

The Montague Reporter

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Board Taps Bogusz for Town Clerk; Now Seeking An Assistant

By JEFF SINGLETON

On Monday the Montague select-board issued permits for late spring and summer events, including music and movies at Peskeompskut Park, a concert on Second Street, and a rally “to support democracy and honor the flag” in Montague Center. The board also put the finishing touches on new sewer use regulations, held a non-public executive session to discuss a discrimination complaint filed against the town by a police department employee, and appointed Wendy Bogusz as the town clerk.

The permit for the “Raise a Ruckus” rally, the third of its kind in recent weeks featuring marching bands music and signs attacking the policies of the Trump administration as a threat to democracy, was requested by Emily Monosson. It would be, she said, a “joyful rally to support democracy and honor the flag” on Flag Day, Saturday, June 14, from 11 a.m. to noon on the Montague Center common.

Monosson said there would be “peacekeepers with vests to make sure people will stay where they should be.” She also said signage

see **MONTAGUE** page A6

Vote Clickers Facilitate an Easy Erving Town Meeting

By KATIE NOLAN

Wednesday night’s Erving annual town meeting was quiet. All 27 articles passed with little discussion and few questions. And, for the first time, the voters used electronic clickers rather than Aye or Nay voice votes.

Moderator Richard Peabody began the meeting with a short lesson on how to use the clickers, which had a green button for “Yes” and a red button for “No.” Voters chose clickers randomly from a box as they checked in.

In an hour and a half, the 58 voters at the meeting approved a \$7.2 million FY’26 operating budget, \$3.8 million for elementary education, \$1.3 million for secondary education, and \$602,000 for Franklin County Technical School.

They also voted \$1.1 million for capital improvement projects, including \$450,000 for a new pump-out/tanker for the fire department, \$200,000 for expanding the town

see **ERVING** page A4

After Food Stamp Thefts, Victims Left High and Dry



A recent wave of SNAP scams has brought home an uncomfortable new reality.

By JAMIE SIMPSON and MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – A number of area residents have reported theft of government benefits from their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards in the last two weeks, and according to police a device to “skim” user data has been discovered at least one local grocery store.

Food benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), officials say, cannot currently be recovered if stolen, as a federal law mandating and funding their reimbursement was allowed to lapse last winter.

“I wish they could catch these people and put a stop to it,” one

victim, Asa Bucinskas, told the Reporter. Last Saturday, the Turners Falls resident and father of three was attempting to buy food seedlings at the farmers market at Peskeompskut Park when he was told his EBT card was declined due to insufficient funds.

Asa and his wife, Tiffany Bucinskas, learned that the funds on their cards had been drained that same day in several transactions in New York and Pennsylvania, some only seconds apart. All told, the couple say, they lost their entire four-figure monthly allotment: \$879 in SNAP benefits, plus \$305 received under a separate state cash assistance program.

A significant number of other

see **THEFTS** page A8

Montague Squeaks Through Second Town-Meeting Night

By WILL QUALE

Montague town meeting members passed the final 14 articles on the warrant Wednesday evening at Turners Falls High School, continuing the annual town meeting one week after they approved the first 17. Discussion focused on two requests by the highway department and the question of whether to allow town officials to negotiate a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) with Montague’s largest taxpayer, FirstLight Power.

The evening’s first article, re-



The 2001 former fire department ambulance used to store and deploy Montague’s robotic sewer camera is failing and will be replaced with a van.

placing two aging highway department (DPW) vehicles, elicited the first parliamentary excitement. Superintendent Sam Urkiel requested funds to replace a 2007 pickup truck and the 2001 former ambulance which carries the department’s Rovver X robotic sewer inspection camera. Town meeting appropriated funds for the Rovver in 2021, and the fire department donated the ambulance, but it now has a serious oil leak.

Precinct 2’s Jim Martineau proposed a smaller appropriation to replace the ambulance with a trailer instead of a van. While this might cost less, Urkiel and select-board chair Rich Kuklewicz both said the camera needs to be kept in a climate-controlled environment, which most trailers cannot provide. Urkiel added that a van would be far more maneuverable.

“We worked hard to get the funding for the camera, which is an amazing savings for the town,” said capital improvements committee member Ariel Elan of Precinct 1, rallying opposition to Martineau’s amendment. “When we have a sudden clog, you need to be able to use the equipment right away. There’s no sense to me in questioning the kind of equipment DPW thinks is appropriate.”

see **SQUEAKS** page A7

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Superintendent Beck Announces Resignation

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – “Tonight I’m notifying the school committee, and the community, of my intent to resign as superintendent of the Gill-Montague Regional School District,” Brian Beck announced at Tuesday’s school committee meeting, reading from a prepared statement. “I will work with the school committee to decide on an appropriate date to ensure that the district is able to conduct a search for my replacement, and I will work hard to facilitate an orderly transition of responsibility.”

Beck, a Turners Falls resident, was offered the position of superintendent in March 2020, nine days after schools were ordered closed statewide for the COVID-19 pan-

demic. He had previously served as a principal at public high schools in Athol and Hadley.

The school committee rated Beck’s performance as “proficient” see **GMRSD** page A5



Brian Beck, Tuesday evening.

Conservancy Files Appeal Of State’s Hydro Approval

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS and NORTHFIELD – On Monday, the final day of a three-week window in which groups could appeal the water quality certification (WQC) the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) issued for the renewal of local hydroelectricity licenses, the Connecticut River Conservancy filed an appeal.

FirstLight Power is seeking new

50-year licenses to operate the Turners Falls dam and canal and the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage station, and securing the WQC from the state is one of the final steps before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issues a decision. MassDEP’s approval came with a number of conditions, but it largely ratified “settlements” the company reached with local towns and civic organizations in 2023.

see **APPEAL** page A5

High School Sports Week: Spring, Seniors Wrap Up

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – Franklin Tech and Turners Falls High celebrated their seniors this week as their seasons concluded. And with the regular season in the books, teams are waiting for their post-season seedings.

Turners baseball will probably make the PVIAC playoffs, but with a losing record they are not likely to be invited to the MIAA state tournament. For Turners and Franklin Tech’s softball programs, the sky is the limit as both teams try to repeat their very successful 2024 seasons.

Meanwhile, both hybrid track teams concluded their seasons with dual victories against the Athol Red Bears.

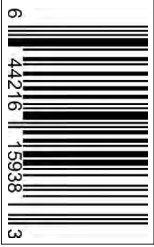
Track and Field
TFHS 100 – Athol 30 (Girls)
FCTS 87 – Athol 44 (Boys)

On Wednesday the Turners Falls girls’ track team defeated Athol at Greenfield High School. Jakhia Williams finished first in the 100-meter dash and long jump, Laura Fuess won the 400 hurdles and triple jump, and Molly Howe broke the tape in the mile and two-mile.

see **SPORTS** page A6



Turners Falls senior Charlotte Canterbury competes in the javelin as the Thunder girls’ track team hosted the Athol Bears on Wednesday at Donna Woodcock Field in Greenfield. The Thunder won the Senior Night meet, 100–30.



Can’t Pluck the Silvery Star of Liberty From Our Northern Sky

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Tom Rooney has been wrapping meats and poultry at Food City in Turners Falls for a year and a half.

OP ED

Investing in the Common Good: Why Funders Back AmeriCorps

At a time when our country faces increasing inequality, growing instability, and the weakening of social ties, it's easy to despair at the scale of the challenges. But for those who believe in the power of collective effort, AmeriCorps offers a solution for progress.

Why invest in AmeriCorps, a federal national service program? Well, to put it simply, AmeriCorps works, or AmeriCorps serves to be more precise. Every year, over 200,000 Americans sign up to serve through AmeriCorps, mentoring and tutoring young people, responding to disasters, preserving public lands, addressing hunger and homelessness, and more. AmeriCorps activates community assets, involving local resources and community members directly in addressing community needs.

AmeriCorps members come from all backgrounds and find common ground in their passion to serve. They develop the skills to work together toward shared goals, ultimately strengthening the civic fabric of their communities.

As private funders and community partners, we have seen through experience how we can play a critical role in supporting AmeriCorps programs, not only by investing in local implementation but also by helping to innovate, build capacity, and expand impact. It's well understood that federal dollars can't solve all the issues we face. But, when leveraged with community investment, together, our efforts are exponentially more effective.

One study from Columbia University bears this out: For every \$1 invested in AmeriCorps, another \$16 is returned to society through better health outcomes, higher earnings, and reduced need for public services.

These kinds of returns should spark the interest of any funder, public or private. In Massachusetts, \$4.3 million in local resources was contributed by the 17 programs being cut at the direction of DOGE. That represents almost \$70 million of outcome benefiting Massachusetts residents removed.

But the deeper possibilities of AmeriCorps are about more than numbers alone. AmeriCorps brings together everyday people of all backgrounds, bridging divides, cultivating leadership, and offering them a chance to connect, learn,

contribute, and gain the skills they need to achieve their potential. Moreover, many members experience AmeriCorps as a leadership ladder, building on their service activities to step into future roles as teachers, health care workers, non-profit leaders, and public servants.

At a moment when the outlook can seem bleak and trust in institutions has eroded, AmeriCorps creates a model for coming together to address shared challenges in the spirit of a common cause. And we invite others, in philanthropy, government, and business, to join us in rejuvenating the heart of America and reinvigorating our commitment to the common good.

When we invest in service, it's not just about programs. We're directly supporting civic well-being and the next generation of leaders.

In support of the value of service,

Megan Burke
President & CEO, Community Foundation of Western MA

Geoff Naunheim
Executive Director, United Way of Franklin & Hampshire Region

Kelsey Thomas
Program Coordinator, UMass Upward Bound

Alison Schoen
Chief Operating Officer, Hope for Youth & Families

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Phillip Ringwood
Executive Director, DIAL/SELF Youth & Community Services

Letters to the Editors



Don't Let Feds 'Deputize' Here

Your May 8 edition contains James Asbel's op-ed warning of the Trump administration's ominous moves toward inserting federal – including military – control over state and local law enforcement operations, as revealed in Executive Order 14288 issued on April 28.

To remove any doubt that these people are deadly serious in their march toward a police state, we now have the President's May 9 proclamation "Establishing Project Homecoming," which offers financial incentives for "illegal aliens" voluntarily to leave the country and promises "sweeping consequences" for those who do not.

Most significant, however, and most threatening to our constitutional democracy, is the final paragraph, Section 3(b):

No later than 60 days after the date of this proclamation, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall supplement existing enforcement and removal operations by deputizing and contracting with State and local law enforcement officers, former Federal officers,

officers and personnel within other Federal agencies, and other individuals to increase the enforcement and removal operations force of the Department of Homeland Security by no less than 20,000 officers in order to conduct an intensive campaign to remove illegal aliens who have failed to depart voluntarily.

"Deputizing" means making a person an agent of the deputizing authority, and thus under the control of that authority. One can only imagine what "contracting" means in this context.

As in Asbel's op-ed, and based on the same insistence that the law enforcement agencies and personnel of this Commonwealth remain under local and not federal control, Governor Healey and Attorney General Campbell are called upon to declare publicly and forcefully that no Massachusetts law enforcement personnel will be deputized or contracted to any federal authority.

Tupper Brown
Gill

Settlers Ignore Shared Roots

As revealed in the new documentary *The Settlers*, Israeli settlers in the West Bank and many throughout Israeli society believe, due to government propaganda, that Lebanon, Jordan, and parts of Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq were all part of "Greater Israel," and that Palestinians don't exist.

Palestine is a place name used throughout history and found in various languages, such as Arabic (*Filastīn*) and Latin (*Palaestina*). Peleset, transliterated from hieroglyphs, is found in five inscriptions referring to a "neighboring people" of the Twentieth Dynasty of Egypt (c. 1150 BCE).

The term Palestine appeared in 5th-century BCE ancient Greek manuscripts. Herodotus wrote of a "district of Syria, called Palaistinē" between Phoenicia and Egypt. In his *Histories*, Herodotus denotes a wider

region than the biblical Philistia by applying the term to both the coastal and the inland regions.

Later Greek writers such as Aristotle also used the word, as did such Roman writers as Ovid, Pliny the Elder, and Plutarch, as well as Roman Judean writers Philo of Alexandria and Josephus.

Palestine has been a place where many religions have been practiced for 4,000 years. Today, the Samaritans of Nablus, Palestine, descendants of the ancient Israelites, still live on the North Mountain.

I was in Nablus visiting friends nearly 20 years ago, watching television, as Abbas campaigned to head the Palestinian Authority. Standing next to him were a Jewish rabbi, a Catholic priest, and a Muslim imam.

I hate to admit it, but I am older than the state of Israel. Thankfully, documentaries such as *Ultra Zionists*

Klon for Goldman

I am pleased to ensorse Marina Goldman for a seat on the Montague Selectboard. Please join me and vote for her as a write-in candidate on May 20.

Sincerely,

John "Klon" Koehler
Turners Falls

and *The Settlers* now exist and can be used to expose the violence and horrors that result from ultra-nationalism wherever it exists. It's time the people of this fragile planet learned to respect the Other and live in peace as we focus on important issues such as climate change.

Genevieve Harris-Fraser
Orange

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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

(Title still temporary.
Haven't found
something better yet.)

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

Never doubt that three guys with **leafblowers** can blow a cloud of dirt from a social club’s parking lot through an office window left two inches open in the early morning hours.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

The bandshell at Peske Park, just like those leafblowers, is aimed straight at our office windows, and this time of year it’s always great to hear the **Montague Community Band** rehearsing very casually in it. Dreamy, even.
It looks like they’re holding two more Monday evening open rehearsals, from 7 to 9 p.m. on May 19 and June 2, and the eight Mondays after that are concerts. Is this your year?

