

The Montague Reporter

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\$2

editor@montaguereporter.org

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

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G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Curriculum Director, School Police Officer Flagged for Layoffs

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – “We hate to see this,” Gill-Montague school committee chair Jane Oakes said Tuesday as the committee approved an FY’26 budget that may cut the director of teaching and learning, the school resource officer, and one special ed position.

Committee members and administrators said they had no choice but to cut the staffing budget this year, and encouraged the community to lobby governor Maura Healey and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for reforms in education funding.

With the layoffs on the table, the committee heard impassioned pleas from staff and members of the public. Gill first-grade teacher see **GMRSD** page A5



School resource officer Dan Miner addressed the committee directly.

MassDEP Tries To Nudge Farm Into Compliance

By WILL QUALE

MONTAGUE CENTER – Efforts to effectively manage stormwater and restore damaged wetlands on Falls Farm – a 110-acre vegetable farm straddling the Montague-Sunderland line owned by cardiologist James Arcoleo – have progressed since last August, when the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) relieved the two towns’ conservation commissions from their own intensive investigations and ordered the farm to undertake numerous specific measures.

But full compliance with all the measures in that administrative order apparently proved unachievable by the late-2024 deadlines set by MassDEP, leading the agency to issue Falls Farm a consent order on January 24, which will be discussed by the Montague com on this Thursday.

The new order, which is included in the materials for Thursday’s meeting, acknowledges prescribed work that has been done, and establishes a timeline on which all remaining work must be planned and fully implemented. It also assesses civil penalties, and imposes additional conditions on the farm.

Last summer’s heavy rains repeatedly see **FALLS FARM** page A4

New Girl Scout Troop Plants Seeds Of Confidence, Character in Daisies



Nancy Gottlieb (top left) drives to western Massachusetts every other Thursday to lead her granddaughter’s new Daisy Girl Scout troop in Turners Falls. Here, the girls explore exhibits at the Discovery Center.

By CHRISTINA TRINCHERO

TURNERS FALLS – Twice a month on alternating Thursday afternoons, Nancy Gottlieb embarks on a 90-minute drive from her home in Westwood, south of Boston, to Turners Falls. Preparing for the trip, she sets up her smartphone to play an audiobook and settles in for the journey.

Gottlieb arrives at the Great Falls Discovery Center in downtown Turners Falls armed with supplies and snacks. A tabletop dry-erase board, decorated with the slogan “Cookies Make Life Sweeter,” is visible from one of the oversized bags she carries.

After greeting the Discovery Center park rangers, Gottlieb meanders past exhibits and art galleries through the complex of old mill buildings. Visible outside, the Connecticut River speeds past, churning up white-capped waves and frothy foam. Arriving in the Great Hall, Gottlieb sets down the bags and readies her materials for the next hour.

Welcome to the 4 p.m. meeting of Girl Scout Troop 65541. Last fall Gottlieb, a 33-year veteran of the Girl Scouts, founded Troop 65541 out of necessity and a life-

long passion for scouting.

“When I tried to sign my granddaughter up for Girl Scouts, I learned there was no troop in Gill,” says Gottlieb, who joined Scouts in 1964 as a Brownie, advancing to the Junior level in 1970. “It called to me. I needed to start a troop that my granddaughter could be part of.”

“And,” she adds, “the drive is not terrible. The joy my granddaughter and the other girls seem to get from this new program more than makes up for the driving. And I get to listen to books on tape!”

Scouting Begins

Girls in kindergarten and first grade are eligible to join Girl Scouts as Daisies. According to Girl Scouts of the USA, Daisies, the first of six levels of scouting opportunities spanning kindergarten through 12th grade, “gain important social skills, learn how to be a good friend and discover the world around them.”

As of this writing, there are four members of Troop 65541, hailing from Gill, Montague, and Leverett. Several new girls see **SCOUTS** page A7

Incumbents Leave Selectboards In Gill, Erving, and Wendell

By JEFF SINGLETON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – With the spring election season fast approaching, we thought we would review the status of incumbent selectboard members up for re-election in our five coverage towns – Montague, Gill, Erving, Wendell, and Leverett – as well any seats opening up by mid-term resignations.

While there are no unexpected selectboard vacancies, incumbents in three of the five towns have decided to step down, leaving more of the races completely open than in any year since 2009.

All five towns have three-member selectboards, whose members serve staggered three-year terms. Everywhere but Leverett,

incumbents and new candidates alike must take out nomination papers and submit them to the town clerk’s office at the end of March, over a month before the election, to appear on the ballot. In Leverett, all seats are filled by an election from the town meeting floor in May.

In an additional twist, the Montague Democratic caucus places nominees for town offices directly on the ballot each year, so a candidate that fails to turn in papers by the deadline has a second chance to appear on the ballot. In all towns, write-in candidates will also be counted.

In Gill, incumbent Randy Crochier has announced he will be leaving the board after see **INCUMBENTS** page A6

High School Sports: Accolades!

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – This week Mia Marigliano represented Massachusetts, Franklin Tech, and Turners Falls in the All-New England wrestling championships, Tech football players received accolades, and Pioneer made it into the basketball finals.

But first, a note about the Turners Falls/Franklin Tech cheer team. After working both the spring and winter sports seasons, the Turners Falls Cheerleaders finally hung up their pompoms this week.

Way back last summer, assistant coach Jaclyn Thibeault agreed to move up to head coach. Since then the squad has worked the sidelines at Franklin Tech football games, riled up crowds at Turners Falls High’s boys’ basketball games, and even performed their halftime routine at the fundraiser for Jenna Putala. They also battled in three skills competitions of their own, at West Springfield, Chicopee, and South Hadley.



Franklin County Tech senior Josiah Little won four awards last week, including Intercounty MVP.

Sadly, after the South Hadley cheer-off, they said goodbye to their two seniors, Hazel see **SPORTS** page A4

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Board Interviewing Several Candidates For Coordinator Job

By JOSH HEINEMANN

After two hours of their March 5 meeting, the Wendell selectboard took a break. They returned and interviewed the first of three candidates – as of that time – for Wendell’s next town coordinator. Acting town coordinator Chris Wings said more applications were coming, and on Thursday, March 6, the board interviewed two more applicants.

They met again this Wednesday for more interviews.

Zooming into the March 5 meeting, project coordinator Phil Delorey recommended spending \$2,000 to have the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) oversee procurement to get the Farley Road bridge project going. Both the Wendell and Erving conservation commissions need to approve the project before it can start. Erving has a con com hearing scheduled this Friday, March 14, but Wendell’s con com has not yet scheduled their hearing.

Delorey said a rural development grant can cover the FRCOG expense, and that the towns have been approved for a \$156,000 grant for the work itself.

Selectboard member Gillian Budine asked see **WENDELL** page A5

GILL SELECTBOARD

Police Chief Salary, Default Sewer Bills Both Skyrocketing

By KATE SAVAGE

Amid the scenery for an after-school theatrical production of *Robin Hood*, the Gill selectboard on Monday unanimously approved a three-year contract with police chief Christopher Redmond which increases his salary by 22% to \$129,304 annually.

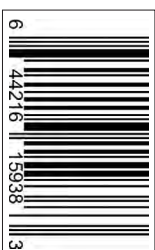
“I’m not crazy that the pay of police is going up as quickly as it is, and as high as it is,” said selectboard chair Greg Snedeker. He blamed state laws for driving payroll costs up, as new standards make it harder for police departments to hire part-time officers.

Snedeker also noted that Redmond, who has been a policeman for 37 years and Gill’s chief for eight, is already eligible for retirement. Hiring a new chief would cost the town even more money, Snedeker said, “to take on a new person with far less qualifications and far less experience in this town.”

“Twenty-two percent seems really high,” said selectboard member Randy Crochier, but added that for the previous eight years, the chief had given Gill a “hometown discount.”

Along with the pay raise, Redmond took on the additional job titles of assistant emergency management director and harbormaster.

see **GILL** page A5



How Bizarre. How Bizarre, How Bizarre.			
Editorial and Two Letters.....	A2	In Pursuit of a Painter.....	B1
Local Briefs and Two Op/Eds.....	A3	Heartfelt Café: Tastes of the Tropics.....	B1
Erving Selectboard Notes.....	A4	Sex Matters: The Old Country.....	B2
Leverett Selectboard Notes.....	A6	Montague Police Log Highlights.....	B3
10, 20, and 150 Years Ago.....	A7	Four Comics.....	B4
Montague Selectboard Notes.....	A8	Our March Poetry Page.....	B5
Bomb Squad Brought to Drugstore.....	B1	Events, Exhibits, Calls.....	B6-B7
West Along the River.....	B1	Montague Cryptojam.....	B8

The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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August 2002

Aligning

The biggest story this week was the termination, by a wrestling-entertainment executive, of half of the staff at the Department of Education. "His directive to me, clearly, is to shut down the Department of Education," she told a reporter. "What we did today was to take the first step of eliminating what I think is bureaucratic bloat."

This year, federal Title I funding to Gill-Montague schools totals \$337,736, according to documents on the DESE website.

No, wait. The biggest story was the firing of a fifth of the IRS workforce right before tax time. For years we've seen studies indicating that the more stretched the department is, the more its auditors focus on poor and middle-class Americans, and the more sizeable tax fraud at the top slips by.

No, wait: the biggest story is Trump selling Tesla electric cars on the White House lawn, declaring that attacks on the company are "domestic terrorism."

Wait, the biggest story is a tumbling stock market, and the president updating his dazzling-wealth-aunts-us-all talking points to advise that we should all be expecting to take a healthy haircut. "The only reason there could possibly be a recession is because of the Biden nonsense that we had to live with," Commerce secretary Howard Lutnick told *CBS News* on Tuesday.

No, no, no. The biggest story came on Wednesday at the Environmental Protection Agency, where administrator Lee Zeldin trumpeted "the greatest day of deregulation our nation has seen." Time to loosen limits on greenhouse gas emissions, mercury and arsenic in coal plant runoff, carcinogenic ethylene oxide in manufacturing smokestacks, hydrofluorocarbons in consumer appliances, emergencies at petrochemical plants, and ways to reuse fracking wastewater...

"We are driving a dagger straight into the heart of the climate change religion to drive down cost of living for American families, unleash American energy, bring auto jobs back to the US and more," Zeldin wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*.

No, that's a distraction. The government is testing the use of the FBI against recipients of public-sector green transition funding. "Citibank revealed in court filings on Wednesday that the FBI, the EPA, the EPA inspector general, and the Treasury Department have all requested that the bank freeze accounts of several nonprofits and

state government agencies," *TechCrunch* reported Wednesday.

This included loans disbursed via the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, part of the pandemic-recovery Inflation Reduction Act. The nonprofits the FBI is attempting to criminalize for this activity include Habitat for Humanity International, Inc., the California Infrastructure & Economic Development Bank, the Connecticut Green Bank, and United Way Worldwide.

We're clawing it back, folks! You've never seen clawing it back like this before. They said it couldn't be done. I say to them, you haven't even seen our claws....

Just kidding. The biggest story is unfolding at Guantánamo Bay, where the administration has just emptied its detention center of migrant detainees – or else, it's –

Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents kidnapping a permanent resident, a green card holder, in transparent retaliation for political speech. The administration alleges without evidence that Columbia University grad student Mahmoud Khalil, a visible leader in Palestinian solidarity rallies, is by virtue of his opposition to the Israeli bombardment of Gaza "aligned to Hamas," and may therefore be stripped of all rights by unilateral executive action.

Khalil, as of press time, is still being held in detention in Louisiana. He is a political prisoner, and this case will be hugely consequential in determining just what the state can do to its subjects over the next few years.

We are proud and relieved to see our own US Congressman was among the terrifyingly few members of the House to speak out on his behalf. From their statement:

We must be extremely clear: this is an attempt to criminalize political protest and is a direct assault on the freedom of speech of everyone in this country. Khalil's arrest is an act of anti-Palestinian racism intended to silence the Palestine solidarity movement in this country, but this lawless abuse of power and political repression is a threat to all Americans. President Trump has threatened that "this is the first arrest of many to come," and, if unchecked, this authoritarian playbook will be applied to any and all opposition to his undemocratic agenda.

True, and good to see them speak up. Unfortunately, the biggest story of the week may just prove to be that only 14 Democrats signed on.



Jay Majerowski welcomes weekend shoppers at Great Hauls, the tiny vintage shop on Avenue A that he runs with his business partner, Elliot Hartmann. The pair also sell records and clothes at Deep Thoughts Records on Market Street in Northampton. Readers may find a rotating selection of (mostly) men's vintage clothing at both locations.

Letters to

the Editors



Command Chain Reiterated

I appreciate John Irminger's taking the time to respond to my letter, but I'm not sure he fully understood the point I was trying to make. His response also raised further questions.

As he noted on January 2, GMRSD Policy BHC directs that communications between staff and the school committee be made through the superintendent. Therefore, I suggested that the GMEA should have started by taking its members' concerns to the superintendent and documented those efforts.

Did that happen? From what I have read, no one said that it did, and Mr. Irminger didn't mention it. Instead, in his February 27 response, he jumped right to my second suggestion, which was that if meeting with the superintendent didn't work, the GMEA should have contacted the school committee. He said that "they repeatedly asked to meet informally, or in executive session... to no avail."

I don't know how they could meet "informally" – that request seems to show a fundamental misunderstanding of the Open Meeting Law – but executive session seems like the place to discuss these concerns. (Mr. Irminger seems to have misunderstood my comment that "there could have been a full discussion" as meaning that the discussion would happen at a public meeting. If

personnel issues are being discussed, of course an executive session is the proper place, but "a full discussion" could – and should – still happen.)

Why didn't the school committee take them up on it? Mr. Irminger has provided no answers: just that the requests "were repeatedly met with non-response or rebuff." Did the school committee discuss them? Did he, as a member, try to get action on them?

Given Policy BHC, I can understand the school committee being reluctant to meet with staff – was that the reason? If so, that's why I suggested the GMEA should have documented their attempts and shared that with the school committee: it would have provided a rationale for waiving the policy.

In any case, Mr. Irminger's attempts to meet with the GMEA are curious. They seem well-intentioned, but they also seem to be a clear violation of Policy BHC. Did he know this? What did he hope to accomplish? As of January 2, he said that he didn't "believe that the School Committee has yet heard the issues the employees are so concerned about."

That seems both unfortunate and unnecessary. If the GMEA had documented their concerns, documented their attempts to resolve them with the superintendent, and sent all that to the school commit-

B-Day Delight

I was recently taken out to the Whistle Stop for breakfast on my birthday. I had never been there before, so I was super delighted to discover how much I enjoyed it. The best food I have ever had in this area. I had an omelet and home fries.

Don Gagnon
Montague Center

tee with a request to meet in executive session to discuss them, then at the very least the school committee would know what those concerns were. I suggested that in my first letter, and I still think it would have been a better way.

One final comment: Mr. Irminger pointedly referred to me a "the former chair of the Montague finance committee." I was on the finance committee for two decades, and briefly – though not especially memorably – served as chair. There have been other chairs, and better chairs, and the current discussion has nothing to do with the Montague finance committee. I was proud to serve on the finance committee, but now I'm just Mike Naughton from Millers Falls; there's no reason to puff me up more than that.

Mike Naughton
Millers Falls

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Greenfield Public Library and the Franklin County Agricultural Society have joined forces to help people create **crafts to enter in the Roundhouse show** at this year's Franklin County Fair in September.

The library will offer various craft workshops in their maker-space this spring. Try Pysanky eggs this Saturday, March 15 at 10 a.m. Others in the series include contemporary patchwork, felt flowers, nature sketching, and *macramé* plant hangers. These classes are free, and materials will be provided unless otherwise noted.

These programs are geared for ages 13 and above. As space is limited, pre-registration is required at greenfieldpl.libcal.com/calendar. For more information, contact librarian Francesca Passiglia at francesca.passiglia@greenfield-ma.gov or (413) 772-1544.

Want help crafting your own obituary in advance? Join Trouble Mandeson and Lilian Autler at 5:30

p.m. next Wednesday, March 19 for "Getting the Last Word In: **An Obituary Writing Workshop**" at the Greenfield Public Library.

The workshop is free, with pre-registration requested via the link in the previous entry. Light refreshments will be served.

A free screening of Pete and Rebecca Davis's **documentary *Join or Die*** is offered on Monday, March 24 at 6 p.m. at Greenfield Garden Cinemas, courtesy of GCC's Community Engagement program.

The film focuses on the research of social scientist Robert Putnam, the author of *Bowling Alone*, about America's declining community connections and the benefits of joining social clubs.

Putnam asks, "What makes democracy work? What can we do about democracy's current crisis?" There are interviews with Hillary Clinton, Pete Buttigieg, surgeon general Vivek Murthy, Eddie Glaude, Jr., Raj Chetty, and Priya Parker. The spotlight also falls on six community groups across the country.

After the screening there will be a question-and-answer session with the directors over Zoom. RSVP is strongly encouraged at gcc.mass.edu/events/join-or-die.

Would you like to **know more about raising chickens**? Dan Wright from Poulin Grain will be at the Greenfield Farmers Cooperative Exchange at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 26 for a "Chicken Chat."

