corpse at the curb
used to be a succulent *cocus nucifera* swaying in the swelter on the edge
of space, a high cluster of ripe coconuts waiting.

- Daniel Hales
Greenfield

How To Tie & Untie

Some days I don't want the clown to twist me a balloon poodle.
Sometimes I don't wanna buy the sugar-water the adorable
frantically waving children are selling at their overpriced lemonade
stand. If Bandanna Man is standing outside Fosters with his
chihuahua in a baby stroller, the law of reentry dictates he cannot
roll it back onstage at the start of the next scene. Sometimes sirens
sound so unsure of themselves when they first start up, wuh what?
I'm constantly amazed that billions of humans are brave & reckless
enough to make more humans, especially since so many people hate
their own eyebrows. Some days I imagine the clown tying a balloon
poodle for the unmade human I almost made with you.

- Daniel Hales
Greenfield

Contributors' Notes

Sarah Greenleaf is a poet, writer, and herbalist, originally from
Leverett, now residing in Wendell. Her influences are drawn from
a background with the Society of Friends (or Quakers), her Native
American heritage, and an affinity for Celtic mysticism, that aligns the
Seeker to the Divine Source of Being thru an attunement with Nature
and the Inner Light within All Creation. Longtime Poetry Page editor
Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno appears in her poem.

Daniel Hales (www.danielhales.com) is the author of the hybrid novel
Run Story (Shape&Nature Press), *¿Cómo Hacer Preguntas? or How To
Make Questions: 69 Instructional Poems* (Frayed Edge), and three poetry
chapbooks. These poems are from his forthcoming book *How To Tie &
Untie Mist* (Frayed Edge, April 2025). He makes music with the Frost
Heaves & Hales, the Ambiguities, and Umbral. He lives in Greenfield.



ILLUSTRATION: HENRY FARRER, WINTER SCENE IN MOONLIGHT (1869)

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 16

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Animal Tracking*. Indoor intro with naturalist David Brown. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Montague Center Library, Montague Center: *Oral History Training*. 6 p.m. Free.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Silverback Swing*. 6 p.m. No cover.

11 Montague Avenue, Lake Pleasant: *Tea and Crumpet Society*, reading group. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Keller Williams*. 7 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *The Valley Moonstompers Society*. 8:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17

Artspace, Greenfield: Opening reception for *Forward*, a community exhibit with work by 37 local artists. 5 p.m. Free.

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: *Stephen Merriman*. 6 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Leftovers*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Young Shakespeare Players* present *The Winter's Tale*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Roundabout Books, Greenfield: *Stella Kola, Cosmic Ray*. 7 p.m. \$.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Ladysplain*, readings feat. *Emily Pettit, Sarah Wisby, Kel Warren, Vanessa Brewster*. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Tall Heights, Lau Noah*. 7 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Danny Pease and the Regulators*. 7 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Emily Bloom, Sweet*

Petunia. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *DeepC Divers*. 8 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: *Perennial, Radical Joy, Truther*. 8 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 18

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Bluey Party*. For children and their caregivers. 1 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Young Shakespeare Players* present *The Winter's Tale*. 11:30 a.m., 6:30 p.m. Free.

Second Congregational Church, Greenfield: *Envisioning the World We Want*. Speakers, musicians, etc., coinciding with the People's March in Washington, DC. 12:15 p.m. Free.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: *Still Singing*, staged readings of a musical memoir written and composed by *Marcia Gomes*. 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. \$.

New Salem Library, New Salem: *Nourish Your Nerves: an Herbal Workshop*. Learn about several herbs that nourish the nervous system, feed the liver, and reduce stress. Participants will prepare and experience a simple facial steam and make their own herbal tea bags to take home. Registration at (978) 544-6334 required. 2 p.m. Free.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *Winter Wonder Party* feat. *BluGroove*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Palladium, Worcester: *Nile, Six Feet Under, Psycroptic, Embryonic Autopsy*. 6 p.m. \$.

Four Phantoms Brewery, Greenfield: *Dan Belmont/ Steve Kurtz Jazz Duo*. 6:30 p.m. No cover.