We weren’t asked to make that **announcement**, but there were two that friends of the paper did request we pass along.

One: “This Saturday, May 17 at 2 p.m. at the Wendell town hall, a **Celebration of Life** will be held for Joshua Jay Dostis, a.k.a. Waffles, a.k.a. WafflesTC clown, a.k.a. Joshua Waffleman. Come to see videos of his actions, and a display of his photos, booklets, sculptures and other memorabilia. Share your memories, your impressions, your expressions of friendship and love.
“There will be light refreshments, musical interludes, and lots of loving commentary as we give tribute to the life of a well-known local activist, street theater performer, dancer, and clown.”
(Reviewing our Events listing this week, one horrified proofreader raised an objection that, following our self-inflicted formatting rules, we had tagged this celebration as “Free.” We wouldn’t write that about just *anyone’s* memorial, but it seemed perfectly appropriate, and will go to print. Free, as in clowns.)

Two: “Why aren’t there fruits and nuts growing around all of the spaces where people live? There could be! **Free hazelnut, juneberry, blueberry, and cherry plants** (and more) will be available for pickup at the Finders Collective’s Free Store, 104 Fourth Street, on Saturday, May 17 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.
“This is our first time doing this – a limited number are available! Please sign up ahead of time with our online form at bit.ly/trees4free or on paper, in person, during open hours at the free store: 3 to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.” Sweet!

We couldn’t fit it in the traditional correx zone on Page A2, but travel writer and clam-pizza-abandoner **Max Hartshorne** wrote in with a correction about his May 8 column (*Mexico City overwhelms, but Roma delivers*, Page B1). He had written that his friends in Guanajuato

tend to leave during the rainy season in May and June, but apparently they set him straight – they actually skip town during the hot, dry months of April and May, and don’t mind the rains.
The record is *hereby corrected*.



Whoever is maintaining this **wayfinding sign**, we have to admit it’s looking awful cheerful. Thanks to Anne Jemas for the photo. We do miss the old DIY signs that said *Hither* and *Yon* – or was that what they said?

Peter Stampfel played in town last weekend, and it was a hoot. We should all be so lucky. Thanks to everyone who pulled it together.



Here’s another hyperlocal submission! Rob Machado writes: “If you happen to be walking on Fifth Street, between Avenue A and J Street, and are wondering how tall you are... wonder no more! I have discovered this **handy height measuring scale**, mounted to a pole, by one of our neighbors.”
That is extremely helpful. Readers from other towns and villages are welcome to come try.

One **town meeting on a Wednesday night** is a hassle for our tiny weekly paper, but we always forgive Erving. We are convinced Montague’s experiment in the same was a sly plot to destroy us... Two weeks in a row!
A huge thank-you to periodic reporter Will Quale, who was up doing edits ’til 5:30 a.m. last week and 4:30 a.m. this morning to get the townspeople the important news while it’s fresh.

Bicycle enthusiasts will be excited to hear that a Critical Mass was accomplished this Monday in these parts, as three cyclists and a passenger towed in a trailer crossed in the wrong direction over the Bailey bridge from the Patch at the same time. The action was carried out without serious incident. There is strength in numbers, and it is always a joy to remember.

In the course of reporting this week’s Page A1 article on food benefit theft, we learned the **doomed bipartisan bill** in the Senate aimed at patching this shameful hole in our safety net, the *Fairness for Victims of SNAP Skimming Act*, was sponsored by Pennsylvania senator John Fetterman. Huh!

Ferd Wulkan has submitted a **crossword puzzle**, but we have to figure out where to put it. A crossword puzzle on the editorial page? Crosswords take a lot of effort to make, so we’ll figure out how to fit it in, but it contains a lot of *opinions*.

Speaking of opinions, this one’s free, as you’ve made it this far into the column: It’s going to be awful hard to build a winning movement for democratic values, *habeas corpus*, **due process**, etc., etc., here in the States if not everyone involved is on the same page about whether subjects in the imperial periphery should have these rights.
According to B’Tselem, the Israel Prison Service was holding 3,327 Palestinians in administrative detention as of last December. The number is now undoubtedly far higher. These, too, are people held without charges, subject in the occupied territories to military law rather than Israeli national law on the basis of the conditions of their birth. As the US-backed government moves toward an increasingly open policy of settling Gaza and annexing the West Bank, what exactly should Americans be doing? Celebrating flags?

Are you listening to the **Montague Reporter Podcast**? Don’t you want to hear a podcast about a newspaper? We’re about to hit a milestone episode. Feel free to jump in now, or go back and listen to the first 99 to get the full context.
People here are talking: **rooster stew**.

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Two More Letters to the Editors

Dorais Endorses

Today I learned that Marina Goldman has stepped up to run as a *write-in* candidate for the Montague town selectboard. I fully support Marina’s candidacy.
Marina has lived in Montague for over 35 years. She raised her family here and has worked to support the town in multiple ways. She is a nurse practitioner and worked with the Opioid Task Force. She worked tirelessly and was instrumental in the revival of the Shea Theater, which has brought countless numbers of people from all over the state to en-

ergize downtown Turners Falls.
Marina is committed to the economic growth of Montague. She is a relationship builder and problem solver, acting inclusively with all who she works with, and has boundless energy with her involvement.
Please join me and others in supporting Marina Goldman, 71 Main Street, Montague with a *write-in* vote on May 20.
Susan Dorais
Montague Center
Town Meeting Member
Board Member, Montague Villages

McInerney: Marina

Lucky Montague! Marina Goldman has thrown her hat into the selectboard ring and what a hat it is. She is a force of nature and Montague will be greatly served by her as selectperson.
Marina has lived in and loved Montague for almost 40 years and has given of herself to the community in more ways than can be counted. I have had the pleasure of working with Marina and have borne witness to her many capacities as community builder, nurse practitioner, and tireless volunteer

and those are just a few of the many hats she wears.
Marina has been instrumental in contributing to the economic development of downtown Turners Falls through her relentless work for the Shea Theater. Imagine when she puts that energy to work for Montague. And all you have to do is stick her sticker on your ballot on May 20.
Linda McInerney
Greenfield
Artistic Director,
Eggtooth Productions


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ERVING from page A1

cemetery, and \$200,000 for the elementary school roof and HVAC replacement. They agreed to move approximately \$1.1 million from free cash and approximately \$85,000 in unspent funds from closed projects to the capital improvement projects, and to appropriate \$100,000 for the capital stabilization fund.

The voting periods were silent as voters focused on their clickers. When each 30-second voting period ended, totals were tabulated by the system and projected on a screen.

Voters had few questions or comments on most of the articles. For an article authorizing the disposal of surplus property, one voter questioned the disposal of seemingly useful recre-

ational equipment, including baseball helmets, gloves, and balls, by the recreation commission. Rec commission chair Tom Glennon responded that the equipment was outdated and had been poorly stored in a shed where it was contaminated by rodents.

Asked about the increase in the FY’26 budget over FY’25, selectboard chair Jacob Smith replied that for the entire town budget, operating expenses and capital projects, the increase was 9%. Finance committee member Daniel Hammock volunteered that the Erving Elementary School budget increased by only 0.6%.

The proposed town cemetery expansion generated two questions: where will it expand, and when will plots be available? Cemetery com-

missioner Robert Holst told the meeting the expansion will be across Mountain Road from the current cemetery.

Smith said the \$200,000 was for the first phase of the project, and that the actual expansion was still “multiple years away.”

The meeting also approved a bylaw requiring rapid-entry systems to facilitate fire department access to multi-family residences, endorsed a set of changes to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments charter, and established water and wastewater capital stabilization accounts.

After Article 27, Peabody called for a voice vote to dissolve the meeting. He was answered this time by a roomful of voters yelling “Aye!”



NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Grant Timelines Impel a Rare June ‘Special’

By KEITH WATERS

Erving is planning a special town meeting for later this summer, likely on June 25 or June 30. On Monday, June 9 the selectboard will have a meeting to finalize the warrant. They may have to meet June 2 additionally.

A number of grant-related issues make this special meeting, so soon after the annual meeting, necessary. Bids for the Farley Road bridge project, being done in conjunction with Wendell, came in over what was expected, and one article relates to that. The selectboard was able to get the state to take on a significant portion of the Church Street bridge project, and another article relates to the changed funding structure for that project. The town also needs to provide matching funding for a

grant from the state for a water asset management project.

Additionally, the historical commission has a number of changes they would like made, and the STM will present those to town voters. They would like to reduce their membership from seven to five, as filling the commission has been an issue, and they would also like to create a separate committee to take care of the town’s museum, the Pearl B. Care Museum.

At a meeting of the selectboard on Monday, the board and town administrator Bryan Smith went over the awaited letter from the board of assessors, which was meant to clarify the potential effect of the Hero Act veteran property tax exemptions. The letter was not immediately clear to everyone at the meeting, and they took some time trying to understand it.

It seems as though the total possible tax exemptions faced by the town would be about \$41,000 a year, based on current enrollment and property values. Board members Jim Loynd and Scott Bastarache expressed interest in allowing the town’s veterans to access the maximum allowed exemptions, sooner rather than later.

The issue will also be put to the special town meeting in June.

Erving currently receives inspectional services through a three-year agreement with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), which expires at the end of June. Bryan Smith brought this to the attention of the board and recommended they sign another three-year agreement, which they agreed to do.

The town has decided to put a fence around the wastewater treat-

ment plant in Erving’side, and has set aside just over \$63,000 for it. The project received four bids, though two were ineligible.

The job will go to the lowest eligible bidder, Guardrail Solutions LLC of West Springfield, for a cost of \$60,000.

Erving has been considering creating a local hazard mitigation committee. At Monday’s meeting the board formally created this committee, which will be comprised of five town staff, two representatives of local industry, and two townspeople. The town staff will be the chief of police, the highway superintendent, the town planner, the fire chief, and the water and wastewater superintendent.

Cynthia Roy-Clark wrote a letter expressing interest in joining the conservation committee, and the board approved her appointment.

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Towns Unsure Quite How to Foot Farley Bridge Bill

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard’s May 7 meeting was the first for newly elected selectboard member Adam Feltman. He won the position unopposed at the May 5 town election, but had not had time to get sworn in, and so he did not vote at this meeting.

The first order of business was board reorganization, electing a chair. Board member Paul Doud voted for Laurie DiDonato, who won with no opposition.

Project manager Phil Delorey delivered one piece of bad news. Gill Engineering had estimated the cost to repair the Farley Road bridge between Wendell and Erving at \$125,000 and Wendell, as the lead town, had a grant of \$150,000 lined up. Bid requests went out in April, and the lowest bid returned was \$346,000.

Neither Wendell nor Erving is ready to make up the difference. Delorey said he had spoken with the state Rural Development Fund about additional grant money, but they were not optimistic. He said he would apply anyway.

Some loose planks on the bridge have been tapped down, but screw holes in the sub decking were rotted and made large enough so the screws that should attach the deck do not hold.

Erving selectboard members have said they think few Erving residents use that bridge.

Elected Lorax

Tree warden Cliff Dornbusch Zoomed in for a discussion about changing the tree warden from an elected to an appointed position. He said his life was smoothing out after some difficulties, and he would be more available.

Recent annual town meetings have given the warden a \$6,000 budget for tree work, and Dornbusch said he has tried to keep the money for spring work, late in the fiscal year. National Grid trims trees at their expense, and the Wendell DPW can do several days’ tree work with \$6,000; hiring an outside tree company costs more.

Feltman said when he worked for the Amherst DPW, the highway superintendent was the tree warden. He travels the town roads regularly, and can watch for when a tree becomes a threat to the road. He said the road crew boss serves as the tree warden in most towns.

Dornbusch said he is also looking at roadside trees that way, and is in close contact with the road crew, but that as someone with a background in tree safety at national parks, he is more qualified to see when a weakening tree may have 20 years of life left before it is a true threat to the road. While the highway crew is more focused on the roads, he said, his focus is on safety first but also the trees. He added that his email signature is from *The Lorax*: “I speak for the trees.”

Treasurer Carolyn Manley said

the procedure for changing the position from elected to appointed would start with a vote at the annual town meeting on June 4. The following May election would confirm that vote, and if that passes, the selectboard would appoint the tree warden going forward.

Dumpster Space

Neighbors Johanna and John Fitzgerald have bought the property at 131 Locke Village Road, which the town had condemned for clutter and trash after years of trying to get the owner to clean it up. At an annual town meeting several years ago, citizens voted against an article that would have paid \$30,000 for professional cleanup.

The Fitzgeralds are now asking the town for permission to use the WRATS open-top container without paying the regular \$3 per cubic foot disposal fee. Wendell pays by volume, not weight, and the Fitzgeralds plan to cut up fiberglass boats into panels that can lie flat in the container.

Delorey said the WRATS is facing a severe budget crisis and may be cutting the hours it is open, but he supported the idea. He said he hesitated at the idea of granting a privilege to one citizen, but thought the request was reasonable – the start of a hazardous waste cleanup for a few hundred dollars, as opposed to \$30,000.

Board members agreed and approved allowing Fitzgerald \$400

worth of open-top container volume at no cost to him.

Other Business

The selectboard approved using the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) for building inspection through FY’26.

Wendell resident and real estate agent Jennifer Gross joined via Zoom to say a client had applied at FRCOG for a building permit in Wendell, but was unable to provide a street number.

