

The Montague Reporter

Leverett Moves Toward Decision on Forest Gift

By JAMIE SIMPSON

The town of Leverett has moved closer to a decision on whether to accept a donation of a 147-acre managed forest. After forester Bruce Spencer offered the land in 2023, the town formed an *ad hoc* committee to study the issue; they shared their findings and recommendations at a meeting last Thursday.

“The Town Forest Exploratory Committee recommends that the Town of Leverett accept the donation by Bruce Spencer and Judy Northup-Bennett of the Two Brothers Woodlot,” they wrote. “The donation delivers public, environmental, and conservation benefits that outweigh the potential costs of Town ownership.”

Spencer is widely recognized as one of the best foresters in New En-

gland, and served as chief forester at the Quabbin Reservoir from 1965 to 2007. The land in question is located at 353 North Leverett Road in North Leverett, near the Shutesbury town line and Lake Wyola.

Committee members Eric Donnelly, Juniper Katz, Jimmy Grogan, Stewart Olson, and Eva Gibavic presented the report and answered questions at last week’s meeting, which was open to the public. The event gave residents time to weigh the information in advance of a property hike planned for April 27, and the annual town meeting on May 3, when voters will be asked whether to accept the land.

The 28-page report is available on the town website.

The hike, at 2 p.m. on Sunday, April 27, is open to all, and an exploratory committee member will

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Voters will weigh whether the forested land, which has been under careful management for a half century, would make a wise public acquisition.

High School Sports Week: A Walk-Off Sacrifice Fly!

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – This week the Turners Falls High School baseball team lost an error-ridden heartbreaker against McCann, but bounced back against Greenfield for their second win of the season. Then they split their next games against Athol and Lee.

The Franklin Tech boys, meanwhile, outlasted Lenox to keep their record perfect.

In softball, the Eagles poured on the runs against Mohawk while Turners beat Greenfield on a seventh-inning sacrifice.

Baseball

*FCTS 5 – Lenox 3
McCann 3 – TFHS 2
TFHS 8 – Greenfield 5
Athol 19 – TFHS 5
TFHS 10 – Lee 2*

Last Thursday afternoon, the Franklin Tech Baseball Eagles topped the Millionaires of Lenox in a seesaw battle to keep their record at a perfect 4–0.

I met with the team briefly before the game. As they were warming up, Coach Dan Prasol reminded his troops that the season is still early, and that they need to produce

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Great Falls Middle School athlete Autumn Thornton blasts the ball into the right outfield in the bottom of the seventh inning last Friday night, driving baserunner Marilyn Abarua home for the tiebreaking run: Turners Falls 3, Greenfield 2.

Groups Will Host Forum For Montague Candidates

By REPORTER STAFF

MONTAGUE – As the annual town election on May 20 approaches, the *Montague Reporter* has partnered with the Montague Public Libraries and Montague Community Television (MCTV) to organize a candidates’ forum on Sunday, April 27 at 4:30 p.m.

The forum will feature an in-depth discussion with selectboard candidates Christopher Boutwell, who has served on the board since 2010, and Edward Voudren, who served from 1997 to 2004. Readers interested in suggesting discussion topics or questions may submit them to editor@montaguereporter.org.

Though there are no other competitive races on the townwide ballot, all candidates will be invited to introduce themselves to voters.

These include Rachel Stoler, Ann Fisk, and Paula Girard, incumbents, running for the board of health, board of assessors, and Montague Housing Authority, respectively; Tamara Kaplan and incumbent Will Quale for the library trustees; and incumbents Heather Katsoulis, Wendy Thompson, and Jane Oakes for the Gill-Montague school committee.

Anyone interested in announcing a write-in candidacy at the forum should email the above address. Vacant seats on the library trustees, school committee, parks and recreation commission, and Veterans’ Memorial trustees will be filled by write-in votes. The Veterans’ Memorial seat is reserved for a veteran.

The April 27 forum will be broadcast live on Channel 9 and available to watch afterward on MCTV’s Vimeo page as well as in re-runs.

A limited number of live audience seats are also available. Anyone interested in attending in person, in the upstairs meeting room at town hall, may call any of the Montague Public Libraries to register.

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Turtles, Sludge, and Cultural Impact

By JEFF SINGLETON

The agenda for Monday’s Montague selectboard meeting was packed, and the event drew a crowd, both at the town hall and online. Topics ranged from removing a dozen trees along Avenue A (*see article, Page A1*) to complaints about a truck parked dangerously on L Street to allocating money to the Cultural Council amid uncertainty about federal funding.

The board also dealt with the resignation of the newly-elected town meeting moderator, a resident who was prohibited from owning a dog but may have the right to a service dog, and extensive proposed changes to the sewer regulations. Not to mention closing a block of Third Street for a music event, announcing that the soapbox derby has been canceled, and approving turtle crossing warning signs made by schoolchildren.

One of the issues that drew the most input, including emails and letters, was the situation on L Street, where vehicles turning from Seventh Street merge

Montague Declines Offer To Remove Block of Trees



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

After hearing from the public, officials agreed that while a contractor’s offer to replace this row of aging shade trees was generous, replacing a few at a time would be better.

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – “The two thorniest meetings I’ve had involved trees,” Rich Kuklewicz said at the Montague selectboard meeting Monday night. “When I first got on the board, there were trees on Montague Street, [and] that was a debacle.”

The selectboard chair, who first joined the board in 2015, was referring to a line of historic trees believed to have been planted by the town tree warden in the late 1940s that were ultimately cut down by the electric company Eversource, which felt its lines were at risk.

“Trees,” he continued. “There’s something about them. I get it.”

The comment came during a discussion of a proposal by Mountain View Landscapes and Lawn Care, the company making “streetscape” improvements on Avenue A in Turners Falls, to remove all the ash trees on the northern side of the avenue between Third and Second Street, which have been undergoing treatment since 2022 for infestation by a beetle called the emerald ash borer.

The company, which is tasked with rebuilding the planters that contain the trees, has offered to remove and replace them, at no extra cost to the town, with trees of different species. This course of action was also recommended by Berkshire Design Group, the landscape

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‘It Is The Right Of The People To Alter Or To Abolish It’

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