Pioneer Valley Brewery,



Turners Falls chamber-folk group *Stella Kola* play at Roundabout Books in Greenfield this Friday. *Cosmic Ray* opens.

Turners Falls: *Gravestone*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Gabriel Boyer, Keith Waters*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Mount Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Dear Ella*. 7 p.m. \$.

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *Briezyjane and the Hurricanes*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Film, *Holding Back the Tide* (2023), oyster documentary, with Q&A with director *Emily Packer*. 7 p.m. \$.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Kamaau*, soundbath. 7 p.m. \$.

Luthier's Coop, Easthampton: *Tandem Jump, The Library Band, The Journals Kept*. 7 p.m. \$.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *akadua, Polar Identity, Minor Moons*. 7 p.m. \$.

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wendell: *Stompbox Trio*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Guiding Star Grange, Greenfield: *Third Saturday Contra* feat. *The Moving Violations*, *Julian Blechner* calling. 7:30 p.m. \$.

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

Vermont Jazz Center, Brattleboro: *Brandee Younger*. 7:30 p.m. \$\$

Next Stage Arts, Putney: *Mike Block & Yacouba Sissoko*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Aradia, Scott Hsu, The Third Entity*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 19

Erving Public Library: *Bigfoot and UFOs*. With Discovery Channel's *Ronny LeBlanc*. 11 a.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Young Shakespeare Players* present *The Winter's Tale*. 1 p.m. Free.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *New Lights in the Dawnland*, Michael Kline's audio tapestry on local Indigenous history and folklore, followed by a discussion led by Nolumbeka Project president *David Brule*. 1:30 p.m. By donation.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *The Grand Trunk Hotel*. Piece together the story of the grand old days in Turners Falls. 2 p.m. Free.

Quarters, Hadley: *Western Mass Electronics*, synth meetup. Featured artist: *Hiss Quiet*. 4 p.m. No cover.

EXHIBITS

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wax, Water and String*, paintings in encaustic, watercolor, and embroidery by *Pam Allan*, through January.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *A First-Class Machine Shop*, local history exhibit with images, text, maps, and artifacts, and *Junior Duck Stamps*, top youth entries for the statewide 2024 Junior Duck Stamp competition, through January 16.

Montague Center Library: *Auto Partitas*, mixed media triptychs based on automotive parts by *Nina Rossi*, through February.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: Guest exhibit featuring *Andrew Vlock* and *Chinatsu Nagamune*, ceramic and textile artists from *Leverett*, through January.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Franklin County's Forgotten Alien Encounters*. In the Local History Room, through January.

Rhodes Art Center, Northfield Mount Hermon School, Gill: *Countervail*, words and ceramic work by *Anne Thiam*, through January 24. Email jrouke@nmhschool.org to visit.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: *Forward*, a community art exhibit exploring evolution, change, and movement with work by 37 local artists. January 17 through February 28, with an opening reception this Friday, January 17, from 5 to 8 p.m.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Salt, fat. Sweet!*, work by *Caroline Davis*, through February 8.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Botanical Photography*, by *Marilyn London-Ewing*, through February.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Improvisations*, paintings by *Gordon M. Green* and *GK Khalsa*, through February 1.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *Peace and Joy*, holiday arts and craft exhibit by member artists, through January.

D'Amour Museum, Springfield: *Look Again: Portraits of Daring Women*, woodcut and collage prints by *Leverett* artist *Julie Lapping Rivera* celebrating the achievements of women who defied the status quo, through February.

CALLS FOR ART

Sawmill River Arts Collective in Montague Center announces their 13th Annual Small Works Exhibit and Sale, to take place February 2 through 24. This is a non-juried show of works measuring up to 10 inches including the frame. Submit up to two pieces of art before January 27. Details at sawmillriverarts.com.

The **Town of Montague** will install six large-scale site-specific wheat paste murals on historic brick buildings in May. Three selected artists will receive \$4,000 each to design a pair of murals that integrate themes identified by the community. Full details and application at riverculture.org. Deadline February 16.

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CALENDAR



looking forward...

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Jen Gelineau, Baby Jesus Burnout*. 4 p.m. \$.

