

# The Montague Reporter

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

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LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

## Clash Brews With Amherst Over School Funding, Cuts

By GEORGE BRACE

Leverett's selectboard met with the town finance committee on Tuesday to continue reviewing departmental budgets for FY'26, which begins in July. Draft budgets for the police, fire, and highway departments were relatively straightforward, but deliberations on cuts sought in the budget for the Amherst Regional School District, of which Leverett is a member, were more complex and charged.

The two town bodies discussed their options for responding to budget proposals scheduled to be taken up next Saturday, February 8 at a "four-town meeting" with Amherst, Shutesbury, and Pelham.

Fin com chair Phil Carter gave an overview of the district budget's current status. Funding a "level services" budget of \$37.54 million would require a 6.45% increase over the current year, he said, but due to revenues from the state and other sources only increasing by 1%, the assessments to the towns

see LEVERETT page A5

## Healey Taps Longtime Jail Official As Interim Sheriff

By REPORTER STAFF

FRANKLIN COUNTY – This week governor Maura Healey's office announced that after a search process lasting approximately three weeks, Lori Streeter, currently the second in command at the Franklin County House of Correction, will replace Chris Donelan as sheriff at the end of this week. Streeter's position will technically be "interim sheriff" until the next state election in 2026.

Streeter will not only manage the Franklin County jail, a 320-bed correctional facility with 250 employees, according to the press release, but as interim sheriff will also assist police departments in the county. The office is currently collaborating with Greenfield and Montague to provide field training for its deputies.

"Superintendent Lori Streeter is a widely respected leader who has dedicated her career to serving the people of Franklin County," Healey said in a statement Tuesday announcing Streeter's appointment. "She knows the Sheriff's Office and House of Correction inside and out, and she has spent years getting to know staff and inmates and earning their trust. She has also prioritized mental health and substance use

see INTERIM page A5

## Senior Affordable Housing Wins State's Informal Blessing



Alyssa Larose (standing at left), housing development director at Rural Development, Inc., fielded questions about the new complex planned for Care Drive with Erving town administrator Bryan Smith (standing at right).

By BEN GAGNON

ERVING – Two high-ranking state officials offered support Tuesday for the Town of Erving's effort to build its first ever affordable housing – a 26-unit complex just off Northfield Road, next to the Erving senior and community center and Erving Public Library.

If all goes to plan, the rental complex known as Evergreen Circle will feature 18 one-bedroom units set aside for seniors along with eight townhomes available to all ages by fall 2028. The total project cost, including the extension of Care Drive and water and sewer lines, is estimated at \$18 million.

The proposal comes more than 20 years after the town's Master Plan identified the need for senior housing in 2002.

Because planning and designing new construction is time-consuming and expensive, getting the unofficial blessing of those who would be handing out state funding and tax credits is a crucial step in the process. A group of more than 20 local, regional, and state officials gathered at the senior center on Tuesday to hear the latest details.

"It takes years to lay the groundwork for projects like these," said Alyssa Larose of Rural Development, Inc. (RDI), the non-profit development arm of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority. "The town has done phenomenal work at creating community here on what is an ideal site."

RDI, which is planning the project and would own the housing, has developed more than 100 ownership units and more than 150 rental units in Franklin County since 2000.

After a Powerpoint presentation from town and regional planners, Edward Augustus, secretary of the state Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, seemed pleased with the proposal.

"I love the synergy here," Augustus said. "If Washington could work like this, we'd all be better off. Thoughtful civic discourse, reasoning together, working with outside partners, and coming up with a plan is no small feat. We have the resources, and you've got the plan and the vision, and we'll continue to work with you."

Of all 50 states, Augustus noted see HOUSING page A6

GILL SELECTBOARD

## Gill Fire Chief Gene Beaubien Passes the Hose After 24 Years

By KATE SAVAGE

After 32 years with the Gill fire department and 24 years as chief, Gene Beaubien said farewell to the job at Monday's Gill selectboard meeting. He received plaques and certificates commemorating his service from the town, from the governor, and from the state senate and house of representatives.

Beaubien's wife Dorrie Beaubien also received a framed certificate, thanking her and her family for the sacrifices they had to make. "While we can never give back all the missed and interrupted days and nights, meals and dinners, dates, holidays, and family gatherings, please know you have the sincere and deepest thanks of your town," the certificate read.

Beaubien was scheduled to retire in 2019 when he turned 65, but received permission from town meeting and the state legislature to delay the date.

The department's board of engineers has selected William Kimball to be the new fire chief. Stuart Elliot and Mitch Waldron are the deputy fire chiefs, and Aaron Budine was promoted to captain.

Seeking Block Grants

After a gap of nine years, Gill is taking the first steps toward applying for a community development block grant. Brian McHugh, the director of community development at the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, said the funds are typically used to repair

see GILL page A4

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## Two to Three Jobs Likely Cut As District Balances Budget

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – On the heels of last week's news that state aid to Gill-Montague schools will not increase noticeably next year, making staffing cuts seem all but inevitable, the school committee met Tuesday night to approve a preliminary bud-

get that reflected the setback.

Speaking during the public comment period at the beginning of the meeting, elementary school librarian Ramona LaTronica beseeched the committee not to cut positions, stressing the "immense importance of a fully-staffed school."

see GMRSD page A3

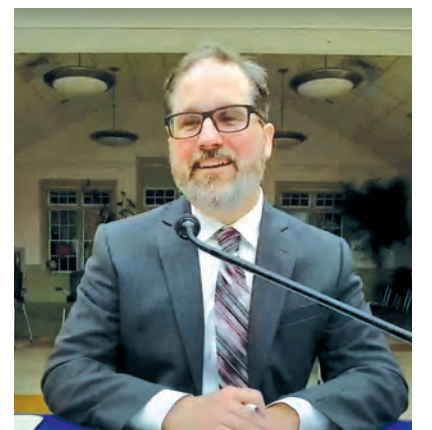
## Wendell Coordinator Interviews For Erving Town Planner Role

By MIKE JACKSON

ERVING – On Wednesday evening the Erving selectboard interviewed the single candidate recommended by a screening committee to fill the role of town planner. The candidate was Glenn Johnson-Mussad of Greenfield, currently the town coordinator and finance co-director in neighboring Wendell, and the board left the interview with the decision to offer him the full-time job.

The position has been empty since last March, following the resignation of former planner Mariah Kurtz, and the town began advertising for it in October. The screening committee met twice in December and twice this month, and recommended only Johnson-Mussad to a public interview after other applicants withdrew or fell short of posted qualifications.

The board members took turns asking him questions. "Tell us what



Johnson-Mussad at the interview.

you know about the town of Erving," member Scott Bastarache led off.

Johnson-Mussad said he stopped there often to purchase ice cream, and had worked with the town on shared projects with Wendell. "One thing that has really stood out to me," he added, "is the way Erving combines a small-town feeling – it's

see INTERVIEWS page A6

## MassDEP Issues Draft Approval Of Hydro Licenses for Comment



MR FILE PHOTO / AREZVI AZAD

The new license will likely require more water to be allowed to pass over the Turners Falls Dam to support habitat in the river's so-called bypass stretch.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

GILL / MONTAGUE – Last Friday the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection released a draft of the terms under which it would allow FirstLight Power to continue to operate two of the largest hydroelectric projects in New England – the dam and canal at Turners Falls and the pumped-storage station at Northfield Mountain.

As a part of an ongoing federal relicensing process, the hydro projects must meet standards established in Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act to obtain a water quality certification (WQC) from the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

MassDEP's 117-page draft "Water Quality Certification with Conditions" would require the company to increase seasonal minimum river flow rates, build a new fish ladder,

install barriers to prevent fish entrapment, and offer new recreational access points on the river, among many other conditions.

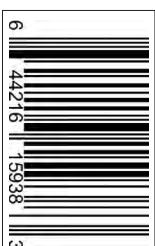
The draft WQC is largely in line with settlement agreements signed in 2023 by FirstLight and a number of public and private entities, including the state Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Scientific analyses, hundreds of public comments, and opinions of other state agencies collected over the last 12 years were also taken into consideration.

FirstLight spokesperson Claire Belanger told the Montague Reporter the draft "represents a balanced decision" that will "support a healthy Connecticut River, allow the continued operations of FirstLight's Northfield Mountain and Turners Falls Projects, and contribute to the Commonwealth's clean energy future."

see MASSDEP page A4

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# The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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**Founded by**  
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold  
August 2002

## Tune In, Tune Out

Though in many other places the government flails and spasms and takes itself over and pukes itself out more regularly, Americans have always been insulated from catastrophes like this, maintaining a fairly comprehensible storyline at home while we tend to direct our worst ends outward and abroad.

Or maybe not *always*. There was that one cataclysmic civil war. And those two Red scares. And the time forty thousand unemployed Great War veterans converged on DC to demand reparations, set up vast shantytowns, and didn't leave until the US Army marched on the capital and cleared them out with guns and bayonets. Or the time the Supreme Court said Georgia had to stop genociding the Cherokee and stealing their homelands and President Jackson made fun of the Court and said it couldn't force the feds to enforce its ruling.

But in our lifetimes, sure, particularly now that we are losing the last generation to remember the Second World War and the resentful slowness of the decision to intervene against Fascism and the complete mobilization of every member of our society and every shred of material when it was finally realized we'd better.

After that, and for a really miraculous length of time, everything pretty much stuck together and progressed along a consensus social storyline thanks to *television*.

And so, as the whole thing finally falls back apart, it does so along

lines that can only be understood in light of the television. Long ago, for example, they started televising Presidents, and then we started picking Presidents based on how well they managed on the television, and then eventually the most successful people from the television industry *itself* began stepping out of the screen and into power.

Trump is a chimera of many makers, but he only assumed his final form in the crucible of his own TV show. His second Cabinet is teeming with colleagues: Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy, reality-star of *The Real World* and *Road Rules*; Dr. Mehmet Oz as the head of Medicare and Medicaid; Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth from *Fox & Friends Weekend*; and likely more. Who can keep track? This week Dr. Phil was invited on a televised ride-along with ICE to detain immigrants in Chicago.

Though the old television and its monolithic storyline may have fragmented into a million smartphones and a million tailor-made paranoid rabbit holes, at the same time the entire country has now become part of a diffuse televised reality show. The cameras are everywhere and we are acting for them at all times, even if we know the game is rigged.

The wild blistering pace of federal transformation is impossible to follow – 44 executive orders as of Wednesday, etc. We are relieved we didn't start a cover story Tuesday about the ways the administration's attempted impoundment of



Hannah Paessel has been the director of the Leverett Library since 2021. Current projects at the library include planning an accessible park and walkway around the grounds, with flat trails and a boardwalk around the wetlands. Also on the wish list is a small outdoor stage for performances to enhance the library's summer music series. A benefit concert with Beth Logan planned for Sunday, April 6 indoors at the library is hoped to help the fundraising effort.

\$3 trillion in appropriations was going to affect every town in our county and every street in our towns and every effort to improve our neighbors' lives, because on Wednesday it went just as casually into reverse.

The attacks are aimed in hundreds of directions, but in all the chaos one commonality is helpful to consider: the sect in power is at all times seeking to produce despair among the chattering classes, the people who for the last eighty years have narrated our shared storyline on TV screens and in magazine pages and even newspapers such as the one you are holding. The howls of confusion and despair and outrage are amplified through the screens and confirm the project's success and feed it and encourage it.

The challenge now is learning how to document and discuss this dramatic sacking of institutions without fueling it: how do we get off, and out of, these screens without turning away from what's happening?

Letters to  
the Editors

## Corners Kudos

After reading the article in the January 16 edition about the successful efforts to protect 47 acres at the iconic "Four Corners" property in Montague Center, we want to express our appreciation to Walker Korby, Jen Atlee, Mount Grace Land Trust, and all those members of our community whose efforts and contributions made it possible.

At this moment especially, we are enormously grateful to live

in a community where we have the chance to witness how the cooperative efforts of many produce a good outcome for all.

And thanks also to the Watroba family for having the vision and commitment to make it possible.

**Tamara Kaplan,  
Emily Monosson,  
Judith Lorei, and Leigh Rae  
Montague Center**

## Common Language

With all due respect, it's the "Gulf of Mexico."

As the saying goes: you're entitled to your own opinion, but not your own facts. Recalling President Clinton's one-time campaign mantra, "It's the economy stupid!" and recognizing you as our once-again, single-term president, "It's the Gulf of Mexico silly!" That's ground truth, derived from the endemic language of the place.

The *lingua franca*, the language of the people, knows no borders sir. I live in the "Connecticut River Valley." When I step across the border from here in Massachusetts into Vermont or New Hampshire, we accept and understand our shared commonality of place.

Perhaps that's the crazy reasoning for "the Gulf of Mexico" en-

joying a real renaissance in nearly all my conversations. I can't stop trotting it out while on the phone or out in public. "Chilly along the Gulf of Mexico," I'll chip in as I pass someone in a store or heading to the men's room. Same thing at the pub: "Quite the big tide along the Gulf of Mexico tonight!" It seems to hit a sunny chord of recognition with folks. They all just smile.

It's a good name, "Gulf of Mexico." Aztec derived. I bet even the fish like it. Think of it like the moon. It's not going anywhere. Long after we're dead, "the moon" will be there – endemically labeled by some long-ago people. And so will the "Gulf of Mexico."

**Karl Meyer  
Greenfield**

## Different Letters

Reader Sharon Horton, formerly of Turners Falls, sent in this photo of herself in Keene, New Hampshire with a vigil sign, and asked that we share it with our readers.

"There is a weekly peace vigil on the common here on Saturdays from 11 to 12," she writes. "I've been known to demonstrate on other days too, figuring that people who live in war zones don't get a day off, so why should I?"

Horton adds that this sign is the title of a sermon delivered in November by Pastor Chuck Baldwin at Liberty Fellowship Church in Montana.



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**PHONE: (413) 863-8666**

#### EMAIL:

editor@montaguereporter.org  
ads@montaguereporter.org  
bills@montaguereporter.org  
subscriptions@montaguereporter.org  
events@montaguereporter.org  
poetry@montaguereporter.org  
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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

LifePath and Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) are inviting people over the age of 60 to a focus group about **transportation needs among older adults** in the county. Participants should have experienced challenges with transportation.

The group will take place via Zoom next Monday, February 3, from 10 to 11:15 a.m. Register at [tinyurl.com/transport-group](http://tinyurl.com/transport-group).

The data will inform LifePath's needs assessment, as well as FRCOG's efforts to improve the Demand Response Program (Council on Aging-provided transportation) and the Franklin Regional Transit Authority's Access Program.

The Greenfield Garden Club is offering **small grants for gardening projects** to groups and organizations in Franklin County. The awards range from \$50 to \$500 and may be used for new or existing projects to promote gardening in the community, especially for those who work with children and teachers who have

a focus on gardening, plant science, ecology, or other related subjects.

There is a rolling deadline for the grants. Apply at [thegreenfieldgardenclub.org](http://thegreenfieldgardenclub.org).

Hartman Deetz and Rebecca Todd give a talk called **"From the Ridge to the River: What It Means to Be a Citizen of the Watershed"** at Greenfield Community College next Friday, February 7 at 7 p.m.

Deetz, a Mashpee Wampanoag artist and activist, and Rebecca Todd, executive director at the Connecticut River Conservancy, will speak about the connection between ecosystems and plant and animal populations, the impact of humans on the same, and making physical, psychological, and spiritual connections to the environment.

The event is sponsored by the Nolumbeka Project and admission is free with donations encouraged. The event will be livestreamed on [nolumbekaproject.org/events](http://nolumbekaproject.org/events).

**All Leverett residents are invited to a community potluck** next Saturday, February 8 from 5:30 to

7:30 p.m. at the Mount Toby Meetinghouse on Route 63. Hosted by Leverett Together, the gathering is called "Building Community in a Time of Uncertainty."

Residents will hear about community building projects while they dine, such as the progress of the Village Co-op, the library's plans for a pocket park, the Amherst-Leverett Alliance's response to the Kittredge Estate proposals, and more.

All Leverett households, families and children, are welcome. RSVP to [bit.ly/42obl3G](http://bit.ly/42obl3G) by Wednesday, February 5.

The Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts has **funding for students heading into college**, with over 160 different scholarships. Each year they give out over 1,000 individual awards – a combined worth of approximately \$1.4 million – to students in Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties.

Students can complete one application at [communityfoundation.org](http://communityfoundation.org) and get matched to all scholarships they are eligible for. Any questions can be sent to [scholar@communityfoundation.org](mailto:scholar@communityfoundation.org). Students should start by first completing the FAFSA application, so that they can share the FAFSA submission summary when completing the scholarship application. Applications close on March 31, and recipients will be selected in June.