Enjoy pizza and cookies as Wright shares his expertise in all aspects of raising chickens. He'll cover nutrition, avian flu, parasite control, and more. There will be time for questions. Register to attend by calling the store at (413) 773-9639 or at form.jotform.com/Form_Poulin/greenfieldchicks25.

On Friday, April 11, the Franklin County Technical School in Turners Falls is holding a **Bike Tune-Up Day**. Speed and Sprocket Cycle Works, a mobile bike repair service, will be there working on fixing up bikes for spring. You can drop off your bike in the morning and pick it up in the afternoon or evening under the flag poles outside.

The cost is \$80 for an adult multi-gear bike, and \$45 for a single-speed kids' bike, with parts extra. Sign up at tinyurl.com/biketune.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

OP ED

Montague Town Volunteer Opportunities: Part II

By LEIGH RAE and JUDITH LOREI

MONTAGUE – In last week's edition, we provided information about opportunities for Montague citizens to run for elected positions. There is still time to get nomination papers into the town clerk, Tina Sulda, for townwide positions and precinct-specific ones (i.e. town meeting membership). April 1 is the deadline. Check out "Your Government" on the town website, www.montague-ma.gov.

There are also opportunities to volunteer for the Town of Montague through appointed seats. Appointments can take place anytime during the year, and there are vacancies on a variety of boards, committees, and commissions right now for you to bring your interest or expertise in service of our town.

Some of the townwide appointments that you can join include the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC), the cable advisory committee, the energy committee, the RiverCulture steering committee, and the tree advisory board.

To learn more about these positions, you can contact the following people:

The **EDIC** is a corporation charged with implementing economic development projects identified in the town's Economic Development Plan. Members of the EDIC serve for three-year terms, and are appointed by the selectboard. Contact town administrator Walter Ramsey at WalterR@montague-ma.gov.

The Montague **cable advisory committee** acts on the town's behalf on matters regarding cable communication. Committee members serve three-year terms and are appointed by the selectboard. Contact chair Jason Burbank at jburbank@facil.umass.edu.

The Montague **energy committee** has a broad mandate to help residents, commercial and business organizations, and the municipality to reduce energy use and increase use of renewable power. Members serve one-year terms and are appointed by the selectboard. Contact co-chair Sally Pick at SJPMEC@crocker.com.

RiverCulture works to enhance and promote cultural programming throughout Montague. The program is administered through the town's planning and conservation department. **RiverCulture steering committee** members serve three-year terms and are appointed by the selectboard. Contact director Suzanne

LoManto at riverculture@montague-ma.gov.

The **tree advisory board** advises the tree warden on tree- and shrub-related policies in Montague. Board members serve three-year terms and are appointed by the selectboard. Contact interim tree warden Jason Kingsbury at treewarden@montague-ma.gov.

The **Library Friends Group** is another local group that is often seeking volunteers to help with fundraising and friend-raising. Kristopher Langston (kristopherlangston@gmail.com) leads this group.

And the parks and recreation department and tree warden often need volunteers to help with specific activities. You can contact Jon Dobosz at recdir@montague-ma.gov if you are interested in volunteering for parks and recreation, and Jason Kingsbury at treewarden@montague-ma.gov if you would like to volunteer to support Montague's tree inventory.

There are also often opportunities to participate in village-designated endeavors like the Montague Center Fire District, Water District, and Volunteer Fire Department as well as the Turners Falls Fire District, which runs both the Turners Falls Water Department and Turners Falls Fire Department.

If you are a resident of Montague Center and are interested in volunteering for the Fire District or the Montague Center Volunteer Fire Department, there are plenty of opportunities. To learn more, contact fire chief David Hansen at chief@montaguecenterfire.com or leave a voicemail at (413) 367-2757.

The Montague Center Water District is also a place to become involved if you are a resident of the village. The bylaws call for three commissioners, and there is one vacancy.

The Turners Falls Fire Department is a professional force, and if you are interested in volunteer or professional opportunities, you can reach out to fire chief Todd Brunelle at chief@turnersfallsfire.org.

Democracy works because people participate. We are fortunate to have an experienced, hard-working town staff and many dedicated volunteers. We hope you will consider joining us.

Leigh Rae serves on the Montague finance committee, and Judith Lorei on the cemetery commission and as a town meeting member. Both live in Montague Center.

frcoq Franklin Regional Council of Governments

FREE PIZZA & TRIVIA

Franklin Regional Council of Governments presents

"Home is Where the Heart Is"
a housing-themed* trivia night

Thursday, March 20 at 6:30 PM
at Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls

Play with teams of up to six. Learn about the new regional housing plan, and eat some 'za!

*No knowledge of housing issues necessary to succeed

OP ED

'Gulf of Mexico Day'

By KARL MEYER

GREENFIELD – Dear Mr. President,

Sadly, the gulf between us seems to keep growing. All the document purging, agency firings, and instant geographic remapping is starting to feel like an assault on my rights.

Who came up with that bizarre "Gulf of America Day" flyover proclamation on Superbowl Sunday? Had school kids sent mailbags of cards begging a change? Or was Elon having a little social engineering fun, pushing a deluge of faux AI demand? I now worry I may wake up to a new street address some morning.

We all like to party sir, but that embarrassing in-flight proclamation landed like a big nothingburger in New Orleans. The boos rivaled your cheers soon thereafter in those Big Easy, big game seats – barely a stone's throw from what everyone knows is the "Gulf of Mexico."

I think that day's wandering flight left you off-balance, with some mistaken official idea of editorial powers over the First Amendment and speech. I mean – what's next, black ops raids on library reading rooms, daytime assaults at AAA Travel; swat teams storming fourth-grade geography? Gram and gramps won't be happy having those cruise brochures torn from their weathered hands, and young Janie, Brianna, and Julio will be traumatized watching Ms. Rollins dragged off as masked men pull the Map of the World from their classroom walls. We dispensed with the all "banned in Boston" literature and language censoring way back in the last century, remember?

That "MAP RAID! Hands on the table!" stuff won't play well in the media, sir, particularly on social. Millions upon millions of maps of the Gulf of Mexico are still circulating. The public library business could prove a real hot mess – confiscating atlases, historic maps, all the dictionaries. Again, not a good look. The other night a broadcaster name-checked the Gulf of Mexico three times. A scientist referred to it as well. There's a giant hornet's nest of common speech ping-pong around there, all of it unmonitored. It's way beyond anything a new Pronoun Police Force (PPF) could handle.

Among the things I hold dear, sir, are my civil rights and a decades-old Atlas of the United States, Canada, and Mexico. It hails from the one time I glimpsed that iconic Gulf from the edge of Mobile Bay. Its centuries-old title remains printed

across that ancient basin in Times New Roman.

All the speech-twisting, terminations and censorship seems downright mean-spirited to me – some of it lobbed at longstanding international friends. Given all that, please understand the tide won't be going out on the "Gulf of Mexico" for me, sir. Ever. I may even get a tattoo.

I'll not let Google, Apple, or anyone else force words into my mouth, be *de facto* arbiters of truth, define the written word, or abridge or devalue my maps, current speech, or thinking. I'll bow to no kings. And banning the Associated Press from the White House?

I think all the censorship, and bluster, and all the instant re-geography will ultimately fall flat. The people have a history of facing down limits on language, the written word; of not yielding to fear and innuendo in this republic. Speech, publishing – a free, independent press, they're unalienable rights. I think the AP, the Constitution, and the Supreme Court will all have my back on this one.

There is time to change course, sir, and I'd like to offer an olive branch in that vein. I'm proclaiming Tuesday, March 18 "Gulf of Mexico Day." It's a "people's" holiday, tacked onto the tail end of the St. Patrick's Day carousing like a second Fat Tuesday. Celebrate with me, with us! Raise a *cerveza* or two! I think you'll be surprised how many taverns, sports bars, and pubs will be eager to join in. I'm thinking beer, drink, and burger specials – maybe fundraisers for people tossed from their jobs, or for families being summarily deported?

This one is for the "essential workers" who got us through a pandemic, and for the teachers, nurse aides, crop workers, bus drivers, librarians – the beat reporters and all the rank-and-file folks who uphold a civil society and open government, and help this democracy function each day. Boston, Detroit, New Orleans, Houston – Acapulco, Ottawa – who knows how far this might fly?

Come celebrate the Constitution, civil speech, and friendship. We'll have what the Irish call a good *craic* in the places where we share our stories, truths and plain speech – and maybe a bit of trash talk.

"Gulf of Mexico Day," sir: March 18, 2025. Mark it on the calendar. This one's headed onto the map.

Karl Meyer, an independent environmental journalist, lives in Greenfield. For more on this topic, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRQsxXcF6Gs.

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FALLS FARM from page A1

eroded destabilized soil on Falls Farm, carrying sediment into protected wetland areas both on and downstream of the farm. In the consent order MassDEP recapped its initial findings and allegations. Farm owners James and Justyne Arcoleo signed the document, agreeing not to contest those findings – while not admitting to them – and to accept liability and fully carry out all imposed conditions.

These findings included determinations that plumes of sediment observed in the Connecticut River originated on Falls Farm – a violation of the Clean Water Act – and that the farm's new irrigation system, which draws water from a protected perennial stream, was in violation of the state's Wetlands Protection Act (WPA).

MassDEP ruled that these and other alleged violations had resulted in "alteration" of protected areas. The WPA states "no person shall... fail to restore illegally altered land to its original condition" and authorizes penalties for noncompliance.

As directed by the 2024 order, Falls Farm hired an approved environmental consultant to develop a stormwater management plan for short-term site stabilization, and an approved wetlands scientist to develop a resource area restoration and mitigation plan.

However, the consent order clarifies that these consultants are still "coordinating with" MassDEP on the "details" of their as-yet-unapproved plans, and that implementation of the plans has not yet begun.

The order also credits Falls Farm for assisting Montague's public works department (DPW) in relocating a storm drain on Old Sunderland Road, and for making progress towards completing a new field delineation which will identify the boundaries of areas of the farm protected by the WPA.

Under the new order, each consultant has an April 1 deadline to submit

their final plan for agency approval.

The stormwater plan – now required to be fully implemented by October 30 – must incorporate rapidly-established vegetated buffer zone, stabilized travel surfaces, and "robust and appropriate sedimentation barriers," as well as "methods of irrigation which protect the interest of the Wetlands Protection Act."

The restoration plan, with a November 30 deadline, shall "restore and/or mitigate any alteration to areas subject to protection."

During these restoration activities and for two years after their completion, Falls Farm must maintain an "appropriate standard of care," under which "the discharge of any amount of untreated sediment-laden stormwater at any time from within the Site to any Resource Area... may be deemed noncompliance" with the order, as may inappropriate planting or cutting activities.

Through the consent order, MassDEP fined Falls Farm a civil penalty of \$39,168, though only \$7,500 must be paid, with the remainder suspended. The suspension may be immediately revoked upon any further violation.

Additionally, Falls Farm will be required to yield one of its six parcels of land – a two-acre strip in Montague lying between Meadow Road and the river – "in order to compensate for water quality impairments associated with unrecoverable sediments." By January 2026, the farm must either transfer that parcel to an agency such as the Department of Conservation Resources, place it under a conservation restriction, or place a deed restriction on it with specific conditions.

Questions emailed to Falls Farm on Monday received no response as of press time Thursday. Several neighbors of the farm declined to comment publicly on the matter, as did Montague town planner and conservation agent Maureen Pollock.



SPORTS from page A1

Andrade and Madison Fritz. Good work, ladies. See the rest of you in the fall!

Basketball

Pioneer 49 – Drury 23

On Tuesday, the Pioneer Black Panthers defeated the Drury Blue Devils at West Springfield High to earn a spot in the Division 5 state championship game.

Although the Cats didn't score their usual 70-plus points, their defense smothered the Devils, holding Drury to just two points in the second quarter and one in the third. As in most games, though, Pioneer's opponents outscored them in the fourth.

Brayden Thayer was Pioneer's top scorer with 15 points, followed by Kurt Redeker (14), Jackson Glazier (9), Alex McClelland (6), William Glazier (3), and Judah Glenn (2).

At high noon this Saturday, March 15 at the Tsongas Center in Lowell, the Panthers will attempt to win the state championship against the Hopedale Blue Raiders.

Wrestling

Franklin Tech's wrestling phenom, Mia Marigliano of Turners Falls High School, grappled in the all-New England regional championship last weekend.

The 132-pound Massachusetts champion had to wrestle six opponents in just two days, and no one said battling the best wrestlers in the Northeast was going to be easy.

In her opening match early Saturday, Marigliano shut out Audrey Shaw of Bedford, New Hampshire 6-0. Later that day she lost a close 4-3 decision against Olivia Hopkins of Rocky Hill, then won her last match of the day against a familiar foe: Lindsey Lincoln of South Shore, whom she had defeated a week earlier in the state tournament.

Early on Sunday she bested another fighter she saw at the Massachusetts finals, Melanie Miles of Putnam. She then faced off against Keira Lynch of Salem. In a high-scoring match, Marigliano lost by a major decision, 19-8.

In her final match of the weekend, Marigliano lost against Hopkins for the second time in two days, sending her back to Turners with only her state championship belt to show for it.

Football

Last Thursday, Franklin Tech presented their awards to athletes who stood out on the football field. The two Coaches' Awards went to Travis Eastman and Tyler Yetter. Eastman finished his career with 36 solo tackles and 11 assists, while Yetter, who stepped in as quarterback in his senior year, passed for 487 yards, rushed for 204, threw seven passing TDs, and ran five in himself.

The Lineman Award went to center/guard Dillon Laffond. Although they don't keep stats for offensive linemen, on defense he made 13 solo tackles in his senior year. The defensive MVP went to senior Madix Whitman, who made 45 solo tackles and 15 assists.

The offensive MVP, the team MVP, the Jim Leadership Award, and the Intercounty League MVP all went to Josiah Little. It was only the second time a Franklin Tech player has won the Intercounty League MVP, according to coach Joe Gamache, the first being Efrain Vasquez in 1997.

What can I say about Mr. Little? He averaged 115.5 rushing yards per game for four years, giving him 5,197 yards on the ground while scoring 46 touchdowns.

If any of the magic from this senior class has rubbed off on the underclassmen, the Eagles will continue to have a very successful program.



NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Water Tower Removal Not in This Year's Plan

By KATIE NOLAN

On Monday night the Erving selectboard, capital planning committee, and finance committee continued preparing the town's FY'26 budget in advance of the annual town meeting on May 14.

For FY'26, the town estimates \$14.9 million is available for appropriating, with \$13.1 million coming from local taxes. Certified free cash – the surplus allowed to roll over from the previous year's budget – and state and local receipts account for the other \$1.8 million in revenue.

The general stabilization fund has a balance of approximately \$11.9 million.

The capital planning committee recommended funding 13 projects, for a total of approximately \$1.2 million. These include a new police cruiser, a down-payment for a new pumper/tanker for the fire department, cemetery expansion, roofing at Erving Elementary School (EES), wastewater lab equipment, software licensing, and work on Church and North streets.

Most of the funding for these projects – \$1.1 million – would be from the capital stabilization fund, which has a current balance of approximately \$1.2 million. Other recommended projects would be funded from the wastewater enterprise fund, the water enterprise fund, or state Chapter 90 funding.

The committee noted that EES will be applying for a grant from the state school building authority for the roof work.

Draft articles for the annual town meeting propose moving approximately \$1.1 million from free cash, plus about \$85,000 in unspent funds from closed projects, into the capital stabilization fund.

The capital planning committee decided not to recommend another nine potential FY'26 projects, including a trailer for the water department, work on Bridge Street and Maple Avenue, internet security upgrades, removal of the water tower at Riverside Park, and infrastructure improvements on Care Drive, but said departments could submit requests to fund these in FY'27.

Capital planning member Benjamin Fellows suggested that an amount equal to a percentage of the annual budget be put into capital stabilization each year. The selectboard also discussed creating separate capital stabilization funds for the water and wastewater departments.

Charter Changes

The selectboard reviewed an early draft of the annual town meeting warrant, which did not include any budget amounts. The board told town administrator Bryan Smith to start filling in these numbers for continued discussion at the March 17 and March 24 selectboard meetings. The board plans to finalize the warrant by their March 31 meeting.

Franklin Regional Council of Government (FRCOG) executive director Linda Dunlavy wrote to Erving, and other Franklin County towns,

asking for a warrant article regarding changes to the FRCOG charter. Any changes to this document must be approved by two-thirds majorities in two-thirds of the FRCOG towns, and according to selectboard chair Jacob Smith the charter has not been updated since it was written in 1997.

Under the proposed changes, FRCOG would no longer be the arbiter of unresolved dog hearings; the town's representative on the FRCOG council could be any municipal employee or finance official instead of only a selectboard member; a town could have more than one member on the executive committee; the methods for a town outside Franklin County joining FRCOG and a Franklin County town withdrawing would be clarified; the regional planning agency section of the charter would be made compliant with state law; and future charter changes would be possible by majority vote, rather than two-thirds vote.