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *Jeffrey Foucault & Company*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Mind Left Body*. 6 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Lisa Bastoni & Helen Hummel*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Id M Theftable, Shea Mowat, Owen Manure, Sam Gas Can & David Russell, Jeff Gallagher & Kryssi*. 8 p.m. No cover.

MONDAY, JANUARY 20

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: *Snowshoe Clinic*. Basics of snowshoeing and a short, fun hike, for all ages and abilities. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy hiking boots. 1 p.m. Free.

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Anti-Inauguration Party*, hosted by Decarcerate Western Mass. 3 p.m. Free.

Stone Soup Café, Greenfield: *Taking Care of Each Other: A Pay-What-You-Can Soup Supper*. In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy of service, compassion, and justice. 5 p.m. By donation.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Marty Frye, Sarah Collins, Dave McKindley-Ward*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Open Mic with *Jim McRae*. 8:30 p.m. No cover.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 21

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Make Your Own Snow Globe*. Registration required. 4 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Midwinter Drawing Social*. 4:30 p.m. Free.

Village of Light Ashram, Leverett: *Talk and Q&A with GurujjiMa, "Transgender as a Spiritual Path"*. 6 p.m. Free.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Song & Story Open Mic*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22

Dickinson Library, Northfield: Poetry discussion with *Nick Fleck*. 3 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Boys From '69*. 8 p.m. No cover.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Silverback Swing Django Reinhardt Birthday Celebration*. 6 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Nerd Night*. 8 p.m. No cover.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

Canalside Rail Trail, Turners

Falls: *Nice & Easy Walk*. Easy-paced, 1 to 2-mile guided walk, geared for seniors, but open to all. Meet at the Great Falls Discovery Center. 1 p.m. Free.

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: *Little House Blues Band*. 6 p.m. Free.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Ramon & Jessica, Call Me Bea*. 7 p.m. \$.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Musical RouletTrio*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Jacob Kordas*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *Kalliope Jones*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: Film, *The Muppets* (2011). Songs and storytelling with *Davis Bates* at 7 p.m.; screening at 7:30 p.m. \$.

Next Stage Arts, Putney: *Gaslight Tinkers*. 7:30 p.m. \$.



Marty Frye, Sarah Collins, and Dave McKindley-Ward, returning from Boston Celtic Music Festival, play the Montague Common Hall on Monday.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *True Stew*. 8 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: *Minstrels in the Gallery, Jethro Tull tribute*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Catamount, Outro, Mutineer*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Les Déraillieurs, Ex-Temper*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

Greenfield Community College, Greenfield: Workshop, *Finding the Calm in the Storm: Somatic Tools for Emotional Health & Stress Reduction*. 10 a.m. \$.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Free Day*. Exhibits, performances, tours, workshops, all free to all. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Hands Across the Hills* book launch and reading. 1 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Forgotten Immigrants: The Bohemians*

of Turners Falls. Beginning in the 1870s, drawn by the promise of work at the John Russell Cutlery factory, almost 300 Bohemian immigrants left farms in central Europe to start life anew in the industrial village of Turners Falls. This illustrated talk by local historian Jim Bridgman, based on over 35 years of research and his new book, *Forgotten Immigrants*, explores the lives of these intrepid pioneers. 2 p.m. Free.

Dreamhouse, Turners Falls: *Anti-Zionist Jewish Deli Night*. 5 p.m. No cover.

Mesa Verde, Greenfield: *Black Verde World Street Food Pop-Up*. 5:30 p.m. No cover.

Lupinewood, Greenfield: *Electro Acoustic Mechanics Launch Party* feat. *Mal Devisa, Harm, Enchanted Mirror*. 6 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Roger Street Friedman, Ari & Mia*. 3 p.m. \$.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Kryssi Battalene & Wednesday Knudsen, A.P.I.E.* 4 p.m. \$

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *Jeffrey Foucault & Company*. 6 p.m. No cover.