Send your local briefs to [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org).

GMRSD from page A1

"We know that students do better with small student-to-staff ratios, consistent and strong relationships, and the opportunity for more targeted supports," LaTronica said. "During the last two school committee meetings there's been discussion of asking the towns for more money.... I'm wondering why we would not follow that invitation from the towns."

The task of the day, however, was to eliminate a working FY'26 deficit that less than a week earlier had stood at \$2 million. Business manager Joanne Blier had done the pencil-pushing, and presented her work to the committee.

One piece of possible good news in the last week was an increased projection of state rural aid. Gill-Montague, Blier explained, has likely crossed a threshold of ruralness qualifying it for a higher tier of rewards under this young program, and she was adjusting her guess at rural aid revenue from \$120,000 to \$480,000.

The town of Montague, meanwhile, had recalculated its so-called "affordable" assessment from \$12,537,772 up to \$12,612,086. On top of that, the number of students from Gill increased and the number from Montague decreased, so Gill's FY'26 assessment – a function of Montague's proportionate to the towns' share of enrollment – rose from \$1,829,051 to \$1,987,094.

Though this bump helped her whittle down the deficit, Blier pointed out that it represented a whopping 12.3% growth over Gill's \$1,769,126 assessment this year.

"I don't think that is going to be well-received," she warned. "I'm hoping that in those years that they had a 4% decrease in their assessment, they took those funds and they put them aside to save them, just in case they got hammered.... I think we're gonna have trouble getting this number passed."

During the last week, Blier became more optimistic that the district will avoid running a deficit in the current year, which will permit it to draw down its transportation revolving account next year. She wrote this in, to the tune of \$200,000, and increased revenue lines for charter school reimbursements and interest by \$50,000 and \$40,000 respectively.

Even with all these revenues increasing, to balance the budget expenditures still had to be reduced by roughly \$1 million.

Blier accomplished this by reducing the district's "community program" line from \$52,529 to \$27,529, chipping away at a few others, and then knocking \$835,366 off the Instructional line.

"There were some new positions that were requested that we did not add to the budget," she told school committee – last week, 10 of these had been presented. "We tried to stay away from staff... But at this point this will mean two to three position reductions that have yet to be determined. Right now those are sitting in the 'Instructional' line, for lack of a better place to put them."

The balanced operating budget sat at \$24,915,303, a 3.6% rise over the current year. Blier asked the committee to approve this as the official preliminary budget.

"It can still change," she said. School committee chair Jane Oakes clarified this point. "This is preliminary, but when we vote the

final budget, the only movement that can be made after that is to reduce something," she said.

The movement passed 7 to 0, with almost no discussion. "As always, very well thought out and clear and makes sense," Montague member Carol Jacobs commented.

The next step in the process is for Blier and superintendent Brian Beck to meet with the Montague and Gill finance committees and selectboards next Wednesday, February 5.

The Regional Road

The budget water was particularly hot this year because, for the second year in a row, Gill-Montague's stagnant "foundation enrollment" – the children the two towns are responsible for – has resulted in stagnant Chapter 70 state education aid to the district.

"The foundation formula doesn't work," Blier vented. "Franklin County Tech is the only district in Franklin County that got more than the minimum contribution... They're up to 591 students now, in grades 9 through 12. Pioneer [Valley] doesn't even have 591 students in their entire district!"

"It's just not sustainable to have one school in the county with 600 students, and every other high school with 200 students or less," she continued. "We can't compete with that."

A letter came in December from the Six Town Regional Planning Board, which is studying the feasibility of combining the Pioneer Valley and Gill-Montague schools, reporting that it had "almost reached the halfway point" of drafting a proposed new regional agreement.

"I thought that they were going to be bringing it to town meeting in May this year," Blier said.

"I'm curious," Oakes agreed. Gill member Bill Tomb, the committee's liaison with the six-town board, was absent on Tuesday.

Things Fall Apart

Another letter arrived from the Collaborative for Educational Services, which provides services to local districts and failed to communicate this fall that it had not received a grant to continue a popular after-school program at Sheffield Elementary.

"Some information about how they're doing," Oakes summarized with a sniff, "which is not necessarily well."

Beck said the district plans to apply directly this year for the after-school money, a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant from the US Department of Education. This sparked the night's liveliest conversation, as the meeting came amidst this week's 45-hour executive-branch attempt to impound \$3 trillion in previously appropriated federal grants and loans.

"I wonder if we should start making a contingency plan for the summer," Montague member Wendy Thompson suggested.

"We have to begin to think about it," said Beck.

Jacobs pointed out that the district relies on Title I funding, federal education money targeted to low-income communities, to cover essential staff.

"Well, on that note..." Oakes said glumly.

The school committee's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 11 at the high school.



OP ED

# All I See Is Chaos... Are You Proud of Him Now?

By J.E. INGHAM

**TURNERS FALLS** – Nine days into the current administration, the President has:

- Gotten us into a trade war with *Colombia* (not Columbia). Expect the cost of your coffee to go up a lot.
  - Threatened Greenland with a military takeover, threatened Panama with calls to take the Panama Canal, threatened Canada and Mexico with higher tariffs, and called to make Canada our 51st state. (What chutzpah!)
  - Pulled us out of the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the WHO... that's the World Health Organization, which warned of the world about COVID in December of 2019!
  - Pulled troops out of NATO ally countries.
  - Issued a far-reaching – and "illegal," according to Senate appropriations committee vice-chair Patty Murray – funding freeze order, which would have eliminated meals for food-insecure children in the schools. (Defenders might say that this will flush out the children who are eating the meals and don't deserve them. I suppose that will flush out all the 7-year-old grifters in the schools).
  - Tried to freeze aid to senior citizens.
  - Froze funding for child cancer research.
  - Disrupted government services like Medicaid, whose portals were down in all 50 states on Tuesday.
- MAGAs are thrilled they got the President they thought was going to eliminate high egg prices and keep

the gas price at the pumps low. But, according to *Scientific American*, "As of January 14, 2025, over 20 million egg-laying chickens in the United States have died from bird flu. This is the worst toll on the country's egg supply since the outbreak began in February 2022."

This past week, bird flu has left many grocery store shelves empty of eggs, and those with eggs are charging as much as \$12 a dozen. That President you are so proud of *conned you*. He has no power to reduce egg prices.

As for gas, that's not in the President's control, either. According to the US's own Energy Information Administration, the retail price of gasoline reflects four main components: the cost of crude oil; refining costs and profits; distribution and marketing costs and profits; and taxes.

The President doesn't control the price of gas. The average gas price this past year was \$2.72 per gallon. Today, the average price is \$3.229.

That President you are so proud of has nominated a number of candidates to his Cabinet. Some are sexual predators, some are drug and alcohol abusers, and many are just incompetent, with virtually no experience in what is required to head a Cabinet office.

All I see is chaos. We were warned, and true to those warnings, the President's playbook is "Project 2025." You just couldn't be bothered to read it, because you only cared about the price of eggs and gas.

*J.E. Ingham lives in Turners Falls.*

## Montague Community Television News Memorial Archived

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

**TURNERS FALLS** – The extraordinary life of the *Montague Reporter's* own Poetry Page editor Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno, who passed away on October 3 at the age of 73, was celebrated by dozens of friends and family members at an event in support of said newspaper. Christopher will never be forgotten, and his memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew him – and the memorial event will have a forever home in the MCTV archive.

MCTV is proud to have coverage of all types of community events, including GMRSD school committee meetings, Gill and Montague selectboard meetings, and Montague finance committee meetings.

If there is a meeting, event, performance, or happening in the area that you think MCTV should capture, let us know! And if you also have an idea for a show, MCTV is always available to assist in local productions as well. Just reach out!

All MCTV videos are aired on Channel 9 and featured on the MCTV Vimeo page.

Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or [infomontaguetelevision@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguetelevision@gmail.com), follow us on Facebook, or find us on Instagram [@montaguetelevision](https://www.instagram.com/montaguetelevision). Find videos and more on our website, [montaguetelevision.org](http://montaguetelevision.org).

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**GILL** from page A1

housing for those who can't otherwise afford it. McHugh suggested applying for one grant to cover Gill, Shutesbury, and New Salem. He predicted that a grant could improve four houses in each town. Before the application is submitted, there will be a public meeting in March.

Under the housing rehabilitation program, individuals can get loans for up to \$70,000, McHugh explained. The loans don't accrue interest, and are either repaid when the property is transferred, or forgiven after a period of 15 years. The repaid funds return to the town's repair program.

Gill's current housing rehabilitation funds sit at \$33,480. McHugh said that once the fund gets that low, it is saved for emergencies, such as failed septic or heating systems.

McHugh also noted that Gill was in an advantageous position for the grant. The application looks at the percentage of residents who are low- or moderate-income - meaning that they make under 80% of the area mean income. In prior years Gill's percentage fell to 26.6%, but the latest assessment puts it at 36%.

"It's one of the few towns in Franklin County where your low- to moderate-income percentage went up," McHugh said.

#### FRCOG Help

The town submitted its priorities for the categories of technical assistance it most needs through Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). The top three priorities are help with the

FirstLight relicensing process, updating the town's hazard mitigation plan, and figuring out accessory dwelling unit zoning bylaws for the town.

FRCOG applies for state grants to provide towns with technical assistance each year.

Apart from those top three priorities, town administrator Ray Purington submitted that the town could benefit from information technology training for local officials on artificial intelligence; continuing education workshops; shared municipal planning services; a pavement or roadway condition study; and zoning bylaw information for clean energy.

"I know our solar bylaw could use a little bit of tweaking and updating," said Purington. "And if it's possible to have bylaws on battery storage systems, that's another category that truly scares the crap out of me."

The selectboard also voted to send a letter supporting FRCOG's application to a state program that would fund a staff position to help towns with energy-saving projects. Gill's energy commission wrote that this might help with "projects that are beyond the scope of the volunteers of the Energy Commission," such as the upcoming elementary school roof and insulation project, roof replacement and solar installation at the Riverside building, and electric service upgrades needed at the public service building.

"We can use all the help we can get on managing these things," said commission member Tupper Brown.

Selectboard chair Greg Snedeker expressed

concern that an additional staff member could end up putting more work on Purington's plate. The board agreed to send the letter of support, but discussed keeping in touch with FRCOG about its plans and pulling out of the program early if it is not seen to be helpful.

#### Other Business

The selectboard reappointed Eve Brown-Waite to the Cultural Council through November 2027, Matthew McCarthy as a firefighter through June 2025, and Mitch Waldron as the fire department's representative to the Northfield EMS regionalization task force.

The board voted to accept a firefighter safety equipment grant of \$10,500 for gloves, helmets, and SCBA facepieces.

The town is offering a free "Stop the Bleed" class on Saturday, February 22, from 6 to 7 p.m. at the fire station. "One of my big pushes when I came here was to do more community outreach and work with the public on things," said police sergeant John Richardson. He said the class will teach "how to stop traumatic bleeding, which is the number-one cause of preventable death. So it's the new CPR, if you will."

Preference will be given to Gill residents, but non-residents will be accepted if there is space. To sign up, email [jrichardson@gillmass.org](mailto:jrichardson@gillmass.org). Richardson noted that the training is particularly important for rural people, who often deal with farm equipment, recreational vehicles, and power tools.

**MASSDEP** from page A1

The Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC), an environmental nonprofit that has been advocating for changes to FirstLight's license for more than a decade, participated in the settlement negotiations but did not ultimately sign the agreements.

"The draft certificate uses what FirstLight has already proposed in the Settlement Agreements, with very few minor improvements," Nina Gordon-Kirsch, CRC's Massachusetts river steward, told the Reporter. "We are sad that MassDEP isn't taking more of a stand to protect water quality standards in the Connecticut River and we encourage the public to read the draft closely and submit comments to help protect the river and its inhabitants."

Throughout the process CRC has advocated for higher flow rates in the section of river below the Turners Falls dam to help aquatic habitat and human recreation, more consistent water levels to minimize bank erosion, and improved public access to information about river conditions. "They're pretty much allowing these facilities to operate at a level that does not meet Massachusetts surface water quality standards," Gordon-Kirsch said. "But there's certain portions I'm happy to see."

#### Slight Tweaks

During public input opportunities throughout the relicensing process, critics have noted that the turbines at Northfield Mountain and the two hydropower plants on the Turners Falls canal can entrain and kill fish and their eggs in large numbers.

The draft WQC, like the Flows and Fish Passage settlement agreement, would require FirstLight to dig a plunge pool below the dam to help increase the survival rates of fish that fall over it. It would also require a barrier net to be installed at the intake of the pumped-storage station within the first five years of the license, rather than within the first seven years, as the settlement agreement specifies.

The pumping cycle at Northfield Mountain can at times cause dramatic fluctuations in river levels, which critics maintain has been a major fac-

tor in riverbank erosion. The WQC would require FirstLight to maintain somewhat more consistent water levels, both above and below the dam, to improve habitat conditions.

"Every time they're pumping water it changes the river level," Gordon-Kirsch said. "There could be variations of up to five feet in a couple hours... And what that causes is these zones along riverbanks where plants can't grow."

The draft WQC would increase the lowest allowable river level above the dam from the 176 feet agreed upon in the settlement negotiations to 178.5 feet, with some exceptions. The minimum flows below the dam would be unchanged from the agreement, as would be the variable release schedules from the power plants on the canal.

FirstLight will also be required to monitor and report on water quality, river levels, and fish passage for the duration of the new license - 50 years, the WQC assumes - and maintain a public website with up-to-date information about the river's flows.

Late last year the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which must approve the license, extended the deadline for its ongoing assessment of the projects' environmental impact. FirstLight has been operating the dam and pumped-storage station under temporary licenses since 2018, when the preceding 50-year permit expired.

"It is hard to say specifically how operations will change given climate change and related weather changes expected in the future," Belanger said. "These minimum flow requirements will impact how much water we can use for clean energy generation at Cabot [Station] and Station No. 1. The requirement to pass more of the inflow also means it may take longer to refill the Northfield Mountain Upper Reservoir."

#### Protected Species

The presence of rare and endangered species in and around the river also affects how the projects are regulated. According to MassDEP, two rare plant species have been found growing along the section of river below the dam, and in order to

protect them, the flow there may not exceed 500 cubic feet per second.

CRC, on the other hand, advocated for flows up to five times higher in that section to help migratory fish and boaters. "MassDEP is saying flows below the dam have to be low enough so that these species can survive," Gordon-Kirsch said. "But we have not found any science-backed research that shows these are aquatic organisms, so we don't believe that should be a reason why the riverbed can't go back to having water in it."

Endangered shortnose sturgeon living in the Connecticut River also warrant special protection. Their recognized habitat has included the section of the river below the dam, but their presence above the dam is under debate. This summer, researchers working with CRC found shortnose sturgeon DNA in the section of river between Turners Falls and Vernon, Vermont, and a local fossil-hunter discovered a young sturgeon trapped in a shallow pool immediately below the dam at Turners.

MassDEP did not find these reports convincing enough to warrant further investigation, or to include major changes in the draft WQC.

"I wish that they would have seen those results and stopped and thought about the impact," said Gordon-Kirsch. "If there are sturgeon in that area, what research and what studies do we need to do?"

The WQC points out that improvements meant to help other species will benefit sturgeon as well, including the new barrier nets and restrictions to the flow rate from Cabot Station scheduled during their spawning season.

"There is no evidence of spawning above the Turners Falls Dam," the WQC states. "MassWildlife determined that while the FirstLight facility could possibly affect Shortnose Sturgeon above the dam, the overall Connecticut River population of Shortnose Sturgeon would continue unaffected."

#### Battery Back-Ups

To meet Massachusetts's mandated net-zero emissions goals by 2050, New England's electrical grid will need to grow to four times its current

capacity, according to the regional grid operator, ISO-New England.

Energy storage, in particular, will be increasingly vital as reliance on renewable generation sources increases. Pumped hydro storage represented 96% of all utility-scale energy storage nationwide in 2023, according to the US Department of Energy, while hydropower contributed 5.7% of the nation's electricity.

FirstLight will play an important role, Belanger said, by maintaining storage capacity at Northfield. "As Massachusetts looks to incorporate significant amounts of new renewable energy into the grid to meet 2030 and 2050 mandates, there will be an increased need for utility-scale energy storage assets that can be rapidly deployed to balance the electric grid," she said. "They do so by generating during peak demand periods when the wind isn't blowing and the sun isn't shining and storing excess clean generation during periods where generation exceeds demand."