Delorey said anyone can assign a house a street number, as it is a simple matter of measuring the distance between house numbers on either side.

He said some people in Wendell want to add a tiny house, but a mobile home is allowed only if it is on a true foundation.

The planning board is holding the plan to remove the dam that holds back Bowens Pond, and has to acknowledge receipt of it. The board can hold it, but not indefinitely, and members have no opinion of what to do. If others want a pause in the dam removal process, the planning board can be a gatekeeper. The state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) wants the dam removed, and Tanner said he has no faith in MassDEP.

DiDonato and Doud said there was no need to slow the process, and that the planning board should acknowledge receipt of the plan.

Open space committee chair Dan Leahy said National Grid might be interested in the property at 40 Gate Lane as a mitigation site for work along their transmission lines. They would want to convert the lower part of the property from forested wetland to shrub wetland, and keep the property in conservation.

He also mentioned a property at 78 Wickett Pond Road that Judy Hall and Alistair MacMartin once bought from the town, answering a request for proposals (RFP) that stipulated that the bulk of the land be put under a conservation restriction (CR). Hall owns the house alone now, and has not completed getting the CR. She has now started listing the land for sale.

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APPEAL from page A1

The Conservancy (CRC), a Greenfield-based non-profit advocating for habitat and recreation on the waterway, was a party to those settlement talks, but pulled out without signing the agreement on “Flows and Fish Passage.” Its appeal, filed jointly with national partner American Rivers, highlights its dissent from the current proposal. The groups argue that the minimum flow the WQC requires in the river’s “bypass” stretch below the Turners Falls dam – 500 cubic feet per second (cfs), from July to mid-November – is “not sufficiently protective or restorative of aquatic life uses in that stretch of the river,” and should be replaced with a 1,400 cfs minimum.

“We’ve been pushing for it throughout the process, and we’ve had expert opinion weigh in,” CRC river steward Nina Gordon-Kirsch told the *Reporter*. The discovery of two rare plant species growing on the river bank below the dam, tussock hairgrass and Tradescant’s aster, prompted MassDEP to reduce the required flow to protect the foothold they have established.

CRC argues that MassDEP failed to prove these grasses are “aquatic,” an “existing use” of the river, or unable to be transplanted elsewhere, and failed in protecting the “most sensitive use” of the river.

“The aquatic species who actually rely on the river for reproduction, and for life, should take precedence over a plant species that cannot be fully submerged in water during its reproductive state,” Gordon-Kirsch explained.

The appeal makes five other complaints: that the WQC does not recognize the hydro projects as “the pri-

mary cause” of erosion in the area, and requires too little mitigation; that it gives the company too much time before installing a fish lift at the dam and a barrier net at the Mountain; that it does too little to protect shortnose sturgeon; that it should require the company to publicly track river levels every five minutes, not every hour; and that it does not take climate change into account.

FirstLight spokesperson Claire Belanger issued a terse response: “While we disagree with CRC and American Rivers’ characterization of the certification issued by MassDEP, this appeal is an active legal matter and therefore FirstLight cannot provide further comment at this time.”

An attempt to reach Andy Fisk, the former CRC executive director and now a regional director for American Rivers, was unsuccessful as of press time.

On Tuesday, an additional objection popped up on FERC’s docket, filed by Greenfield environmental reporter Karl Meyer. Providing flow maps from FirstLight’s own application, Meyer argued that the WQC should have been denied on the basis that when the company fills its reservoir atop Northfield Mountain at full speed, a miles-long stretch of the river flows upstream.

This, he said, violates the federal Clean Water Act’s stated aim “to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity” of waterways.

“It’s kind of a prayer,” Meyer told the *Reporter*. “I wanted to honor my work on this, and not just fold my tent... I just want the truth out there.”



GMRSD from page A1

in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024, though last December the district’s union, the Gill-Montague Education Association, announced publicly that they had “no confidence” in him after a membership vote of 166 to 9.

“We would like someone who is regularly available or accessible, proactively communicates with staff and families, is collaborative, and communicates effectively in team settings,” the union statement read.

Following that event, the administration restarted the district’s Joint Labor-Management Committees, contractually mandated boards intended to collaboratively address workplace concerns.

The public portion of Tuesday’s meeting was prefaced by an executive session to discuss increasing the salary ranges for six senior administrative positions. If school committee members knew of Beck’s plans to step down before his public statement they did not let on, and showed no visible reaction.

“I’m grateful to the school committee for the opportunity to serve in my home community in this capacity,” the superintendent continued. “I have been blessed to work with so many talented and dedicated faculty, staff, and administrators in this role, and I have learned a ton from you all. Thank you.”

“Thank you, Brian,” Gill member Bill Tomb, acting as chair in the absence of Jane Oakes, replied, and then moved on with the evening’s agenda.

The meeting was short, as the main item was originally scheduled to be the committee’s annual evaluation of Beck.

“That is going to be put off to a later date at this time,” Tomb said. “There’s more to look at with that, and Jane would choose to hold it back until at least the next meeting.”

Beck declined after the meeting to comment further about his decision, other than that it was made for personal reasons.

The revisions to the administrators’ positions were unanimously approved. Salary ranges were increased for the middle and high school principal and assistant principal; the assistant principal at Sheffield and Hillcrest elementary schools and the principal at Sheffield; the director of pupil services; and the director of business and operations. The low-

est floor was raised from \$85,000 to \$90,000 per year, and the highest cap from \$145,000 to \$156,000.

The secondary assistant principal was assigned a new task, “Coordinates summer school programming for secondary students,” and Sheffield’s principal is now responsible for coordinating the after-school program at that school, brought in-district this year after the Northampton-based Collaborative for Educational Services failed to renew the state-administered grant funding the program.

Gill resident Robert Marcalow was appointed to the building committee for the Gill Elementary School roof, and the committee voted to declare all the Chromebooks possessed by graduating high school seniors under the district’s “1:1” computing system as surplus.

“We choose to dispose of them with the outgoing seniors,” Beck explained.

Secondary school principal Shawn Rickan came to discuss a new proposed middle school math curriculum, Connected Mathematics Project 4, published by Michigan State University. Rickan said a team had reviewed three curricula and chose CMP4 “overwhelmingly,” in part because the district already uses CMP3, and that elementary and high school teachers were consulted to make sure it would fit well with their curricula.

The committee unanimously approved the curriculum. The move comes in part as a response to an intervention at the middle school by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), mandated after poor student performance on standardized tests.

In related news, Rickan reported that a consultant from Walker Solutions, which the district has employed to help the middle school improve its “climate-culture,” has scheduled two “parent café” events next Wednesday evening at the school and next Friday morning at the Brick House Community Resource Center.

Rickan called the events a “workshop for parents and caregivers,” to discuss “communication and school climate.”

A similar topic surfaced during a discussion of the school committee’s own goal-setting. “Something like communication has forever and a day been an issue, that we don’t com-

municate correctly,” said Tomb. “So people try to alter how they communicate, we establish positions... and still we get communication issues, that we’re not doing it well enough.”

Montague member Heather Katsoulis said improving the district website should be at the center of the effort. “It would be nice to have everything on a site that’s really community- or user-friendly,” she said.

“I like what Shawn was talking about,” said Montague member Carol Jacobs. “Make yourself available, in real time, in a place that people can get to that isn’t always the school.”

Later, Jacobs said she felt the committee should “showcase the work of the district” to the broader community, and could make a calendar inviting various speakers to give reports, though “some people aren’t going to like that, because they want the meetings to be short.”

“Brian’s job is to do the work in the schools and in the district – he’s the operations guy – but we have a big role in setting the tone, the governance and policies and all of that,” she added.

“It’s really an inclusion effort for the community, rather than just the students,” said Tomb.

“We’re hoping to make ourselves a little less hands-off,” said Montague member Wendy Thompson.

A spring concert and art show will be held this Friday, May 16, at 6:30 p.m. in the high school theater. Music director Alyssa Comeau said 166 students, “not including the art kids,” are contributing to the event.

A spring festival will be held this Sunday, May 18 at 11 a.m. at the elementary schools in Turners Falls, and next Wednesday a “walk, bike, and roll” event is planned for their morning commute. The Class of 2025 high school graduation is scheduled for Friday, June 6 at 6 p.m.

The committee’s next meeting on May 27 will include its annual reorganization. Tomb joked that he will run the meeting until a chair is elected, as the “oldest person on the committee.” By policy, he is assigned this responsibility as its longest-serving member.

Katsoulis, Thompson, and Oakes are all running unopposed to hold their seats in the town elections of May 19 and 20, and a vacant one-year Montague seat is expected to be filled by a write-in vote.



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MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Proposed Regulation of Commercial Truck
Parking on Town Ways and Lots

The Montague Selectboard proposes to amend the Montague Traffic Rules and Regulations by adding a new section #11 to Article V titled “Commercial Truck Parking Restrictions.” The regulation will restrict overnight parking of commercial vehicles on town ways and municipal lots. Violations shall be punishable by a \$50 fine or by towing. A draft of the proposal is available at www.montague-ma.gov. The selectboard will hold a public hearing as part of their weekly business meeting on Monday May 19, 2025 at 7:00 PM via ZOOM. Written or in-person testimony is encouraged.

Written comments may be directed to walterr@montague-ma.gov.

Richard Kuklewicz, Chair

MONTAGUE TREE WARDEN

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws (MGL), Chapter 87, Public Shade Tree Law, Section 3 (Cutting of Public Shade Trees; Hearing; Damages), the Town of Montague Tree Warden will hold a Public Hearing regarding a proposal from the Town of Montague to remove or prune public shade trees on Thursday, May 15, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in front of 56 Avenue A.

This proposal is a part of the Town’s ongoing Avenue A streetscape improvement project. The two ash trees located in front of the 56 Avenue A storefront have been identified by the Town as good candidates for replacement during this project, given their age, condition, and susceptibility to Emerald Ash Borer. The two Town trees located within the public way that are designated for removal and replacement have been posted with a notice of public hearing.

For further information, please contact Chris Nolan-Zeller, Assistant Town Administrator, at (413) 863-3200 x109.

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“Every great cause begins
as a movement, becomes a
business, and eventually
degenerates into a racket.”

Eric Hoffer, ‘The Temper of Our Time’

MONTAGUE from page A1

would be posted to identify places to park, neighborhood residents would be given advanced warning of the event, and an “onsite medic” would be present.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz asked if the organizers had talked with police chief Chris Williams about the rally. Monosson said Marina Goldman, who had cosigned the application, had talked with him after a similar rally in April, but was unsure whether the two had discussed the upcoming event. Town administrator Walter Ramsey said Williams had “signed off” on the application, a copy of which was available at the town hall.

The board unanimously voted to approve the permit.

The board also approved permits for a large number of events in Peskeompskut Park from early June through mid-September organized by the RiverCulture program. These included 14 concerts, four movies, and one “fairy house day.”

RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto told the *Reporter* that this

list joined a formidable number of summer events already scheduled in Montague, including a First Friday event on June 6 in downtown Turners Falls, the Pocumtuck Homelands Festival on August 2 and 3, the mug race in Montague Center on August 16, the RPM heavy metal festival at the Millers Falls Rod & Gun Club from August 29 through September 1, and a vintage car show on September 1 in Turners.

No sooner had the board approved the Ruckus rally and RiverCulture events than Peter Chilton of Nova Motorcycles added to the list by requesting an entertainment license to allow four bands to perform on Saturday, May 24 from 5 to 11 p.m. on a lot he owns across Second Street from Nova, where food trucks are parked.

In response to a question from Kuklewicz about the noise level as the evening progressed, Chilton said the bands did not play “heavy” rock, but were more like the “indie” rock bands of the 1980s and ’90s. He also promised the stage would be facing away from the nearby residential

neighborhood. The entertainment license was unanimously approved.

A calendar of summer events will appear next week in the *Montague Reporter*.

Tree Falls In Forest

The board held a hearing on proposed changes in the town’s sewer use regulations, which have not been updated since 2013 and are no longer consistent with federal policies or the treatment plant’s National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

Most of the changes, which focused on consolidating regulations for industrial users which previously had been scattered throughout the document, were reviewed by the board on April 14.

At Monday’s meeting, assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller said some “relatively minor” adjustments had been made to the draft, primarily to improve clarity. For example, a section on billing practices which had suggested that sewer fees and surcharges are sent out “on a monthly

basis” was changed to indicate that “all annual charges and surcharges are to be billed with sewer use.”

Sewer bills are sent out twice a year, in the spring and fall, and are based on the previous winter’s water usage as calculated by the town’s two water departments.

Although this portion of the meeting had been posted as a “public hearing,” the board did not announce the hearing’s beginning or end, as is the common practice, and there was no public discussion of the 68-page document, which the board approved unanimously.

Other Business

Acting as the personnel board, the selectboard voted to appoint current executive assistant Wendy Bogusz as the new town clerk. Nolan-Zeller, who served on the hiring committee, told the board the committee felt Bogusz was the “most highly qualified candidate” due to her 28 years of service to the town, 25 as executive assistant. Noting that Bogusz is “obviously known to all of you,” Nolan-Zeller also mentioned her re-

cent work on the board of registrars.

With virtually no discussion, the selectboard unanimously voted to approve the recommendation and directed Kuklewicz and Ramsey negotiate a contract with Bogusz.

The board discussed extending the search for the director of assessing so that the hiring committee can “reopen the process and see if we can get some additional candidates,” according to Ramsey. He said the committee had interviewed some “good candidates,” but wanted “to see what else is out there.”