Other Business

The selectboard reviewed and approved the job description for the senior services director and profiles of the town and library, part of the applicant search process. The job description was revised to emphasize collaboration by the director with other departments to support programs for residents of all ages.

Applications for the position are due April 8. The board approved a contract with FRCOG to prepare the town's hazard mitigation plan, for an amount not to exceed \$20,000.

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WENDELL from page A1

if the construction grant's source was federal. Delorey said it was a state grant, and he had seen no red flags, but he added that the state might be funding that program with federal money.

The board voted to pay FRCOG \$2,000 from rural development funds for procurement on the bridge project.

Delorey said the town has been fortunate in receiving grants and had completed several projects, and warned that time is arriving for him to slow down in his role as project coordinator, but he continued with his report.

Maps disagree about a portion of the line that divides Wendell from New Salem north of Swift River School. Franklin County maps show a bump in the town lines that puts three houses – and 0.6 miles of road – in Wendell, while town maps show a straight line that leaves those houses and the section of road, in New Salem. The homeowners consider themselves New Salem residents, pay property tax to New Salem, and may vote in New Salem. Neither town can receive Chapter 90 money for maintaining that stretch of road.

To make the line match what residents have understood for years, Delorey said FRCOG has to discon-

tinue that portion of Wendell Road, and that both Wendell and New Salem town meetings will then have to accept a new straight town line that leaves the houses and road segment in New Salem.

Still No Tax Hearing

Rural Resource Group (RRG) consultant Adam Hemingway Zoomed in and said, for the third time, that Wendell's annual tax classification hearing had been postponed because the town did not yet own the required software.

The least expensive workable software costs \$10,925, and the amount provided in the budget is \$8,200. A town meeting vote would be required to transfer the \$2,725 difference from another account.

Town accountant Erin Degnan said she would be OK with a short-term overspending from the account. The board voted to allow the assessors to move forward with the software update, and consult with the finance committee about where best to find the extra money.

Common Beauty

Assistant town engineer Alistair MacMartin, who also did much of the restoration of the Wendell Meetinghouse, came in person to bring up lighting on the south common, across Center Street from the Meet-

inghouse. The building has a light over its rear door, but when the door opens it casts a shadow exactly where people need to see as they leave the building.

A second floodlight on the side of the building would solve that problem, but would be ugly, and MacMartin said he wanted to keep the area attractive.

Another option, running a wire from the Meetinghouse under Center Street, would be much more involved, MacMartin said. The attractive light pole he found costs \$5,000, enough to give the Friends of the Meetinghouse pause. His concern is to provide adequate light for Meetinghouse patrons and still keep the site attractive. He left the discussion open.

MacMartin shared that he did not think the free box added to the site's beauty. He said Sherry Martinez, who maintains the free box, was willing for it to move to the small parking area behind the senior center.

Wings suggested that someone could beautify the free box, or make a new, more attractive one.

Continuing his talk of aesthetics, MacMartin said the north common grass needs attention. Neighbor Geoff Richardson estimated \$200 for lime, \$50 for seeds, and compost for an unnamed price, and offered

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the use of his spreader.

MacMartin said he would spread the lime and seed, and asked the town for \$250, suggesting that compost money might be raised with donations. The board approved spending \$250 from the property maintenance account, with Budine abstaining because her husband's store sells lime and seed.

Other Business


MacMartin, emboldened, said he also felt the interior walls of the town hall could be painted a more cheerful color. The ceiling paint, possibly old enough to be lead-based, is peeling, and the stamped metal behind it might be lead foil. A historic designation for the town

hall might increase the cost of that work, but might also provide a source of grant money.

The first step would be to get an estimate for both wall and ceiling paint. MacMartin suggested using an historic color for the walls.

Amid questions about enforcement, the selectboard approved parking regulations that prohibit overnight parking on streets and in town parking lots.

The board drew up a list of topics to bring to a consultation offered by state senator Jo Comerford. Budine brought up school and school transportation reimbursement, regionalization, and rural aid.

Lisa Hoag was appointed to the historic commission. 

GILL from page A1

Sewer Surge

Acting as sewer commissioners and joined by appointed sewer member Jeff Suprenant, the board raised the minimum sewer bill from \$4 to \$75 per quarter.

"It's going to be a shocker for those who were only paying \$4 per bill," said Snedeker.

Town administrator Ray Purington calculated that before this change, some properties in the Riverside district were charged less than \$60 a year to have water and sewer connected to their buildings. "Both of those systems have to be maintained year after year after year," he said.

"I can't believe we were doing that," said Snedeker. "It's not just about usage. If you don't use it that's up to you, but it adds a tremendous amount of value to your house, and that's not being recouped."

In the last billing cycle, two Gill properties received the minimum bill and five others had usage bills below \$75.

Other changes to Gill's sewer billing are likely to follow. The commission is exploring moving from a minimum bill to a "connection charge," which is paid by everyone connected to the Riverside sewer system regardless of usage. The connection charge would cover fixed costs – expenses like printing bills and payroll, which recur regardless of how much water goes down the drains.

In addition to this, users would continue to pay a fee based on the amount of water they used, but the rate would likely decrease. In Purington's first calculations, the connection charge would be \$117.40 per user per quarter, and the usage rate an additional 24 cents per cubic foot, down from the current rate of over 35 cents per cubic foot.

The issue of minimum bills, connection charges, potential new grease regulations, and sewer rates for the upcoming year will be discussed at the next sewer commission meeting on Monday, April 7.

Will Federal Grants Last?

Monday's meeting was also a public hearing on an upcoming community development block grant application. Gill and New Salem are seeking \$900,000 to help residents rehabilitate their homes.

However, concerns were raised about the future of the arm of the federal government that administers the grants. The Trump administration has proposed dramatic staffing cuts to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, including an 84% cut of the arm of HUD that oversees the community block grants.

Brian McHugh, director of community development at the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, explained that the grant "benefits lower moderate income residents in each of the towns." Projects covered include lead paint remediation, windows, roofs, siding, septic system, and plumbing repairs.

"The program is basically meant to correct code violations," said McHugh. The funds are given to homeowners in the form of no-interest deferred payment loans, which are recuperated when the property changes ownership. The loan amount also declines each year, disappearing after 15 years.

While \$630,000 of the requested grant would go toward rehabilitation, \$270,000 would cover administrative work performed by McHugh's agency, such as inspection and supervision.

McHugh said Gill was in a good position to receive the funds, but upcoming

changes to the federal office could have unforeseen consequences.

"This is all assuming there's anybody at the federal level to actually press 'Send' to send us some money," said Snedeker. "The funds might be there, but there might not be anybody there."

Other Business

Selectboard members worried about finding residents to run for open seats in the town's upcoming election on May 19. After 15 years, Crochier has announced he will not be running for reelection, and his seat is on the ballot.


"What are we going to do if we have anybody pull papers?" asked Snedeker.

Other positions up for election are board of health member, assessor, cemetery commissioner, and library trustee. Those interested in running for these positions may call the town clerk's office at (413) 863-8103.

The town will be hand-counting the ballots at this election, rather than using the more expensive voting machines.

The board approved a \$1,000 payment for the fire department to start the process of migrating to new software. It currently uses two separate systems to report incidents and log training and maintenance reports as required by federal law. The new software will replace both of these systems, and will also provide additional features, such as storing information about hazards and access locations for buildings in town.

Sticking with the current software would cost \$5,620 annually, while switching to the new software will be \$6,000. "\$380 more for the extra features I think is reasonable," said Purington.

The rec committee will host a barn dance at the town hall on the afternoon of Sunday, March 30. 

GMRSD from page A1

Jenay Hall warned against cutting the curriculum position. "I... grow more frustrated each year," she said, "when our admin team makes significant budget decisions without seeking and considering the perspectives of the staff members who... will be greatly impacted."

Former member Leslie Cogswell urged the committee to find an "alternative solution" that would allow school resource officer (SRO) Dan Miner to stay on.

"Cuts cannot be the solution every year," school librarian Ramona LaTronica argued.


Miner, a Montague police officer who serves primarily in the schools under the SRO program, spoke to the committee directly. "I know everybody's addressed the money thing, if it's possible to make other cuts – I understand that," he said. "My mother sat on [your] side of the table for many years."

Montague member Carol Jacobs, a Greenfield elementary principal and former superintendent, said the teaching and learning director was "a tough cut" and "a really pivotal position." "I'm going to support it, but I'm really hoping that we can dig deeper and find the money for those positions," she said.

The mood was somber. "This falls on me," said superintendent Brian Beck, explaining that principals declined to give feedback on cuts – "I get it," he said – and that his priority was to preserve "student-facing" jobs.

The committee unanimously approved a final FY'26 budget of \$24,953,853, with \$500,000 coming from the excess and deficiency account. Oakes and business manager Joanne Blier clarified that if enough savings are found within that budget, the layoffs could theoretically be reduced, but the committee decided against enlarging the number as it already entails a nearly 13% increase in the contribution asked of the town of Gill.

"We have to hit up the state," said Montague member Heather Katsoulis, urging listeners to send letters to Healey. Blier shared information about a session of the legislature's Joint Committee on Ways & Means to be held Monday, March 24 at UMass Amherst.

Beck said he was planning to attend, along with other superintendents. "I'm hoping to go as well," said Oakes. 

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INCUMBENTS from page A1

15 years. Crochier has served on numerous other local and regional committees, and is currently employed by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments as a health inspector for towns that opt in to the cooperative service.

On November 18, according to an article in this newspaper, Crochier said he had accomplished most of the priorities he had when he first joined the board, and that he was announcing his retirement early to give residents time to consider filling the empty seat.

"If you're doing it for an agenda, then don't run," he said at that time. "We all have somewhat of an agenda, but if you're doing it for that one item, it's too much of a commitment for that."

As of this week, no one has indicated they will run for the seat, according to town clerk Doreen Stevens.

The election will take place Monday, May 19 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Gill town hall. Nomination papers for all elected offices are available until 6 p.m. on March 27 and must be returned with 20 signatures by 4 p.m. on Monday, March 31. Besides the selectboard, there is an open seat on the board of health.

Scott Bastarache, who was first elected to the Erving selectboard in 2016, has chosen not to return for a fourth term.

"I have come to the understanding that I only have so much bandwidth and need to prioritize my time elsewhere in the coming years," Bastarache told the *Reporter*. "The role, when done at a high level, takes a lot of commitment and time to ensure you are giving the town and its residents what they deserve."

Though Bastarache first joined the board in 2016, he left for almost two years, and was then re-elected in 2019 and 2022.

According to Erving town clerk Richard Newton, the election will be held May 5, and nomination papers need to be turned in at town hall by 5 p.m. next Monday, March 17. As of this writing, according to Newton, there are no candidates for the seat.

After five years on the Wendell selectboard, Gillian Budine has announced she is not running to keep her seat. In a brief interview, Budine said she is very committed to the town, but does not have the time

to serve due to family and work demands. She emphasized that her retirement had nothing to do with policy or political frustrations.

As of this week one candidate, Adam Feldman, has taken out papers to run for the seat. Feldman told the *Reporter* he had been "recruited" to throw in his hat, though he did not say by whom.

According to town clerk Anna Wetherby, the final date to take out papers in Wendell is this Saturday, March 15, and they must be returned by next Monday, March 17. The election will be held Monday, May 5.

Chris Boutwell, first elected to the Montague selectboard in 2010, was the only incumbent to tell us he had taken out papers for re-election. Boutwell also served on the board of health from 1997 until 2021, and currently serves as the town's representative to the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District.

Interim town clerk Tina Sulda reported this week that no one besides Boutwell had taken out nomination papers. They are available at the clerk's office until March 31, and must be turned in with signatures of 48 Montague voters by the next day, Tuesday, April 1, by 5 p.m. The election will be held Tuesday, May 20.

Leverett is the only town in Massachusetts that still elects town officers directly at its annual town meeting. Nominees, both incumbents and challengers, are nominated from the floor, and often make speeches and even respond to questions. This year's annual town meeting will be held Saturday, May 3 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Though candidates do not take out nomination papers as in other towns, incumbents typically announce in the town newsletter whether they intend to run again, and volunteers for unopposed seats often announce their candidacies via the newsletter or a townwide email listserv.

Patricia Duffy, whose term expires this spring, told us she plans to run for re-election. Duffy, who has served on the board for three years, indicated that it takes that long to become comfortable with local policies and processes.

"It's a lot of work, but I wouldn't say that's a con," she told the *Reporter*. "Almost everything in your life is based on your local government working."



NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Four-Town Fight Rages On Over Regional School Costs

By GEORGE BRACE

Leverett's selectboard and finance committee got down to brass tacks during a lengthy budget discussion on Tuesday and finalized much of the town's proposed FY'26 budget, but are still awaiting news before they can review the two largest components: the Leverett Elementary School (LES) budget, and the town's contribution to the Amherst-Pelham regional school district.

Drafts of both school budgets were included in the overall town budget, but as of Tuesday, contract negotiations with LES teachers had not been completed, and Leverett's proposed assessment through the "four-town meeting" process with the other towns in the regional district, Amherst, Pelham, and Shutesbury, had not been determined.

Tilman Wolf, Leverett's representative to the regional school committee, briefly updated the board on the negotiations before leaving to attend a school committee meeting taking place simultaneously.

Wolf said he expected "significant cuts" of \$900,000 to \$1.3 million from level services in the district budget, but also 6% to 8% increases in costs beyond the district's control, resulting in an overall increase.

In addition, Wolf warned that a change being floated by Amherst in the method used to assess costs to member towns could result in Leverett's contribution, which was \$1.6 million in FY'25, rising by as much as 13.7%.

Selectboard member Jed Proujansky said a 13.7% increase was a "non-starter," and reiterated that the board had already agreed to a maximum increase of 6.5%.

Wolf explained that part of Amherst's reasoning in seeking to abandon the "guardrail" assessment method, which assures that no town's contribution rises by more than 4%, was the opinion that Leverett has benefited over several years by its student enrollment growth not being adequately represented in its assessment, and that this year's jump should balance that out.

Chair Tom Hankinson said he was "inclined to go along with" Proujansky on the 6.5% maximum, and concerned that "next year, or the year after, when things aren't working out for the other towns," they will switch to another method resulting in high costs to Leverett.

Fin com member Nancy Grossman expressed dissatisfaction with the regional school committee coming in with proposed changes "at the last second" again after doing the same last year. She said a "meeting of the minds" had been reached several weeks ago, "but here we are again, weeks later, rehashing the whole thing."

Grossman also said change was needed in how schools are funded overall.

Fin com chair Phil Carter argued that Leverett should push for the three smaller towns' assessments increasing by 6.5% and Amherst's by 4.5% to 5%, arguing that this would provide a viable budget.

Fin com member Bethany Seeger

said the towns "need to rip the Band-Aid off" the argument over assessment methods in the future, but that 13.7% hike would be "a really high amount to expect our town to pay."

In other school budget-related news, fin com member Isaiah Robison commented that Leverett school committee members had not "gotten the hint" of his offer at a previous meeting to take care of a \$3,500 courtyard job budget item for free, and that they should give him a call.

Big Overages

The selectboard voted to increase the fire department's budget by \$4,588, or 8.9%, a compromise between the guidance of a 2.5% maximum increase for departments and an initially requested increase of 15.7%.

Seeger said that rising costs for necessary or mandated expenses, not discretionary costs such as uniforms, were driving the budget figures.

Board member Patricia Duffy warned that these rising costs may result in deficits, and suggested the department might pursue community fundraising.

Hankinson commented that he saw a degree of "inflexibility" in the department not working to adhere to the board's budget guidance to the extent other departments did.

The board opted to increase funding for a Council on Aging coordinator position enough to move it from four to 10 hours per week, rather than to the 19 hours initially requested. Hankinson said he understood the COA's desire to be more "robust," and wanting the town to have "skin in the game" by providing more funding, but said the position needs to be better "fleshed out" before making such a large jump.

Robison agreed that an incremental approach was preferable.

The board also reduced the COA's request to increase a general expense line, which stands at \$342 this year, to \$1,142 rather than \$2,000. Officials wondered aloud whether the COA was using grant money it had been awarded, or if it was piling up.

Capital Plan, Special Articles

The board approved sending articles to town meeting for two expenses from the capital plan: \$75,000 for a police cruiser, and \$250,000 for repairs to LES's sprinkler system.

Duffy said she had met with a contractor for the sprinkler system and was told the repairs would include "state-of-the-art" improvements and should last for "decades." She noted that a failure more extensive than one that occurred several years ago could be "catastrophic," and that the cost of replacing the system rather than repairing it would be \$1.5 million.

The board also approved a series of special financial articles, many of which were "bookkeeping" measures, but rejected several others.

An article seeking \$11,000 to continue a mosquito monitoring program was removed. The program was originally joined to help the town "opt out" of possible aerial pesticide spraying by the state, but Duffy argued that the risk of spraying in western Massachusetts

is currently low, and that if the town needs to fight a spraying order, data from surrounding towns which are members of the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District (PVMCD) might help.

Duffy suggested skipping the monitoring this year and looking into joining the PVMCD next year, which would cost \$5,000.