Originally built in 1972 to store excess energy from the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant at Vernon, the station still remains the largest energy storage facility in New England. When the water in its reservoir is released through giant turbines, it can power more than one million homes for over seven hours. Pumped-storage facilities built today, however, typically do not use rivers as their lower reservoirs.

#### Upcoming Events

On Wednesday, February 19 at 6 p.m., MassDEP will host public hearing on the draft WQC, virtually and in person at the Greenfield Community College dining commons. Zoom participants may register ahead of time to submit their comments for MassDEP's third, and likely final, public hearing on the relicensing.

Ahead of the hearing, CRC will hold a virtual information session about the relicensing process on February 5, and an in-person session on February 12.

The deadline to submit written comments on the draft WQC to MassDEP is February 24, and the agency's final WQC is due to FERC on April 22.

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**LEVERETT** from page A1

would need to increase by 9.44% to make up the difference.

Carter said that if the towns balk at this increase and default instead to a "guardrail" agreement used in previous years to apportion costs if they didn't agree, the budget would come up \$1.26 million short of providing level services at the middle and high schools.

This approach is based on the state's "statutory" method of dividing costs, but caps towns' increases in contributions at 4%. It was put in place to prevent the towns from being forced to use the statutory method of assessment if they cannot reach another agreement.

Carter said the cuts that would need to be made were not specified at the last four-town meeting in December, but that he had read in the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* that they would "translate" into a loss of eight teachers and six paraprofessionals.

Further complicating matters, Carter said that Amherst officials have declared that they will not increase their town's assessment by more than 4% under any circumstance, regardless of the agreement the four towns have been operating under. Amherst is the district's largest town.

Hankinson said this figure was a coincidence, and had nothing to do with the across-the-board 4% cap in the guardrail agreement.

Amherst is instead proposing, Carter said, to "combine the worst features of the guardrail and statutory methods" by increasing the district budget by 4% - requiring the \$1.26 million in cuts - and then reverting to the statutory method to divide costs among the towns.

This would result in Amherst's assessment going up 2.33%, while Shutesbury's would increase by 5.53%, Leverett's by 11.32%, and Pelham's by 19.97%.

Carter said that in his opinion a 4% overall increase would "seriously degrade" the quality of education, and suggested Leverett "insist" that each town increase its contribution by 6%.

Selectboard member Jed Proujansky suggested Leverett avoid "spinning our wheels" trying to accommodate the other towns, and consider accepting a default to the statutory method and focusing on the budget itself. He noted that every town in the state was facing a challenge, but "we can't do anything short of coming as close as possible" to a level-services budget.

"They should tell us what we lose" with each percentage decrease, he added. "It's not just a money thing. It's a money thing versus a quality-of-education thing."

Fin com member Isaiah Robison described school funding increases as "inherently unsustainable" and "totally absurd." Whatever the method for determining assessments, he said, the schools could not continue to be funded as they have been in recent years.

Fin com member Nancy Grossman said Amherst would not agree to a 6% increase, and argued that Leverett should think about "what is doable" and pursue the guardrail scenario. Many of the board and committee members advocating for higher assessments were relatively well-off financially, she added, and someone needed to speak for residents struggling to cover property taxes and living expenses.

"The percentage goes up year

after year after year," she said.

At the end of the hour-long discussion Hankinson interrupted Grossman in a loud voice saying that the boards needed to make a decision, sparking an emotional exchange. Moments later the selectboard and fin com voted jointly, 5 to 2, to advocate at the four-town meeting that each town's assessment should increase by 6%.

**Town Departments**

Leverett fire chief Brian Cook's draft budget presented at 16.5% over the current year, well above the maximum 2.5% "guidance" sent to departments by the selectboard.

To justify the increase, the chief cited training costs, price hikes for required software and equipment, and an increased call volume, partly due to the town's aging population.

Selectboard member Patricia Duffy and others commented that the large request may reflect a need to "right-size" the department, but the two boards asked Cook to return with a lower budget so they could see what would be lost.

Fin com member Bethany Seeger noted that the school committee provides alternate budgets, which help "paint the picture," but added that a 16.5% fire department budget increase was actually small at \$8,500, compared with the numbers dealt with at the school.

Discussion of hiring a full-time firefighter was postponed until a study currently underway on fire department regionalization is completed. Board members said the results would inform their decision on the matter.

Police chief Scott Minckler noted that his costs were continuing to rise, but his draft budget was within the 2.5% guidance. Minckler requested and received approval to include a \$3,200 warranty as part of a \$75,000 expense for a new hybrid cruiser, which will come up for a vote at the spring town meeting.

The board also approved the hiring of Matt Regnir, a 22-year-old Wendell resident who currently volunteers as a firefighter in that town, as Leverett's fourth full-time police officer. Minckler said Regnir was "green to police work" and would train with the department 20 or more hours per week until he graduates from the police academy in December. Until then he will not be granted police powers, wear a uniform, or carry a gun or other police equipment.

Minckler said Regnir would go on ride-alongs with other officers and help with administrative functions at the station during his training period, a process the department used before the state phased out part-time officers.

Highway superintendent Matt Boucher presented a budget following 2.5% guidance. Boucher said a co-op program that provided Franklin County Technical School students to work with the department was going well, and he plans to continue it.

**Local Initiative**

The selectboard decided to take no action on a suggestion from Proujansky that they create an application process for housing developers seeking collaboration with the town under the state's Chapter 40B Local Initiative Program (LIP).

Hankinson and Duffy said they didn't want to give the appearance that the board was negotiating with

the prospective developers of the Kittredge estate by creating such a process, and would like to keep the two matters separate.

Proujansky replied that no official request about the Kittredge land had yet been submitted, and that he felt the town should be prepared if one comes from that group or elsewhere.

Hankinson said that the door was not closed to Kittredge proposals, but that "the town told us, 'We're not interested in the selectboard working with them,'" and that he didn't want to appear to be doing so by establishing an LIP process.

Proujansky said he understood residents' sentiment to be that they didn't want the board to work on the ideas floated so far, but that others may be okay.

Duffy said she agreed it was a good idea to establish a process at some point, but not in response to ideas being floated by the Kittredge developers. She also pointed out that the costs involved in adopting an LIP process may be significant, and that the board was busy preparing for town meeting.

Resident Jacob Park added that LIP proposals are "pretty rare," and towns with defined procedures for them "even more rare." He said he didn't see any urgency in setting an application process, and that if a developer and the town were interested in pursuing a proposal together there would be time to work on it collaboratively.

**Foreign Intelligence**

Proujansky also reported on a number of news items he had heard at a Massachusetts Municipal Association conference he recently attended, two of which had possible bearing on the development of the Kittredge estate.

One was the existence of a small-scale wastewater treatment program - for five to 10 houses - which could provide an alternative to using services from Amherst on the property.

Another was a case in which the state overrode a decision by a selectboard not to approve water and sewer services from a neighboring town in a Chapter 40B development because the state had a facility on the involved property. While the state has no compelling interest on the Kittredge property, Proujansky said, "it makes things a little fuzzier on what is possible.... Everything is not as black-and-white as we had hoped."

Proujansky also said he had learned of a number of free programs the town could take advantage of including the receipt of two electric car-charging stations for free if they are placed on town property, a cyber-security audit, and a program which evaluates local roads using dash-mounted iPhones and AI.

**Other Business**

The board waived the town hall use fee for the Leverett Together group to hold a planning meeting for a potluck supper to build community spirit. The supper itself will be held at the Mount Toby Meetinghouse on Saturday, February 8. A representative of the group said 42 residents had already expressed interest in the supper.

The board set the Leverett Village Co-op's liquor license renewal fee at \$100, and declared a non-functioning milk cooler at Leverett Elementary School as surplus to be disposed of.

**INTERIM** from page A1

treatment and re-entry programs, which enhance public health and public safety."

Streeter attended Mohawk Regional High School and graduated from Westfield State College with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a minor in social work. She has worked at the House of Correction since 1985, beginning as a correctional officer and working her way up to superintendent and "special sheriff."

She also serves as the chair of the Women in Criminal Justice Conference and the Greenfield-based Community Justice Support Center,

which runs the department's pre-release and post-release programs.

"She worked with me as Superintendent of the facility for 10 years, for example helping to establish the mental health and substance abuse programs," Donelan told the *Montague Reporter*. "So everything we've done, we've done in tandem."

Donelan added that while leaving the sheriff's job, which he has held for nearly 15 years, will be bittersweet, "it's time to move on, and I'm passing the keys to someone who is very capable."

Streeter told the *Reporter* she was unavailable for comment this week.



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The Town of Leverett reserves the right to reject any or all bids.

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**WENDELL CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

Pursuant to Mass General Laws, Chapter 131, Section 40, Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Wendell Wetlands Protection Bylaw, the Wendell Conservation Commission will hold a remote Public Meeting via Zoom on February 11, 2025 at 6 p.m. to determine how the WPA and/or the Bylaw may apply to a Request for Determination of Applicability filed by **Swallow Rise, Inc.** for the removal and chipping of fallen and broken trees on up to 1.5 acres at **5 John Quist Road** in Wendell.

The public is invited to attend. The RDA application will be posted on the Town of Wendell website as of February 4, 2025. The Zoom link for the meeting is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81307558816>

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**HOUSING** from page A1

that Massachusetts has the lowest housing vacancy rate, creating challenges for growing families who want to move into larger homes or empty-nesters who want smaller ones.

"If you want to stay in your community, there just aren't many options," he said. "I look forward to coming back out here and breaking ground, and cutting some ribbons."

Robin Lipson, secretary of the Executive Office of Aging and Independence, also said she was impressed with the work done on the project so far.



Left to right: Housing and Livable Communities secretary Edward Augustus, state senator Jo Comerford, and Aging and Independence secretary Robin Lipson.

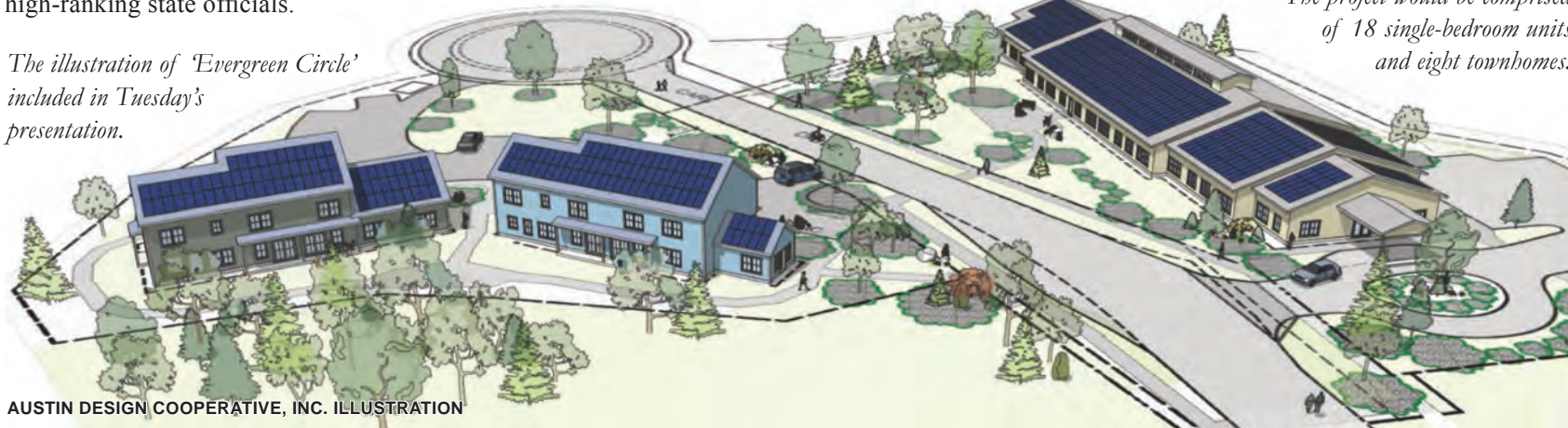
"We recently spent six months traveling the state and speaking with 600 older adults, and what we heard from them matches up with the goals of this project," she said. "What's most important in senior housing is being in the heart of the community – they don't want to be isolated, they want to be where things are happening and not segregated from other age groups. You've really hit it out of the park with this plan."

Also speaking in support of the project were state senator Jo Comerford and state representative Susannah Whipps. Referring to the relatively new senior and community center, completed in 2011, and library, completed in 2020, Comerford praised the town's dedication to the growing civic campus. "I love that you've put your best foot forward," she said.

Jacqueline Boyden of the Erving senior housing committee said the town "has been trying to achieve a campus look at this site; we've been working on it for a very long time."

After the meeting, Larose said she was encouraged to hear positive feedback from the high-ranking state officials.

The illustration of 'Evergreen Circle' included in Tuesday's presentation.



AUSTIN DESIGN COOPERATIVE, INC. ILLUSTRATION

"Any time we can bring people who are really important to the process to see the site and the context of the project, that helps a lot," she said. "The fact that they're taking an hour and a half to be here is a big deal. A lot of pieces need to fall into place to make this a reality."

The Powerpoint included a segment on the dire need for affordable housing in Franklin County, presented by Megan Rhodes, housing and livability program manager at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

"Housing is very, very tight right now," Rhodes said. "Franklin County ranks third in the state with the lowest rental vacancy rate of 1.9%. We'd like it to be more like four or five percent. Right now we estimate a net affordable housing shortage in Franklin County of 3,020 units."

Billed as "affordable multi-generational housing," Evergreen Circle would feature 18 units set aside for seniors in a single one-story building, with each unit featuring an accessible bathroom and a "roll-in" shower. Two other multi-level townhome-style buildings would feature six two-bedroom units and two three-bedroom units.

To be eligible for the senior units, an applicant's income would have to fall between 30% and 60% of the area's average median income (AMI). For the townhomes, the range would be between 50% and 60% of AMI. The median household income in Franklin County was \$72,584 in 2023.

The timeline for the project includes applying for state funding between November 2025 and February 2026, breaking ground in spring 2027, and leasing out units in the fall of 2028.

Erving's growing civic campus would never have become a reality if not for an unusual backstory. It all started in the early 1990s when the Grand Trunk Railroad paid the town \$110,000 for 25 acres of land on the other side of the railroad tracks, to the northwest of the library and senior center site. The railroad bought four other parcels from other owners in the area for a total of 67 acres, and planned to build a massive staging area to receive and deliver new cars to dealers around the state. But after the plan fell apart in 1996, the railroad offered to sell all five parcels to the town.

At the end of Tuesday's meeting, former selectboard member Dan Hammock told the rest of the story.



Erving senior center director Paula Betters served mint chocolate chip ice cream pie with a logo for 'Evergreen Circle,' the proposed development.

"We told them the land was more valuable to them when they bought it in the early '90s than it was to the town in 1996," he recalled. "They agreed to sell it back for less per acre than they bought it for."

The town ended up buying the 67 acres of land for just \$145,000. The senior center and the proposed affordable housing is on 15 acres of that land, and there is another nine acres abutting the property that could be used for a public purpose in the future.

Hammock, who currently serves on Erving's zoning board of appeals and board of assessors, recalled that it was controversial to sell the land to Grand Trunk Railroad in the early 1990s because of increased traffic from the staging area for new cars. It was also controversial to buy the land back a few years later because it wasn't clear what the town would do with the property. Town meeting voters ultimately approved both transactions.

"This site is a poster child for having a long-term vision for the future," Hammock said.

**INTERVIEWS** from page A1

rural, it's small – but at the same time some really ambitious projects and a lot going on, and a forward-thinking approach to town planning."

Johnson-Mussad's prior experiences include an undergraduate degree at UMass, jobs as a public health planner and Homeland Security training coordinator at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, consultancies with non-profits, and a seat on the Greenfield school committee, where he currently serves as chair. He was hired as Wendell's town coordinator in January 2022.

The board asked him about juggling priorities, working with town departments, and "managing potential conflicts between new development and existing residents in a close-knit community." He related challenges with maintaining volunteer committees in Wendell and handling "highly charged" interactions with the public in Greenfield, and underlined "listening and one-on-one relationship-building."

When Johnson-Mussad left, all three board members were emphatic in their reaction. "His knowledge is vast," said Bastarache, "and it may not be direct with years of experience as a town planner, but I think the wide range of experience in meeting people and in municipal work will lend heavily to an easy transition into this role.... He's got a demeanor about him that's calming."

"I'm also comfortable in saying he could step in and take on this role," said member James Loynd.