Ramsey initially requested one extra month but the board, without taking a vote, decided to extend the period by six weeks.

At the end of the meeting, the board retired to a non-public executive session to discuss the town’s strategy for responding to a legal complaint lodged before the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination by an S. Williams. Kuklewicz clarified that the complainant was police officer Shawna Williams, not police chief Chris Williams.



SPORTS from page A1

Other first-place finishers included Charlotte Canterbury (800m), Carly Walsh (400m), Ella Guidaboni (110m hurdles), and Anya Livingstone in javelin. The relay team of Daisha Ovalle-Perez, Guidaboni, Fuess, and Walsh won the 4x100m.



Franklin Tech senior Madix Whitman competes in the triple jump as the Eagles boys’ track team hosted the Athol Bears on Wednesday. Whitman placed second with a distance of 35 feet, 6 inches, and Tech won the event 88-47.

In the boys’ meet, William Thomas won the 800m and the two-mile while Nicholas Leblanc took discus, Wyatt Whitman the 110m hurdles, Samuel Bodenstein the 200m, Dylan Cullen the 400m, James Edson the 400m hurdles, and Sawyer Cadron the mile.

Bodenstein, Carson Couture, Madix Whitman, and Josiah Little won the 400m relay.

Baseball

TFHS 9 – Smith Academy 2
Greenfield 11 – TFHS 1
Frontier 7 – TFHS 4

The Turners Falls Baseball Thunder traveled down to Hatfield last Thursday, and defeated the Smith Academy Falcons. Blue scored in the first inning and outpaced the Falcons to take the contest going away.

Ledwin Villafana cracked a home run while Trevor Lyons, Jackson Cogswell, and Nathaniel Trinke clocked doubles. Kainen Stevens pitched a complete game, scattering six hits, striking out 12, and walking two.

On Monday the team traveled to Greenfield and were upended by 11-1. I stayed for the first couple of innings, which gave me a chance to talk about post-season chances. Greenfield took advantage of some Thunder mental mistakes and was comfortably ahead when I left.

On Tuesday the Thunder celebrated Senior Night, saying goodbye to Villafana and

Zachary Keeney. Little league players were in attendance, and I was hoping to get a group picture but they were everywhere from the softball field to the tennis courts. Some were playing football near the baseball diamond. The baseball game started a half hour after softball, and I attempted to watch both.

Frontier scored twice in the first inning, and it remained 2-0 until the third inning when Lyons put the Thunder on the scoreboard with an RBI single. In the fifth, Freilyn Jose Abarua Corona placed a single and Brody Girard was walked, and the pair orchestrated a double steal to put both in scoring position. It didn’t matter – Cogswell skyed a monster home run, giving Blue a 4-2 lead.

In the sixth, Frontier got two men on with no outs. Blue managed a double play, but the lead runner scored to make it a one-run game, and after two hit batters and a base hit Red gained a 5-4 lead. Turners couldn’t score in the sixth, and in the seventh the Hawks scored on a deep sacrifice and a wild pitch to take the game 7-5.

Cogswell, Girard, Lyons, and Abarua Corona had hits for the Thunder. Stevens pitched the complete game, walking one, striking out two, and allowing two earned runs.

Softball

FCTS 8 – Frontier 1
FCTS 15 – Pioneer 1
TFHS 10 – Taconic 5
FCTS 21 – Mahar 2
FCTS 10 – Northampton 0
TFHS 5 – South Hadley 1

Last Thursday the Franklin Tech softball machine went to South Deerfield, where they beat the Red Hawks via the long ball.

A storm was brewing, so the game started 30 minutes early. Arriving in the third inning, I witnessed Hannah Gilbert send the ball over the fence for a four-bagger. As I settled in my seat, one of the regulars reported that “Ally,” Alison George, had also hit a two-run homer in the second inning.

The scoreboard at Frontier was made in shop class, and it has the innings painted on a wooden frame with hooks for numbers to display the score. The Hawks had scored in the first, and Tech had now scored three unanswered runs.

As the game went on Frontier displayed fantastic defensive plays, forcing Franklin to rely on the home run. In the fifth, Lindsey Taylor and Gilbert both obliged, and Frontier switched pitchers.

Next, Kylee Gamache got a base hit and was relieved by Taylor. Brayleigh Burgh batted her home, and in the sixth Cordelia Guerin got on base and George smacked another home run to make it 8-1.

As Gilbert came up to bat in the seventh, lightning struck. It was quite spectacular: the sky lit up, and five bolts darted down.

The game was delayed for a half hour and then finally called, giving the Eagles the 8-1 drubbing.

On Mothers’ Day the Franklin Tech Eagles dismantled the Pioneer Black Panthers at Nancy Gifford Field. It did not start well for the visitors – Tech’s very first batter shot the ball directly at the Pioneer pitcher, who managed to make the throw to first but then collapsed. After getting her breath back she was cleared to continue, but the hit parade was just beginning.

Tech scored 15 runs in four innings while holding the Pioneers to just one run in five. Eleven Eagles hit safely: Taylor, Gamache, Gilbert, Burgh, George, Ava Worden, Skylei Lapan, Shelby O’Leary, Gianna DiSciullo, Samantha Duncan, and Taylor Underwood.

Gilbert pitched four innings, allowing one run on two hits and a walk and striking out 10, besides hitting a home run and a double. Burgh relieved her, striking out one and walking one.

Tuesday was Senior Night at Turners Falls, and before the game Madison Liimatainen, Marilyn Abarua, and Mia Marigliano had their pictures taken with their families. After the game they received gift bags and cupcakes.

Turners set the tone early when catcher Marigliano made a circus catch in the first inning. Blue built a 6-0 cushion after three, but in the fifth inning the visiting Taconic team scored three unearned runs to make it 6-3.

In the sixth, Marigliano reached base on a fielders’ choice, Liimatainen walked and was replaced by McKenzie Stafford, and Abarua reached on an error, scoring Marigliano. Janelle Massey then hit a three-run homer to give Blue a 10-3 lead.

The margin narrowed to 10-5 in the seventh on two singles, a fielders’ choice, and a shot down the first base line, but two consecutive outs gave Powertown the victory. Marigliano, Liimatainen, Abarua and Massey had two hits each with Abarua hitting two doubles, Liimatainen hitting one, and Massey parking two home runs. Addison Talbot and Autumn Thorton also hit for Blue. In the circle, Liimatainen gave up four earned runs off 11 hits and three walks and struck out 12.

That same night in Orange, Tech beat the Mahar Senators in another mercy-shortened affair. Coach Joe Gamache allowed most of his starters to rest, but the reserves held their own and then some: Taylor, Lapan, and Emma Petersen hit doubles, while Breanna Kempf hit a triple and Sandra Johnson hit two. Burgh pitched all five innings, letting up two earned runs on three hits and two walks and whiffing 11.

On Wednesday afternoon the Eagles concluded their regular season by mercying the visiting Blue Devils of Northampton. It was Senior Night and Guerin, O’Leary, Gamache, Gilbert, and DiSciullo received

their just deserts.

Franklin scored five runs in the first inning and never looked back. Gamache finished with two home runs, Gilbert added one, and Guerin, O’Leary, and George all batted runs in.

Meanwhile, the Thunder concluded their own regular season on a positive note, defeating the Tigers 5-1 in South Hadley. Marigliano, Liimatainen, and Massey hit doubles while Abarua, Madisyn Dietz, and Ameliya Galbraith had singles. Liimatainen struck out 11.

Boys’ Tennis

West Springfield 4 – TFHS 1

On Tuesday the boys’ tennis team was set to square off against the West Springfield Terriers at 4 p.m., the first match in an evening filled with contests, but the boys from Westside were nowhere in sight. “They’re going to be late,” one of the players informed me. “They’re having gas problems,” another added.

And although coach Steve Touloumtzis had to go to Hatfield town meeting that evening, he allowed the visitors ample time to warm up when they finally arrived.

All the early sets were evenly played, with most games going to deuce or add-in, but Westie seemed to get the game point and slowly built their leads. I left for the softball game with the match still tight, but the visitors held on to win it 4–1.

Turners’ lone win came on the second doubles court, where Max Briere and Nethanel Martin won in three sets. Noah Kolodziej, Mario Pareja, and Vaughn LaValley lost in singles play, while Lucas Black and Philipp Tischleder were edged out in first doubles.

Girls’ Tennis

Greenfield 4 – TFHS 1

TFHS 4 – Chicopee 1

The Turners girls’ team also lost a match 4–1 on Tuesday, visiting Greenfield. Avery Heathwaite won in second singles while Olivia Wolbach lost first singles in a hard-fought three-set tiebreaker. Keira Feeley, Khiarieliex Huertas Hernandez and Lily Sumner, and Izzy Decker and Evelyn Galvez lost in straight sets in third singles, first doubles, and second doubles respectively.

The ladies ended their season on a high note on Wednesday, though, sweeping first and second singles and both doubles matches to outpace the Chicopee Pacers 4–1.

The team celebrated Senior Night in spectacular fashion. The seniors were adorned in elegant evening gowns complete with pageant sashes.

Last Saturday, Wolbach also completed a playoff match in the Western Mass individual tennis tournament. “I lost the second set 6-1,” she explained on Wednesday. “But that’s OK. She was ranked fourth, and I’m only a freshman!”



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SQUEAKS from page A1

The amendment was voted down, the question was called, and – with moderator Elizabeth Irving exclaiming “We’re just gonna vote, guys!” – the article passed with a single dissenting vote.

Whether the vehicles will be electric is up to the department. Urkiel said they will explore all options, and if grants make vehicles like Amazon’s Rivian van or the Ford F150 Lightning affordable, they would be considered.



The town’s remote-controlled robotic camera can burrow through subterranean pipes, providing staff with a live feed showing their condition and allowing the department to identify sites of groundwater infiltration, a perennial challenge aging collection systems pose to wastewater management.

Fast Track for Old Rail

The next topic of debate was a guardrail along Meadow Road which ostensibly keeps vehicles from plunging down a steep bank into the Connecticut River. Urkiel became familiar with this part of town last year while repaving Old Sunderland Road and replacing a culvert on South Ferry Road, and said the guardrail “really concerned” him. This fast-tracked its \$200,000 replacement, moving it ahead of numerous projects on the capital improvements committee’s five-year spending plan.

“I voted against this,” said selectboard member Matt Lord, explaining why the board’s recommendation of the article was not unanimous. “I feel we’re going to have to be judicious in where we spend capital. I believe this is a good thing to do, but it came up relatively quickly, it was not on the plan before this year, and given that, as well as the fact that it is a – let’s call it a tertiary road, it is not traveled on very much – I’m hopeful we can find funding outside the town.”

While some agreed – “this seems like a lower-priority place to save a big chunk of change,” commented Ian Tapscott of Precinct 6 – others said deferring the project could prove more costly.

“This is a safety issue,” said Precinct 1’s Lynn Reynolds. “If anybody has looked at those guardrails, the cost to defend a case, if there were an accident... would be way more than the cost to repair.”

“Our reserves are excellent, our borrowing rating is excellent, we have millions in capital stabilization, we have a robust chunk of free cash,” said Elan, arguing that after decades of deferred capital investment, this is a good time to act. “For the sake of safety, we have to do these things together as a town.”

“I’m not in disagreement regarding problematic deferred capital investments,” replied Lord. But, he said, pointing to the \$37 million in improvements called for in Montague’s capital plan, “I do not believe this town has the funds to accomplish them all.”

Urkiel was asked about the deterioration of the wooden posts which support the guardrail. “There’s a lot of missing posts,” he said, “and the wood posts that are still holding, they’re not very strong. If a vehicle was to hit those, it’s not going to do much [to stop it].”

In what would be the night’s most exciting vote, the ayes were only slightly louder than the nays. Irving declared the article would pass unless seven members requested a vote count. Seven, including Lord, stood to request the count. In the final tally, 44 members voted to appropriate the funds from free cash to replace the rail while 19 members voted against it.

Other capital requests passed unanimously, with substantially less discussion: appropriating funds for the Millers Falls Library, Unity Park, bus stops, crosswalks, and asbestos removal on the utility lines on the condemned footbridge across the power canal – “the first domino to fall in the long-awaited Strathmore removal,” in the words of assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller.

PILOT Pends

The biggest question of the evening concerned the town’s largest single source of revenue.

FirstLight Power, owner of the Turners Falls dam,

power canal, and two hydroelectric stations, provides roughly one-fifth of Montague’s tax base. For years, the town and company have disagreed about the value of the company’s assets and how much tax it owes.

FirstLight’s most recent appeal of its assessments before the state Appellate Tax Board (ATB), covering fiscal years 2022, ’23, and ’24, asserts that in FY’22 its assets had a value of \$45 million, rather than the \$129 million assessed by the town.

“So, we’re way off,” town administrator Walter Ramsey said. The selectboard and board of assessors, he explained, hoped to “resolve currently contested valuations, and avoid future contestations” by negotiating a PILOT agreement with FirstLight, mediated by the ATB. This would establish annual payments for a set number of years, he said, creating predictability, reducing litigation costs, and sparing Montague from the substantial penalties it would incur were the tax board to rule in FirstLight’s favor.

Negotiating a PILOT requires town meeting’s authorization.

Precinct 3’s Ray Godin immediately presented a written amendment to limit the PILOT’s duration to “a period of time not to exceed five years.”