MONDAY, JANUARY 27

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: Author talk, *Bella Levavi and Mo Schweiger*, with Q&A and readings from their zine anthology of their *Montague Reporter* column "True Love Will Find You In The End." 6:30 p.m. Free.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28

Erving Public Library, Erving: *All-Abilities Social: Build a Bird Feeder*. All welcome; snacks provided; sign-up required. Two sessions, noon to 1:30 p.m. and 4 to 5:30 p.m. Free.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Half Waif, Kristine Leschper*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wes Brown*. 8 p.m. No cover.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Silverback Swing*. 6 p.m. No cover.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 31

Greenfield Community College, Greenfield: *Music Matters Benefit Luncheon* for Música Franklin. Register at www.musicafranklin.org/musicmatters. 11:30 a.m.

Downtown Greenfield: *Winter Carnival*. All day. See www.greenfieldrecreation.com for map and full schedule. Parade of Lights, 6 p.m.; fireworks at Beacon Field, 7 p.m. Free.

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: *On The Lam*. 6 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Vimana*. 6 p.m. Free.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Open Mic for Writers*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Wallace Field, High Tea*. 7 p.m. \$

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Aleksi Campagne & Kaiti Jones*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *Moon Hollow*. 8 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: *Bag Lady, The Prozac*. 8 p.m. \$.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Slowdive*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Farley String Band*. 12 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *First Generation Ensemble* presents *Mother Tongue*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Bill Frisell*. 7 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Mdou Moctar*. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: *Same Old Blues*. 6 p.m. Free.

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *She Said*. 7 p.m. No cover.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Arc-A-Palooza* feat. *Evelynroze, The Bromantics, John Wayneovich, Alex Casavant*. Benefit for United Arc. 6:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: *Rattlesnake Gutter Gutterknives*. 6 p.m. Free.

THURSDAY, MARCH 6

Greenfield Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: *Film Sprint Festival*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

SUNDAY, MARCH 9

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Abstract Turntablism Workshop* by *Maria Chavez*. 5 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, APRIL 8

Nova Arts, Keene NH: *mssv, Landowner*. 7 p.m. \$

FRIDAY, JUNE 20

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *Green River Festival* feat. *Mt. Joy, Julien Baker & Torres, Ocie Elliott, TEKE::TEKE, Kabaka Pyramid*, more. Single-day tickets on sale Friday. See greenriverfestival.com. \$\$.

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *Green River Festival* feat. *Courtney Barnett, Kevin Morby, LA LOM, Thus Love, bobbie*, more. Single-day tickets on sale Friday. See greenriverfestival.com. \$\$.

SUNDAY, JUNE 22

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *Green River Festival* feat. *Waxahatchee, MJ Lenderman & The Wind, Chicha Libre, All Feels*, more. Single-day tickets on sale Friday. See greenriverfestival.com. \$\$.

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HEARTFELT from page B1

in the United States, brought to Louisiana by French immigrants and to California by Spanish immigrants.

Today the Mediterranean region still produces the most artichokes, with the top producers in Italy, Spain, and Egypt. Globe artichokes are grown for US consumption in Peru, Argentina, and the US. In 2020 the world produced 1.5 million tons of artichokes.

One hundred percent of US artichokes are grown in California, and 80% of those come from the “Artichoke Center of the World” – Castroville, California, where the annual Castroville Artichoke Festival has taken place every summer since 1959.

For commercial growth, artichokes are limited to warm areas of the US – Zone 7 or higher (we are Zone 5) – and need good soil, regular watering and feeding, and frost protection in winter. They can be grown from seed or rooted sucker. The plants only live a few years, with peak harvesting in spring and mid-autumn, and once picked, artichokes remain fresh for two weeks or more. Artichokes are also grown ornamentally for their foliage and the pretty purple flower heads.

I found some artichoke seeds at a seed swap this spring and planted them in one of my raised beds. When one plant shot up above the rest, I culled out all the other plants and allowed it to grow with plenty of room. When cold weather arrived, it was trimmed down to six inches and mounded with brown leaves, straw, and cloth. This variety doesn’t fruit until its second year, so time will tell if it comes back to life in the spring to bear fruit.

Artichokes are rich in fiber and low in fat. They are loaded with vitamins and minerals like vitamin C, folate, phosphorus, and magnesium, and rich in antioxidants. For a plant-based food they have an above-average amount of protein. Health benefits attributed to the artichoke include lowering blood sugar and improving digestion, heart, and liver health.