"We're all on the same page," said chair Jacob Smith.

"I would feel very comfortable with him in this role," town administrator Bryan Smith agreed. "Sounds like you all are coming to a decision?" The board empowered Bastarache and Bryan Smith to contact Johnson-Mussad and bring an offer letter to their meeting next Monday.

"We can be flexible about a transition period," said Jacob Smith, "versus a hard start date."

"I would like us to still be good neighbors, and be mindful of our folks on the other side of the river," said Loynd. The other members agreed on this point vociferously.

An attempt to reach Johnson-Mussad for comment was unsuccessful as of press time Thursday morning.

**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD**

# Retirement Dominoes Lining Up at Erving Town Hall

By KEITH WATERS

The Erving selectboard met jointly Monday with the finance and capital planning committees to review FY'26 budget and capital planning requests. The conversation was somewhat relaxed as the current year's budget is working out well, about 50% through the year and just under 50% through the allotted funds.

The tax collector's budget is down, as that office is now sharing an assistant with the assessors. Principal assessor Jacquelyn Boyden is retiring, and training time for a replacement was written into the assessors' budget request.

Town accountant Deborah Mero said she is starting to think about retiring, and suggested the possibility of an assistant to learn on the job with the idea of taking over when she retires.

Town clerk Richard Newton,

who oversees elections in the town, also mentioned that it would be good if someone else became familiar with the systems he oversees in case he retires.

Software costs, now largely billed as subscriptions, are generally going up. The selectboard and committees and town administrator Bryan Smith talked a little about whether those expenses should show up with each department that uses the software or in the town's information technology department budget, but a definitive answer was not established.

**Securing Our Water**

Water superintendent Peter Sanders presented to the joint meeting about a grant the state is making available for computer security upgrades. Sanders said he has been requesting an upgrade to the plant's existing system for some time, and that his current cost projection for the upgrade is \$26,000. The grant

available from the state for a project and town this size is \$15,000.

After establishing that winning the grant would not mean making a definite commitment to the upgrades, and that the project would likely take place next fiscal year, the board and committees consented to allow an application for the grant.

**Managing Our Energy**

The state is offering grant funding to pay for "energy managers." Smith said he had looked into this, and recommended it. The funding is meant to pay for a salaried position or consultants for three years, with the understanding that the town or region receiving the grant will consider whether to continue the funding after the initial three-year period.

Smith said he was of the opinion that Erving could benefit from such a position, but should not pay for it by itself. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FR-

COG) has stepped up and is offering to make a county-wide energy manager position, and has asked if Erving would like to participate. It was this version of the program that Smith said he endorsed.

After a brief discussion, most of which involved board member Scott Bastarache suggesting the town would have to put a note in its calendar to review the arrangement after two years, the board voted to approve a signal of interest to FRCOG.

**Parking Our Climbers**

Ryan Shumeyko of the Western Massachusetts Climbers' Coalition (WMCC) was in attendance to discuss his group's request for a letter of support from the board for a conservation restriction at the Farley Ledges climbing area.

WMCC is applying for a 2025 MassTrails grant from the state, which could provide as much as \$100,000 for their efforts, which

would be to set up a new parking lot and trailhead to the climbing area. The group is coordinating with a landowner on Old State Road who could provide the land for the parking area and trailhead.

If successful, this could alleviate traffic concerns along Route 2, where the current parking area is. The climbing area is popular, and the parking lot is often filled to overflowing when the weather is good.

Smith said WMCC has been in touch with him, and that he was in support of their plan. The board approved writing a letter of support for the application.

**Other Business**

A discussion of interview questions for the potential new town planner was on the agenda. Due to time constraints, that discussion was put off until Wednesday night, when an interview was scheduled. (See article, Page A1).

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

# Hard Times on the Horizon

By JEFF SINGLETON

“It’s going to be a very challenging budget year that’s starting to shape up,” said Montague selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz at the board’s Monday night meeting, after putting the final touches on the February 12 special town meeting warrant and hearing updates from town administrator Walter Ramsey on next year’s budget.

The board appointed members to a new building committee for a revamped or new library in downtown Turners Falls, set priorities for technical assistance the town needs, and learned that the state would soon issue a Water Quality Assessment, the latest step in the long relicensing process for FirstLight Power’s local hydroelectric projects.

The amended warrant for the February special town meeting, which the board had given preliminary approval to two weeks earlier but which had to be reviewed by the finance committee and town counsel, was once again read and approved.

Articles include funding for equipment at Montague Community Television, over \$20,000 to supplement a previous appropriation for transportation and tuition for a local student at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in Northampton, \$24,000 to plug a hole in this year’s airport budget, and changing the tree warden from an elected to an appointed position.

The warrant, along with motions indicating proposed funding sources, will be mailed to town meeting members and posted on the town website this week.

Updating the board on the progress of next year’s budget, which must be presented to the annual town meeting in May, Ramsey reported what he had learned at a recent meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Association. Montague may receive a significant increase in Chapter 90 highway aid from the state, he said, because the formula has been “tweaked” to benefit municipalities with a high ratio of road miles to residents.

On the other hand, the governor’s proposed budget did not alter the Chapter 70 education aid formula, which led to Gill-Montague, and the majority of districts in the state including Boston and Somerville, to be thrown into a “hold harmless” status, receiving an increase of only \$75 per student.

The working Gill-Montague budget was facing a deficit of over \$2 million, only part of which was caused by the unexpectedly low Chapter 70 estimate. Ramsey noted that school and town officials plan

to meet next Wednesday to discuss the budget and town assessments.

Ramsey also described the potential increase in Montague’s budget if the town adopts provisions of the state HERO Act, which allows for larger benefits to disabled veterans and their surviving spouses. Montague is currently required under state law to reduce property taxes for qualified veterans, but most of the reduction is reimbursed by the state.

Chris Demars, director of the Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans Services District, of which Montague is a member, requested that the board consider endorsing sections of the law which would add two new exemptions for beneficiaries, with different levels available. Greenfield is the only town in the district which has adopted the new provisions, Demars said, which would need to be endorsed by Montague town meeting.

Ramsey said the town currently “spends” \$61,000 on exemptions for a caseload of 65 beneficiaries, and that the state reimburses the town \$51,000 of that. The new program, with varying benefit levels based on local choice, would not be reimbursed, he said, and the additional cost could range from \$18,000 to \$50,000. Ramsey said he would return to a future meeting with a more refined cost-benefit calculation.

### Regional Services

Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority’s Brian McHugh, who oversees federal community development block grants (CDBG) for the town, previewed proposals for the upcoming “FY24/25” CDBG cycle.

As usual the program, which must benefit low- and moderate-income residents or eliminate slum and blight, has five components: housing rehab, public projects such as playgrounds and senior centers, other infrastructure work such as the ongoing Avenue A streetscape improvement projects, social services, and planning.

After reviewing proposed options for Montague, McHugh requested that the board approve assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller as an environmental certifying officer, who will monitor the environmental impacts of CDBG projects. The board approved Nolan-Zeller to the role.

“He’s been elevated,” said board member Chris Boutwell.

“Make him a badge,” said McHugh.

Nolan-Zeller presented options for the town’s priorities for technical assistance from the Franklin

Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), provided under an annual state grant. The selectboard chose regionalization of emergency ambulance service, updating Montague’s hazard mitigation plan, and planning for outdoor recreation and the use of open space.

### Indigestion

FRCOG senior economic development planner Ted Harvey reported on the results of a meeting with Turners Falls business owners and others to discuss a proposed program to hire a “coordinator” for downtown business zones in Shelburne Falls, Northfield, and Turners Falls. Harvey said he would ask the towns involved to contribute \$4,000 each so the program, otherwise funded by a state grant, could be extended to cover a second summer.

Kuklewicz said he thought that it was a “great concept” but that the board needed to talk more about the town’s share of the funding, which may come from the community development discretionary account.

“We’ve gotten some budgetary news that’s not the greatest from the governor’s budget,” he said, suggesting that the town should wait and see “what other towns are doing,” and let the “finance committee digest where we’re at.”

The board did not take a vote on the requested contribution.

### Other Business

At Nolan-Zeller’s request the board approved a \$100,000 grant from the state Board of Library Commissioners and authorized Kuklewicz, Ramsey, or libraries director Caitlin Kelley to sign for it.

The board established a building steering committee for the project, which would either enlarge the Carnegie Library or replace it, and appointed Kelley, Nolan-Zeller, Dorinda Bell-Upp, Ariel Elan, David Dempsey, Lydia Ievins, Josh Lively, Patricia Perham, and Will Quale to the committee.

Selectboard member Matt Lord agreed to be the town’s liaison for the assessment of regional ambulance service, which he called a “market failure at a very high level.”

Wearing their personnel board hats, the selectboard members placed police officer Jacob Dlugosz on “111F injured on duty” status and appointed Elizabeth Walber to the RiverCulture steering committee.

Removing those hats, they approved two midspan telephone poles, to provide new service to 390 Millers Falls Road and 2 Foster Road. A Class 2 license for the sale of reconditioned automobiles was approved for Gregory Precourt at the Montague Garage in Montague Center.

At the end of the meeting, under an agenda item for “topics not anticipated,” Ramsey announced that the state Department of Environmental Protection had released a draft of its Water Quality Certification, the current stage of FirstLight Power’s federal relicensing process. (See article, Page A1.) The board then retired into an executive session to discuss the town’s litigation strategy regarding FirstLight.

The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be held next Monday, February 3.

## LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on January 29, 2015: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

community,” the document says.

### Just A Regular Snowstorm

The long and heavy nor’easter known to some as the Blizzard of 2015 that dumped up to two feet of snow from Worcester to the coast only brushed the Connecticut River Valley, leaving locals here wondering what all the fuss was about amid a statewide emergency shutdown.

But for those who worked through the long, tedious storm, the comparably light precipitation came as a relief. When it came time for snow removal from the municipal lots Wednesday morning, Montague DPW foreman Dick Clough said that vehicle owners finally seemed to know the drill: “I don’t believe they towed very many.”

### Shea Theater Lease

On January 21, the town of Montague issued a request for proposals (RFP) for the community-based, non-profit Shea Theater, detailing the town’s requirements and expectations for applicants.

“The town of Montague is planning to lease the building, beginning on January 1, 2016, for a period of up to ten years, to the entity that offers the most competitive proposal, to be measured in terms of financial feasibility, programming creativity and variety, governance structure and organizational capacity, and overall benefit, social and economic, to the

## 20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on January 27, 2005: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

will be on the warrant of a special meeting on February 3.

### MEDIC Backs Strathmore Purchase

On January 24, the Montague Economic Development Industrial Corporation unanimously endorsed a motion to sign the purchase and sale agreement the town has negotiated with Western Properties, LLC, the owner of the Strathmore Mill.

The proposal to purchase the 134-year-old, 250,000-square-foot mill complex for \$300,000

### Why Did The Turtle Cross the Road?

The Gill selectboard was updated this week on the reconstruction of Main Road. The three-mile, \$3.7 million project has been slowed by the lowly but endangered wood turtle, which has two known points of crossing on that road. MassHighway, the con com, and the town’s engineering firm are attempting to redesign culverts to help turtles cross safely.

## 150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on January 27, 1875: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

While almost every manufacturing town in the State using water as a motive power, is suffering from the drouth, we can go down to the dam and complacently watch thousands of horse power go to waste.

### Turners Falls and Vicinity

On a bust – water pipes.

Getting full – the ice houses.

The year began and will end with Friday, something which occurs about once in fifty years.

Winter is wearing away. So are the trousers of the little boys who go coasting.

Geo. C. Adams has established a grist mill in Gilman and Kimball’s building.

There is much sickness prevailing in the village, and many of the business men are or have been laid up.

When you come to town, stop your team in the cross-walk. Pedestrians can break a new one in the deep snow.

Next to an oyster waltzing, nothing looks more graceful than to see a girl running to catch a ride on the back of a countryman’s sleigh.

B.N. Farren, Esq., has purchased all the brick in the yards of George Adams & Son and R.L. Goss, to be used at the Tunnel.

The Cecilian Society netted about \$125 by their concert and ball.

At a meeting of the School Committee, on Monday last, it was voted to lease the hall in the Oakman school house, to the new Congregational society for a term of three years, at a rental of one hundred dollars per annum.

The work of extending the canal to the millsites of the Griswold Manufacturing Company is to be suspended for the present. The contract provided that the Griswold company should be supplied with water on the 1st of July, 1876, from which time they should have to pay rental, but not being desirous of commencing so soon, the Griswolds have made arrangements with the Turners Falls Company to delay the completion of the canal one year, or till July, 1877.

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# High School Sports: Strong Swimmers

By MATT ROBINSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – Basketball teams from Franklin Tech and Turners Falls snapped their losing streaks this week, while the schools' hybrid swim teams crushed Hampden Charter School before drawing a tie and a loss against Holyoke.

Tech's wrestlers competed in the state vocational tourney, with one athlete crowned a state champion.

## Swimming

TFHS 78 – HCSS 6

TFHS 81 – HCSS 4

TFHS 47 – Holyoke 47

Holyoke 52 – TFHS 42

The Turners Falls swim teams swamped the Hampden Charter School of Science last Friday before dropping back down to earth on Monday against the Holyoke Purple Knights.

The Turners boys swept Hampden 78 to 6, with Blue's swimmers taking every event. Individual first places included William Tyler, in the 200-yard individual medley and 100-yard freestyle; Liam Bliss, in the 50-yard freestyle and 100-yard butterfly; Connor Glennon in the 500-yard freestyle; Malcolm Tyler in the 200-yard freestyle; Ryker Bray in the 100-yard backstroke; and Tyler Galenski in the 100-yard breaststroke.

The Thunder also won all three relay races: William and Malcolm

Tyler, Bliss, and Galenski the 200-yard medley; Glennon, Bray, Mario Pareja, and Matthew Sibley the 200-yard freestyle; and Glennon, the Tylers, and Bliss the 400-yard freestyle.

The girls were just as dominant. Individual winners included Tristan Bliss in the 200-yard freestyle and 100-yard butterfly; Avery Heathwaite in the 200-yard individual medley and 50-yard freestyle; Sylvie DiBartolomeo in the 500-yard freestyle; Keira Feeley in the 100-yard backstroke; and Lilian Walker-Hanning in the 100-yard breaststroke.

And the Blue Ladies, too, swept the relays: DiBartolomeo, Walker-Hanning, Bliss, and Heathwaite the 200-yard medley; Walker-Hanning, Maddie Phillips, Jessica Schimmel, and Rosie Fortin the 200-yard freestyle Relay; and DiBartolomeo, Bliss, Walker-Hanning, and Alice Fortin the 400-yard freestyle.

On Monday Turners celebrated Senior Night, giving kudos to Heathwaite, Sibley, Maya Deramo, and DiBartolomeo before their meet against the Purple Knights.

In the boys' lanes Turners only won two events – the 100-yard breaststroke (Liam Bliss) and 400-yard freestyle (the Tylers, Galenski, Bliss), but their second- and third-place finishes knotted it up for a tie.

The girls, however, did not fare as well. Alice Fortin won the 100-yard freestyle and Walker-Han-

ning the 100-yard breaststroke, but Holyoke swept all three relays, giving Purple a 10-point win.

## Wrestling

Franklin Tech's Wrestling Eagles competed in the state vocational tournament on Saturday, pulling off a seventh-place finish. One athlete became the 2024-25 state champion in her weight class.

Eight Eagles competed in the mixed-gender competition. Mason Thurston finished fourth in the 120-pound class, Carsten Couture second in the 126, Maxon Brunette third in the 132, and Landon Purington second in the 138. Camden Bonnett came in fourth in the 150, Colin Eddy third in the 190, Seamus Collins fourth in the 215, and Dillon Laffond third in the 285.

On the girls' mats, Jacqueline Churchill finished third in the 235-pound class and Mia Marigliano finished first in the 132, taking home a state championship crown.

## Girls' Basketball

Bement 40 – TFHS 20

FCTS 44 – Athol 24

On Monday afternoon, the Turners Falls JV girls hosted the Bement School from Deerfield.

Because Bement only goes to ninth grade, and with the pep band jazzing up the crowd, some of the spectators were expecting a home win. It certainly seemed that way at first, as Blue shot out to a 6-0 lead. But with four starters missing, the Thunder couldn't hold onto that lead, and after a quarter the visitors were on top 16-8.

Bement instituted an aggressive defense and continued to pester the Blue ball carriers, forcing multiple steals. One saving grace was that at least three times, they stepped out of bounds after stealing the rock. But Turners continued to have difficulty hitting the basket, and Bement took the contest 40-20.