“This is essentially a trial program,” Godin explained. “It hasn’t been done with FirstLight, they’re not good neighbors – if they were, we would not have been in court with them.... My understanding from the pre-town meeting is that the selectmen and board of assessors and administration are contemplating a 10-year PILOT program. My suggestion for you is that’s way too damn long for this group.”

Ramsey confirmed that the officials were “looking at a 10-year deal,” and objected that the amendment would “cut us off at the knees.”

Questions abounded from the floor, and the answers from the stage were delivered with facial expressions and glances as well as words.

Melanie Zamojski of Precinct 6 asked whether FirstLight had “a history of not upholding agreements with this town.”

After several moments of silence from Ramsey and the selectboard, town counsel Greg Corbo came to their rescue, taking the mic to say “I would suggest that that question not be in order.”

Godin’s amendment did not pass.

“Shortly after I became a board member,” Kuklewicz recounted, “2017 or 2018, there were some past years of contested taxes and valuation,” which the town resolved through a previous PILOT arrangement with FirstLight. This agreement, he said, “basically laid aside the past lawsuits, [and] also set a tax level up to the year 2022. I think it was a good agreement – they did abide by the agreement.”

“Why didn’t we renegotiate right away?” asked Jackie Stein of Precinct 2. Corbo smiled.

“There are lots of reasons,” said Kuklewicz. “There’s been uncertainty in the markets.”

Discussion continued, with town meeting and finance committee members variously expressing support and skepticism, and Sam Lovejoy of Precinct 1 pointing to Erving’s valuations of Northfield Mountain as a cautionary tale. When it went to a vote, the ayes clearly had it over a small chorus of nays, and there were no challenges.

Counting Heads

One of town meeting’s most routine, yet seemingly complicated, articles is the annual replenishment of several stabilization funds from the town’s free cash reserves. Walking members through the calculations, longtime finance committee member John Hanold demystified these figures one last time before his retirement after 21 years of service on the fin com.

Hanold received an ovation during the discussion of that article, and again at the end of the meeting.

“I’ll take a motion to dissolve, without day,” Irving said after Hanold’s second round of applause. “All those in favor?”

Ayes were heard throughout the auditorium. “Wonderful, everyone. Vroom vroom vroom!”

Irving started to lean back in her chair before suddenly grabbing the mic.

“Is anyone opposed?”

The next big question facing town meeting may be whether next year’s annual meeting should again be held on a weeknight, or shifted back to its traditional Saturday timeslot. Though 78 members attended the first night, this week attendance peaked at 66, just two above the quorum threshold, at 6:50 p.m.

If anyone noticed that the votes tallied on the guardrail question, the third article of the night, summed to 63, they did not dare to mention it. If the quorum had been successfully challenged, the meeting might have been continued to a third night.



LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on May 14, 2015: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

dent Michael Sullivan. “I think they are going to fit the school and community well.”

New GMRSD Principals

Skydiving, Anyone?

The Gill-Montague Regional School District has hired Annie Leonard as secondary level principal and Earl McGraw as assistant principal for the newly configured middle school/high school beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

“I couldn’t be happier with their selection,” said superinten-

At its May 11 meeting, the Montague selectboard approved a request by Mickey Longo, manager of the Turners Falls Airport, to place a sign in Peskeompskut Park advertising the airport’s annual open house. The event will include parachuting, plane rides for kids, experimental planes, and a radio controlled aircraft.

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on May 12, 2005: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Urban Trees: Joys and Woes

As part of the Crabapple Blossom Festival celebrating the brilliance and fragrance of the crabapples and ornamental cherries on Avenue A, Alan Snow of the state Bureau of Forestry explained to a group of walkers that the trees on the southeast side tend to be flowering crabapples, which can easily be pruned to stay under the power lines, whereas ash, Norway maple, and pin oak are prevalent on the northwest side, where there are no similar overhead obstacles.

He also explained that trees in an urban setting live for an average of only 12 years, far shorter than trees in a forest, due to the crowding of asphalt and brickwork around the roots and wounds from

plows, mowers and trimmers.

Snow strongly favors sidewalks and setback planting of trees to protect them from cars and plows, but recognizes this conflicts with separating pedestrians from vehicles.

Hot New Teen Disc

The latest installment of the Music Project’s compilation CD is almost here! A program at the Brick House Community Resource Center allows teens to learn about writing, playing, and recording music. Participants have been working at the Hot Spot Teen Center’s recording studio since last fall and are working on the art for the latest CD’s packaging.

The third CD produced by the group since 2003 features 18 tracks by local teens. Participants will receive copies in an informal ceremony on May 27 where CDs will be available for sale for \$5 each.

150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on May 12, 1875: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

The whip-poor-will has put in his appearance.

Ed. Peabody drives a handsome span of new horses.

Albert Jones has been engaged by R.L. Goss to run the ferry.

John Jameson is putting up a good-sized building to be used as a blacksmith shop.

The Turners Falls Lumber Co.’s mill was started up last week.

Alex. Davis, of the Boston Commercial Bulletin, was in town yesterday, and will write up the place for that paper.

Boating is beginning to be lively. On fine evenings the river is thick with craft.

Geo. O. Peabody is building for the Montague Paper Co. a house in which to store some of their pulp-making machinery.

The Clark & Chapman Machine Company have arranged for the manufacture of the Coleman water wheel another year.

Wild duck are quite plentiful on the river between here and the French King, but our sportsmen don’t seem to care much for shooting this spring.

Charley Jones speared forty-nine pounds of muscalange at Deerfield one night last week, and gave a fish supper to a few friends at the Farren House.

The season of frog opera has opened with great success. The tenors are of about the average ability, but the bass solos are not yet up to the standard.

The steam fire engine “Alvah Crocker” was taken out last Thursday for trial, but was disabled by the breaking of a valve. She was taken out again last evening, when she worked excellently.

A balloon sailing northward attracted a good deal of attention Saturday. It was Donaldson’s balloon, the “P T Barnum,” went up from the Hippodrome in Springfield, that afternoon, and landed in Mr. Munson’s lawn, in Greenfield, at half past five, just an hour from the start. The aeronaut was accompanied by two ladies and two little girls.



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PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER'S COMP

THEFTS from page A1

Montague and Greenfield residents also discovered their benefits stolen in the last week, according to discussions that unfolded on Facebook and Nextdoor.

According to the Montague police department, a “skimmer” device was discovered on a card reader last Thursday at Food City. Dispatcher Steve Chase said the fake reader looked authentic and explained that when pressed, its buttons pressed the corresponding buttons on the real reader underneath it, so that all skimmed transactions were recorded as genuine in the grocery store’s register.

Though one Greenfield resident reported on social media that after her benefits were stolen police in that city told her skimmers had been located at the Stop & Shop and Big Y supermarkets, Stop & Shop manager Julie Jourdain said no such devices have been identified at her store. Requests for comment from both the Greenfield police department and Big Y corporate offices received no response as of press time.

Matthew Deane, president and co-owner of Foster’s Supermarket in Greenfield, told the *Reporter* his staff checks card readers for skimmers each morning. When the store learned of concerns of local EBT skimming, he said, they asked police to help check for the devices, but none were found.

According to Montague police chief Chris Williams, the device found in Turners Falls is currently in an evidence locker, and will be inspected physically next week.

Food City manager Brian Cocco said that the card readers at the downtown grocery store have been checked daily for years, using two different methods, and that this was the first skimming incident discovered during his 15 years there. The fake reader was apparently installed so discreetly that it didn’t register on security cameras, he said, yet it was difficult to remove.

No Recourse

The two main benefit programs that disburse funds via EBT cards in Massachusetts, SNAP and Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC), are administered by the state Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA).

Food stamps were first issued federally from 1939 until 1943. The program was revived in 1964 and has been modified several times since, and in 2008 was renamed SNAP. These funds can only be used to cover food, including seeds for edible plants, at participating retailers and markets.

TAFDC, meanwhile, is Massachusetts’ version of the program often called “cash benefits,” which families of low or no income can use to pay for other essential needs such as housing, utilities, medications, and clothing. On a federal level this program was known

from 1935 to 1997 as Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and was replaced in 1997 with the more restrictive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Both SNAP and cash benefits began being disbursed via EBT swipe cards in 2002. As debit and credit cards have shifted to a chip-based scan technology in recent years, retail fraudsters using increasingly sophisticated skimmer devices are turning their focus to these cards.



Turners Falls resident Asa Bucinskas discovered Saturday that over a thousand dollars’ worth of combined aid had been wiped from his family’s account.

The Federal Trade Commission and other agencies list ways to spot and avoid skimmers: look out for readers that are misaligned, or that move if wiggled slightly; if a reader looks suspicious, compare it to nearby readers; and ask for a manager if you’re still not sure.

In the past, DTA has informed clients of the rise in benefit theft and recommended changing their PINs monthly, but this did not eliminate the risk of skimming.

In December, Congress chose not to renew a 2022 law funding the reimbursement of stolen SNAP benefits. Though the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) website says that states may use federal funds to reimburse stolen benefits, in the face of massive cuts to many federal programs there is no guarantee the funding will continue, and DTA staff are currently telling victims of SNAP theft that they are on their own.

Staff at the DTA’s Greenfield office declined to comment on the recent local thefts, and referred questions to Boston.

Attempts to reach Community Legal Aid, which provides legal support for low-income benefits recipients, were unsuccessful as of press time. A request for comment from the office of US representative Jim McGovern received no response, and staff for state senator Jo Comerford also deferred to DTA.

Julianne Lima, a spokesperson at the agency’s Boston headquarters, confirmed that stolen TAFDC benefits are eligible for reimbursement, but added that “SNAP clients who experience benefits theft are still encouraged to report the theft

to DTA should additional funding become available in the future.”

Simply Swiped

According to a dashboard on the USDA website, a total of 5,401 claims of stolen SNAP benefits were entered in Massachusetts between October and December 2024, up from 3,618 in the previous three-month period. The data ends in December.

“DTA has been taking significant steps to proactively protect clients from theft,” Lima told the *Reporter*. “In late 2024, the department launched a new EBT card locking feature that allows clients to control when their card is usable by locking and unlocking it through the free DTA Connect mobile app and web portal. Benefits cannot be stolen when an EBT card is locked.”

Ed Bolen, director of SNAP State Strategies at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, warned in a December 2 blog post that many low-income American households could be devastated by the loss of a month’s worth of food, and wrote that while the card-locking security measures may be helpful, a “better solution” will be to implement EBT cards with chips.

California and Oklahoma are testing chip systems, Bolen wrote, and the USDA is “drafting additional regulations” requiring states to report on their progress toward a transition, but this is likely to take years: “[I]t takes time for the card-based technology to be deployed and for the hundreds of thousands of stores, bodegas, farmers markets, and other SNAP-authorized retailers to update their technology.”

Asa Bucinskas said his family was reimbursed for their stolen cash benefits, but the \$879 SNAP balance is gone. The local DTA office, he said, could only refer them to local food pantries, such as those at the Franklin County Survival Center and the Brick House Community Resource Center.

Even with Tiffany working full-time at a dental office and his own part-time work as a personal care attendant, Asa said, making ends meet is difficult even with the benefits, as all of their earnings go to necessities. “I’m glad we paid the car insurance for the year before this happened,” he added.

In the wake of the theft, some of the family’s neighbors in the Patch have stepped up to support them. “I appreciate the help, and consider them not just friends but family,” Asa said. Even so, he told the *Reporter*, he is not sure how the family will get through until their next benefit period, which begins June 10.

Lima, the DTA spokesperson, declined to answer questions about the recent fraud reported in Franklin County, or its extent. A public records request submitted by the *Reporter* is pending.

Jeff Singleton contributed additional reporting.



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Above: The mail trucks line up at the Turners Falls Post Office.

Ainsworth On The Road: Road Tripping to Pepe's

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – Last winter Max Hartshorne suggested we go on a caper, and though my initial impulse was to say “not interested,” I quickly changed my mind when I opened his email. How about taking the train from Springfield to New Haven for pizza and a stroll about town?

Sure, I said, but let’s wait until spring when the weather’s better.

We waited through April and left on a rainy Friday



The original Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana, in the Wooster Square Historic District of New Haven, Connecticut.

in May when we realized it would never get better. We met at the Big Y in Northampton and Max, being a talkative sort, told me to get on I-91 south.

Max even texts talkative: “I’m bringing snacks, a book, headphones, water in a backpack, raincoat, small umbrella. Should you bring a cribbage board and cards?”

I brought the cribbage board and cards but we never used them; they’re still in his backpack. All I really needed was what I wore for the weather: an olive green raincoat LL Bean claims is worn by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, a hoodie, shirt, bluejeans, and the winter boots I bought at Sam’s before Christmas.

Max is a travel writer who lives in South Deerfield and knows how to go places on the industry’s dime. Three weeks ago he flew to Mexico City for the weekend. (“Feels like Brooklyn,” he said.) Next month he’ll visit Quebec City, and later this summer he’ll be in Italy.

When Max asked why I’d never been to Europe, I told him I liked being in America where the toilets work. “I don’t even have a passport,” I said.

Max was stunned. A while later he said, “I really think it’s sad that you will die without ever having had a passport.”

At Max’s insistence we parked in a garage off of Main Street and walked past the Peter Pan and PVTA buses into Springfield’s Union Station, where we used a kiosk to pay \$6.50 each for senior tickets to New Haven.