The board also decided against a \$13,500 article to repair a set of crumbling concrete stairs outside LES, choosing instead to ask the highway department to look into removing them. It was noted that an ADA ramp was already nearby, and suggested that kids would "love running down a grassy hill" replacing the steps.

Hankinson said the board may be able to take care of the situation through the highway department without a budget article at town meeting.

Field Building

The re-formed *ad hoc* committee for the future of the Field library building presented a report on its work. Member Maureen Ippolito began by saying the committee does not want to see an article to sell the building at this year's town meeting.

Hankinson replied that the selectboard was not considering one.

Ippolito said that community preservation commission (CPC) chair Danielle Barshak had attended a meeting to advise the group on what the CPC wants to see in an assessment of the building for possible funding consideration. The committee is planning to use this information in soliciting an assessment from architectural firms. The group also plans to solicit septic and well estimates.

Once these assessments have been made, said Ippolito, the committee will provide options for future use of the building at town forums, and continue its work based on the feedback it receives.

Other Business

Franklin Regional Council of Governments representatives Laurie Scarbrough and Jack Carolan presented a final prioritized list of 18 projects for potential funding under the state's Complete Streets grant program.

The top three chosen were pedestrian crossing improvements at the town hall, post office, and church area on Montague and Putney roads; crossing improvements in the North Leverett Historic District; and a shared-use pedestrian and bicycle pathway from the town hall to the public library.

The selectboard approved the list, which is available via a link on the town website.

The board also discussed areas of interest to provide to the state's Community One Stop for Growth grant portal for potential funding. Ideas included a town center revisioning study, exploring affordable housing possibilities, the Dudleyville Road project, and evaluating and repairing bridges.

The board voted to add \$100 to the fund for childcare at town meeting on May 3, for a total of \$300.

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THE SPIRIT SHOPPE

SCOUTS from page A1

are expected to join this month.

Gottlieb, who first became an adult volunteer in Girl Scouting in 1992 and has been a troop volunteer, a service team member, and a Council trainer, describes the Daisy program as multifaceted. The girls earn colorful petals of the Daisy, which are ironed or sewn onto each Scout's vest, pinafore, or tunic after she completes simple activities or shares stories that highlight the Girl Scout Promise.

The program, Gottlieb explains, offers official pins, badges, and journeys.

One example of a pin the Daisy Girl Scout can earn is the Cookie Entrepreneur Family pin. The scout sets a goal for her sales and with troop members for troop sales; she chooses how to reach her goal; she practices with money to make change; she role-plays talking to customers and completes that task. She improves her organizational skills by tracking important dates, being honest and fair, and using resources wisely.

The girls in Troop 65541 are currently working towards the Eco Learner badge. They will discuss how to protect nature, how to keep living things safe when they go on a hike, and how to protect nature from trash.

Recently, according to Gottlieb, the girls voted to go on a hike. By planning the trip, including what they should bring – a water bottle, change of clothes, and a change of socks – packing for it with a parent or guardian, and completing the hike, they will also earn the Trail Adventure badge.

Journeys are themed projects that end with a "Take Action" project. For example, for the Think Like An Engineer Journey, Daisies find out how engineers use design thinking to solve problems and then complete three hands-on challenges such as designing a fairy house, an air-powered car, and a way to get across a canyon. They then plan and carry out a Take Action project that helps others.

"Girl Scouts is an amazing program that provides girls with many opportunities. It helps to instill confidence and to have the courage to try anything and accomplish what they set out to do," says Gottlieb. "The Girl Scouts' motto of building girls of courage, confidence, and character is satisfied through the program. And it's fun!"

Living the Promise

On a recent Thursday, Gottlieb sets up the portable dry-erase board on a table. In white marker, she outlines the activities, connecting



Make new friends: Troop 65541 debriefs with a closing circle last week.

each activity with the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

After an opening circle to welcome the scouts and set the intention for the meeting, the girls write cards to a sister troop in Los Angeles. This activity directly aligns with the Girl Scout being "considerate and caring," a key component of the Girl Scout Promise.

"Circles," Gottlieb says, "promote transitions from one activity to another, and reinforce that all members are part of a cohesive, supportive group."

Later, the girls plant nasturtium seeds in toilet paper tubes, and set them aside.

It's time to partner up and explore the animal exhibits at the Great Falls Discovery Center. Their assignment: buddy up and find an animal to discuss. With an adult volunteer leading the way, the girls, brimming with anticipation, joyfully skip toward the exhibit.

Gottlieb joins the girls in an exhibit area. They stop to look at the wildlife habitat dioramas, including fish that are native to the Connecticut River. The Eastern Spadefoot Toad catches one girl's attention. She interacts with the exhibit, opening a lid to reveal a replica of the toad staring back at her.

"They learn little things," Gottlieb remarks. "This is what scouting is all about."

Sarah Lowe of Leverett is a registered adult volunteer. Lowe is quick to share that she was a Brownie, and her mother was a Girl Scout. She enrolled her daughter in Troop 65541 last fall.

"There are not a lot of groups like this," Lowe says. "Yes, there are camps, sports, and gymnastics, but nothing that involves crafting, community, and caring." She says her daughter is excited about the group and is engaged.

Philip Grandin, of Montague Center, says he appreciates the service-focused skills his daughter is

learning. "It is important to help one's community," he says. "I love the idea of an organization that emphasizes service to the community, and that we are responsible to one another."

Closing Circle

The girls and the adult volunteers return to the Great Hall. Gottlieb corrals everyone, asking the girls to sit on the floor in a circle. They talk about the fish and animals they saw. Two girls, with their arms resting on each other's shoulders, listen as Gottlieb speaks softly.

Several minutes later, it's time to end the meeting. Gottlieb stands; the girls spring to their feet, running in different directions and then rejoining their peers and the adults as Gottlieb encourages everyone to be part of the friendship circle. They all join hands. Gottlieb leads the group in the Girl Scout song: "Make new friends, and keep the old. One is silver and the other is gold..."

Later, asked about the girls' reactions about the troop, Gottlieb pauses.

"They come in with big smiles," she says. "They seem to enjoy what they are doing. By having them come from different schools, they are expanding their ability to make friends. They seem to like it, and I am thrilled. I am hoping that each time we add another girl or two that they will be of the same belief: that this is an opportunity to gain more friendships, more knowledge, more experiences."

Gottlieb reflects on the Girl Scout Promise and Law.

"The skills they are learning," she says, "make them successful citizens in school: being honest and fair; being responsible for what they say and do; respecting people and each other and respecting themselves. These are important skills that go into becoming a whole person. It starts at a young age, and it keeps going."

TRINCHERO PHOTO

MB

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

Here's the way it was on March 12, 2015: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

theater does not plan to apply.

Drips, Burst Pipes, And Ice Dams

Shea Operator Bows Out

The non-profit that operates the historic, town-owned Shea Theater says it will not pay utility bills beyond June 30. Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio said, "We have a lease through December 31, and one of the obligations is that they pay the utility bill." If they exit earlier, he continued, "maybe we can all work something out."

The town has issued a request for proposals for use of the theater, due April 22, but the

Winter weather and water are testing the limits of Erving town buildings. At the March 9 select-board meeting, highway superintendent Glenn McCrory discussed ways to deal with a frozen water supply line into the senior/community center. Library director Barbara Friedman reported ice dams and water dripping into the library.

In a non-weather-related water problem, a water pipe in Erving Elementary School's second-grade classroom burst, displacing three classes.

20 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on March 10, 2005: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

fence and No Trespassing signs further discourage pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

Grave Issue in Millers Falls

At the Montague selectboard meeting on March 7, an attempt was made to gain ground on the contentious issue of public access to the Dry Hill Cemetery in Millers Falls.

James Senn, whose land abuts both sides of Dry Hill Road along Wendell Road as far back as the cemetery, told the board his grandfather had blocked off the public road long ago. Since then, it has been difficult for relatives, genealogists, or sightseers to visit the graves without traveling a washed-out side road. An electric

Board member Allen Ross said, "The town has to have access to its cemetery."

Waiting for Bohemians

Flocks of plump robins and sleek cedar waxwings love the ornamental fruit trees wise community planners have placed in the tree belts. At the foot of the Third Street hill, the birds are enjoying the fruit of the Washington hawthorne that hangs on the tree through winter.

So far this year, bohemian waxwings, straying from their wintering grounds in the north-central states, have not been seen in town.

150 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on March 10, 1875: News from the Turners Falls Reporter's archive.

misfortune to have about \$1000 stolen from his house by burglars one night last week. No clue has been obtained of the robbers.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

G. Henry McCoy is travelling for his health. He is now in Zoar.

A gentleman in Boston has made application for \$25,000 worth of stock in the new bank.

Applications for the cashier-ship of the new bank are quite numerous.

There is now over four feet of snow on the level, with a fair to middling prospect of as much more.

Mr. Richard Clapp has a very desirable tenement to let in his fine brick block on the Avenue.

The Rev. Mr. Moors is to repeat his lecture on Rome in the Methodist Chapel, this evening.

S.M. Redding has opened a dry and fancy goods store, in De-Wolf's Block, Second Street.

The Montague Paper Company have more orders than they can possibly fill. Their book papers are the most celebrated for excellence of any in the world.

Geo. Green of Riverside had the

The ladies of the Baptist Mite Society will hold a fair and festival at the Baptist chapel March 16. No charge for admission. Supper will be served at 7 o'clock.

The dog fund, amounting to \$210, has been paid over to the Library Association. It would be an excellent idea to have a reading room in connection with the library, and if nothing better to keep it open two evenings in the week.

A fox made his appearance in the village on Saturday, and was surrounded by about half the population, but he broke through the circle and trotted off. Three or four men followed him with unloaded guns, but they didn't shoot him much.

Mrs. E.A. Wyman, an amateur artist of merit, has just finished an excellent oil painting of Turners Falls, as seen from Factory Hollow. She has recently painted some very fine scenes, and has at present on the easel a strikingly natural fruit piece.



Troop Welcomes Members – and Volunteers

TURNERS FALLS – Girl Scout Troop 65541 welcomes new members. Membership is \$35 annually, with financial assistance available to ensure all girls have the opportunity to participate. No prior experience is necessary. For more information, email info@gscwm.org or call (413) 584-2602.

"We welcome adult volunteers," Nancy Gottlieb tells the Reporter. "There are so many ways to volunteer: working with a troop as a leader/coleader/first aider/camper/cookie manager or on an occasional basis, teaching troop(s) something you are knowledgeable about such as first aid, drawing, hiking, robotics, or volunteering with the Council. A program consultant volunteers with the Council, and adult volunteers can contact the consultant for more knowledge in the consultant's areas of expertise."

There are fixed requirements, including a CORI check for those working with girls. "Adult registration includes



TRINCHERO PHOTO

available trainings and insurance coverage, and supports Girl Scouting," Gottlieb says. Information, and registration forms, are available at www.gscwm.org.

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Cake-Hauling Bids Roll In

By JEFF SINGLETON

Sludge and dirty water highlighted a Montague selectboard meeting on Monday, the board's briefest meeting in recent memory. Clean water facility (CWF) director Chelsea Little reported that she had issued a request for proposals for hauling away the sludge solids the waste plant produces.

Later, the board authorized assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller to apply for a grant to begin to address a blocked culvert on Meadow Road.

Little presented on the bidding process to dispose of sludge "cake," defined as the solid material removed from sewage during the treatment process and then further dewatered. The bidding started last Thursday and will end Thursday, April 3. "I do have a lot of interest from multiple organizations in the region," Little said. "That's always good news, because we want it to be really competitive."

Facilities to dispose of sludge solids have become rare, with the town's cake currently going to a plant in Connecticut. Asked whether the proposals must state the destination of the sludge, Little said that while bidders do need to state where they will take it, this is not one of the criteria for evaluating the proposals.

The search for a hauler comes in the context of a proposal to compost Montague's sludge, as well as a significant amount from other towns in the region, at a new facility, probably at the end of Sandy Lane behind the town transfer station.

Last spring the engineering firm Weston & Sampson presented several costly scenarios for a facility that it estimated would generate a net revenue in 20 to 30 years. Under the preferred scenario, the town would not only reduce or eliminate the cost of hauling sludge, but significantly increase the revenue it receives from other towns for processing.

At that time the engineering firm estimated that construction could begin this year and that the facility could open in 2026.

The CWF already receives liquid sludge from neighboring towns for processing. Between July 2023 and June 2024 this service generated \$83,281 toward the plant's operations.

One question about the composting facility is the ultimate destination of the product, as land application of composted municipal sludge is controversial. Connecticut and Maine have already banned land application, and the Vermont and Massachusetts legislatures have been considering restrictions. A letter from a Wendell resident in the June 27, 2024 *Montague Reporter* wondered why the town is considering a proposal that would "spread toxic chemicals

throughout our farmlands, gardens, parks and other open lands."

The Montague facility would likely need to test sludge destined for composting for levels of potentially dangerous PFAS chemicals, according to Weston & Sampson engineers.

In other news, Little reported that the treatment plant may be able to eliminate the use of town water for chlorination. Last year the plant received a very large bill from the Turners Falls water department, and staff have been unable to pinpoint the cause of the problem, whether a faulty meter or leaks in the system.

Little told the selectboard on Monday that her crew "had pressure-tested the line, but thankfully there was no leak." They then looked to see if "the infrastructure we have" can feed the chlorine without using town water, and determined that recently-installed pumps should be able to do so.

Little reviewed the monthly testing data on the effluent the plant sends into the Connecticut River. The plant met most of the criteria set by its state and federal licenses, with the exception of the reduction of biological oxygen demand (BOD), a measure of the wastewater's potential to consume oxygen, typically a sign of bacterial presence. She attributed this to the temporary removal of one of the facility's two chlorine tanks for emergency maintenance, and said she had informed regulators of the problem.

"They could potentially find us in violation and send us an order of non-compliance, like a year from now, which is what they tend to do when they actually get to things," she said. "Or they could not..."

Little and the selectboard set a date of April 14 to review proposed updates to the town's sewer use policies, in response to new regulations under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System.

Bridges & Culverts

On the culvert front, Nolan-Zeller requested that the board authorize him to apply to the state Division of Ecological Restoration for a grant to begin planning a project to rebuild a clogged culvert under Meadow Road. The culvert covers Cranberry Pond Brook, a long, winding stream that travels from Cranberry Pond in Sunderland to the Connecticut River.

Nolan-Zeller said the agency issues grants for "some site work and assessment of the brook," not for design and construction. A different project, to replace the South Ferry Road culvert over the Sawmill River, was completed last fall.

Town administrator Walter Ramsey, sharing several pictures of the Meadow Road culvert clogged by silt and vegetation, said it "has to handle a lot more water than it was designed to take," including a "rush

of water" that backs up from the nearby Connecticut River during high-water periods.

"Good. Step one of - I'll be optimistic, and say five," said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz as the board voted to authorize Nolan-Zeller to apply for the grant.

The assistant town administrator said he had attended a "kickoff meeting," along with public works superintendent Sam Urkiel, for the Eleventh Street bridge reconstruction project, which is scheduled to begin this spring. The contractor for the renovation, which is mandated by the state Department of Transportation, is Davenport Trucking.

The bridge, which connects Avenue A to the "Patch" neighborhood, will remain open during construction, although often reduced to one lane of traffic.

Other Business

Wearing their "personnel board" hats, the selectboard members endorsed a 20% incentive pay increase for police officer James Ruddock due to his completion of a bachelor's degree in criminal justice at the University of Southern New Hampshire. They also removed sergeant Jacob Dlugosz from 111F, injured-on-duty, status, effective retroactively to March 7.

Ramsey announced that the Gill-Montague regional school district intends to apply, along with an unnamed non-profit organization, for a grant to "improve" the pollinator garden near the Sheffield Elementary School parking lot. He requested the board's permission for the application, since the garden is on town land.

Kuklewicz noted that he had received complaints about the garden from a neighbor because the garden looked like "unkempt grass" when it was first created. He said he had seen the garden improve over the last summer, as "seeming more like wildflowers... attracting things, which helped." He also said it looked better after the edges were mown.

The board unanimously voted to endorse the application.

At the end of the meeting the board retired into an executive session to discuss the property at 16 Canal Road, the address of a small hydroelectric plant whose walls are propped up by the surrounding Strathmore paper mill complex, which the town intends to demolish. As previously reported in the *Montague Reporter*, the cost of stabilizing or rebuilding the hydro plant, operated by the Canadian-owned company Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, may total \$10 million, nearly as much as earlier estimates for the entire Strathmore demolition.

The next Montague selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 17.

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPENINGS

Nomination papers for the annual town elections, to be held on Monday, May 19, 2025 (Gill) and Tuesday, May 20, 2025 (Montague), for School Committee seats are now available at the Gill-Montague Regional School Superintendent's Office, 35 Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls. Completed nomination papers are due in the Superintendent's Office no later than 4:00 p.m. on Monday, March 31, 2025.

Please note that all papers must be picked up and returned to the Superintendent's Office and not the Town Clerk's Office.