Autumn DiMare (7), Scarlett Pouliot (5), Brianna Preston (4), and Kourtney Cummings and Bethany Whitney (2 each) scored points for the Thunder.

After the game I went to Franklin Tech, where I watched the Eagles defeat the Athol Red Bears 44-24.

Franklin came into this game riding a five-game losing streak and were itching for a win, and the result was never in doubt – Tech rocketed out to a 10-0 lead and never looked back.

With only eight Bears on their team, Athol was in foul trouble very early. By the second period, one player had fouled out and several more were in trouble. Meanwhile, Tech coach Joe Gamache substituted his players liberally, limiting fouls on any individual player. Tech had built a 28-5 lead by the half, and were on top 41-11



DAVID HOITT PHOTOS

Above: Turners Falls's Malcolm Tyler swims the breaststroke section of the 200-yard medley relay as Turners hosted Hampden Charter last Friday.

Below: Thunder swimmer Alice Fortin swims a leg of another 200-yard medley relay during the same meet.



Turners Falls's Alex Quezada (left) goes up for a shot against McCann Tech defender Jack Dolan as the Thunder hosted the Hornets last Thursday.

going into the final quarter.

Only three players from Athol scored their 24 points, while 10 Eagles hit the bucket: Brayleigh Burgh (11); Abigail Dobias and Liliana Inman (6 each); Lindsey Taylor and Haleigh Benoit (4 each); Cordelia Guerin, Laken Woodard, and Madyson Lynde (3 each); and Ariel Peters and Alison George (2 each).

## Boys' Basketball

FCTS 68 – Pioneer Christian 52

McCann 46 – TFHS 31

TFHS 61 – Mount Greylock 59

Last Thursday the Tech Eagles defeated Pioneer Christian by 16 points. It was their second win in a row after dropping seven games.

I had just come from the Turners boys' JV game, and it was cold outside. Very cold. As a result, there were not a lot of people at the game. The contest was pretty physical, with Tech instituting an early full-court press while Pioneer concentrated on steals.

Tech built a 10-point first period lead by hitting from the outside, but the Christians won the rebound battle in the second, narrowing the gap to seven by the half.

That's when I left for the Turners varsity game, but Franklin held on to win it 68-52. Gabe Mota (16), Caleb Johnston and Nolyn Stafford (12 each), Hunter Donahue (11),

Jaime Muniz (8), Dylan Cullen (4), Brody Hicks (3), and Cole Bassett (2) scored for Franklin.

When I got to the Turners/McCann game, I found the Blue Thunder already down 26-13. Although they made some great passes, they succumbed to the physical antics of the visitors, and three Turners players were injured in the game.

McCann held that double-digit lead, and even the pep band couldn't help as the Thunder went down 46-31.

On Tuesday, though, the Boys in Blue snapped their four-game losing streak, edging out Mount Greylock 61-59. The game was even throughout. Grey led by two points after one period, but Turners nosed ahead to 31-29 in the second and kept that three-point lead throughout the contest. Both teams scored 16 in the third and 14 in the fourth to give the Thunder the well-deserved win.

Kessick Beck (18) led Blue in scoring, followed by Caden Williams Senethavisouk (14), Brody Girard (12), Davian Bala (6), Alex Quezada and Kainen Stevens (4 each), Jose Freilyn Corona Abarua (2), and David Siano-Klempner (1).

Next Friday, February 7, the Tech boys visit Turners Falls high school for a Coaches against Cancer event. All proceeds will go to a Turners Falls alumna who is battling cancer.

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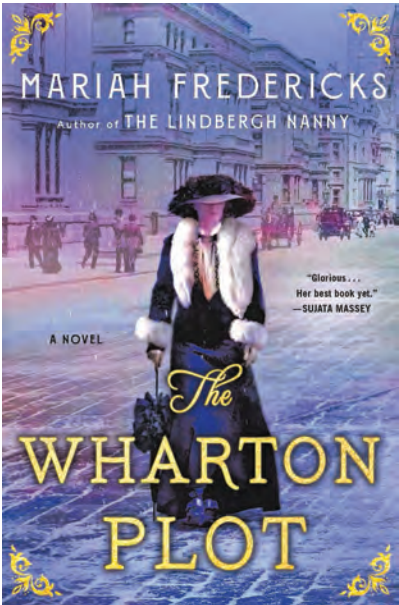
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Above: Lake Pleasant's icy Bridge of Names, with its 1,400 inscribed pickets – still available, for a \$30 donation!

BOOK REVIEWS

Three Takes: The Woman in the Big City

Mariah Fredericks, The Wharton Plot (Minotaur Books, 2023)
Ursula Parrott, Ex-Wife (McNally Editions, 2023)
Alafair Burke, The Note (Knopf, 2025)



By CLAIRE HOPLEY

LEVERETT – From at least the early 20th century American novelists have been telling tales about women making lives for themselves in the big city.

In 1900 Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie showed a farm girl becoming an actress in Chicago via the beds of wealthy men. In 1905 Edith Wharton's House of Mirth por-

trayed beautiful Lily Bart, born into one of the less affluent upper-class families of Gilded Age New York. A single career path is marked out for her: marry a rich man and become a social star. Unfortunately, Lily is persnickety. But when at 29 she's still unmarried and without money of her own, persnickitiness stops working for her.

Persnickitiness didn't work for Edith Wharton, either. Like Lily, she was born into New York high society. She was wealthy but she, too, was directed to the marriage path as the only career possibility. Her husband could be fun, but he was no intellectual match, and he stole her money.

Mariah Fredericks's The Wharton Plot (New York: Minotaur Books, 2023) is set in 1911, when Edith has decided to divorce him. She plans to divorce New York, too. She's had it with its society hostesses – many of them her relatives – and dislikes the noise and dirt of the booming skyscrapered city. She's only there to arrange for

her husband's medical care and to haul her editor over the coals about her royalties.

He introduces her to David Graham Phillips, an enormously successful writer. Edith – dressed as usual in satins and furs – detests Phillips's flamboyant clothes and deplores his novels, but when he is shot dead the next day, she tries to work out who murdered him and why.

She sometimes calls on Henry James, her friend, for help. He does his best. Morton Fullerton, her unreliable lover, is useless.

The real-life Edith Wharton didn't turn sleuth, but apart from this Mariah Fredericks' description of her is factual. Wharton divorced her husband and moved to Paris, where she lived until her death in 1937. Quite likely, then, she heard of Ursula Parrott's 1929 novel Ex-Wife, which sold 100,000 copies in its first year and launched Parrott on a career writing novels and screenplays that netted her hundreds of thousands of dollars in the 1930s.

see BOOK REVIEW page B8

I Didn't Know I Was A Puritan – Until I Visited New Orleans

By MANDEIGH MUDBALLS

FRANKLIN COUNTY – In the tried-and-true tradition of fleeing winter for warmer temps, I decided to abandon my beloved Franklin County for one whole week and take a trip to New Orleans.

Naturally I left on Christmas, the best day to fly as a Jew. Regardless, I stuck out like a sore thumb at Logan Airport – it turns out I didn't need a yellow star to point out that I was Jewish, I just had to be the only person not wearing a matching set of Christmas pajamas.

As I stepped out into the balmy Southern air, I noticed one glaring difference between the streets of New Orleans and my hometown.

Unlike Greenfield's Main Street on Christmas, where every storefront is either abandoned or closed for the holiday, New Orleans' six million bars were stuffed to the gills.

I was disgusted. Affronted. Shocked. Surprised. Where were all of these people's families? Was no one's mother haranging them, saying that they're waiting on them to slice the ham? Is everyone here Jewish?

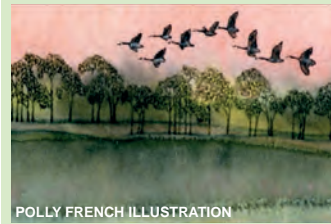
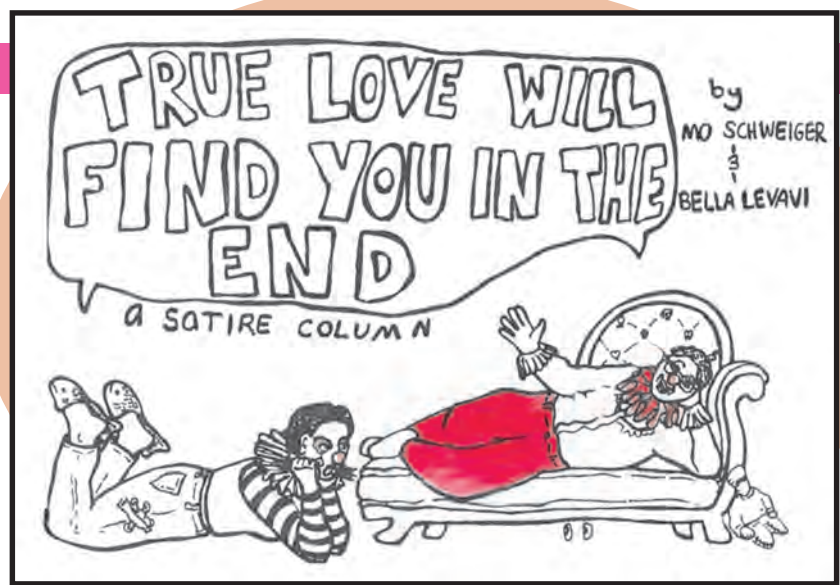
Somehow, though, I shoved my Puritan sensibilities to the side and joined the fun.

My first stop in the French Quar-

ter was the famous Pat O'Brien's: home of The Hurricane. Aptly named in 1940 by a psychic who predicted the city's catastrophic Hurricane Katrina 65 years later, dubbing it "a drink that will break your levee and expose the deep-rooted racism that permeates and defines the fabric of America," this rum-based cocktail is a New Orleans staple.

This warmed my heart and made me think of home, reminding me of Floodwater Brewery – another vehicle for revelry, named after the destruction caused by Hurricane

see TRUE LOVE page B3



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

ACROSS THE RIVER AND INTO THE TREES

By DAVID BRULE

We would like to have something meaningful to say, a pronouncement worthy of the long horizon that beckons us to move forward. But we are tongue-tied at exactly the moment when we should be speaking to the sunlight that is creating pools of light between the river and the tree-lined shore beyond.

– Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno, from "Anything You Want" (2024)

PESKEOMPSKUT AND BARTON COVE – Standing on the shore, on the edge of the ice, I look across the frozen river to the Cove on the far side.

Beyond, and across space and time, there is an endless field of white, dotted here and there with brightly-colored tents of the men and boys who love fishing through the ice.

The sight of all this frozen river sends me spiraling back to a Sunday in 1957, when my sister, my father, and I laced up our skates right here, made our way down the wooden ramp placed there for skaters, and stepped out onto the ice.

That day back then, it seemed like all of Turners Falls was out on the ice. That year the river froze over from the dam to the French King Bridge and beyond.

We hadn't gone far out before we saw a dapper gentleman gliding effortlessly by us, skating backwards, waving and smiling. My father pointed out Harvey Welcome, locally famous for his flawless skating and performing dog. Easily he sailed by on the bare windswept ice, reappearing with his wife, the couple now waltzing gracefully across the surface as anyone on the floor of a ballroom. That image has remained with me forever.

Once across the main part of the river, we skated from ice fisherman to ice fisherman, my father seeming to know everyone – although I can't be sure now, since he talked to anyone and everyone so easily, whether he knew them or not!

We explored the Bear's Den on skates this time, instead of in the rowboat we used to keep tied up below the house at the Narrows.

There was a blazing fire in the middle of the Cove on a little birch-tree island, where we stopped to warm up and chat some more, while other skaters crisscrossed the Cove or played hockey...

Another Sunday, some fifty years later, I found myself once again on that vast expanse of ice. Much had happened to the river: the nuclear plant at Vernon, dumping its heated waters into the Connecticut, had actually prevented ice from forming for decades.

Then that nuclear plant became obsolete, shut down by the forces of nuclear failure and the continuous pressure from the force applied by the nuclear resisters, who won out in the end. The plant was shut down.

The ice returned. The calendar had turned to 2007. The snow squall of that particular February day had put me in the mind for a late afternoon's winter saunter. Dusk found me far out onto the Cove ice, moving and gliding through time on my skis.

Lingering there just beyond the fishing shacks, with the sun going down over the windswept tundra surface of the Cove, and alert to the sweep and sway of the lofty pines on the far shore, suddenly I heard, welling up from the frozen landscape, the tinkling sound of the balalaika, of all things. The music grew louder in my memory, and I caught myself beginning to want to rise up on my skis to dance and spin in a sweeping waltz across the ice.

Whoa!, I said to no one in particular, this isn't Karelia, this isn't Russia. But it was already too late – my afternoon trek out onto the

see WEST ALONG page B4



The author and Nikolai at frozen Barton Cove.

# Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

## 'BENNY'

Meet Benny, a sweet and affectionate seven-year-old boy who loves the limelight. When you're this handsome, why not?

This boy is fantastic with kids, having lived with a two-, four- and eight-year-old. Benny also did well with the cat and dog that shared his space. Benny enjoys being petted on the head and back, but favors being picked up by some people more than others. Benny is not big on toys, but loves a scratching post, which is music to the ears of most cat people.

While Benny is an indoor cat, he is curious and can be somewhat

of an escape artist. That being said, his excursions have been limited to a fenced-in yard and he returns within ten minutes. Looking for a cat who's looking for you? Benny is your boy.

Benny's adoption fee is \$299. 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](http://www.dakinhumane.org).

# FEBRUARY LIBRARY LISTING

## Montague Public Libraries

Turners Falls: Carnegie (413) 863-3214  
 Montague Center (413) 367-2852  
 Millers Falls (413) 659-3801

Erving Public Library (413) 423-3348  
 Gill: Slate Library (413) 863-2591  
 Leverett Public Library (413) 548-9220  
 Northfield: Dickinson Library (413) 498-2455  
 Wendell Free Library (978) 544-3559

## MONTAGUE

**All month:** *Grab & Go Craft.* Heart buddy. At all branches while supplies last.

**Every Saturday:** *Drop-in Community Puzzle.* Carnegie, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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

**Saturday, February 1:** *Valentine Card Making.* For children and their caregivers. Carnegie, drop-in 1 to 4 p.m.

**Every Tuesday:** *Imagination Station.* Drop-in craft, ages 6 to 12. Millers Falls, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, February 4:** *Valentine Card Making.* All ages. Millers Falls, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 5:** *Knitting Club.* All ages. Montague Center, 4:30 p.m.

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

**Every Thursday:** *Bilingual Music and Movement.* Carnegie, 10 a.m.

**Monday, February 10:** *Friends of MPL Meeting.* Email [kristopherlangston@gmail.com](mailto:kristopherlangston@gmail.com). Carnegie, 5:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 12:** *Needle-Felted Hearts.* Ages 12 and above. Registration req'd: [kmartineau@cwmars.org](mailto:kmartineau@cwmars.org). Montague Center, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. and 5:45 to 6:45 p.m.

**Thursday, February 13:** *Book Club.* Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains.* Millers Falls, 5:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, February 18:** *Meet and Greet with Montague Villages.* Millers Falls, 3 to 4 p.m.

**Saturday, February 22:** *Local Children's Author Reading.* Astrid Sheckels, *Hector Fox and the Map of Mystery.* Discovery Center, 3 p.m.

**Monday, February 24:** *Craft Club.* All ages. Montague Center, 4 p.m.

**Thursday, February 27:** *Book Club.* Bertino, *Beautyland.* Montague Center, 7 p.m.

**Friday, February 28:** *Meet and Greet with Montague Villages.* Montague Center, 10 to 11 a.m.

## ERVING

**Sunday, February 2:** *Knitting with Ben.* Ages 6 to adult, caretaker req'd for under 10. 11 a.m.

**Every Wednesday:** *After School Activities.* Makerspace staffed. Snacks. 1:30 to 3 p.m.

**Thursday, February 6:** *Friends of the Library.* Monthly meeting, open to all. 1 p.m.

**Sunday, February 9:** *Puzzle Swap.* All ages, no puzzle

required. 1 to 3 p.m.

**Sunday, February 9:** *Genealogy Drop-In Help.* 1 to 3 p.m.

**Tuesday, February 11:** *Red Cross Ready* emergency preparedness. 5:30 p.m.

**Sunday, February 16:** *Craft Day.* Sign-up required. 1 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 19:** *Library Trustees* monthly meeting, open to all. 4:30 p.m.