I’ve been captivated by trains since I was in grade school and we boarded a sleeper car bound for Fort

see AINSWORTH page B2

BOOK REVIEW

Ian Kumekawa, *Empty Vessel: The Story of the Global Economy in One Barge* (Knopf, 2025)

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

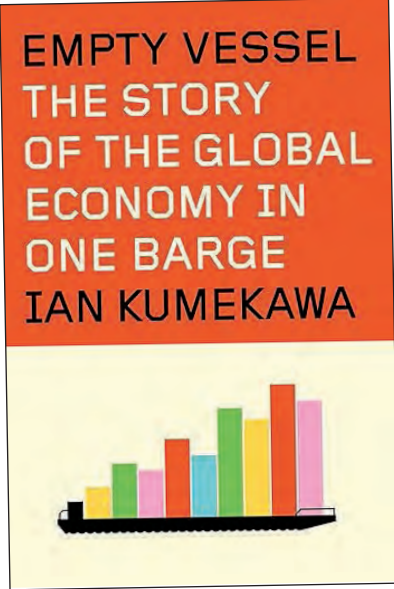
LEVERETT – When I was a child and lived near a canal, I loved watching the barges that came gliding by. Often they were home to a family, evident from the smoking chimney and a washing line pegged with children’s clothes. Barges seemed magical, especially those towed by horses, though I later learned that they carried heavy cargoes of stone or coal rather than fairy dust.

While I thought I knew what a barge is, I have often been mystified by dense terminology and hence the workings of the global economy. I certainly wouldn’t have thought that barges played any special role in it, so the title of Ian Kumekawa’s *Empty Vessel: The Story of the Global Economy in One Barge* was startling. How could this be?

The author describes the barge at the center of his book as a “simple ninety-four-meter-long flat-bottomed hull with a modular five-story ‘accommodation block’ mounted on its deck.” Vastly bigger than the 60-

foot (i.e. 18-meter) barges I remember. And five stories of accommodation! Not one small cabin with a metal chimney and a washing line.

The name of this barge – technically a “dumb pontoon” – is now *Jascon 27*, but it had other names at each chapter of its life. Its story, the author says, “offers a window on the profound and dynamic changes that have buffeted and shaped the

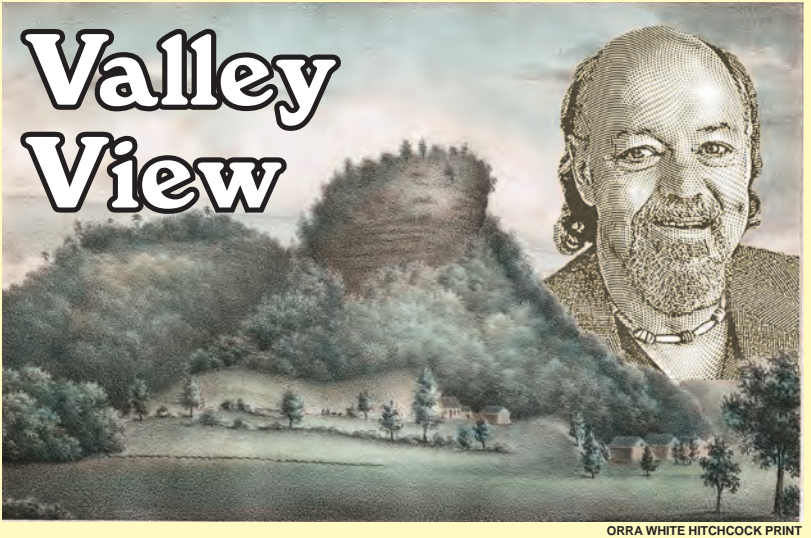


world economy over the past forty years... it has been the repository of such changes as well as the stage on which they have played out.”

Kumekawa’s tale begins in 1979 with building of *Jascon 27* by the Stockholm shipyard Finnroda Varv at the behest of Parley Augustsson, a Norwegian shipping magnate. Augustsson named it *Balder Scapa* and planned to contract it to the North Sea oil industry. Economic turmoil intervened, and so, lacking money to pay Finnroda Varv, Augustsson rented it as a salvage vessel to haul up high-quality military steel from the German naval boats sunk in Scapa Flow after the First World War.

This caper has more than a hint of desperation about it, and indeed the salvage company shortly went bankrupt, but as the author notes, while the barge was a physical object it was also a financial asset that allowed Augustsson to avoid taxes: “It did not matter what the *Balder Scapa* contained or what it did. The only thing that mattered was that it

see ONE BARGE page B4



Turkey Season, Shad Run Impacted by the Rain

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Mid-May. Rhubarb knee-high. Rotting tulip-magnolia petals carpeting the lawn below their large ornamental tree. Kwanzan cherry blossoms pink. Japanese maples ascending to their spring burgundy splendor.

Such are the springtime inspirations in my yard. Yet still, to me, nothing triggers spring reminiscence like those faint whiffs of sweet lilac tickling my nostrils and tweaking my consciousness. It’s invigorating. Optimistic. A signal of renewal and rebirth.

Last time we met in this space, my topic was the native Eastern brook trout I once pursued with youthful passion. That discussion was ignited by news of a record eight-pound brookie pulled through the ice on Maine’s Moosehead Lake in January.

This week we’ll switch gears to a couple of other spring pursuits that kept me busy for many years as a sportsman – not to mention as an outdoor writer, pumping out a weekly column for a small daily newspaper. I’ll touch upon wild turkeys and shad, both of which significantly grew in population and popularity among regional sportsmen in the 1980s. By then I was married with two kids and keeping a home, yet still stubbornly clinging to my youth, tattered and torn, on the local men’s softball circuit.

First, turkeys. The wild variety did not exist in my world as a kid growing up in South Deerfield, chasing trout up and down rattling mountain streams in hip boots. Times have changed. Aggressive trapping and relocation efforts brought quick success to restoration efforts by New England state wildlife agencies. Now not only have they gained lofty status as our state game bird, but it’s not unusual to catch the big birds strutting down city streets.

I remember hearing my first gobbles in the early ’80s. Approaching 30, I was guided by a

friend trying to spark my interest. This daybreak introduction occurred, quite coincidentally, less than two miles up the hill west of my current home. That East Colrain neighborhood surrounding a vast, working Yankee dairy farm was then viewed by many Bay State hunters as their state’s turkey-hunting capital.

The 2025 spring turkey season opened on April 28 and consumes four weeks. I finally saw my first turkeys of the season two weeks in, on my way to Pine Hill Orchards in Colrain for a Mother’s Day pie. Two skittish hens crossed the road in front of my truck, not a half-mile as crows fly from the spot where I heard those first gobbles many moons ago.

I stopped turkey-hunting years ago, satisfied that I was a competent caller. After that I called in a few for a friend who loves to hunt, but drifted away when he preferred gentlemen’s 9 or 10 a.m. starts. Far too late for me. Similar to trout fishing, I wanna be there before the birds sing to experience first-light magic. There’s nothing quite like blending into the habitat and waking with the woods.

If ever I get the urge to return to the field, I have plenty of calls, camo clothing, and equipment squirreled away in safe places. Some of the box and slate calls are collectible. In fact, some of the box calls are works of art. A comeback becomes less likely as I age. I have lost my stomach for killing.

As for the ongoing season, it’s hard to imagine anything but a lackluster first two weeks of hunting. The rainy weather has not helped, keeping fair-weather hunters home and reducing daybreak gobbles from the roost to a bare minimum. Gobblers prefer announcing their presence in clear, high skies in which sound travels far, and hunters prefer aggressive gobbling on the way to the gun.

There is, however, plenty of time to harvest a nice gobbler

see VALLEY VIEW page B3

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

‘PRINCESS’

Are you looking for a totally silly absolute sweetheart to join your family? You should meet Princess. This crazy girl hits zoomies at the drop of a pin – she loves to play and loves being with her people. Princess is crate-trained, but needs some help learning a new routine. She doesn’t have experience with cats, and can be pretty annoying to older dogs – she would need a very tolerant fellow dog to help teach her some better manners. She

has lived with kids as young as 4 and does very well with them. Princess has some skin allergies, and will need lifelong medication to stay happy and healthy. A vet reference is required for her adoption. If you’re ready to fall in love, come to Dakin Humane Society in Springfield, Tuesdays through Saturdays from 12:30 to 3 p.m. You can also call (413) 781-4000 x.1 or email springfield@dakinhumane.org for more information about a pet.

Senior Center Activities MAY 19 THROUGH 23

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 . Check the town newsletter or the LeverettConnects listserv for info.	Wednesday 5/21 9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent 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 5/22 10 a.m. Montague Villages Board Meeting 1 p.m. Pitch 3:30 p.m. Meditation for Seniors Friday 5/23 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. Pizza Party 2 p.m. Chair Dance
WENDELL Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is June 4. 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. at 1 Care Drive. Daily snacks and coffee. Fitness room and pool table open. Monday 5/19 9 a.m. Good for U 10 a.m. Seated Fitness 12 p.m. Pitch Cards 1 p.m. Yoga Tuesday 5/20 9 a.m. Stretch & Balance 10 a.m. Line Dancing 11 a.m. Social Stringer Wednesday 5/21 9 a.m. Interval Training 10 a.m. Chair Aerobics 11:30 a.m. Bingo Thursday 5/22 9 a.m. Barre Fusion 10 a.m. Pilates Flow Friday 5/23 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Quilting, Open Sew
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. A six-week class, “Mindfulness Meditation for Stress Reduction,” will be offered Thursdays from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. starting May 22. Seniors 55+ from all towns are welcome. Contact instructor Jean Erlbaum at (413) 230-1518 or jean.erlbaum@verizon.net for information or registration. Monday 5/19 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 6 p.m. Cemetery Commission Tuesday 5/20 9 a.m. Chair Yoga 11 a.m. Money Matters 3 p.m. Tai Chi	

AINSWORTH from page B1

Lauderdale. The immense engine would jerk us forward, and I’d stare out the window and listen to the *clack-clack-clack* of the wheels on the tracks. I’d roam from car to car and by the time we reached the Carolinas wish I’d bought more *Spooky* and *Sgt. Rock* comic books inside the newstand at Grand Central Station.

Change of Plans

There was just one train on the platform in Springfield, an engine connected to two grungy passenger cars with grimy windows. “You’d think they oughtta have a place where they can wash their trains,” said Max. Something seemed amiss – we were the only people waiting to board – and so Max walked over and spoke to an Amtrak worker. When he was finished he turned and yelled, “Track’s being fixed! We’re taking a bus to Hartford.”

There’s plenty of songs about trains, but I can’t think of one about buses. Let’s just drive, I said, but Max was adamant, so we got on the bus and sat across the aisle from each other. “If I was rich I’d hire a driver,” said Max. “Sprinter vans are the real celebrity rides now.”

The driver stopped in Windsor Locks and opened the door for a woman who sat in front of us with her toddler, who didn’t know how to play her video game. She gave it to her mother who punched it a few times and gave up. “Baby I don’t know what I’m doin’, can you play something else? Momma don’t know.”

Max was already thinking about lunch at Pepe’s. “I’m having the white clam pizza. It’s their most famous.”

The woman in front of us turned her head and said, “You must be going to New Haven! I like their shrimp pizza.”

In Hartford we boarded an empty Amtrak passenger car. The windows were clean and the seats were blue with red trim. We went past loading docks on the back sides of shopping centers and old brick factory buildings, and heard the horn blare whenever we approached an intersection.

Max read from the speedometer app on his phone. “Fifty-seven,” he said. “Now we’re at 74... 79, 80, 87, 89... this is the fastest stretch.”

An automated voice told us to “have your mobile ticket activated, or paper ticket ready for collection.” An employee dressed in black and wearing an Amtrak conductor hat strode down the aisle. “Thank you,” he said when I handed him the white rectangular piece of paper. “Appreciate it.”

On the Pizza Prowl

Max decided to get off one stop before Union Station because it was closer to our destination. He turned on his app and we followed it to Wooster Square, and the 100-year-old pizzeria that gets all the big-city write-ups: Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana.

Inside the seating section was divided by a wall, and servers waited in the back for orders to come out from the kitchen. We’d arrived just in time to snag one of the last booths, and menus and plates were on the table.

Everything looked scrumptious – the Amanti Della Carne with crushed Italian tomatoes, mozzarella, meatballs, pepperoni sausage and bacon; the Quattro Formaggi with crushed Italian tomatoes, mozzarella, asiago, goat cheese and basil; the original tomato pie with grated pecorino romano and olive oil. Prices ranged from \$11.25 to \$37, depending on size and type.

I ordered the Caprese with roasted marinated cherry tomatoes, garlic, pecorino romano, and an olive oil blend with a swirl of pesto.

Max, as promised, had the white clam pie and talked about a trip to Portugal. “We stayed near the ocean, and in every restaurant the only thing on the menu was fish,” he said. “After five days I was really tired of fish.”

The Caprese was a delightful mix of tomatoes and melted cheese on a crunchy thin crust. Max ate only half his clam pizza and asked for a box to take the rest with him.

“Max,” I said. “Are you sure you want to be eating cold clams four hours from now?”

“Yeah, you’re right,” he said, and left the to-go box on the table. Outside a line of customers was waiting, some holding umbrellas and others lucky enough to be under the awning.

A Trip to the Way-Back

We walked a mile to the Peabody Museum of Natural History on Whitney Street to gaze at the prehistoric giants in the Great Hall of Dinosaurs.

On the way, Max pointed to public spaces where the city prevented homeless people from loitering by planting spikes and boulders into the concrete, something called “hostile architecture.”