The easiest way to cook an artichoke is to steam it, but there are many other ways to cook them, including roasting, grilling, boiling, and pressure cooking. They require some preparation before cooking, so make sure you have a cutting board, a sharp knife, a large pot, and a steamer basket ready. A cut lemon is good for reducing browning; use it to rub on the cut ends.

You’ll need to trim off the end of the stem, and pluck off any tiny leaves. Some use a vegetable peeler as the stem is edible, too, so you’ll want the peel removed in that case. Pull off the first couple of layers of tough outer leaves. Cut at least an inch off of the top, and use scissors to cut off any remaining barbed leaf tips around the choke.



The author’s green and healthy artichoke plant, this past summer. It is now beeled over for wintering, and time will tell if it comes back to life to bear fruit, as this area is a bit colder than they are used to.

No matter how you cook them, artichokes are a unique dish with a flavor profile that’s nutty, buttery, and earthy. Their taste is mild and similar to asparagus. The leaves become very tender when cooked and the inner heart is silky smooth and leaves a slightly bitter taste behind, followed by a sweet aftertaste. This comes from the plant’s cynarin compounds, which block sweet receptors on the tongue and can actually make food taste sweeter. Even water can taste sweet after eating an artichoke!

Artichokes pair very well with lemons, wine, mushrooms, greens, and salty foods like capers, olives, and Parmesan cheese. Their hearts can be found in cans and jars, sometimes plain, sometimes marinated, which provides an easy way to include them in recipes. Enjoy this artichoke dip at your next gathering.

Trouble Mandeson lives in Greenfield with her wifey and cat Peeps. She works as a personal care attendant, writes grants, feeds people, and is a hospice volunteer working to make death a positive experience.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Four Deer, Two Bobcats, One Fox, Five Dogs, One Raccoon, One Audi