**Sunday, February 23:** *Book Club.* Tea and snacks. 2 p.m.

**Tuesday, February 25:** *All-Abilities Social.* All welcome; light refreshments; sign-up req'd. 12 to 1:30 p.m. and 4 to 5:30 p.m.

## LEVERETT

**All month:** *Botanical Photography* by Marilyn London-Ewing.

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

**Every Monday and Wednesday:** *Online Qigong.* See [leverettlibrary.org](http://leverettlibrary.org) for info. 10:30 a.m.

**Tuesday, February 4:** *Craft Circle.* For adults. 6:30 p.m.

**Every Wednesday:** *CNC Playgroup.* Ages 0 to 5 with caregiver. 10:30 a.m.

**Every Thursday:** *Mah-jongg.* Beginners welcome. 1:15 to 3:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 12:** *Tech Help.* 10 to 11:30 a.m.

**Thursday, February 13:** *Tea Towel Printing.* Register: [leverettlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:leverettlibrary@gmail.com). 4:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, February 18:** *Zine Workshop.* Youth 11 and up. Registration required: [leverettlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:leverettlibrary@gmail.com). 3:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 19:** *Clay Day.* Ages 5 to 12. 1 to 2:30 p.m.

**Thursday, February 20:** *LEGO.* Ages 5 to 12. 2 to 5 p.m.

**Tuesday, February 25:** *Game Night.* 6:30 p.m.

**Thursday, February 27:** *Playful Engineers.* Mechanical automata. 4 p.m.

## NORTHFIELD

**All month:** *In-Library Kids' Scavenger Hunt.*

**Saturday, February 1:** *Puzzle Pick-Up.* 10 to 11:30 a.m.

**Every Tuesday:** *Drop-in Knitting/Crafting.* 6 to 8 p.m.

**Every Wednesday:** *Storytime: Music and Movement with Robin.* For toddlers and preschoolers. 10 a.m.

**Wednesday, February 5:** *Book Group.* Helen Dunmore, *The Siege.* 10 a.m.

**Wednesday, February 5:** *Tech Help.* Bring your device and ask your questions. 1 to 3 p.m.

**Wednesdays, February 5 and 19:** *Dungeons & Dragons.* Single-night campaign for ages 16 and up, all XP welcome. Register at [northfieldrec.com](http://northfieldrec.com). 5 p.m.

**Thursday, February 6:** *Spice Club pickup starts.* Sample and recipes while supplies last. *This month:* sesame seeds.

**Thursday, February 6:** *Take-and-Make Craft.* Paper-strip heart. While supplies last.

**Thursday, February 6:** *Environmental Book Group.* Vigliotti, *Before It's Gone.* 3 p.m.

**Friday, February 7:** *Coffee/Tea Social.* 10 to 11 a.m.

**Tuesday, February 11:** *North Pacific Albatrosses.* 5:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 12:** *Readings Group.* Frans de Waal, *Mama's Last Hug.* 3 p.m.

**Thursday, February 13:** *Trivia Night.* Four Star Farms, 6 p.m.

**Tuesday, February 18:** *Friends Meeting.* 5:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 19:** *Felt Workshop.* For ages 12 and up. Register at [dmemlib@gmail.com](mailto:dmemlib@gmail.com). 5:30 p.m.

**Thursday, February 20:** *LEGO.* 3:30 p.m.

**Saturday, February 22:** *Tiny Art Reception.* 1 p.m.

**Wednesday, February 26:** *Poetry Discussion* with Nick Fleck. 3 p.m.

**Friday, February 28:** *Teen Night.* 6 p.m.

## WENDELL

**All month:** *Art Exhibit* by Amy Fagin.

**Saturday, February 1:** *Native Winter Seed Sowing Workshop.* Registration req'd. 1 p.m.

**Every Sunday:** *Yoga.* 10 a.m.

**Mondays, February 3 and 17:** *Fiber Group / Mending Circle.* 6:30 p.m.

**Every Tuesday:** *Tech Help.* 3 to 5 p.m.

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

**Every Wednesday:** *Movie.* 4 p.m.; *Yoga.* 6:20 p.m.

**Every Wednesday:** *CNC Playgroup* with Sylvia. 10 a.m.

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

**Tuesday, February 11:** *Paper Circuit LED Valentines.* Ages 7 and up. Reg req'd. 4 p.m.

**Friday, February 14:** *Office Hour,* Rep. Saunders. 1 p.m.

**Saturday, February 22:** *Group Puzzle Time.* 1 to 3 p.m.

**Tuesday, February 25:** *Adult Book Group.* 10 a.m.

**Friday, February 28:** *Friday Night at the Library.* 5 to 7 p.m.

**Friday, February 28:** *Book Reading Event.* Sylvia Wetherby, *Ophelia.* Snacks, music, craft. 5:30 to 7 p.m.

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**TRUE LOVE** from page B1

Irene that laid bare the lack of infrastructure in rural Massachusetts.

The drink stained my mouth bright red, making it look like I had applied clown makeup and helping me fit in with the city's residents. It was perfect.

The next stop on my bar crawl was a hotly-debated spot: Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop Bar. Some say it's the oldest building in America, some say the oldest bar in New Orleans, some say the longest bar in New York City; I say it's got the best cocktails around. My personal favorite was the "Terrorist Attack on Bourbon Street," invented by the same psychic who named the Hurricane. (And before you start writing Letters to the Editor saying "too soon Mandy," I'll remind you that it's in fact *not* too soon, due to the 24-hour news cycle. Why don't you take a sip of your "Alligator Uprising of 2026," named by that same guy, and throw your phone in the river?)

After going back to my Airbnb and staring at the wall for three hours, I decided to book a swamp tour with Lana Del Rey's husband's company, Airboats by Arthur Del Rey (formerly just Airboats by Arthur; the name change is pending).

I was disgusted. Affronted. Shocked. Surprised. The tour guide wouldn't stop talking about sex! From comparing alligators to his wife (bad) and daughters (worse) to making lewd comments about his boat, I couldn't believe the vulgarities that came out of his mouth in the light of day.

As we neared a grove of cy-

press trees and he compared their "knees," or protruding roots, to "Cajun dildos," I realized that what was actually happening was an unabashed normalization and celebration of women's sexuality, something veiled, mysterious, and taboo in our Northern Puritan culture. I immediately relaxed and gave a big smooch to the baby alligator that he had grabbed from the swamp and plopped into my lap.

That night I journeyed to Celebration in the Oaks, a light display in New Orleans's Olmsted-designed City Park. I immediately felt a connection to the place because of my love for Greenfield's own Olmsted, Energy Park. I wove through centuries-old oak trees dripping lights, marvelling at the ability to wear short sleeves to a Christmas event.

The centerpiece of the show made me stop in my tracks: a light-up display illuminating a Black Creole retelling of "The Night Before Christmas." I realized then that in the Puritan land of Massachusetts, I had only ever seen white stories told in public holiday displays, exemplified by Light Up the Fairgrounds, a celebration of Franklin County's white-owned businesses.

As I took in the story, which took place on the Bayou and featured a Black light-up Santa on a sleigh pulled by crocodiles, I realized: I am the first Jewish Puritan. Thank you, Massachusetts.

True Love Will Find You  
In the End (TLWFYITE),

Mandeigh Mudballs



**THIS WEEKEND**

**The Bernardston Gill Leyden Snowmobile Club's Rides**

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – Vintage snowmobiles are offered by the Bernardston Gill Leyden Snowmobile Club for rides during the annual Winter Carnival that happens in Greenfield as part of the official carnival events. This year's carnival is from Friday, January 31 through Sunday, February 1, and the Vintage Snowmobile Show & Rides are from 12 to 4 p.m. at Beacon Field on Sunday.

The club has been around since the early '70s. Brad Stafford is the club advisor, and has been a member of the club for 30 years. He told me that he has been "going to the carnival for 15 years, because my dog used to participate in the keg pull," an event that is another part of the carnival.

"Six years now," Stafford said when I asked how long the rides have been offered. "I was the first one to put the event on," he said. "I have been running it since."

If you want to know what a vintage snowmobile is, Stafford explains: "A vintage snowmobile is a sled that is over 25 years old. The sleds we are going to have are close to 50 years old.

They are privately owned – not just by members of my club, but also private enthusiasts."

He also added "People absolutely love it... People show up with stories about their past."

The club covers all three towns mentioned in its name – all three towns have trails that the club uses snowmobiles on. "We connect to state trails that go all over the state," he told me. "From my club, I can ride to North Adams."

Other members of the club include Jared Smith, the club president; Joe Lisewski, the trail boss; and Dan Hale, the

vice president.

The club is headquartered at 241 West Leyden Road in Bernardston, and their website is [www.bglsnow.com](http://www.bglsnow.com). You can register online to join the club. They also have a Facebook page to their name.

I had this inner tube sled for a while that I used to love going down hills on. If riding one of these snowmobiles is anything like that, I understand why it is so popular with people.

Stafford has this to say when it comes to doing this event again in future years: "We can absolutely hope so."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Some of the club's vintage sleds, at a past Winter Carnival.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG**

**A Classic Switcheroo; Feds Inspect Airport, Given Bitcoin; Stabbed on Thursday; Molasses Attack; Into a Stream**

**Tuesday, 1/21**

9:43 p.m. Caller from Federal Street reports she went to check on her granddaughter and she was not in her bed. There was a stuffed animal under the blankets. She was last seen at 9 p.m. Caller wanted the info logged and officers to be aware in case they come across her. Report taken.

11:54 p.m. Greenfield PD providing courtesy transport for juvenile to bridge at bottom of Turners Falls Road. Officer responding to transport juvenile from bridge to residence on Federal Street.

**Wednesday, 1/22**

7:41 a.m. Report of breaking and entering overnight at the Lady Killigrew Café. Window smashed, cash register items gone through. Caller states she is safe; it does not appear anyone is still there. Investigated.

8:55 a.m. Manager at Turners Falls Municipal Airport calling to report a suspicious male party walking around the premises and on property marked 'No Trespassing.' Male party stated he was from the FAA, but had no ID and was acting strangely, saying he was a WWII vet and going on about other things. Manager called back stating male party just left

property in a New Hampshire transit van. Officers spoke with male party, who was parked at the water department; everything appears to be in order.

10:43 a.m. Owner of an Avenue A apartment building calling to report fire alarm sensor going off since 6:30 a.m.; believes it to be from freezing temperatures; has happened before. Access basement thru Booska Flooring, open today. Relayed to Shelburne Control.

**Thursday, 1/23**

5:28 a.m. Caller reports possible "bear tracks" in the area of the playground and picnic area at Peskeompskut Park. Call logged.

9:45 a.m. Elevator 911 activation at Moltenbrey Apartments; male party reports he accidentally hit the button with a shopping cart. No need for PD, FD, or EMS.

1:57 p.m. Walk-in reporting scam; received messages from individuals claiming to be federal agents. Party took out \$15,000 and sent it to them. He also gave out his Social Security number. Officer speaking to party. Party put money into the bitcoin machine at Cumberland Farms in Greenfield. Officer heading to Cumberland Farms in Greenfield. Report taken.

5:48 p.m. Report of a blue vehicle that appeared to be trying to parallel park next to a tan vehicle but kept repeating the process unsuccessfully. Caller was not sure if the blue vehicle might have bumped the tan vehicle. While on the line, the caller observed the blue vehicle drive off on Fourth Street toward L Street. Unknown plate. Referred to an officer.

10:28 p.m. Received four calls on the business line from a number mapping to Avenue A. No voice contact; no background noise. On the fourth call, a female asked, "Can you come pick me up?" Attempted to obtain additional information, but the caller hung up. Caller did not sound like she was in distress, and no background noise was heard. Additional calls received from same number; no voice contact; rustling sound only. Caller called back in stating she was bitten three times by a dog. Will not specify which apartment she is in, but states she needs police and animal control. Denies need for medical services. Caller called back in stating she needs animal control and there are people in the building who are drug dealers and need to be arrested. Officer advises caller was not bitten. She was advised of her options.

**Friday, 1/24**

9:10 a.m. Assisting Green-

field PD/TD and TFFD on Cleveland Street; 64-year-old male stuck in concrete.

10:22 a.m. Caller from Seventh Street reporting that his neighbor has built a tiny house on a trailer in the yard. It is backed up against the garage and has a wood stove inside, and the smoke is constantly coming into the caller's house. Caller is not sure if this is a safe situation or if it could be creating a fire hazard. Transferred to TFFD.

5:10 p.m. Multiple reports of a motor vehicle accident on East Main Street; possible injuries reported. Asked caller to call back on 911 so she could be conferenced with EMD. Caller immediately called back and was conferenced with Shelburne Control. Caller was unsure of specifics on injuries; occupant has not yet exited the vehicle. Caller also advises there is a pet in the vehicle that might be injured and that a vehicle with Connecticut plates ran the stop sign, which she believes caused the accident. Officers advised. Report taken.

**Saturday, 1/25**

1:03 a.m. Caller reporting car alarm sounding for the past half hour at Fourth and L streets. Officer advised. Alarm is now off. See call from later today (3:15 p.m.); property owner reported damage to the main door that occurred during this altercation.

2:18 a.m. 911 caller reports car alarm sounding again at Fourth and L streets. Another caller reporting same. Alarm shut off.

8:48 a.m. Caller states that on Thursday she was stabbed in the leg by a female while hanging out at an Avenue A address. Advised of options.

11:18 a.m. 911 caller reporting that someone rear-ended him while he was backing out at Greenfield Cooperative Bank. Ambulance requested due to wrist pain and to check on infant that is in the second vehicle. Shelburne Control notified of request; TFFD responding. Tow requested for second vehicle. Officer advises one operator transported by ambulance; other occupants declined transport.

1:06 p.m. Caller from Powertown Apartments on Avenue A reporting vandalism in the building; Caller states a substance that appears to be honey or molasses was poured on a handle in the common hallway, on a rug, and on the door handle of an apartment. Caller spoke with the landlord, who requested the caller report the incident to the police. Officer spoke with caller and tenant of involved apartment; advised of options. Tenant will likely

be reporting this to the Housing Authority due to ongoing issues with another party.

3:15 p.m. Caller from L Street reporting damage from last night; someone kicked in the main door to the building. Caller is not at the property. Officer advised caller of options. Caller requesting to have incident on record at this time; officer requesting call be referenced in the related call from 1:03 a.m. today.

11:32 p.m. 911 caller from East Chestnut Hill Road states someone arrived at her house knocking at her door. Caller states that before this, she heard a loud "boom" from outside. The noise did not seem like a car crash, but was loud enough to hear inside her house. During the call, the individual returned to the caller's front door and stood outside. Involved male wearing a red coat and hunting cap. Caller advised male was not saying anything, but was pointing down the road and to his ear and chest. PD arrived in the area and discovered a vehicle into a stream. Shelburne Control contacted; FD requested to scene. No reports of injuries at this time. Officer states vehicle operator left area by being picked up by another vehicle. Rau's *en route* for tow. Officer states guard-rail of bridge where car went into stream has been ripped off. DPW notified of damage and requested to respond and assess. Jersey barriers may be needed. Officer providing courtesy transport for passenger of vehicle to address on Millers Falls Road. Greenfield PD requested to check welfare of vehicle owner, who resides in their town. Greenfield PD made contact; male party will call MPD. Party called and was transferred to an officer. Summons issued.

**Sunday, 1/26**

4:42 p.m. Walk-in reports that a sidewalk in front of a Montague City Road address never gets shoveled after it snows, and the hedges are not trimmed, so it's a hazard while walking by. Report taken.

6:07 p.m. Caller from Randall Road reporting that someone has their music playing and the bass is too loud; reports they do this every day. Officer advises no music in area.

7:31 p.m. Walk-in reports he was delivering food on Highland Street and a dog jumped into his car. No tags. Did not belong to the people he was delivering food to. Female party called in stating her mother's dog got loose. Verified dog is her mother's. Caller *en route* to pick up dog.

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

  
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**WEST ALONG** from page B1  
ice had sent me into the time-warp of an ice-fishing trip to the Arctic Circle, as in my mind I plunged into the northern Russia that was somewhere between the *glasnost* and *perestroika* of the '90s.

Along with Jude Wobst of Lev-erett, legendary teacher of Russian, I was chaperoning a group of high school students on a homestay in the Republic of Karelia. At one point in our month-long stay, my Russian hosts determined it was time for me to go ice-fishing, Russian style.

Being in Karelia, whose nearest neighbor is Finland, I figured the ice fishing excursion would be a little less weird than the other things they had had me do so far, so I figured, why not?