There is one 3-year Gill School Committee seat open. There are three Montague School Committee seats open: one 1-year, and two 3-year.

For more information or questions, please contact Tara McCarthy at (413) 863-9324 or tara.mccarthy@gmsrd.org.

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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

MARCH 13, 2025

Above: Several agencies responded Monday night to a bomb threat at Walgreens in Turners Falls.

HISTORY

Wendell's Sawin Family Strikes Again

By PAM RICHARDSON

WENDELL – Ten years ago, I wrote *Wendell, Massachusetts, Its Settlers & Citizenry, 1752-1900*, using my own research as well as the copious notes made by 19th-century Wendell resident and historian Thomas E. Sawin. So vital were Sawin's notes to Wendell's historical record that he joined me as co-author despite his death 142 years prior to our book's publication.

Over the months, indeed years, that I spent deciphering Sawin's antiquated longhand, learning everything I could about the man, and transcribing the huge volume of historical information he left for posterity, I came to have a deep appreciation and even affection for him. We were engaged in a mutual effort; I profited from his memories and conversations with people long gone, while he got the benefit of 21st-century technology and my research skills.

What a team! I was sad when our collaboration came to an end. I missed him.

Then, last week, an article from the September 21, 1847 *Greenfield Gazette and Courier* was delivered

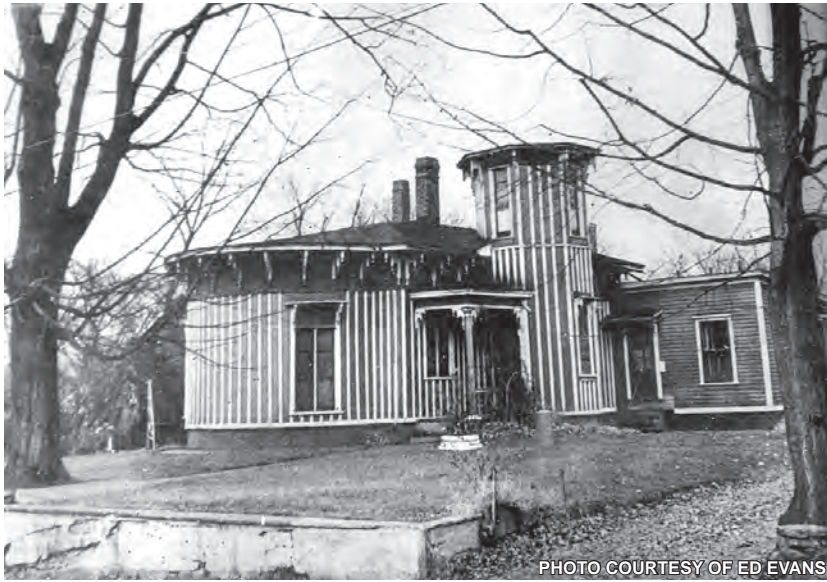


PHOTO COURTESY OF ED EVANS

This "Ink Bottle House" on Pleasant Street in Greenfield was once owned by the painter John Sawin, Jr.

to my inbox – thank you, Ed Hines, president of the Wendell Historical Society – and suddenly, my interest in Wendell's Sawin family caught fire again, though this time in relationship to Thomas's elder brother, John, Jr., a carriage-maker and painter.

The *Gazette* article informs readers of the growing popularity in the US of the European decorative art of fresco painting, but laments its pro-

hibitive cost in most American cities. However, the article continues, local tradesman and artist John Sawin, Jr. – through his connections and talent – was now making fresco painting available and affordable to residents and institutions of Franklin County.

Interested parties were invited to call in at the Wendell Baptist Church to see a recent example of Sawin's work, which "is upon the see **HISTORY** page B8



POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

WEST ALONG THE RIVER

A MID-MARCH ALMANAC

Each year, after the late winter blizzards, there comes a night of thaw, when the tinkle of dripping water is heard in the land. The hibernating skunk curled up in his deep den, uncurls himself and ventures forth... His track marks one of the earliest datable events in that cycle of beginnings and ceasings which we call a year.

– Aldo Leopold, from *A Sand County Almanac*

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – February 24. This has been the first day above freezing in two months. The first dripping we've heard this year came at the end of February, if you don't count the slow drip of the icicles that formed briefly last week.

A lone redwing turned up on time, on his customary annual schedule, as house records from the last 50 years show. His arrival time has always been somewhere between February 18 and 24. And there he was!

I say "he," because the males always arrive a few weeks ahead of the females, who travel separately with their gender folk. The males get here to select the choicest patches of marsh land over across the river in the ancient oxbow.

March 5. What do you know about this? A March rain is falling, and we can't yet call it an April shower, of course. It began as it always does with a few unseen drops, much earlier in the morning than they said it would.

Gentle rain on icy snow. I don't mind now, after lamenting the lack of snow all December and part of January. But now in early March, I say the snow can go away for all I care.

The carefully constructed wood pile grows smaller. Wood piles are built up so that they can be torn down, but then I'll have to build another one for next year. It's one of the stations of the year's cycle; I can't imagine not doing that.

Otherwise, pricey fuel oil holds steady in the tank. The Siberian dog's coat is still thick and full, but my winter boots are begging for a respite.

At least the redwing clan at my window has been increasing, as more males arrive, looking for cracked corn free for the taking. They got here a bit late, but we'll take it.

Same for our local song sparrow. He should have sung his spring

song weeks ago, but he finally tested out his pipes just before February ended. Now he sings every day, his little heart swelling with the inspiration of springtime, and the chance that a choice lady sparrow might be listening and choose him instead of some other songster.

Our sparrow sings the same song I heard on the shores of the Connecticut just below my childhood home above the Narrows, back when I was ten, my first double-digit number, as the poet says.

Sparrow's song always sends me spinning through a time-traveling spiral to those early days of my life on the river. Waiting patiently through the long winter of those years back in the '50s.

But my time machine doesn't stop there: I'm sure this wee bird sang the same song 10,000 years ago as the last glacier retreated, just as he's doing this morning. Only back then, there was no one to hear him, only a possible mate, or perhaps a young woman of the First People who gave him the name of The One Who Sings First. And why not? It's as good a name as any for the early songster.

The marsh at the Narrows that I haunted with the sparrow and redwing is now destroyed and submerged by the power company dam. They didn't ask my permission, and didn't care for what I was losing back then.

But I still carry that marsh around in my mind, and I'm letting you know about it now, so that you can have that image to carry around too.

March 6. That dripping of the early thaw has stopped, for now. All the snow has disappeared from the roof, and the icicles of February have fallen.

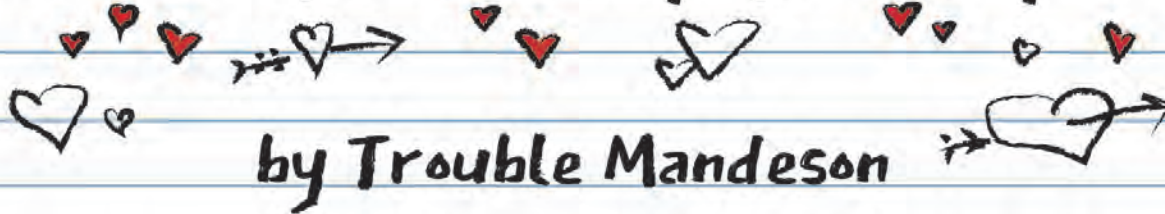
The rushing river over yonder see **WEST ALONG** page B3



LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES ILLUSTRATION

Song sparrow (*melospiza melodia*).

NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE



by Trouble Mandeson

GREENFIELD – This month's topic is tropical fruit, such as papaya, mango, guava, and pineapple. These fruits typically grow in warm, tropical climates close to the equator, where the sun shines directly



MANDESON PHOTO

A huge pile of the author's favorite tropical fruit, pineapple guava, received as a gift from a friend's yard on a visit to Los Angeles. The fruit has notes of pineapple and mint, with some comparing the flavor to cotton candy.

overhead, providing plenty of it for plant growth.

With our globally connected food supply chain, we can find many of these tropical fruits in our local supermarkets these days. Some are foreign to me, so when I'm out shopping and I spot someone buying something I'm not familiar with, I'll often approach them and ask how they prepare it. Most people are pleasant and willing to share their techniques.

Shopping locally, we can find bananas, pineapples, mangoes, figs, and plantains aplenty, with occasional appearances in the produce section of coconut, passionfruit, guava, dragon fruit, and star fruit.

Growing up in California, in the market we could find sugarcane grown in Florida, Texas, or Louisiana, which my mom would buy for us throughout the summer. We'd suck and chew on the tough, sugary-sweet fibers for hours until every sweet molecule was consumed.

Most tropical fruits are produced in rainforest, monsoon, and savannah zones. Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru, and Thailand are top exporters. Sicily and Southern Spain produce bananas and mangoes, passion fruit is grown in Portugal, and watermelon and guava in Colombia.

In the US, we grow bananas and citrus in Florida and Southern California, with the USDA's "plant hardiness zones" indicating which fruits can be grown where. California also produces finger lime, native to Australia,

see **HEARTFELT** page B4

Pet of the Week



'YARA'

Meet Yara! She is a cute little dilute tortoiseshell cat that was brought in with two feline friends. These kitties came from a home with a lot of cats, so they are used to living with others.

That being said, they have been social, confident, and curious since entering the shelter, but are still getting used to receiving a lot of pets. You will need time to gain Yara's trust, but we're sure you'll be inseparable once that connection is made.

The \$299 cat adoption fee includes spaying, a rabies vaccine and current distemper vaccines, FeLV/FIV blood testing, a microchip im-

planted and registered to you, treatment for fleas, ticks, and ear mites, a veterinary exam and health certificate at Dakin, and a free follow-up exam within 30 days with participating veterinarians. Your vet may recommend additional health care.

If you're ready to adopt now and want to learn more about, meet, or adopt a pet like Yara, 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., calling us at (413) 781-4000, or visiting www.dakinhumane.org.

REVIEW

GCTV's *Lights! Camera! Greenfield!* 2025

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – For the second time, I thought it would be fun to review *Lights! Camera! Greenfield!*, the short film competition that Greenfield Community TV (GCTV) has to its name. I went to the Garden Cinemas to see the free screening event they were having.

The crowd that showed up for the showing at the Garden was fairly huge. Some of the films I liked better than others.

Mr. Fisherman featured an individual playing a fish creature who was interviewed for some kind of job with a society. While this is going on, we get scenes that are supposed to be glimpses of his life. The character does get the job, and then treats himself to a meal, which turns out to be fish.

I got everything in the film. It was a little bit funny. It was easy to see why the guy had the reaction he did.

I used to make videos to go along with reviews, which I would post online on a website as a hobby, so I get the idea of doing something like that for a film. I would ask a question that reviews made me want to ask. It usually made sense why I was asking what I did in connection with what I reviewed.

The film *Just Curious* does that: a boy goes around

asking what the key to the city is. That fits and connects with the idea, but just barely, and it was still a weird film.

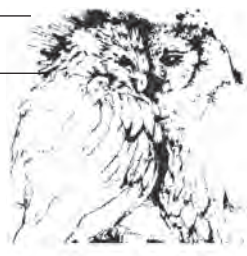
Winter Weekend was another weird one. I got it, sort of: they were trying to show some winter adventure going on. But it seemed not to have much of a story to it. It also looked more to me like a slideshow than a film.

The Curse of Roanoke seemed at first to be about a woman going about her day, but it turned into a horror film of some kind. If that is what it was supposed to be, it was not a bad attempt at one, but it felt a little off.

Found On Side of Road: A Video Poem was an interesting film, to say the least – it showed interesting lines and imagery on screen. It was what I expect to see when someone is doing a poem on video, so at the very least it fits with a concept they were doing.

Sleeping With Fishes was another weird one. The title only made sense because of one scene where a guy eventually went underwater to have a conversation with fishes. The other stuff, where he was led underwater and tried to talk with someone through a can telephone, didn't make sense until the ending.

I liked *Mr. Fisherman* the best. It was unique, and I understood the whole film.



Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

A Brief Chronicle of Europe's Sexuality...

SOUTH HADLEY – I've just spent the last two weeks in Europe, where I've observed many historical and artistic representations and sensibilities of sexuality. Here is my brief descriptive chronicle.

Let's start with Athens, my first stop, where my family and I spent a week inhaling the ancient ruins and temples to the god/desses. Something we love noticing in large cities is graffiti. One of the first graffiti image categories to greet us was a winged scrotum, sometimes with one eyeball. They appear to symbolize a cross between fertility and the winged god Hermes, with a little cyclops thrown in for fun.

This was actually the most popular image we encountered, although to be fair, Athens is not riddled with graffiti. There were a couple minotaur graffiti, one holding a Greek vase, another holding a video camera.

The winged scrotum was not the only symbol of fertility. Many gift

shops sold individually decorated wooden penises on key chains, about five inches long. I can only imagine that owning one of these, plus drawing a winged scrotum, would ensure as much fertility and virility as one might ever need.

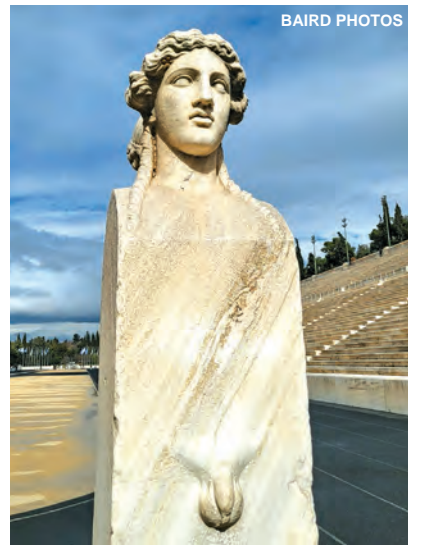
We then encountered sculpted genitals in very expected and unexpected places. Unexpectedly, at the first modern Olympic stadium – the Panathenaic Stadium. While the current structure was built in 1896, this was apparently the location of those mythic games over two millennia ago.

Near one end of the stunning marble-built parallelogram track was a marble statue, essentially a rectangular base with two heads, each facing the opposite direction. One head depicted a young athlete, the other perhaps an elder spectator or judge. Out of the flat rectangle on both sides, below the heads, protruded a penis and scrotum. Interestingly, the youthful head had a flaccid penis whereas the older head had a more robust penis. One had very nice carved curly pubic hair.

(Side note: it would be great if pro-pubic hair messages could, like the Olympic torch, make their way back to the US, especially for vulvas. I find the trend of partial or full vulva pubic hair removal disturbing and sexist from a visual and labor perspective; pubic hair is meant to be protective, though a little trim here and there never hurt anyone.)

Next stop was the incredible Museum of Cycladic Art, which not only housed beautiful 2,500-year-old Grecian vases depicting erotic acts, but also showcased the earliest known Cycladic figures from 3000 B.C.E. Cubist artists later drew inspiration from these.

All figures but one are assumed likely ciswomen by the archeologists, as they contained breasts, a



A young athlete depicted at the Panathenaic Stadium.

triangle indicating the vulva area, and folded arms accentuating or protecting a small belly, indicating pregnancy and fertility. The male figure looked almost the same as the female figures. They were all extraordinarily elegant.

There was a special exhibit there about the life of women in ancient times. Signs discussed how a feminine great mother-goddess Cycladic monument may be one of the earliest known in Aegean societies, testifying to the central role of women, fertility, and reproductive powers.

Another sign discussed how "notions of gender and identity were fluid and complex." Examples include the twins Artemis and Apollo, often depicted similarly. Apollo was associated with both music and healing – typically seen as a more feminine activity. Artemis is a hunter and protector, more historically depicted as masculine roles. Additionally, the male god Dionysius is often depicted femininely.

Hermaphroditus, son of Hermes and Aphrodite, was a deified and worshipped intersex god/dess. Their male worshippers "assumed see EUROPE next page



A graffiti the author saw everywhere in Athens.

Senior Center Activities MARCH 17 THROUGH 21

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, please call 863-9357.

Monday 3/17

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
3 p.m. Senior Tech Class
6 p.m. Cemetery Commission

Tuesday 3/18

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

Wednesday 3/19

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
11:45 a.m. Friends' Meeting
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
1 p.m. Mobile Food Bank
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 3/20

1 p.m. Pitch
3:30 Volunteer Training

Friday 3/21

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

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom. Foot care clinics are the third Tuesday of each month. Luncheons are the fourth Friday at town hall. For more information, contact (413)

548-1022 or coa@leverett.ma.us.

Please check the town newsletter or LeverettConnects listserv for more info.

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is April 2. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments.

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

ERVING

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

Monday 3/17

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

Tuesday 3/18

9 a.m. Stretch & Balance
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer
1 p.m. Garden Club

Wednesday 3/19

9 a.m. Interval Training
10:15 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bingo

Thursday 3/20

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

Friday 3/21

9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Quilting, Open Sew

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WEST ALONG from page B1 has shed its shoreline of ice, sending the sound of the now-free river's voice and music up through the bare trees to the back porch.

Jays yodel their spring song, redwings call their *oak-a-lee*.

Fog and mist rise up through the dark bark of maple trees, like the wisps of the spirits of those we have lost over the winter.