At 105-year-old Union Station, I told the clerk at the ticket office window we’d been in town to taste the



Top: CT Rail 6709 idles at New Haven’s Union Station, northbound for stops in Berlin, Meriden, Windsor Locks, Hartford, and Springfield. Middle: The Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale offers visitors a glimpse of planet Earth as it was millions of years ago: a vast array of beastly animals. Bottom: The Caprese at Pepe’s is topped with mozzarella, roasted marinated cherry tomatoes, and garlic with a swirl of pesto and a pecorino romano and olive oil blend.

city’s famous pizza. “Where’d you go?” he asked. “Pepe’s,” I said. “You gotta go to Sally’s next,” he said. “Sally’s, Modern, Pepe – those are the big three.” The train back to Springfield was crowded with students and workers returning home. They were sociable and relaxed. A guy in the row in front of us wheeled around and started talking about the basketball play-offs. The conductor said Modern had the best pizza: “Pepe’s lost a step since they started franchising.” Indeed, there’s now a Pepe’s as far south as Delray Beach. Max was asleep past Hartford. Trains are great for that. I looked out at the swampy meadows and lush greenery along the swollen Connecticut River. Where next, I wondered, a ferry ride down the Hudson for bagels in Brooklyn? With so much to do around here, who needs a passport!

Chip Ainsworth writes sports for the Recorder and opinion and news (and sometimes travel!) for the Reporter. He lives in Northfield.



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VALLEY VIEW from page B1 searching for last-chance hens who’ve lost their first nests to predators or pneumonia brought by the extended raw, rainy weather. Still, the highest percentage of spring kills occurs during the first two weeks, so I would expect this year’s numbers to be down a bit.

A hunter told me he was puzzled by what he had seen during Week One. Perplexed by a lack of sightings and gobbles, he said he’d heard coffeehouse chatter about bird flu infecting our statewide flock. Though I suppose that’s not impossible, I find it hard to believe I wouldn’t have been alerted to such a development by Mass-Wildlife, the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the New England Outdoor Writers Association, or other wildlife-management organizations I’m cyber-connected to.

Which brings us to the annual Connecticut River anadromous fish runs, and particularly American shad – the best and most plentiful sportfish of the lot. Shad spawning runs always peak in May after river temps rise into the-60s Fahrenheit. Having tracked, compared and contrasted these runs for nearly half a century, I was surprised to receive my first notice that the runs were underway on April 18. The Holyoke fish lift had opened four days earlier.

I sensed an early start, but had no time to investigate. Too busy. So, I printed the report and left it handy on my desk before hitting the road for an Easter Weekend getaway at Smuggler’s Notch, Ver-

mont. Shad could wait. Since then I have received three additional weekly reports, released each Friday until the fish runs come to a halt and spawning begins. I was right about the early start. Connecticut River coordinator Ken Sprinkle attributed it to drought and abnormally low mid-April water levels. That all changed overnight, when five inches of rain fell during the week of May 4. Valley runoff flooded the river, necessitating the closure of the fish lift, which, at press time, was expected to open no soon-er than late this week.

What that means for this year’s fish runs is at this point anyone’s guess. What we know for certain, however, is that flooding lowers the water temperature and raises turbulence, both of which temporarily slow spawning runs. That said, migrating fish are prepared for such setbacks. By the time all is said and done, we know it’ll all come out in the wash and they’ll make their way to spawning grounds.

As of May 9, with the fish lift down, a total of 26,508 shad had passed Holyoke and 287 of them had passed Turners Falls. Once the river settles down and water temps ascend into the 60s, the sportfishing peak will arrive and last a couple of weeks. So, it won’t be long before the Rock Dam boys are reel-ing ’em in hand over fist.

A simple matter of *when*, not *if*.

Gary Sanderson lives in Greenfield. Questions and comments are welcome at gary@oldtavernfarm.com.



ART PATROL

The New Blooming Bee



Mary Chicoine (left) and Anna Morrison paint a new bee crosswalk at Court Square in Greenfield.

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD –I have written several articles on the artists who have made those bee statues for the annual bee fest in Greenfield, to celebrate Lorenzo Langstroth, the “Father of Modern Beekeeping.” This year’s festival will be held this Saturday, May 17th from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., and features Mary Chicoine’s new painting of a bee-themed crosswalk for the event.

I literally stumbled upon Mary painting the crosswalk at Court Square for the event. She is one of the artists who has made the bee sculptures that I mentioned. Finding her painting the crosswalk was how I found out that it was being done for the festival.

Mary said she was asked by Sandy Thomas, the head of the festival,

to design it, and she called it “Blooming Bee.” It was done because the old bee crosswalk had been paved over. She figured out how to “incorporate the crosswalk stripes” into her design, and she painted it with Sally and Anna Morrison.

Mary said it took a couple of days to design and paint, and that it was the largest mural she has ever made, though before she did something that was six feet by thirty feet. One reason for the large size, she explained, is “so the crosswalk stripes would fit within the bee body.”

It is a nice big mural, and certainly a sight to behold when you look at it. It will certainly draw a crowd to it when the Bee Fest is happening.

When asked whether she thinks it will be well-liked by people, Mary said, “I hope people will like the bright colors, and how big it is.”

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Major Food Stamp Heist at Food City; Chocolate Mess Found; Intoxication; Eagle Watcher; Male Moving Along; Child Overtired

Monday, 5/5

10:21 a.m. Party calling from Nouria to have an officer pick up counterfeit money. Services rendered.

12:44 p.m. Party into station stating that her child’s father’s girlfriend is threatening her unborn child, stating she is going to do something so bad she will end up on life support. Advised of options.

1:08 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street reports she has a picture or video of someone trying to break into her apartment around 10 this morning. She will be coming to the station. Advised of options.

2:42 p.m. Caller from Worcester Avenue reports someone hit her car at the senior center today. Damage to back bumper. She drove the car home and would like an officer response. Report taken.

Tuesday, 5/6

6:51 a.m. Caller states a black Jeep with Vermont plates has been parked in the same location on East Mineral Road for the past three mornings as she has walked her dog. Officer requesting reach out to Vermont. Vermont has no history with vehicle or male party. Officer states he spoke with an Erving officer who had run the plate and states the party is homeless; they are going to search the area for a tent. Nothing found or suspicious at this time.

2:22 p.m. Caller went shopping at Food City and used an EBT card; there is now nothing on the card. She called Food City to ask why and was told that 20 other people have said the same thing. Was also told they check for skimmers. Caller thinks it’s an inside job. Referred to an officer.

4:41 p.m. Caller reporting a butt dial to 911. No need for FD, PD, or EMS.

6:09 p.m. 911 call reporting two-car accident on Millers Falls Road. No smoke, flames, or fluids. Both parties still on scene.

Third caller reporting one car is attempting to leave the scene. Plate obtained.

Officer advising vehicle on scene, single-car accident, flat tire from hitting the curb. Was able to change tire roadside and drive away.

Wednesday, 5/7

1:23 p.m. Property owner from Fourth Street states that there are at least two dogs in the second floor apartment who are barking constantly, sometimes for an hour straight, and it is disrupting the other tenants. Caller is concerned for the well-being of the dogs because the tenant that lives there leaves them alone for several hours at a time. Caller requested number for animal control. Officer responding. Investigated.

5:08 p.m. 911 caller believes that his ex-girlfriend broke into his home yesterday, and possibly today, through where the A/C unit is while he was at work. He came home to the door open, things out of place, and chocolate all over the floor, counter, and microwave. Ex-girlfriend doesn’t have a key. Officers advised. Involved female called to speak with an officer; states her ex-boyfriend threw her belongings out yesterday, so she went there after 8 a.m. when he went to work to retrieve her belongings. Female party called back stating that the cops were at his home and she was worried that she was going to get arrested, as she was at the residence getting her belongings because they were outside in the rain. Officer advised that she is not getting arrested and advised her of her options.

6:40 p.m. 911 open line from Avenue A. Officer states open unlocked door off of Third Street; looking for someone in the building, possibly cleaning crew. Officer states that the cleaning person had a lot of stuff in the elevator and may have hit the button.

8:10 p.m. 911 caller reporting that three motorcycles just nearly ran several vehicles off the road in the

area of Scotty’s. Last seen heading onto Millers Falls Road. All PD units committed on emergency call. Officer advised of call; info also given to Shelburne Control. Officer states unfounded for motorcycle crash; spoke with several neighbors, and no one heard anything. Another caller calling to see why the police were in the area stated later in the call that he was struck in the rear of his truck by a motorcycle; the two talked about it and decided neither was going to report it. Officer advised.

11:33 p.m. Caller from Avenue A states that two intoxicated females destroyed property belonging to her daughter’s children. Caller states females are not on scene at this time. Officer spoke to caller and advised her of options.

Thursday, 5/8

8:22 a.m. Food City store manager states that they found a “skimmer” at one of their registers. Report taken.

4:26 p.m. 911 crash notification mapping to Industrial Boulevard. No voice contact. Callback attempted; no answer. Officer searched area; no accident in area. One vehicle on the side of the road with flashers, looking at bald eagle.

4:33 p.m. TFFD advising Opticoms on all street lights are not working. DPW advised.

5:13 p.m. 911 caller from Third Street reports three males are being chased/harassed by some male parties. They are attempting to get back to their vehicle now to leave. Officer advises no vehicle matching description at this time. Officers clear; spoke to caller, who reports all parties left prior to PD arrival.

8:03 p.m. 911 caller from South Deerfield reports he is being held hostage in a blue Volvo station wagon by a drunk driver. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

Friday, 5/9

2 p.m. Caller is very concerned about the mistreatment of a dog occurring

at a Prospect Street address. From the window of his home, caller can see dog being abused (yanked violently) and left outside for several hours in the pouring rain tied to a tree. Info faxed to animal control officer.

Saturday, 5/10

11:19 a.m. Caller would like it on record that sometime this morning her EBT account was hacked and all of the available funds were taken from the account. Caller reported it to the agency, and they stated it has happened a lot around here recently but they are not planning on replacing any funds to people who had them taken.

2:12 p.m. Caller would like it on record that all of his EBT benefits were taken from his account this morning; several hundred dollars’ worth of benefits are gone.

2:15 p.m. Motorist complaining that teenagers in the road conducting a fundraiser at Avenue A and Seventh Street are interfering and distracting drivers. Referred to an officer.

Sunday, 5/11

4:54 p.m. 911 caller reporting male party just showed his penis at Peskeompskut Park then urinated on a tree. Caller called back in stating the male party left after he heard him calling. Headed towards the churches. Caller does have a video on his phone if officers would like to see it. Three parties at picnic table state they saw the male but don’t know who he is. Officers out with male party. Party refusing to identify himself. One detained. Officer confirmed with caller that it was the correct involved male. Everyone involved stating not as reported. Male released; states he will be moving along out of town.

6:10 p.m. Caller from East Main Street reporting there is a child locked in a room in an apartment who has been screaming for over an hour to be let out. Officer advises child is fine; overtired.

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ONE BARGE from page B1

was a vessel registered in Norway. Arguably it was worth more as a financial abstraction than as a concrete working ship.”

Nonetheless, after Augustsson returned it to Finnboda Varv – to whom he had never paid a penny – it was sold to Consafe Off-shore, a Norwegian company that had helped pioneer container shipping. The barge was designed to be modular and adaptable, so Consafe refitted it with an accommodation deck made of shipping containers slotted together, thus converting it into a “coastel” – offshore housing for oil-rig workers. Consafe renamed it *Safe Esperia*.

The economic turmoil roiling the 1970s and ’80s hastened the decline of the shipping business. In England the Bibby company of Liverpool was suffering, but noting Consafe’s success, it invested in the company and eventually acquired *Safe Esperia*. Instead of housing oil workers in the far North of the globe, the ship was now taken 8,720 miles to the far South to be used as barracks for the military personnel based in the Falkland Islands after the 1982 Falklands War.

A postage stamp issued in 1987 celebrated this role, showing the barge, now renamed the *Bibby Resolution*, moored with two others in the harbor of Stanley, the Falklands’ capital.

By 1988 the Falkland gig was over. The next task for the *Bibby Resolution*, now registered in the Bahamas to cut costs, was to house Volkswagen workers in Emden, Germany. It arrived from the Falklands on a heavy-lift ship because, lacking an engine, it could not travel under its own steam. But by the end of the 1980s new technology was letting Volkswagen lay off workers, and so the *Bibby Resolution*, now characterized as a “hotel ship,” was drafted to lodge refugees in Hamburg.

Promoting this “floating option” as a “cost-effective solution” to the problem of housing immigrants, mostly from Asia and

Africa, prompted more barges to moor in Hamburg. Living conditions on board were often squalid and always unfriendly, prompting Kumekawa to observe that when the *Bibby Resolution* housed white workers and British servicemen it was called a “coastel” or “floating hotel,” but when it housed black and brown refugees it was referred to as “a floating option.”

Things got worse. In Germany many barges were hostile places, but in the United States they became jails. For its next gig the *Bibby Resolution* was transported to New York, moored off Lower Manhattan, and renamed *Maritime Facility II*. (Its sister barge, the *Maritime Facility I*, was previously called the *Bibby Venture*.) Their use as prisons was not popular with New York residents, but while the tough-on-crime policies of the 1990s had vastly increased the prison population, building new prisons on land was fraught with problems, among them labor, zoning, and environmental laws.

In contrast, as Kumekawa explains: “Walking up a short gang plank meant crossing into an entirely different legal world” where minimum wages and other land-based social legislation didn’t apply.