We headed north, already closer to Murmansk than I thought necessary. We made our way in the Russian-manufactured car through the frozen emptiness to a small village set in the vast whiteness on the edge of a frozen lake.

On went my Sorel Arctic Pack boots, my good-for-30-below down jacket, a heavy wool ski hat made in

Quebec, long Johns underneath all that, and off I go!

Not so fast, *tovaritch!*  
My Russian hosts felt my clothes were not suitable for the frigid temperatures, so off came my Sorel boots, my good-for-30-below down jacket, my French-Canadian ski bonnet. They let me keep my long Johns.

Onto my head was placed a huge Russian fur hat – with the earflaps loose, of course, and ready to flop in the air with every frozen step. My down jacket was replaced with a huge sheepskin affair and my Sorels became knee-high *valenki*. These thick felt peasant boots were actually superior to the Sorels, and fun to wear in the freeze-dried snow. Thus clad, out I went onto the frozen lake.

Slowly it dawned on me that my jovial hosts were laughing and gesticulating in a Russian I couldn't understand, but I was beginning to get the point. They themselves were totally attired from head to foot in the latest hi-tech Arctic gear, and I looked like a survivor from the 19th century – or at least from 10 years ago, which was just about the same

in the Russia of the '90s.

Things got better after an uneventful day spent hauling up nets through the ice containing a few perch-like fish and some unappetizing sucker-like things.

Then it was time for me to be burned in the searing heat of the sauna, flailed with stingingly refreshing birch branches by the other guys – was this a kind of revenge for us winning the Cold War? – and then go for a heart-stopping roll in the snow.

We trudged back to the wooden cottage in the wooden village where the women had spent the day drinking tea, telling stories, and waiting. There, alternating cups of tea and glasses of homemade vodka, along with pickles and *pirozhki*, the rest of the afternoon slipped by, and eventually we headed back, a few miles south to what at that time was considered civilization...

*That was then in 1992*, as I had written it all down in my journal back in 2007. With that Russian vision still in my head, I think of our two countries again, now in 2025 still run by two angry, selfish men.

Once again, in the winter of 2025, I find myself on the ice-bound Cove. My skis have carried me far out across the whiteness, turning snow-blue in the dusk. As in the past, I've always treasured this vantage point, looking across to the village shore. I have a unique view, but am I the only one to look back to the far shore and see what I'm seeing?

How curious it is to stand in this isolated place on the ice. The lonely vantage point gives me permission to remember all those histories that played out over there across the river.

I can take in so many stories and memories in a sweep. In the span of what my eye can see, there are visions of my parents' home above the Narrows, the homes of my school friends, the places all of us grew up together from kindergarten to high school. In view is the white Cassidy home, the Williams Garage where my father toiled, the homes of my grandparents on Seventh and L streets, and the schools, from Central Street to the New Eighth to Crocker Avenue.

Overlooking Unity Park up on

Prospect Street there's the home of the poet and poetess, now empty only since a few months past. That house is where once the writers gathered to share stories and poems. Now its rooms are quiet, though the walls still hold their voices and laughter.

The ice booms this evening beneath my feet.

These are the thoughts that can slip into one's mind when one is a solitary figure on skis in a vast whiteness. Dusk is falling on the Cove, the headlights move along Route 2, the last fisherman trudges back across the ice, going home.

In the gathering darkness I watch the sun go down, an orange haze behind the silhouetted steeples of Saint Mary Our Lady of Peace, Saint Anne's, no longer crowned with its cross, and our enduring Lady of Czestochowa. Lights come on in the little town across the river, and I point my skis homeward, to the tree-lined shore beyond.

*For Edjue and all the boys who love fishing under the ice.*



# COMICS and PUZZLE

JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION

**OVER THE HILL** Carolyn Clark

Panel 1: A man with a large stack of books says, "Hurry! where did these new books come from? There are several here I want to read! Look!"

Panel 2: The man asks, "You know that stack of books you have on the bedside table? Like forever? I simply turned it upside down."

Panel 3: The man says, "You keep adding to the top of the stack, Cupcake, and you read one or two, but you never dig deeper."

Panel 4: The man says, "Hurry, you clever clogs! Oh! Now this one I must read! What fun! .. like a kid in a candy store ..."

**Cool Cats on the Ave** Suzette Snow-Cobb

Panel 1: Two cats sit on a windowsill.

Panel 2: The cats are still on the windowsill.

Panel 3: The cats are still on the windowsill.

Panel 4: The cats are still on the windowsill. A caption reads: "Apollo & Luna realize waking the humans at 4 a.m. did not result in the intended early breakfast."

**BLIZZARD** Rob Machado

Panel 1: A woman in winter gear says, "All the weather Reporters said to expect BLIZZARD Conditions!"

Panel 2: A man in summer clothes says, "Yeah, but the guy I listen to said that was a HOAX! He said it would be WARM... over and over, and LOUDER, too. Doesn't that MAKE it true?"

**Now FLY, FLY?** Jan Atamian

Labels: PROUD, BOYS, OATH KEEPERS

Text: "With Vengeance, Trump releases his winged monkeys in pursuit of law and order..."

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# Aquí se habla español



Esta es la página mensual en español del *Montague Reporter*. Aquí podrá encontrar cuestiones acerca de la comunidad hispana en el área, eventos de interés, curiosidades, y noticias mundiales en español. Si quiere participar o compartir alguna sugerencia, envíenos un correo electrónico a [spanish@montaguereporter.org](mailto:spanish@montaguereporter.org).

## Gente de Franklin County: Rogelio Galvez, pintando casas y de sueños.

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

**GILL** – Rogelio Galvez Ovalle vivió en Turners Falls desde el año 1998. Nació en Chiapas, México, más concretamente en Unión Juárez, y residió en Turners 26 años y recientemente se ha mudado a Gill.

Salió de su país buscando una vida mejor y quería ayudar a su familia. Rogelio me señala que no se viene aquí por gusto, sino por necesidad.

Empezó viviendo en Springfield y trabajando en las fincas en Sunderland, y como le quedaba lejos el trabajo decidió mudarse a Turners. El pueblo le pareció muy bonito y tranquilo, incluso, marcando las distancias, le recordaba a su pueblo al otro lado de la frontera. Le gustaba poder dejar su carro sin cerrar y que no pasase nada.

Le gusta mucho jugar al fútbol en sus ratos libres, y bailar cuando hay fiestas. Piensa que es un buen lugar para criar a sus cinco hijos.

El frío fue al principio un gran inconveniente puesto que provenía de un lugar bien caliente. Pensó al ver los árboles sin hojas en invierno que se habían secado, y no podía creer que en la primavera recuperasen las hojas ya que en

México los árboles que pierden las hojas es que se han secado. Me dice que ahora piensa que son seis meses y que poco a poco se ha ido acostumbrando.

En aquellos años no sabía inglés y empezó a estudiar en ILI of Massachusetts en Northampton, y también en Greenfield Community College. Pasó los exámenes y consiguió su diploma.

Rogelio me dice que aprender inglés ha sido importantísimo para su negocio ya que es la lengua que usa con la mayoría de sus clientes, y todo lo que tiene que ver con la administración, por ejemplo, con las facturas.

En Turners, conoció a la que es ahora su esposa, que viene de la misma región que Rogelio. Tiene cinco hijos de 10 a 23 años.

Cuando él llegó no había muchos latinos en el pueblo, así que no era tan fácil relacionarse con personas que hablasen español. Inmediatamente Rogelio se dio cuenta que aprender inglés era muy importante. Se siente cómodo y feliz en la comunidad ya que se siente incluido y bien tratado.

Hace diez años empezó como aprendiz de pintor y decidió iniciar su negocio por cuenta propia. Rogelio es un pintor profesional tanto



Rogelio Galvez ante una de las casas que ha pintado.

del interior de casas, como el exterior, aconseja sobre los colores y materiales que pueden quedar mejor y está asegurado.

También su negocio limpia el exterior de casas de vinilo o piedra

con mangueras de alta presión. Así mismo se ha especializado en la construcción de tejados y su reparación. Hace también otras reformas como poner piso o puertas. Las máquinas especializadas son de su propiedad y ha realizado una gran inversión para comprarlas.

Rogelio está disponible todos los días de la semana en cualquier parte de Massachusetts para pintar su casa. La empresa de Rogelio se llama **R.G. Fine Painting** y pueden contactarle a través de su email [Rogelio.RRGO@gmail.com](mailto:Rogelio.RRGO@gmail.com) o en el teléfono (413) 824-7079.

Rogelio es también el dueño de **Cielito Lindo**, el *food truck* de comida mexicana que se encuentra en Route 2 a la salida del puente entre Gill y Montague.

La idea de Cielito Lindo surgió porque le gustaba mucho cocinar,

y siempre lo hacía para amigos y familia en las fiestas familiares. Amigos estadounidenses que habían probado su comida le sugirieron la idea y así fue como compró el camión y más tarde el terreno donde se encuentra el *food truck*.

Me cuenta Rogelio que aunque en invierno hay menos clientes por el clima, el camión sigue abierto durante estos meses de frío porque tiene a personas que trabajan y dependen de él.

La comida de Cielito Lindo trata de ser lo más parecido a los platos originales de su país, por ejemplo, las carnes que son diferentes y por ello los sabores son diferentes.

Me cuenta Rogelio que el *food truck* ha salido en el *New York Times* y que viene gente de Keene, Nueva York y Boston para probar sus especialidades. Señala que aunque hay competencia con otros restaurantes latinos en la zona, esto es bueno y cada uno tiene su especialidad.

La birria es su especialidad, es carne que puede ser de chivo o de res a la barbacoa. El sabor viene del marinado que lleva la carne antes de cocinarla. Ahora en estos meses desapacibles pueden usted llamar o pedir por Internet. Así pues, Rogelio ha conseguido cumplir sus sueños, tiene dos negocios, ha comprado una casa para su familia y todo ello gracias a su esfuerzo de cada día. Es para mí el ejemplo de lo que es el sueño americano, llegar a un país que te acoge y trabajas para conseguir una vida mejor que no podías tener en tu país de origen. No quiere volver a México porque su vida y sus hijos están aquí van sus pedidos a casa por un importe mínimo.

En cuanto a la comida, me dice que nunca antes de llegar aquí había probado las hamburguesas o la comida china y que le encanta probar nuevos platos y va con su familia cuando tiene tiempo a conocer tipos de comida diferente.

## Primeras medidas del gobierno de Donald Trump

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Donald Trump lleva solamente dos semanas en la presidencia de los Estados Unidos y ya ha firmado más de 50 decretos. Estas algunas de las medidas tomadas por el jefe de los Republicanos, para según él lograr la revolución del sentido común:

- Ha cancelado todos los programas de diversidad e inclusión en la contratación de la Administración Federal. Esto significa que miles de empleados se han quedado sin trabajo de la noche a la mañana y sin previo aviso.
- Ha desaparecido la web en español de la Casa Blanca, ignorando que 40 millones de estadounidenses utilizan el castellano como lengua de comunicación principal. Responsables de prensa de la Casa Blanca dicen que es solamente una medida temporal.
- Ha declarado la emergencia nacional en la frontera con México. Esto permitirá movilizar al ejército para participar en la seguridad de la frontera.
- Ha derogado 78 órdenes ejecutivas firmadas por Biden. Entre

estas la aplicación móvil CBP One que permitía solicitar citas en los puertos de entrada fronterizos.

- Trump ha revocado el protocolo firmado por Biden que permitía la entrada en el país a las personas que estuviesen pidiendo asilo. Trump envió el domingo 25 de enero, cuatro aviones con ciudadanos mexicanos y guatemaltecos deportados. El gobierno mexicano ha iniciado el programa llamado "México te abraza."
- Ha dictado una orden ejecutiva que impide obtener la ciudadanía por nacimiento en territorio estadounidense. Está orden ejecutiva es contraria a la Decimocuarta Enmienda. En este momento, 22 estados y dos ciudades están impugnandola.
- Ha indultado a todos los condenados por el asalto al Capitolio el 6 de enero.
- Ha decidido impulsar la pena de muerte para todos los inmigrantes que cometan crímenes de sangre o atenten contra fuerzas de seguridad del estado.
- Ha renombrado el Golfo de México como Golfo de América.
- Ha anunciado una subida de tarifas a productos colombianos y otras sanciones como revancha

por no aceptar vuelos con personas deportadas procedentes de los Estados Unidos.

- Ha retirado al gobierno de los Estados Unidos del Acuerdo de París que combatía las emisiones.
- Ha retirado a los Estados Unidos de la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS).
- Ha dejado sin validez el acuerdo de la OCDE que gravaba con un 15% a las multinacionales.
- Ha suspendido también toda ayuda humanitaria internacional.

### Quinto aniversario de LAVA Center en Greenfield.

Este fin de semana tendrán lugar diferentes actividades empezando el viernes 31 de enero hasta el domingo 2 de febrero. Las actividades incluyen exposiciones de fotos, arte para niños y adultos, música en directo, presentaciones de libros, talleres de improvisación, y escenario abierto para todo tipo de actuación. Todas las actividades son gratis y se aceptan donaciones.

The LAVA Center es un espacio comunitario dedicado a las artes y las humanidades que se encuentra en el 324 de Main St. en Greenfield Si quieren sa-



ber más acerca de estas celebraciones, consulten la página web [www.thelavacenter.org](http://www.thelavacenter.org).

• **Vida activa con diabetes.** Taller en español ofrecido los jueves entre el 20 de febrero y el 27 de marzo de 10:30 a mediodía. Está organizado por LifePath

y Brick House en colaboración con Montague Catholic Ministries. El taller tendrá lugar en la sede de la Brick House en 24 Third Street en Turners Falls y solamente en persona.

El taller ayudará a personas con diabetes a llevar una vida activa al mismo tiempo que informará a los participantes acerca de cómo llevar una dieta saludable, hacer ejercicio y lidiar con el estrés y las emociones difíciles.

Para obtener más información o registrarse para un taller, llame al (413) 800-2208 o envíe un correo electrónico a [jolvera-aguilera@brickhousecommunity.org](mailto:jolvera-aguilera@brickhousecommunity.org).

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- ★ BE YOUR OWN VALENTINE CRAFT PARTY! \$10 SUGGESTED DONATION 2/14 2/13 & 2/27
- ★ COLLAGE CLUB & SPRINT SATURDAY 2/22 6:30-8:30
- ★ OPEN MIC FOR WRITERS! 2/26 7 PM
- ★ SWEATSHIRT WEAVING 2/2 12-5 PM \$500
- ★ KIDS ART SHOW!!! KIDS AGED 0-12 ARE INVITED TO SUBMIT BY 2/8
- ★ VISION MAP 3/1 1-3 PM \$15
- ★ SIGN UP IN ADVANCE

LOOKYHEREGREENFIELD.COM

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 30**  
Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Silverback Swing*. 6 p.m. No cover.  
Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Tommy Filiault, Lil Ted Blues Band*. 8 p.m. \$.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 31**  
LAVA Center, Greenfield: Exhibit launch and reception, "History of LAVA: Memorabilia and Photography." Art-making table for kids and grownups with Jovonna Van Pelt. 5 p.m. Free.

Downtown Greenfield: *Winter Carnival*. All day. See [www.greenfieldrecreation.com](http://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.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Well-Suited*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

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. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Woody's Enchanted Forest*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

The Drake, Amherst: *Bag Lady, The Prozac's, 40 Lashes*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Two-Step*

*Night feat. Les Taiauts, The Honky-Tonk Angels. Cajun; country karaoke. 8 p.m. \$.*

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bluegrass & Beyond*, featuring An Evening of Honky Tonk Music with Betsy Dawn Williams. Williams is a local singer and musician who fronted the country swing bands Girl Howdy and The Nite Caps. Swing dance, two-steps and waltzes will be on the menu for this evening of classic country music. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1**  
Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *Workshop, Coiling Pine Needles*. Marsha Leavitt teaches this ancient art. Participants will create wall pieces using long pine needles that have been treated with glycerin to make them flexible. Contact [marsha3072@gmail.com](mailto:marsha3072@gmail.com) for information on fees and registration. Fees include materials. For ages 16 and up. 9:30 a.m. \$\$.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Where Are All the Animals Hiding?* For ages 3 and up. 10:30 a.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Farley String Band*, 12 p.m.; book launch and reception, *Valley and Beyond: A Writers Read Anthology*, 2 p.m.; improv comedy workshop with Henry Balzarini (email [hbquit@hotmail.com](mailto:hbquit@hotmail.com) to register), 4:30 p.m.; Open Stage with Kemah Wilson, 7 p.m. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: Drop-in *Valentine Card Making*, for children and their caregivers. 1 to 4 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Native Winter Seed Sowing*



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The young actors and writers of the Performance Project's First Generation Ensemble return to the Shea Theater this Saturday with *Mother Tongue*, an original multilingual physical theater performance exploring their personal and family experiences. Runs 90 minutes, for ages 12 and up. Highly recommended by MR staff.