But deep under the frozen crust of snow life is stirring, turning over on itself, preparing to emerge.

On the morning's air, the faint odor of a wandering skunk.

March 8. The March wind has huffed and puffed and blown itself out, but to little avail, no kites emerged to be seen on the frozen landscape. The wind has moved on to try its luck somewhere else, a hundred miles away.

This morning the Siberian is happy on his personal patch of glacier in the back yard. His snow is all around, hard, slippery, and just right to stretch out in luxury. He feels the icy familiarity of this element from deep in his DNA.

No birds, then suddenly, a lot of birds! Some all-clear call, unheard to my poor human ears, and they all swoop down, danger passed, they are released from the alarm call minutes ago.

This week brought a flock of redwings, more than 15. For weeks up to now, just two or three individuals spent the day here. But yesterday the whole flock dropped from the skies to find the cracked corn, an annual familiar pit stop along their aerial highway north.

Some of them will stay, however, and claim a specific patch of the

oxbow marsh across the river from where I sit. Still frozen, the marsh is all ice and snow with last year's cattail stocks lifting their shaggy tufts to the winds. But only the redwing knows which exact one he wants.

He sings there for awhile, then takes a break to cross over the river to me for his designated respite, before winging right back to be sure no other redwing has taken over the exact spot of his desire.

A gaggle of geese, in classic v-shape, calls down from up above, heading due north. The clamor may be much ado about nothing: maybe they came from the faraway south, or maybe just from open water only a mile away. No matter, it too is a sign of reluctant spring, and we'll take it!

The geese disappear into a snow squall, flakes whirl and swirl, taking back the season.

March 10 to 12. What will happen when the promised 50-degree weather arrives?

What will happen to the frozen crust of icy snow spread over the backyard? Five inches of rock-hard snow still isolates the turning of the worm from the increasingly longer days.

Above that crust the crystal air is clear, and tentative song spreads from among the bare tree trunks. The sap doesn't know whether to rise up or stay below. We wait for some sign.

The Full Worm Moon of March 14 seems impossible, but the warming days may well coax more hibernating creatures and humans outdoors, to shed sweaters and gloves to stare and blink in the sun.

*Well, two things are certain –
The sun will rise and the sun will set.
Most everything else is up for grabs.*

From *Crystal Declension*,
by Charles Wright.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Brother Unwelcome; Officer Advises There Is A Large Puddle; Bonfire Unsafe; Wind Takes Down Trees, Pole; Sugar Scare

Monday, 3/3

11:21 a.m. 911 caller reporting disturbance on Old Greenfield Road. Situation mediated; all parties advised of options.

2:41 p.m. 911 caller from East Chestnut Hill Road concerned about a carbon monoxide alarm sounding in her home. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

4:19 p.m. Caller from J Street would like to speak to an officer; reporting larceny of a cell phone. Officer will follow up tomorrow.

5:13 p.m. Caller reporting a dog wandering around Crescent Street area; caller went to a nearby residence and saw a dish with food and a tether, but the owners weren't home. Officer advises the dog was just hanging out at his own property.

6:09 p.m. 911 caller re-

porting dog in the road and woods in Colrain heading toward Route 2; states 10 cars are pulled over with their hazards on. Caller reports they have recovered the dog and are in the parking lot of Shelburne Falls Coffee Roasters. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

7:59 p.m. Party into station to speak with an officer about someone stealing money from her bank account. Officer advised her to bring in bank statements and highlight the transactions that she didn't make, and he would look into it for her.

11:26 p.m. 911 caller from East Main Street states her brother is intoxicated and is not welcome to be in her apartment. Caller states male threw a water bottle and it hit her in the head. Caller advises a similar situation happened Friday/Saturday night. Officer advises both parties advised of options. Male party has a ticket for the 7 a.m. Amtrak.

Tuesday, 3/4

12:10 p.m. Report of assault on Twelfth Street. Officer requesting Clinical & Support Options if available. Situation mediated; plan put into place with CSO.

12:15 p.m. Traffic assistance requested at West Main and Church streets for a large tow truck that needs to pull an oil truck out of a driveway. Services rendered.

Wednesday, 3/5

6:48 a.m. Report of disturbance on Prospect Street. Officer advised caller of options.

5:26 p.m. Caller reporting there is a man circling the K Street neighborhood, angry and screaming. Wearing a grey hoodie, white T-shirt, baggy jeans, short brown hair. Male holding something in hoodie; possibly a weapon. Officers searching area; unable to locate.

8:38 p.m. Loud music complaint on Avenue A. Officer requesting caller let him in back door; building is locked. Caller states music has been shut off.

9:12 p.m. Caller from Avenue A called back stating that the music had started again. She left but left the front door open for officers.

9:26 p.m. Caller reporting a big puddle at the intersection of Turnpike Road and Letourneau Way; states that if someone drives through it, it will start pouring into his house. Reports speaking to TFFD, who told him to call the PD. Officer advises there is a large puddle.

Thursday, 3/6

4:05 a.m. Montague wastewater department advises they received an alarm indicating water flood-

ing into Franklin County Technical School. They advise they were able to divert some of the water but will need additional assistance; requesting on-call Turners Falls Water Department staff respond and meet them near the school's pump station. On-call contacted and advised.

9:33 a.m. 911 caller reports they drove into a snowbank on Wendell Road. No injuries; no damage. Tow requested. Rau's removed vehicle from snowbank.

1 p.m. Manager of a Fourth Street property advising she received a call from someone in the building that a woman in one of the units is kicking and screaming. Officers advised. No answer at door; quiet upon arrival.

1:39 p.m. Caller from Highland School Apartments reports he got a new mattress and box spring yesterday and wrote his initials on the side of it. Today he went to pay rent, and when he got back he noticed the middle of the mattress was "droopy," and that the mattress had been stolen and replaced with an old one. Caller believes he knows who has his new mattress. Advised of options.

4:51 p.m. Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter advising an older black and tan beagle was found in Montague Center and dropped off at the shelter.

5:06 p.m. Basement door triggering alarm at Carnegie Library. Alarm company contacting keyholder. Building secure.

6:47 p.m. Report from G Street of a male party, dressed in all black, attempting to get into vehicles. Entire area of Patch checked; negative findings.

Friday, 3/7

8:03 p.m. 911 caller reporting bonfire in a backyard on H Street; unsafe due to wind. Sparks flying everywhere. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

10:20 a.m. 911 caller from Franklin Street reporting landlord kicking in the front door. Landlord-tenant issue. Upstairs tenants are not paying rent. Advised of options.

11:29 a.m. Caller reported she was walking her dog on Third Street when a car pulled up and started yelling at her about picking up after her dog. She got a plate number, but it does not come back to any vehicle. Wants on record at this time. Report taken.

1:07 p.m. School resource officer advising report of a tree down on Industrial Boulevard. Unsure of details. DPW requested and advised to bring loader to Tech entrance on corner.

Tree is blocking southbound lane heading toward Millers Falls Road. DPW contacted.

1:19 p.m. 911 caller reporting tree on power lines on Ripley Road. Lines are smoking. Transferred to Shelburne Control; officer checked with fire; under control. Fire advised a pole was down. Control advises they submitted a ticket for Eversource.

1:23 p.m. Report of tree partially in road on Chestnut Hill Loop. Second caller reporting line down as well. Someone tied a bag around the involved pole. Line is in road, still attached. Verizon called; foreman will be made aware. Officer advising he moved it to side of road to be avoided. Not an emergency at this time.

1:41 p.m. Report of disturbance on Twelfth Street. Party removed to hospital.

2:23 p.m. Caller reporting on behalf of a female party that the female let someone into her apartment earlier this month to use the bathroom. The woman then stole her purse, which had her bank card and PIN written on the back. Since then, she has had money stolen from her account. Involved female came into station and is talking with an officer. Investigated.

6:36 p.m. Caller reports that he received a package he did not order, opened it, and it was Easter egg-type candy, but the bags were covered in a white substance. Caller unsure if it was confectioner's sugar or something else. Caller handled the bags, but did not ingest the candy. Caller put the package outside on the porch prior to calling. Officer advises the package was addressed to the caller and that the powder seemed to be confectioner's sugar.

Saturday, 3/8

5:47 a.m. Caller from Sunrise Terrace states the alarm is sounding again; states the fire department is trying to figure out why it goes off at random times. Call given to dispatch.

9:16 a.m. Manager of an Avenue A property states that a tenant is calling and leaving threats on employees' voicemails. Involved female transported to hospital due to a medical issue.

10:17 a.m. Caller from North Taylor Hill Road states that the top of a tree broke off and is dangling over the road and power lines. Not touching power lines, but it would if it came loose. DPW foreman advises the tree is not a hazard to power lines. Their bucket truck is out of service at this time.

12:07 p.m. Caller from Randall Wood Drive states that a large pine tree is leaning toward the road and looks as if it may fall onto the house across the street. DPW foreman advises that the tree has been like that for a long time. Not a hazard.

EUROPE from previous page

the role of women, and male gods 'dressed' as female deities," all evidence that these early humans were playing with gender roles and expectations.

Another wall sign titled "the origin of the world" discussed how the "sky and sea are the metaphorical womb of the Cycladic universe," and how important this was for "the perpetuation of society." And since it doesn't seem fair that today in Athens numerous penises and scrotums are graffitied and souvenir-ified, the museum signs tells us that "modern Cycladic Christian women, seeking protection, help, or healing in remote sanctuaries, present (metal) votive offerings representing their breasts or genitals."

Speaking of "origin of the world," I traveled on to Paris, first visiting the Musee D'Orsay to check out Couvert's 1866 painting of that title. This painting got on my must-view list after reading 45-year-old Glynnis MacNicol's 2024 memoir *I'm Mostly Here to Enjoy Myself: One Woman's Pursuit of Pleasure in Paris*, a chronicle of a few weeks in Paris in 2021 spent reacquainting herself with pleasure of all sorts after coming out of New York City pandemic lockdown and isolation.

I was certainly intrigued by MacNicol's description of the painting, as it sounded like it was a large close-up of a vulva. The painting actually frames a nude supine person from their thighs to the top of their breasts, centering their vulva, adorned by a mop of dark pubic hair. The vulva was quite anatomically correct, depicting both the labia *majora* and labia *minora*, possibly a first in oil painting.

The Origin of the World was once owned by prominent psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. I'll let you draw your own conclusions about the title and views on motherhood.

There were also several versions of Venus paintings at the D'Orsay, some by artists idealizing their male gaze on femme bodies, others, like Manet's *Olympia*, trying to more realistically portray how femme bodies may experience a male gaze – with models staring out at viewers with a measure of defiance and amusement.

The last item I'll mention in this chronicle is a chastity belt I saw at the history museum on Mont-Saint-Michel (MSM).

MSM was built in 966, after a bishop was visited by the archangel St. Michael and commanded to build an abbey atop this small rocky island. Over the past 1,300 years a medieval village developed at the base in order to feed and house the Abbey pilgrims, as well as sell them mementos. It is my favorite place on Earth, and this was my second visit.

I had time to explore the history museum, where I wandered through prison rooms as well as rooms with medieval furniture set up as knights' lodgings. Unexpectedly, amongst heavy old wooden cabinets and chairs sat a large, uncomfortable-looking metal chastity belt, a reproduction of the 14th-century belt worn by Tiphaine de Ragueneil, wife of Bertrand du Guesclin. While I did notice two holes for elimination, this surely represents one of the most gruesome literal subjugating devices known to woman.

If only the Cycladic art and goddess worship had continued to grow. I can only imagine what society might be like now. Versus, from what I can surmise, the gradual attrition of worship and appreciation of mostly women deities – as seen in that early Cycladic, predominantly earth-mother/goddess-centered worship – with the addition of powerful male gods like Poseidon and Zeus. This eventually culminated in the Christian deification of male gods, sacrificing the earth-mother sensibility.

On a positive feminist note, Athens is so named because Athena defeated Poseidon in being granted protector and patron of the city: she gave Athens the first olive tree, whereas he only gave a spring of salt water. Pretty redundant, as Athens is near the salty coast.

Stephanie Baird is a certified OWL facilitator and an EMDR psychotherapist and consultant who encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health. She is the author of the book EMDR Therapy and Sexual Health: A Clinician's Guide (2023). She welcomes feedback and suggestions at sexmatters@montaguereporter.org.



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HEARTFELT from page B1

which grows in the shape of a finger. It's filled with sticky pearls that burst open and release a tart and juicy flavor.

Other California-grown tropical fruits are Meyer lemon, a Chinese hybrid that is sweeter than traditional lemons, cherimoya from South America, an oddly-shaped, green-skinned fruit, and white sapote. Similar to the creamy custard of cherimoya, sapote is green and smooth on the outside with sweet pulp inside.

As a kid in the suburbs of Los Angeles, I'd spend the summer days with my friends riding our bikes up and down the alleyways that ran behind each block of houses, plucking fruit from local trees as we zoomed past: pomegranates, lemons, plums, and my absolute fave, pineapple guavas, a soft green oval-shaped fruit about the size of a small lime.



These figs are grown locally in Greenfield at Dancing Bear Farm, which sells them right out of the greenhouse. Last year, the author made this box into jam, which she is still enjoying.

Pineapple guavas, native to Brazil and often grown in New Zealand, are also known in those places as feijoa. You bite the fruit in half and then scrapes out the soft inner fruit with your teeth. It's got a flavor unlike anything else. I occasionally find a chocolate bar with feijoa, but it's pretty rare.

On a trip to California last year, a high school chum gave me a five-pound net bag of pineapple guavas which I carried around with me for the rest of my trip, eating four or five a day. I ate so many I got a rash on my face, and even that didn't stop me from enjoying the delectable treat.

In Asia some tropical fruits – bananas, mangoes, and jackfruit – play a significant role in religious, cultural, and social life. They're used in ceremonies and symbolize prosperity with stories and folklore passed down through the generations. It was told that Buddha meditated under a mango tree, so the fruit is considered to be sacred. In India and Thailand they use banana leaves and flowers in religious ceremonies, and jackfruit, planted near homes in Southeast Asia, represents abundance and prosperity due to its large size.

When cooking with tropical fruits you can experience bold colors, interesting textures, and varied flavors. Many of these fruits boost immunity, replenish electrolytes, and provide vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Some are sweet, others tangy, and some even offer floral profiles. The textures range from the crunch of a pomegranate seed to the silky smoothness of a papaya.

MOM'S QUICK BANANA BREAD

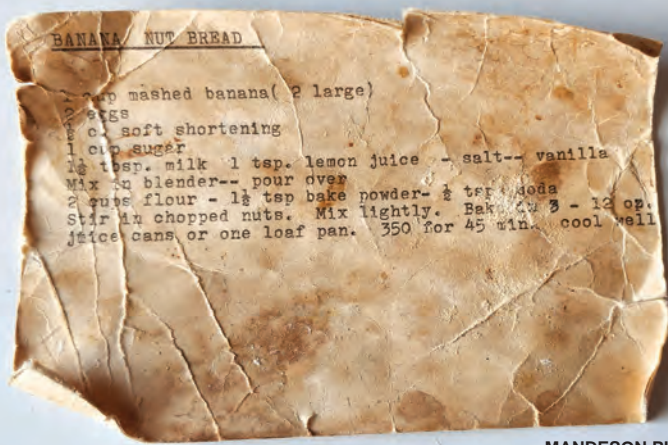
- 2 large bananas
1/2 cup softened butter
3/4 to 1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla or almond extract
1 1/2 cups flour
1 tsp. baking powder
pinch of salt

Optional additions: golden raisins, chopped nuts, chia seeds, hemp heart seeds, flax seeds, chocolate chips...

In a blender, mix the bananas, sugar, eggs, butter, and vanilla. In a separate bowl mix the dry ingredients together, then add in the wet ingredients and mix to combine.

If you're using chocolate chips, raisins, or other additives, mix them in now.

Put in a greased loaf pan and bake at 350° for 45 minutes, or until a knife or toothpick comes out clean.



MANDESON PHOTOS

The author's mother's original index card recipe for banana bread, circa the 1960s, is still used today for the simplest banana bread recipe.

Desserts can be given an unexpected twist by adding tropical fruit, like slices of star fruit in a pavlova, or layering cubes of guava or kiwi with cream into a trifle for an exotic take on the English classic. Or one can pair these fruits with savory items, like grilled pineapple with BBQ sauce or a salsa with mango and avocado.

It's important when cooking with tropical fruits that they are properly prepared. There may be skin or seeds, or even unpalatable parts that need removal before consuming. For example, the rambutan from China contains a soft, tart ball of fruit which one must get to by peeling off the reddish, hairy, inedible skin.

Pomelos, native to Southeast

Asia, are a large teardrop-shaped citrus fruit related to grapefruit, but they are actually a separate species. To the Chinese, they symbolize family unity and are eaten during the Chinese New Year. Although their taste is bland, dry, and not sweet, when hybridized with an orange they produce the more palatable grapefruit.

Some wonderful ideas for incorporating tropical fruits into a menu might include a pineapple upside-down cake, Indian mango yogurt pudding, or a cold glass of guava or coconut horchata, the traditional Mexican agua fresca made from fruit, water, lime juice, and a sweetener.