- Friday, 11/1**
5:32 p.m. Summons served, Franklin Road.
6:34 p.m. Main Road caller reports her downstairs neighbor is intentionally making noise by dragging chairs around.
- Saturday, 11/2**
7:54 a.m. Main Road caller reports the upstairs neighbor is out of control.
12:13 p.m. Report of a large cat struck on Main Road. Removed bobcat from roadway.
- Sunday, 11/3**
5:09 a.m. Head-on collision with injuries, French King Highway.
5:43 p.m. Checks requested on parties, French King Highway. Parties were fishing.
- Monday, 11/4**
8:53 a.m. Tree crew obstructing traffic on Center Road.
10:40 a.m. Assisted Bernardston PD, dump truck vs. pole accident.
- Wednesday, 11/6**
4:55 p.m. French King Highway caller reports just purchasing an Audi; same now disabled on the Highway.
8:12 p.m. Removed large deceased raccoon from the travel lane, Main Road.
- Friday, 11/8**
12:41 p.m. Railroad ties left on the roadside, Grist Mill Road and Vassar Way.
12:48 p.m. Assisted Northfield PD with brush fire.
1:39 p.m. Two-car accident, French King Highway.
- Saturday, 11/9**
5:17 a.m. French King Highway caller reports a vehicle in the parking lot that isn’t normally there. Someone inside the vehicle appears to be under the influence.
- Sunday, 11/10**
12:14 p.m. Assisted Northfield PD with an accident with injuries.
4:44 p.m. Caller advises she struck a deer on the French King Highway.
- Monday, 11/11**
10:19 p.m. Calls reporting an injured deer struggling on the road just west of the French King Bridge.
- Wednesday, 11/13**
4:16 a.m. Accident with injury, River Road.
- Thursday, 11/14**
11:33 a.m. Riverview Drive caller reports a stray dog.
- Friday, 11/15**
2:43 p.m. Minor vehicle contact, Wagon Wheel.
- Saturday, 11/16**
1:17 p.m. West Gill Road caller reports an injured bobcat, struck by a vehicle. Transported to station. ACO took animal to a vet.
- Tuesday, 11/19**
5:39 p.m. Caller reports an injured fawn on the side of Main Road.
8:20 p.m. Mountain Road 911 call for a disturbance.
- Wednesday, 11/20**
8:53 a.m. Illegal burn, Hoe Shop Road.
- Friday, 11/22**
8:51 a.m. Removed branches from roadway, Barney Hale Road.
- Saturday, 11/23**
4:42 a.m. Mount Hermon Road 911 call, static on the line. NMH security advised.
Monday, 11/25
12:47 p.m. Search of the river, Turners Falls Rod and Gun.
1:26 p.m. Death in water, Barton Cove.
5:27 p.m. Main Road caller reports daughter struck a deer in the area of Flagg Farm.
- Thursday, 11/28**
5:55 p.m. 911 call from Mountain Road Estates with rock music playing, possibly AC/DC’s “Rock and Roll Ain’t Noise Pollution.” Silent call procedure performed. Callback connected to voicemail.
7:30 p.m. Main Road caller reports items stolen from her vehicle.
8:38 p.m. Mountain Road caller reported a missing dog; called back to advise it had returned.
- Saturday, 11/30**
6:32 p.m. Main Road accident, no injuries.
- Monday, 12/2**
2:06 p.m. Disabled vehicle, Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Will be pushing vehicle to the Turners Falls side.
3:12 p.m. Death notification, Main Road.
- Tuesday, 12/3**
11:53 a.m. Assisted probation, Main Road.
- Wednesday, 12/4**
10:26 a.m. Assisted Northfield PD with structure fire.
3:28 p.m. Welfare check, Turners Falls-Gill Bridge.
- Saturday, 12/7**
9:18 a.m. Main Road caller advises they were attacked by a rabid fox.
- Tuesday, 12/10**
8:22 a.m. Vehicle breakdown, Riverview Drive.
8:31 a.m. Suspicious vehicle, Main Road. Fresh damage; airbags deployed. Discovered to have been stolen.
8:32 a.m. Grove Street caller reporting his vehicle was broken into.
- Thursday, 12/12**
3:51 p.m. Two dogs loose, West Gill Road.
- Friday, 12/13**
10:22 a.m. Grove Street caller reporting larceny from vehicle in the driveway.
- Wednesday, 12/18**
5:18 p.m. Car vs. pedestrian accident, no injury, French King Highway.
9:22 p.m. Lyons Hill Road caller advises there are cars in her driveway; one appears to be stuck in the mud.
- Friday, 12/20**
8:13 p.m. Disabled vehicle in breakdown lane with hazards on, French King Highway. Party is okay.
- Tuesday, 12/24**
9:23 a.m. Report of a truck delivering dry-tates parked in the breakdown lane on the French King Highway, causing a hazard.
- Saturday, 12/28**
6:52 p.m. 911 call stating Pissgah Mountain Road is icy; caller is having difficulty going up it with his truck. Advised he is on the section not maintained in winter. Attempted to contact a tow.
- Sunday, 12/29**
8:33 p.m. Dog bite, Riverview Drive.
- Monday, 12/30**
4:22 p.m. Assisted a citizen with fingerprints for employment.
- Tuesday, 12/31**
No time listed: Main Road caller into station reporting loose cows.
8:19 p.m. Report of a driver hitting a pole north of Uppingil Farm and continuing southbound. Pickup has driver-side damage.

ARTICHOKE DIP



All the ingredients for this artichoke dip. It’s simple to put together and yields a rich, warm, delicious dip for a party or a snack. Artichoke hearts are also great in salads, or eaten straight from the jar.

- 8 oz. can of artichoke hearts, non-marinated, drained and chopped
- ½ cup sour cream
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1¼ cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- dried or fresh dill to taste

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Drain and chop the artichoke hearts. Put the sour cream, mayo, cream cheese, garlic, and 1 cup of the Parmesan cheese together in a bowl, and mix until smooth. Stir in the artichoke hearts and a little bit of dill weed, to taste. Place in a greased baking dish or pie pan. Sprinkle the remaining ¼ cup of Parmesan on top, and some extra dill if desired. Bake in the preheated oven for about 20 minutes, or until hot and bubbly. Serve warm with crackers, bread, or veggies.

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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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