Workshop. Registration required. 1 p.m. Free.

Downtown Greenfield: *Winter Carnival*. All day. See [www.greenfieldrecreation.com](http://www.greenfieldrecreation.com) for map and full schedule.

Fatbike group ride on the Greenfield Ridge, 3 p.m.; Glow Party at Greenfield Middle School, 5:30 p.m. Free.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *CitySpace Bluegrass*. Jam session. 4 p.m. Free.

Abandon Dream, Turners Falls: *beetsblog, bobbie, Adam Tobin, Beverly Ketch, Alex Homan, Nat Baldwin, Asa Horvitz*. 4 p.m. No cover.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Wishbone Zoe & guests*. 5 p.m. No cover.

Greenfield Moose Lodge, Greenfield: *Bingo Night*, benefit for programming at the Greenfield Public Library. 6 p.m. \$.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: *In The Dark Times There Will Be Singing*, speakers, musicians, poets, etc. Benefit for ACLU. 6:30 p.m. \$

First Church, Amherst: *Song &*

*Story Swap*, with guest artist Chris Koldewey. Attendees invited to contribute a song or story on the topic of "the Sea." All ages. 7 p.m. By donation.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Jessica Lea Mayfield*. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *The Nields, Wheelzies*. 7 p.m. \$.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Pablo Giménez Spanish Ensemble*. 7 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Sundrifter, Problem With Dragons, Curse The Son, VRSA, Benthic Realm*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Next Stage Arts, Putney: *Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Holly Bowling*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Emily Margaret Band, NCP Sound*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Bella's Bartok*. 10:30 p.m. \$.

## 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, through February 22.

**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. *Small Works Show and Sale*, February 2 through 24. Reception Sunday, February 2 at 1 p.m.

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

**Artspace Gallery, Greenfield:** *Forward*, a community art exhibit about evolution, change, and movement, with work by 37 local artists. Through February 28.

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

**South Gallery, Greenfield Community College, Greenfield:** *Nima Nikakhlagh*, mixed-media works by Iranian artist Nikakhlagh. Through February 25; gallery talk Wednesday, February 19 at 12 p.m.

**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. *Depth be Depth*, work by Daniel Feldman, February 6 through March 1.

**Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls:** *Peace and Joy*, holiday exhibit by member artists, through January. *Wouldn't It Be Lovely*, member group show, January 29 through February.

**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.

## CASTING CALL

The Montague Shakespeare Festival seeks passionate performers of all kinds to bring Shakespeare's dark masterpiece *Macbeth* to life at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls. Artistic director Nia Lynn is holding an entirely online series of workshops for aspiring cast members on February 1, 2, and 8, with attendance at all three encouraged. Reach out to [info@montagueshakespearefestival.com](mailto:info@montagueshakespearefestival.com) for details. Once casting is announced, actors will have four weeks to memorize their lines before in-person rehearsals begin March 15, with mainstage performances March 28 to April 6.

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# CALENDAR



## looking forward...

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Knitting with Ben*. Make a hat in the Makerspace. Ages six to adult, caretaker required for 10 and under. 11 a.m. Free.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: Reception, *Small Works Show and Sale*. 1 p.m. Free.

Beacon Field, Greenfield: *Winter Carnival*. See [www.greenfieldrecreation.com](http://www.greenfieldrecreation.com) for full schedule. K9 keg pull, 1 p.m.; cardboard sled contest, 2:30 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *First Sunday Word*. Open mic and readings. 1 p.m. By donation.

Black Birch Vineyard, Hatfield: *B-Town*. 1:30 p.m. No cover.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton: *In The Dark Times There Will Be Singing*, speakers, musicians, poets, etc. Benefit for ACLU. 1:30 p.m. \$

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: Wendell energy committee's Groundhog Day event: *Looking at Wendell's Energy and Climate Future*. 2 p.m. Free.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Rosie Porter*. 3 p.m. No cover.

Athol Congregational Church, Athol: *Quabbin Valley Pro Musica* presents Mozart's *Requiem*. Sponsored by the 1794 Meetinghouse. 3 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *King Kyote*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3

LifePath Community Engagement Center, Greenfield: *Free 8-Week Group for Those Living with Dementia and Their Caregivers*, first session. A time for caregivers and people living in the early stages of dementia to participate in activities and discussions, separately and together. Call (413) 773-5555 to register. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Shelburne-Buckland Community Center, Shelburne Falls: *Franklin County 100+Women Who Care* quarterly meeting. Every three months the members of this circle of philanthropic women choose a local non-profit recipient of awareness and support. See nomination form at [100pluswvc-franklinctyma.com](http://100pluswvc-franklinctyma.com). Public invited for refreshments and socializing at 5:30 p.m.; meeting at 6 p.m.

Greenfield Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: Silent film, *Nanook of the North* (1922), with live accompaniment. \$ 6:30 p.m.

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

### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Make Valentines With the Millers Falls Community Improvement Association*. All ages. Materials provided. 3:30 p.m. Free.

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

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5

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

Erving Public Library, Erving: *After School Activities*. Makerspace staffed. 1:30 p.m. Free.

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Monthly meeting*, open to all. 1 p.m.

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *Beginning Genealogy Workshop Series*. Participants encouraged to bring a laptop or tablet. Registration required at (978) 544-6334 or [n\\_salem@cwmars.org](mailto:n_salem@cwmars.org). 4 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Beautiful Disasters*, storytelling open mic and potluck. Trouble Mandeson and Nisse Greenberg host a night of story and food sharing. Food, 6 p.m.; true stories from your own life, 7 p.m. Free.

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

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Geordie Greep*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Vinyl Night with Breakdown Records*. 9 p.m. No cover.

### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Canalside Rail Trail, Turners Falls: *Nice & Easy Walk*. Geared for seniors, but open to all. Meet at the Great Falls Discovery Center. 1 p.m. Free.

Turners Falls High School, Turners Falls: *Coaches Vs. Cancer*. Turners vs. Tech basketball, 50/50 raffle, games, pep band, Senior Night. All proceeds go directly to TFHS alum Jenna Putala and her fight against cancer. 4 p.m. \$.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Lights, Community, Action!*, four-act musical revue to benefit the Center for Self-Reliance Food Pantry. 6 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Four Rivers Public Charter School* presents *21st Annual Variety Show*. 6 p.m. \$.

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: *Ukes for Ukraine*. 6 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Community College Dining Commons, Greenfield: *From the Ridge to the River: What It Means to*

*Be a Citizen of the Watershed*, with Mashpee Wampanoag artist and activist, Hartman Deetz, and Connecticut River Conservancy executive director Rebecca Todd. 7 p.m. By donation.

All Saints Church, South Hadley: *Le Vent du Nord*. 7 p.m. \$.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *American Amnesia, EmberGlow, GDI, Miracle Blood*. 7 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Eric Love*. 7:30 p.m. No cover.

Bowker Auditorium, UMass Amherst: *Endea Owens And The Cookout*. \$ 8 p.m.

The Drake, Amherst: *Big Richard, The Shoats*. 8 p.m. \$.



Next Saturday, February 8, Court Dorsey leads a day-long workshop on "The Twelve Mysteries" at the Wendell Meetinghouse.

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: Court Dorsey workshop, *The Twelve Mysteries: A Whole Way of Life*. *The Twelve Mysteries* came out of an intensive period of meditation with Swami Ashisananda during a pilgrimage Dorsey made to northern India in the 1970s. He will share sonnets from his book *Tiger Stripes: Poems of Shadow and Light* and lead participants in the practices. Participants asked to bring lunch; hot beverages and snacks provided. Advance notice to [courtcdorsey@gmail.com](mailto:courtcdorsey@gmail.com) is helpful but not required. 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. By donation.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Winter Farmers Market*. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$.

Greenfield Community College Dining Commons, Greenfield: *Full Snow Moon Gathering and Eastern Woodlands Social Dance*, with Wampanoag Nation Singers and Dancers. Bring rattles, enjoy refreshments. 1 p.m. By donation.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *The Secret Lives of Turners Falls Germans*. After the canal was rebuilt

in 1869, German immigrants were among the first to move to Turners Falls, and first to witness the planned village's growing pains. Join DCR staff as we use photos, news clippings, and oral history to figure out how they built their community and traditions through mutual aid and hard work. For youth and adults. 2 p.m. Free.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Backyard Superheroes, The Agonizers, Skeleton Crew, El Grande*, many more. 2 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Field Notes*, storytelling event to benefit Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture. 4 p.m. \$.

Mount Toby Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Building Community in a Time of Uncertainty*, community potluck dinner hosted by Leverett Together. Leverett residents are invited to hear about ongoing community-building projects including the Leverett Library, the North Leverett Sawmill, the Amherst-Leverett Alliance, LeverettConnects, and the Village Co-op. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Lights, Community, Action!*, four-act musical revue to benefit the Center for Self-Reliance Food Pantry. 6 p.m. \$.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Open mic* with featured performer singer-songwriter *Pete Nelson*. BYO food and beverages. Performers' sign-in at 6:15 p.m.; music at 6:30 p.m. By donation.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *Stealing Frequencies*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Next Stage Arts, Putney: *É.T.É., Yann Falquet with Emily Troll and Eric Boodman*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Palladium, Worcester: *Atmosphere, Sage Francis, Mr. Dibbs*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

United Church of Bernardston, Bernardston: *Second Saturday Roast Beef Supper*. Call (413) 648-9306 to reserve take-out, or seatings at 5 and 6:15 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Sam Amidon*. 8 p.m. \$.

De La Luz Soundstage, Holyoke: *Rio Bamba, Deejay Theory*. \$ 8 p.m.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *The 413s, The Wild Brood*. 8:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Dr. J*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Greene Hall, Smith College, Northampton: *Silver Chord Bowl*, collegiate a cappella showcase. 2 p.m. \$.

### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Erving Public Library, Erving: Workshop, *Red Cross Ready Emergency Preparedness*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Artspace, Greenfield: Screening, *Ghost* (1990), benefit for Artspace Community Clay. 7 p.m. \$.

### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Montague Square Dance*, with *Devilish Mary's House Band* and caller *Grace Clements*. Jammers welcome. Families welcome for circle dances and beginner squares, 6:30 p.m.; regular squares, 8 p.m. By donation.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Id M Theftable, Shea Mowat, Owen Manure, Jeff Gallagher*. 8 p.m. No cover.

### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15

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

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Dawn Landes, Sandy Bailey, The Pinkerton Raid*. 8 p.m. \$.

### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Jones Library, Amherst: *Film & Gender, Criticize, Farewell Sarathael, Letters of Marque*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Little Lies*, Fleetwood Mac tribute. 8 p.m. \$.

### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Northampton Center for the Arts, Northampton: *Matthew Shipp*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

### THURSDAY, MARCH 6

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

### FRIDAY, MARCH 7

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Suzanne Vega*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

### SUNDAY, MARCH 9

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

### TUESDAY, MARCH 11

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Alan Doyle, Fortunate Ones*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

### TUESDAY, APRIL 8

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

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**BOOK REVIEW** from page B1

In many ways the Jazz Age New York of *Ex-Wife* was a different place for women than the Gilded Age New York evoked by Mariah Fredericks. Though *Ex-Wife* is set less than 20 years after the events of Fredericks's novel, career possibilities for women were greater.

Patricia, the novel's protagonist, is a copywriter with a salary that allows her to rent an apartment and buy lots of dresses, hats, coats, shoes, gloves, handkerchiefs, and handbags. Her typical day is a quick after-work session in the gym; next she speeds home to shower and dress in something lovely; then she waits, cigarette and drink in hand, for whoever is taking her out that night.

Though she wouldn't miss these trips to restaurants and speakeasies, they are meaningless because she is mourning, devastated by the loss of her former husband Peter. Despite her corps of lovers, she sees no way forward other than by getting Peter back.

Patricia's friend Lucia is also a divorced copywriter. They mostly talk about clothes and men, but they sometimes discuss their plight as women who have benefited from the work of early feminists, but have lost access to the social arrangements that supported their mothers. Patricia views the calamitous effects as irreparable – at least without Peter – but Lucia sees a way back: marriage with a responsible, kindly, and affluent man who loves her and whom she loves.

When Lucia marries a businessman 15 years her senior, Patricia is shocked; she thinks Lucia is marrying him solely for his money, but Lucia assures her differently.

Bleak as Lucia's resolution and Patricia's despair may sound, *Ex-Wife* is often amusing and always fast-moving and astute. It easily bears comparison with F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* as a record of the Jazz Age. But while its wit and glitter made it an enormous success and propelled Ursula Parrott into a lucrative career, it was forgotten, as were her seven subsequent novels and her multitude of short stories and screenplays.

*Ex-Wife* has now been republished (New York: McNally Editions, 2023) and it's a startling read. No one has written as well as Parrott about the lure of buying and wearing fashionable clothes, nor cap-



tured the brittleness of clever young women in the whirl of the big city.

Parrott's son Marc notes in his Afterword that his mother based Patricia's life on her own. She married four times, he tells us, and quickly spent or gave away the immense amounts of money she earned. She died in 1957 in the charity ward of a New York hospital at the age of 58, already forgotten, no doubt at least partly because the Second World War shut down the Jazz Age and what followed the war was a cult of domesticity that would have bored Patricia – and millions of other women – to tears.

*The Note* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2025), Alafair Burke's latest novel, has three women at its center. Old friends from summer camp, they are May, a former New York DA about to embark on an academic career; Lauren, a world-class musician; and the prettiest, boldest one, Kelsey, daughter of a Boston construction mogul and right-hand woman in his financial empire.

Kelsey has her hands on a cottage in the Hamptons and invites May and Lauren to join her in a vacation. It's just after the pandemic and they haven't seen each other for a while so the idea is to have fun. Like Patricia and her friends, they party a lot. Like Edith in *The Wharton Plot*, they become sleuths, but unlike her they have problems when they are tangled in a train of events that led to murder.

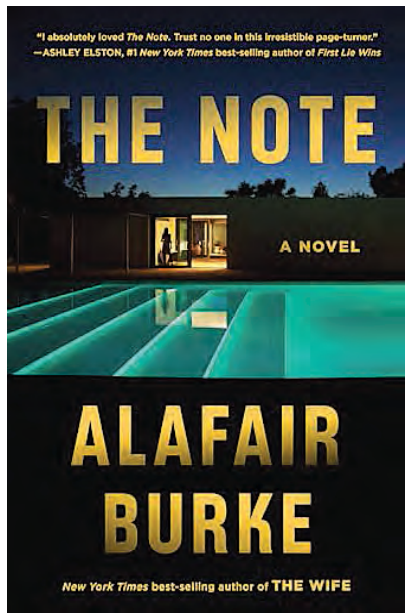
Despite their ample resources and lucrative careers, May and her two friends are as adrift in the city as Patricia – hence the enthusiasm with which they hurl themselves into partying. The city has promised and delivered money and

opportunities, but it turns out they are unsatisfying or downright constraining rather than emancipating or fulfilling.

Since *The Note* is powered by the engine of the whodunit, Burke's exploration of the fate of young women in the city is a portrayal rather than an analysis. They often come off as unlikeable. In contrast, Mariah Fredericks and Ursula Parrott enlist us on their characters' side. Edith Wharton's escape to Paris seems ideal in her circumstances. As for Patricia, it's hard not to sorrow for her as she repeatedly hurls herself back into the fray of New York.

As a literary trope the strains of women in big cities has given us many great novels, *Ex-Wife* among them. We also have multitudes of interesting ones such as *The Wharton Plot* and, rather less so, *The Note*. In movies and TV, too, the woman-facing-the-city theme is a regular standby.

But would we be content to have the last couple of centuries of women's history characterized by the idea that women's encounters with the city overwhelmed them? Or should we be looking elsewhere for the energy powering such fictions?



Giant cities grew out of two centuries of rapid social and economic change, and they have always caused multiple anxieties. Physically, city life is tiring; psychologically it's often lonely. In short, cities are exciting, but also frightening. Fear underlies many tales of women fraught by their experiences of giant conurbations. Grief and disillusion are often the result – unless you can get yourself to Paris.



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