Fruit pairs wonderfully with poultry and pork. Pineapple is delicious when added to an Adobo-style roast pork, to a salsa for caramelized pork tacos, or as a kebab.

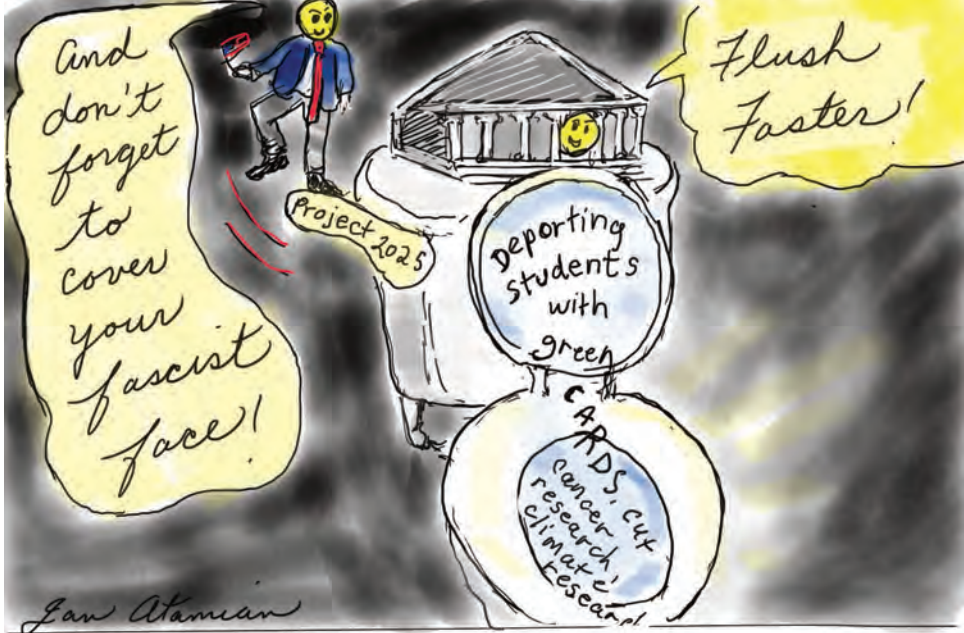
If you were to guess bananas as the most popular tropical fruit eaten around the world, you would be correct. We Americans eat 26 pounds a year. Bananas have no fat but do have a gram of protein, 28 grams of carbohydrates, no added sugar, fiber and potassium, and a variety of minerals. They also contain resistant starch, which prevents blood sugar spikes.

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

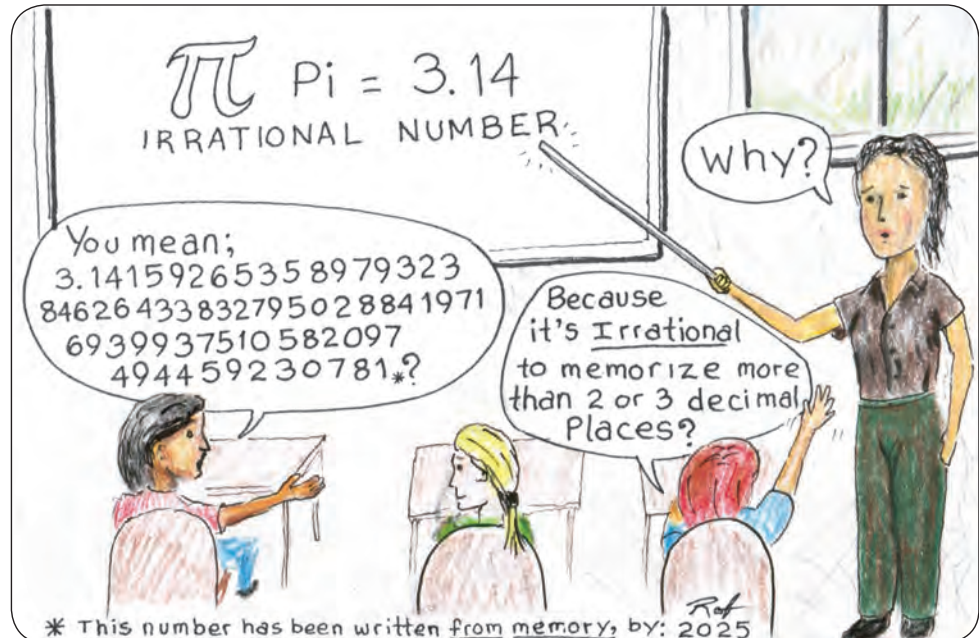


JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION

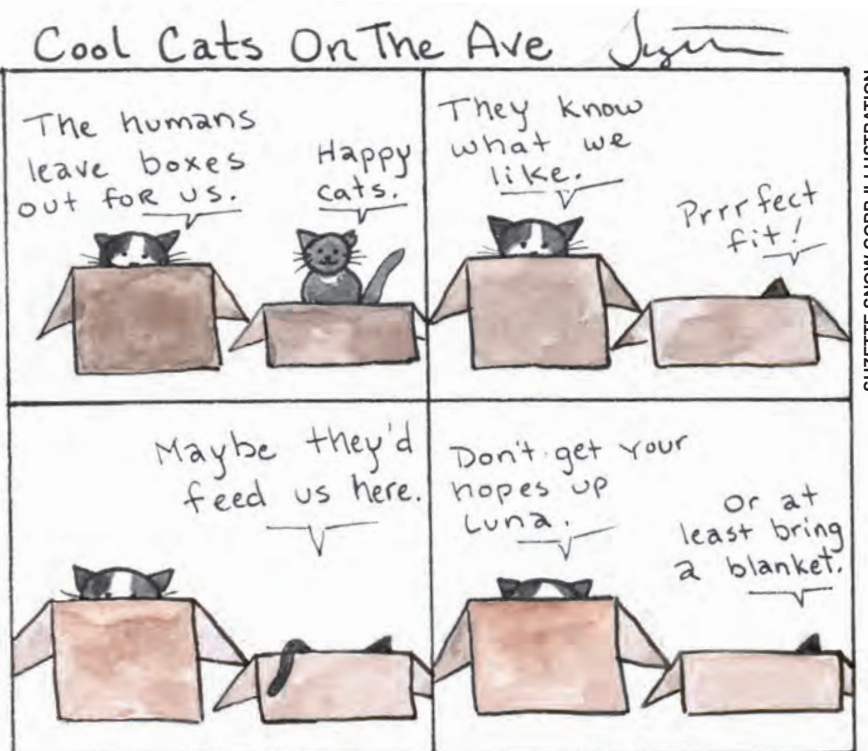
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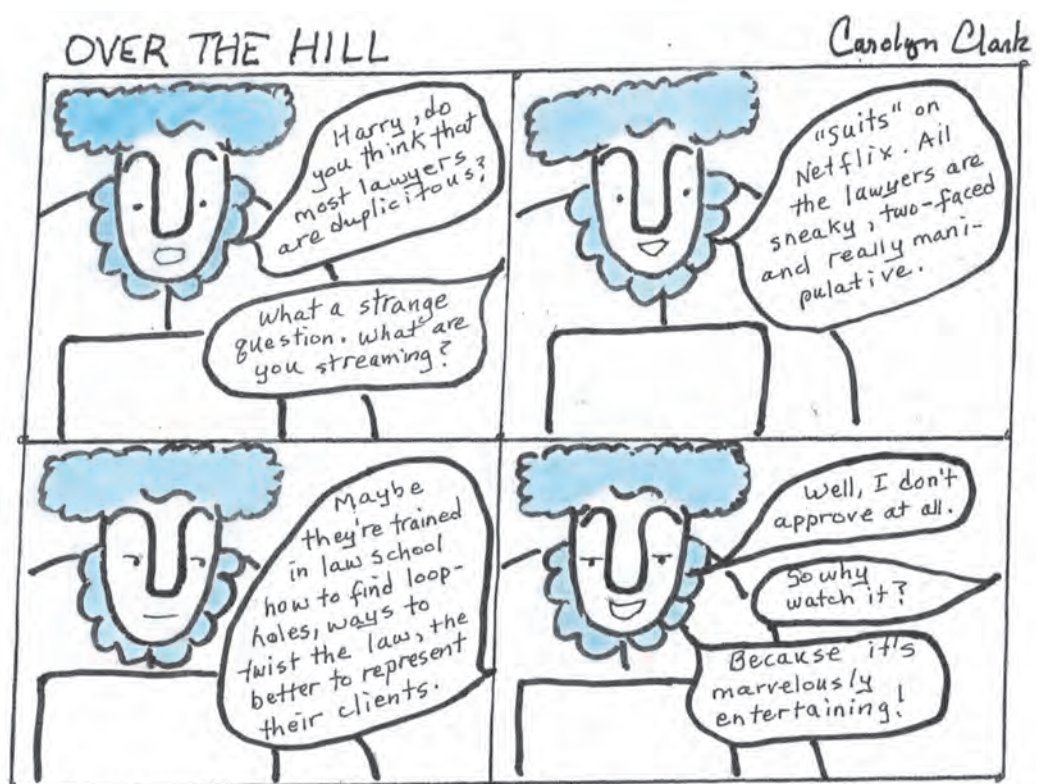
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* This number has been written from memory, by: 2025



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

- William Carlos Williams

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

Our March Poetry Page

Released Back Into the Wind

In the dusk of winter
a barred owl hurtled
towards the seeds I poured
into the bird feeder, its
destination my eye level
the tray of seeds and morsels it did not
want, only confused by hunger
thought it might. No time to
lift up my arm, I stepped back
and then the owl, a ream of smoke
solidified as himself, brown-eyed,
staring at me from the branch
of the spruce, without a nest,
just the wind to buffet him,
in the trees beside our house.

I left out pieces of bacon; undesired.
I bought him chunks of stew meat,
top quality, though I, a vegetarian,
ate none. He too disdained it offered
on a plate. My fingers encased
in thick leather gloves,
I held out the meat in my hand
for him to grasp, and he did, flying
in a rush of tallow-colored wings,
lighting on the phone lines
leading to our house, awake
with all of us when the children
caught the feeder bus.

Sometimes he'd disappear, and at night
when I awoke to a familiar
yet amplified darkness weighing in
and walked to the window
to see if he was perched on the tree,

he was, living inside the dark
beating of my heart as though
whatever longing it was he felt too
or perhaps he was the longing, the wildness
that woke me to keep watch for him.
Some days when he disappeared, I called
owly, owly, and he'd return and I'd lift
my hand. He'd swoop to my feet
to stand and chitter his thanks,
as I lay more meat before him.

But then one evening
as my young daughter clothed in scarf,
coat, and gloves left to feed her
chickens he flew behind her
landing in back of her, the imprint
of his wings like fingers stroked in snow
four feet apart with empty space in between.
Next time he flew to my feet,
I had to stamp them
no, owly, I can't feed you anymore.
He chattered, I stamped my feet,
then he looked up into the wild nest
in my eyes that he had grown to love
and flew away one last time.

- Laura Rodley
Shelburne Falls

At Your Last Reading

For CSL

at your last reading
separated from its person
a panicked dog barked

left alone
in a truck
next to us
there in the
unnameable
courtyard

your words merged
unflappable
you barked your poems back
in a chorus of keening

- Janel Nockleby
Turners Falls

Angle

Low into the woods he drives his skidder
the seat patched with silver duct tape,
black grease upon the wheels.
It emits a blue smoke that he
does not worry about, a noise he wears
no shields upon his ears to guard against.
He's been chopping logs for thirty years,
growing apples just the same.
Now they're sending apples from China
packed in Washington, and bought the train station
between the west and east coast,
at prices lower than he can give.
But here the woods, the prices dropped here
too, wood coming in from Russia,
but here the woods, the beeches bend down
to him, their tiny burnt orange cones
sidle along the rust red of his skidder,
and the red lines where the forester left
his painted mark tell him which tree to cut.
And he knows how to hold the chainsaw
hefting its weight in his thighs
holding it like a woman caught in a mid-dip swing
her body cutting into the tree, rhumba, rhumba,
the wedge he must cut first, then on the other side
he slices the saw's teeth through to the heart
when the tree gives way, heaves
with a sigh to the ground, then crashes,
snow fluffing up, leaves and branches scattering.
He knows how to do this, to let them down so easy,
he lets them down all over the woods.
The hard maple bends to him, take me,
she says, take me, I want to rest now
and he holds his saw tight, his thighs perched
and cuts straight into her heart, never missing.

- Laura Rodley
Shelburne Falls

Contributors' Notes

Pushcart Prize winner Laura Rodley's latest book is *Ribbons and Moths Poems for Children*, 2024 International Book Award Nonfiction Winner. She taught writing at Gill-Montague senior center for 14 years, editing and publishing seven books of Montague, Gill, and other local seniors' memoirs, culminating with *As You Write It Lucky 7*.

Janel Nockleby lives in Turners Falls, works at the Great Falls Discovery Center, and earned an MFA in poetry from UMass-Amherst. She wrote this poem in honor of Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno.



The Poetry Page is supported by
NatureCulture
WritingTheLand.org

ILLUSTRATION: WILLIAM TROST RICHARDS, *THE SPRING*, 1863.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 13

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *West African Drumming Class*, presented by Jafar Manselle and the Wendell Warriors. Performance followed by drumming workshop. Drums provided, or bring one from home. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: Griffin William Sherry. 7 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Honky Tonk Heartbreak*, vinyl listening party. 8 p.m. No cover.

FRIDAY, MARCH 14

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour* for ages three through six, accompanied by an adult. Learn about spring in the Connecticut River Watershed through story, activities, and crafts. 1:30 p.m. Free.

Artspace, Greenfield: Reception for *Teen Art Show*. 5 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Montague Square Dance*, with the *Old Fashioneds* and caller *Will Mentor*. Jammers welcome. Families welcome for circle dances and beginner squares, 6:30 p.m.; regular squares,

8 p.m. By donation.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: Reading, *Dana Maple Feeney, Colin Weinstein, Will Amend*. 7 p.m. Free.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Open mic for writers*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *Moon Hollow*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Alash Ensemble, Garth Stevenson*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Charlie Chronopoulos, Midnight Betty*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Cinemastorm* double feature: *Office Space* (1999), *Idiocracy* (2006). 7:30 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Great Craic Blackguard*, Irish band. 7:30 p.m. No cover.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Muda, Misuser, Feardotcom, Clock Serum, Barbie.Ai*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Wishbone Zoë Band* playing Cheap Trick, Pearl Sugar, Cowperson. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Ashley Rhodes*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Mud Season* feat. *The Dave Bulley Band, Bow Thayer, Pre-Emption Road, Chica Fuego, Lee Toten, Valerie Newman, Space Bar*, and more. 12 p.m. \$.



This Friday's Cinemastorm double feature at the Shea Theater brings together two Mike Judge films that fortunately hold no resonance in today's society: *Office Space* (1999) and *Idiocracy* (2006). Free admission and popcorn, movie trivia, refreshments in the lobby, and an opportunity to once again ignore the pro-eugenic implications of the latter movie's dysgenic premise.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Marigold Market*, with live music by Aviva Yarrow, Ollie Schechter, bobbie, Otto Benson, Wallball, Saliba, Mibble. 12 to 5 p.m. No cover.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne: Reception for *Student Art Exhibit*. 2 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *The Rhizome Project with Moira Smiley*. Community singing workshop, 3 p.m.; potluck, 5 p.m.; concert, 6:30 p.m. No one turned away for lack of funds. Tickets at www.weathervane-arts.org. \$.

Four Phantoms Brewing, Greenfield: *Derek Bridges*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *PJ Pacifico*. 6 p.m. No cover.

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *All Cooped Up!* Franklin County Musicians Cooperative presents Orlen, Gabriel & Avery, Small Change, Larry LeBlanc, Pat & Tex, and many more solo artists, duos, and small groups. Folk, rock, country, Celtic, jazz, swing. All ages. 7 p.m. By donation.

Mount Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Colleen Kattau*. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Big Bad Bollocks*. 7 p.m. \$.

Institute for Musical Arts, Goshen: *Jami Sieber, Kim Chin-Gibbons*. 7 p.m. \$.

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wendell: *Ragged Blue*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Stationery Factory, Dalton: *The Slambovian Circus of Dreams*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Mengers, WAAH, Sapien Joyride, Phrøeggs*. 8 p.m. \$.

EXHIBITS

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Atomic Dog: What I did to beat the blues*, paintings by Ryan McGinn, through April.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Where We Are, Together*, paintings by Cameron Schmitz, through May 26. Reception March 29, 3 to 5 p.m. *Deep Roots: A History of Agriculture in the Connecticut River*, on display in the hallway.

Montague Center Library: Ann Feitelson: *Quilts*, through May 2.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: Jacqueline Strauss, guest artist showing soft sculpture creatures, through March, followed by *Hallie's Comet Fine Jewelry* by Christina Giebner, March 20 through May 20.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Feathers and Fur* by Mary Schreiber, through April.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: Louise Minks and Friends, historical portrait work by Minks and student works. Through March 16.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Kids' Art Show*, works by area youth, through March 28.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: *Teen Art Show*, work by youngsters across Franklin County, March 14 through April 25, with a reception this Friday, March 14 at 5 p.m.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *New England Dreamscapes*, new paintings on slate by Sarah Adam, through April. *New Roots in Riverbanks*, exhibit about Polish and other Eastern European immigrants to the Connecticut River valley, through May.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *Annual Photography Exhibit*, 19 New England photographers exhibiting in black and white and color. Through March 30.

Gallery A3, Amherst: Sue Katz and Gloria Kegeles, photographs, painted wood, and assemblage, through March 29.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral*, paintings by Edith Bingham.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne: *Student Art Exhibit*, work by fifth- and sixth-graders at the Mohawk school district. Through April 27. Reception this Saturday, March 15 at 2 p.m.

Borgia Gallery, Elms College, Chicopee: *For a Pair of Wings*, works by Hannah Hurricane. March 17 through April 18, with a reception Thursday, March 27, from 12:15 to 1:15 p.m.

considered from artists and writers in the region and anyone affiliated with the college. Submissions will be accepted through April 1. Guidelines and more information at gcc.mass.edu/plum.

Fiddleheads Gallery in Northfield is looking for naive, fanciful, humorous, or curious art for a show, "A Touch of Whimsy: art that makes you smile," from May 23 to July 13. Contact Marge Anderson at margedvaa@gmail.com by May 9 to submit work.

CASTING CALLS

The **Wendell Meetinghouse** is looking for two actors who can play a man and a woman, mid-20s to 50, in a production of *Swamped*, a full-length play written and directed by Court Dorsey. Stipends available if cast. Rehearsals will take place at the Wendell Meetinghouse. Please respond to courtcdorsey@gmail.com for more information or to arrange an audition. Rehearsals will begin soon, and proceed on a slow track until the production in June.

The **LAVA Center** is looking for playwrights and directors for a new play festival, "On the Boards." The deadline for play submissions and director applications is March 31. For more information, visit thelavacenter.org/on-the-boards.

CALLS FOR ART

Greenfield Community College's **literary journal, Plum**, has sent out a call for poetry, fiction, essays, and visual art for their spring edition. Work will be

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CALENDAR



looking forward...

FRIDAY, MARCH 28

Pink Edwards, Greenfield: *Wishbone Zoë, Hedgewitch, Matthew Thornton*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MARCH 29

Montague Congregational Church, Montague Center: *Pancake Breakfast* with "real maple syrup, assorted meats, coffee, tea, and juice." Walk-in service. 8:15 to 10:15 a.m. \$.

FRIDAY, APRIL 4

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: Film, *Wings of Desire* (1987). BYOB and snacks "speakeasy" with music at 6 p.m., feature at 7 p.m. By donation.

FRIDAY, APRIL 11

33 Hawley, Northampton: *Vic Rawlings & Arkm Foam, Jake Meginsky & Lemuel Marc, Milk of Mustard Seed*. 8 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Willie Lane, Matt Valentine, Spectre Folk*. 8 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, APRIL 13

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *One Master, Midden, Compress*. 7 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, APRIL 19

Mount Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: *John Sheldon*. 7 p.m. \$

FRIDAY, MAY 2

Nova Arts, Keene: *Dead Gowns, Rick Rude, Footings*. 7 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, MAY 12

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Tune-Yards*. 8 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, MAY 29

Colonial Theater, Keene: *10,000 Maniacs*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

SATURDAY, JUNE 14

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington: *Steve Earle*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

The Drake, Amherst: *Mikaela Davis, Lily Seabird*. 8 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, JULY 14

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Jon Spencer*. 7 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, AUGUST 18

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Toad the Wet Sprocket, KT Tunstall, Sixpence None The Richer*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 31

Tanglewood, Lenox: *Bonnie Raitt*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Folly of Three, The Fake Nudes, Creative Writing*. 9 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, MARCH 16

Antenna Cloud Farm, Gill: *Open rehearsal and artist chat*, followed by refreshments. Limited seating; reservation will close once the event is full. Contact info@antennacloudfarm.com for information. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Element Brewing, Millers Falls: *Boys of the Landfill*. 1 p.m. No cover.

Erving Public Library, Erving: Author talk, *Judy McIntosh*, discussing her writing journey and her latest book, *Swift River Secrets*, a contemporary mystery with family feuds and grudges going back to the drowning of four towns to create the Quabbin Reservoir. Registration appreciated at (413) 423-3348, but not required. 2 p.m. Free.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Ragged Blue*. 3 p.m. No cover.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: Reading, *Ariel Yelen, Ari Banias, Phoebe Glick*. 4 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: *NOW Ensemble*. 4 p.m. \$.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Ian St. George, Franklin's Mint*. 4 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Chest Fever*. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Stanley Jordan*. 7 p.m. \$.

Darlings, Easthampton: *Space Camp, Landowner*. 7 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Lexi Weege, Organ Transplant*. 7 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, MARCH 17

Greenfield Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: Screening, *The Irish in Us* (1936), with introduction by local film and theater historian Jonathan A. Boschen. 6:30 p.m. \$.

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

TUESDAY, MARCH 18

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: Workshop, *Writing Your Own Obituary*. Part of a series on death and dying. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Jobi Riccio, Silvie's Okay*. 7 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *GOST, Dead Register*. 8 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

Brick House Community Resource Center, Turners Falls: *Community & Family Cooking Class with Dinner*.

Kyle from Just Roots will lead participants in cooking a meal which they will then enjoy together. To register, contact Stacey Langknecht at (413) 800-2496 or slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org. 5 p.m. Free.

Bombyx Center, Florence: Launch celebration for *Rooted Resilience*, a multimedia project dedicated to preserving and amplifying marginalized voices of Western Massachusetts. Live performances and discussions with artists and directors. 6 p.m. By donation.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Zara Bode's Little Big Band*. 7 p.m. \$.

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



Landowner brings their distortionless post-punk jitter to new Easthampton venue Darlings Bar & Café this Sunday night, with noise maximalists Space Camp.

THURSDAY, MARCH 20

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: Trivia night. *Home Is Where the Heart Is*. Info on FRCOG's 2024 Regional Housing Plan, free pizza. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Wendell Town Hall, Wendell: *A Deep Presence, 13,000 Years of Native American History*, featuring *Robert G. Goodby*, professor of anthropology at Franklin Pierce University and researcher in Native American archaeology. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Easthampton High School, Easthampton: *The Performance Project* presents *Mother Tongue*. For ages 12 and up. 6:30 p.m. Free admission.

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *Reading Aloud for Grownups*. Mira Bartok and Jo Boskind will each read a short story. Refreshments available. See nsfriendsoflibrary.weebly.com/events for information. Zoom link also available. 7 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Ye Vagabonds*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Valley Voices Story Slam*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Sulis Studios, Florence: *Austyn Wohlers, Saapato, bobbie*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MARCH 21

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour* for ages three through six, accompanied by an adult. Learn about salamanders through story, activities, and crafts. 1:30 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Theater of Ideas*, featuring Nina Gross presenting "Taking the Pulse." 6 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Balkun Brothers, Jelly, Jatoba*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Surrealist Party Games* with *Roger Clark Miller*. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Liz Longley, Max Gomez*. 7 p.m. \$.

Clark Auditorium, Williamstown: *Flore Laurentienne*. 7 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Vapors of Morphine*. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Suitcase Junket, Cloudbelly*. 8 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Taxidermists, Mal Devisa, B.L.I.X.* 10:30 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MARCH 22

Greenfield Savings Bank, Turners Falls: *Crafting with Eveline MacDougall*. Upcycling art workshop. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. 1 p.m. Free.

Wendell State Forest Headquarters, Wendell: *A Walk in the Wendell Woods*, led by local naturalists Adam Kohl and Bill Stubblefield. Explore "some of the ways organisms manage to deal with winter conditions and prepare to burst forth in the spring." Dress for the weather. Rain date March 29. 1 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Workshop and concert with Dr. Kathy Bullock*. Benefit for the Stone Soup Café. Learn and sing African American songs of inspiration, hope and joy, 1 to 5:30 p.m.; community potluck, 5:30 p.m., concert including workshop participants, 7 p.m. By donation.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *The Hilltown Ham Hocks*. Benefit for FamilyAid. 5 p.m. No cover.

Four Phantoms Brewing, Greenfield: *Ragged Blue*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Palladium, Worcester: *Mayhem, Mortis, Imperial Triumphant, New Skeletal Faces*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Misty Blues, Alex Rohan*. 7 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Boys Go To Jupiter, bobbie*. 8 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *RJ McCarty*. 8 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Paulo Angeli*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Trans Inclusive Crime Syndicate*. 9:30 p.m. \$.

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

SUNDAY, MARCH 23

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Getting Started with Native Plants*, talk by Jocelyn Demuth. Free. 11 a.m.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Haiku Tiny Books*. Hands-on workshop to create a tiny book of haiku poems. Materials provided. Bring up to five favorite haikus. Registered participants receive a sample selection of modern-day haiku prior to the workshop. For adults and young adults ages 16 and older. Call (413) 863-3214 to register. 1 p.m. Free.

Second Congregational Church, Greenfield: *Songs of Hope and Comfort* presented by *Eventide Singers*. 3 p.m. By donation.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Ted Leo and the Pharmacists, Nova One*. 7 p.m. \$

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Arthur Buezo, Moon Hollow, The Bandit Queen of Sorrows*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rare Geese, Connect 4, rev.web, Zane Kanevsky*. 9:30 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, MARCH 24

Tori Town, Holyoke: *bobbie, PJPHJL, Silvie's Okay*. 7 p.m. \$.

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HISTORY from page B1

entire wall, back of the pulpit [and] is [of] a somewhat elaborate design – an entablatured front with entrance between four columns to a recess embraced within paneled walls and ceiling, and terminating by a window in a secondary recess.”

The author of the article is given merely as “T.E.,” but these two letters happen to be the first and second initials of Thomas Sawin’s full name, and suggest the probability that he wrote this piece as a bit of advertising for his brother, John. Thomas was a proven writer, a longtime member of the town’s school committee, and an esteemed member of the Baptist Church in Wendell, serving as its Secretary for over 40 years.

The Baptist Church in Wendell was erected in 1819, about a quarter of a mile from the Town Common, and then, in the late summer of 1845, it was dismantled and moved up to the southeast end of the Common. Opening ceremonies were held on July 4, 1846. The summer of 1846 is also the date given for the erection of the Congregationalist Meetinghouse across the Common and facing the Baptist Church.

The *Gazette* article appeared one year after the completion of both churches. The two churches seem to have been competing with each other, and it is likely that the Baptists regarded a Sawin fresco on their walls as a feather in their collective cap.

Upon reading the old *Gazette* article, I went immediately to the former Baptist Church for a careful inspection of its interior. While the “recess embraced within paneled walls and ceiling” still exists at the rear of the building, not a single trace of columns, moldings, or a mural remains.

Disappointed, I searched the internet for examples of Sawin’s work, but this resulted in only two finds. One is an oil painting of George Washington’s Tomb at Mount Vernon, done in the classical style in 1849 and now owned by the Five Colleges & Historic Deerfield



John Sawin Jr., American (1807-1874), Washington’s Tomb, Mount Vernon, 1849. Oil on wood panel, Historic Deerfield, Deerfield, Massachusetts, Museums Collections Fund, HD 2019.38

Museum Consortium. The other is a photograph, clipped from a 1939 issue of *Antiques* magazine and taped onto the back of said painting, of a Bride’s Box commissioned in 1827 for a certain Abigail Fiske.

A Bride’s Box was used to store small personal items, like lace, linens or jewelry, from a bride’s trousseau. Having been born in 1807, John Sawin would have been 20 years old when he created this box.

John had come as a child with his family in 1815 from Cambridge, Massachusetts to Rockwell Hill Road in the southern part of Wendell where his father, John Sawin, Sr., set up a lucrative carriage-making business. It flourished for 50 years, and John Jr. and his brother Daniel took up their father’s trade, to which they added carriage-painting in the forms of transparencies, frescoes, and landscapes.

Interestingly, several generations earlier, the Sawin family intermarried with the Wyeth family, producers of at least four great American artists, and the artistic gene of the Wyeths manifested in several generations of Sawins as well.

One year after creating the Bride’s Box, John Sawin married Sally Putnam in the neighboring town of

New Salem. (She descended from John Putnam, constable of Salem, Massachusetts during the witchcraft trials there in 1692.) They had four children, one of whom died in 1836, followed two years later by Sally’s death, most likely due to childbirth.

Five months after Sally died, Sawin married Ruth Ann Kirtland of Rutland, Vermont, and together they had seven children, but as was typical of the time, three of these died as infants. Of John’s surviving seven children, three became painters as adults.

Despite his large family, John moved around with them a lot; the list of their various residences includes Wendell, Amherst, Northampton, Saratoga Springs, New York – where he ran a boarding house and a daguerreotype shop – Troy, New York, Greenfield, Cambridge, Wayland, East Lexington, Washington, DC, and Winchendon, which is where he died of pneumonia in 1874.

My internet search resulted in only one other pertinent item: a lengthy, detailed handbill for John Sawin’s decorative painting, printed in 1855 and now part of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association Collection. I have reproduced it in its entirety below be-

cause it suggests that at one time there may have been quite a few local examples of Sawin’s work.

The undersigned architectural, fresco, & decorative painter respectfully solicits orders for embellishing the Plastering of CHURCHES, PRIVATE RESIDENCES, HALLS, STORES, OFFICES, &c. Through a friend I am receiving from Paris and Germany the best and latest published Designs, and at as early a date as the Fresco Artists in our cities, thereby enabling me to compete with them in the same style of work and at nearly fifty percent less charge than their prices. Reference to numerous Gentlemen of good judgment in the beautiful and now firmly established branch of the Arts, FRESKO PAINTING, can be given. I would refer you to the new church in Winstead, Conn., decorated in the ANCIENT GRECIAN ORDER, and to a PARLOR in my Residence in imitation of FRENCH DESIGNS of CARVED OAK ORNAMENTS, in colors, in oil. J. Sawin DESIGNER AND DECORATOR IN FRESKO PAINTING

NOTICE

By arrangement with an importer, I can furnish, hang and varnish any quantity of Parlor Fresco Paper; from \$1 to \$10 per roll. Also, – J.S. invites orders from his friends in Greenfield and in Franklin County, in any or all kinds of SIGN, CARRIAGE, HOUSE, MILITARY, STANDARD, BANNER, REGALIA and LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

Also, Wire Window-Screen Shades, Cambric Transparent Window Shades in oil – Price \$3 to \$10 per pair. Imitation of Woods, Marbles, Stained Glass; Window Blinds painted and Sash glazed.

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The ad mentions an example of Sawin’s art at a church in Winstead, Connecticut, but I could find no

other reference to the existence of this work.

Frustrated by being met with one brick wall after another, I went to see my friend Dave Allen, at *old-maps.com* in Greenfield, with the hope of at least locating Sawin’s former residence and shop at the “west end of Pleasant Street.” Oh, to find his home and see his art still upon the parlor wall!

Within a matter of seconds, Dave was pointing at an 1855 map of Greenfield. We quickly found Pleasant Street and there, at its most western end, was an oddly-shaped house with the name “J. Sawin” written next to it.

I ran to my car, drove the few blocks to the Pleasant Street site, and noticed a man pushing a wheelbarrow full of wood in front of an unusual-looking house there. I introduced myself and cut to the chase: Had John Sawin ever owned this property? I asked.

To my surprise, the man, Ed Evans, nodded “yes,” saying he had seen that name on a July 1848 deed to the house. A native of Greenfield, Ed had always felt a fondness for what was called the “Ink Bottle House” before purchasing and restoring it in the 1970s.

Ed believes, from his research, that the house was built in the 1830s and that it has always looked pretty much as it looks today with a large round room on one side of the house and a two-story tower on the other. Its unconventionality must have appealed greatly to the artist in Sawin. A hidden room in the basement led Ed to wonder if the house was once part of the Underground Railroad.

But when I asked, with fingers crossed, if he’d ever found any sign of murals or other decorative painting on the walls, Ed’s answer was a definitive “No.”

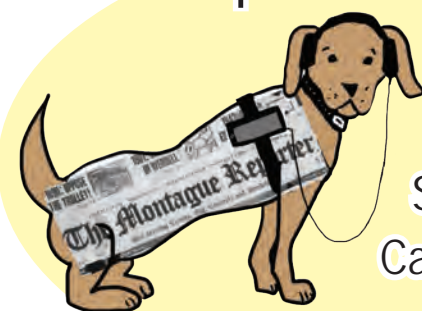
Hitting this last brick wall, sadly, brings an end to my story, a story that didn’t turn out quite the way I intended. Piecing the past together is never easy, and sometimes it’s just not possible.

But hope dies hard in a historian, and my wish is that someone with some bit of memorabilia concerning John Sawin Jr. may read this piece and reach out to me with it. If that someone is you, please contact me at *stoneoak2003@yahoo.com*. Thank you!



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