Another factor that enabled the use of barges as prisons was that their business model was to “furnish generic accommodation, not for a particular industry... but for anyone, anywhere.” Foreign ownership was also an asset, because legally it enabled New York to ignore “regulations and local democratic resistance.” A final factor was that the city’s “waterfront was largely abandoned,” because the development of containerized shipping had moved cargo ships to specialized ports elsewhere.

Much of this applies also to Portland, England. In 1997 the barge was transported there from New York, to serve again as a prison. It was again resisted by local peo-

ple, though generally approved by prisoners, who liked the sea views and enjoyed the recreational facilities originally designed to entertain oil-rig workers. *Maritime Facility II* was now named Her Majesty’s Prison *The Weare*, after a local river. Its prison role ended in 2005, when the new Labour government decided it did not provide classrooms and other facilities needed to rehabilitate, rather than simply incarcerate, prisoners.

By this time, and despite being owned by the British government, the ship had long been registered in the Bahamas, a “flag of convenience” that exempted it from taxes and labor laws. When the government sold it at the end of its stay in Portland it was bought by Pacific Maritime, who even before the deal was complete had sold it to a Nigerian company registered in the British Virgin Islands. After several years of legal wrangling, the Nigerian company dispatched it to the oilfields of the Niger delta, where it reprised its original role: housing oil-rig workers.

It was now called *Jascon 27*, in line with its sister ships belonging to the company.

The barge had arrived in the Onne Oil and Gas Free Zone in a mess. The accommodation decks had been designed to bend with the movement of the ship, but the sprinkler system installed when it was an immobile prison ship was not. *En route* to Nigeria the sprinkler system had stayed rigid and ripped out of the walls.

Another problem was its air-conditioning system, adequate for England but not the Turkish-bath humidity of West Africa. This made the barge useless for off-shore housing, so it stayed in Onne for short-term use by shore workers. Since 2016, however, it has been out of service, and in 2019 it was offered again for sale.

The Brazilian government considered it as a jail for 800 prisoners, but decided otherwise, and so, now covered in mold, it re-

mains in Onne.

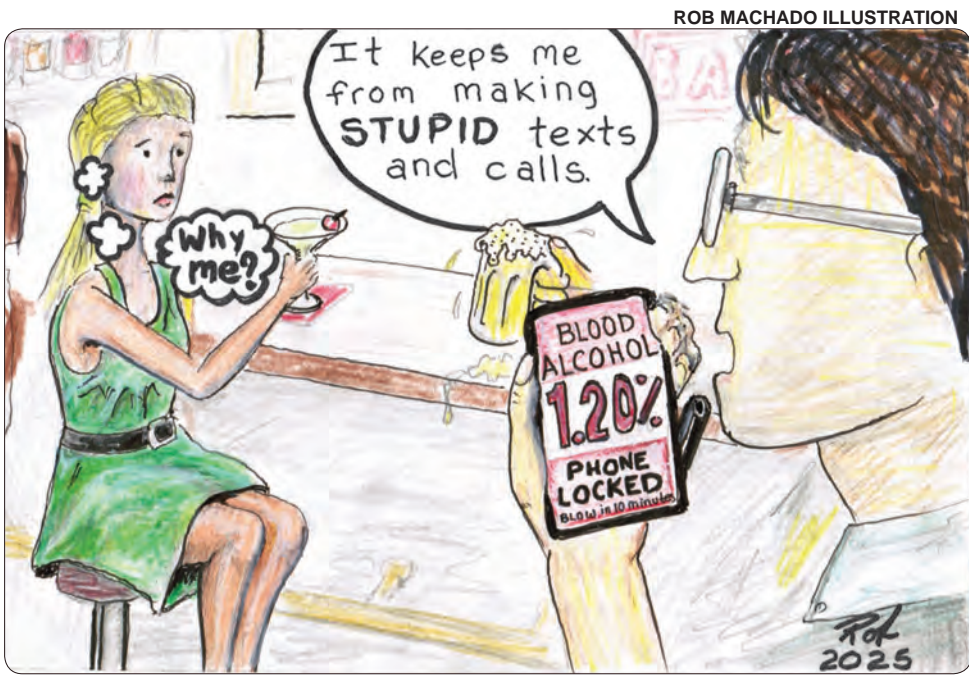
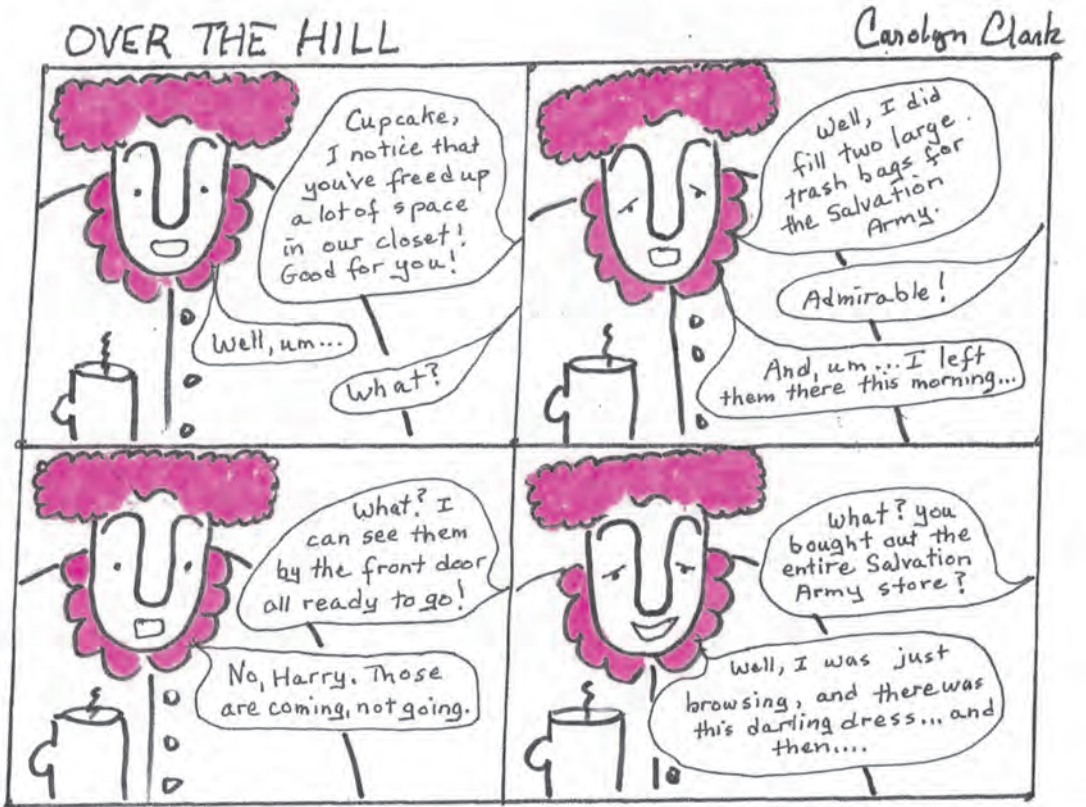
Most chapters of this book discuss the roles of barge as it moved from place to place. Kumekawa also analyzes the historic forces that drove each move: the economic changes that disrupted manufacturing in the 1980s; the financial machinations that made the barge a fungible asset as well as a physical object; the widespread immigration that created the need for cheap accommodation; the legal regimes that allow shipowners to operate by laws of the sea that benefit themselves while neglecting the welfare of workers and seamen.

Crucially, as Kumekawa notes, “Its fortunes were at the whim of global markets, particularly the energy market.” Nonetheless, and possibly counterintuitively, the emptiness of barges has made them vessels, not for cargoes, but “for the major social and economic transformations of the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries.” They are “adaptable Band Aids, not bespoke individualized treatments” for the economic frictions of the last 45 years.

This book is brilliantly conceived, admirably researched, and gratifyingly well-written – quite simply a major achievement. Had I tried to master the opaque language of the global economy in order to understand it, I would not now have the insights *Empty Vessel* has provided. It shows the global economy not as an abstraction, but as a force amenable to manipulation while being irresistibly powerful.

As “a material microhistory of an object that was involved in a set of overlapping macro transformations,” this book is both readable and rewarding.

And those barges of my childhood? They have been transformed, too. Now that manufacturing industry has declined and heavy loads are hauled by road, they have become colorful leisure craft, taking vacationers along picturesque canals. Everybody loves them.



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The Children's Page

Tadpole Spring

IN SPRING, THE FAIRIES MAKE PARADES BURSTING WITH COLOR. THEY CARRY MAGIC WANDS, AND FLUTTER TOGETHER IN PATTERNS IN THE SKY.

IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS PAGEANTRY, FAUNA WAS QUITE CAUGHT UP IN ANOTHER WORLD ENTIRELY! BY A QUIET VERNAL POOL, THEY WATCHED EACH DAY, THE MOST MARVELOUS CLUSTER OF CLEAR GOO WITH MYSTERIOUS MOVING BLACK DOTS INSIDE.

SPRING IS THE TIME WHEN THE FAIRY QUEEN BESTOWS GIFTS OF MAGIC POWERS, AND EVERY FAIRY WONDERS IF THEY MAY SUDDENLY BE ABLE TO MAKE FLOWERS BLOOM, OR TURN RAGS INTO BALL GOWNS.

SUCH WAS THEIR DEVOTION AND FASCINATION THAT BARELY DID THEY LEAVE THE GLOSSY EDGE OF THE POND.

AT NIGHT, THEY EVEN BROUGHT ONE WRIGGLING ORB TO THEIR BEDSIDE IN A TEACUP, SO DETERMINED NOT TO MISS THE MOMENT WHEN THIS DEEP MAGIC OCCURED.

JUST AS THEY AWOKE ONE BRIGHT MORNING, VOILA! OUT OF THE ORB IN THE TEACUP BURST A TADPOLE, FULL OF LIFE AND FUN! FAUNA WAS DANCING IN THE AIR!

CAREFULLY, THEY BROUGHT THE TEACUP BACK TO THE POOL PLACING THE LITTLE BEING INTO THE WATER. FAUNA WATCHED WITH JOY AS DOZENS MORE EMERGED. THE MORNING BREEZE WAS DANCING IN THE LEAVES, AND THOUGH ALL PARADES AND PARTIES WERE FAR AWAY, THEY COULD HAVE BEEN NO HAPPIER ON THAT DAY!

A SUDDEN GUST CAUGHT THEIR WINGS AND IN THEY WENT! LAUGHING, THEY SAT AMONGST THEIR NEW LITTLE TADPOLE FRIENDS IN THE TINY POND.

Written by Beverly Ketch
Drawn by Hannah Brookman


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EVENTS

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THURSDAY, MAY 15

Mohawk Grill, Turners Falls:
Al Nakba Remembrance.
Community gathering,
potluck, speakers. Participants
encouraged to bring lawn
chairs. 5 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls:
Curmudgeon Bingo. 7 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton:
John Gorka. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro:
*Carsie Blanton, Brittany
Ann Tranbaugh.* 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MAY 16

Great Falls Discovery Center,
Turners Falls: *Nice & Easy
Walk.* 1 p.m. Free.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Josh
Johnson, The Argus Quartet,
Maria Somerville, Roger
Miller,* more. 3 p.m. \$.

The Academy at Charlemont,
Charlemont: *Mini Poetry
Contest,* with readings by
*Joseph O. Legaspi,
Rage Hezekiah,* and
Martin Espada. 4 p.m. \$.

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

Sena Farm Brewery,
Worthington: *The Doomsday
Ladies.* 6 p.m. No cover.

Element Brewing, Millers
Falls: *David Brule & His Irish
Band.* 6:30 p.m. No cover.

Unnameable Books,
Turners Falls: Poetry,
CAConrad, Daniel Hales.
7 p.m. By donation.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Harm,
Stace Brandt, Two Wrong
Turns, Saliba.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

Wendell Meetinghouse,
Wendell: *Two-Step
Night,* with *Les Taiauts,*

The Honky-Tonk Angels,
country karaoke. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls:
Frank Viele. 8 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Eric
Love.* 8 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: *Gold
Dust, The Croaks, Silvie's
Okay, Mibble.* 8 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro:
*Slobdrop, Oziem, Technicolor
Ltd.* 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls:
Eleanor Levine. 9:30 p.m.
By donation.

SATURDAY, MAY 17

Unity Park, Turners Falls: *The
Brick House 5K.* Run the full
5K, or walk or roll a 1-mile
course along the Canalside
Rail Trail. All proceeds support
the Brick House Community
Resource Center. Pre-
registration encouraged at
brickhousecommunity.org/5k.
Same-day registration, 9 a.m.;
race at 10 a.m. By donation.

Montague Retreat Center,
Montague: *Second Annual
Western Mass Herbal
Symposium.* Workshops,
classes, plant walks.
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. \$\$.

Wendell Town Common,
Wendell: *Plant Swap and
Community Tag Sale,*
with food vendors.
9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free.

Just Roots, Greenfield: *Spring
Festival and Seedling Sale.*
Vegetable starts, herbs,
fruiting plants, flowers, native
pollinators; crafts and food for
sale. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free.

New Salem Public Library,
New Salem: *Nature
Journaling* with Amy
Shamansky. 10 a.m. Free.

Barton Cove Campground, Gill:
*Yoga and Hiking with Libby
Volckening.* Gently paced
hike, alternating with yoga. For



Noise-maxers *Space Camp*, seen above playing *10 Forward* in early 2023,
return to the Greenfield room, now reopened as *Last Ditch*, this Saturday night.
Film & Gender, Nurse Joy, and K.O. Queen round out the bill. Bring earplugs!

ages 13 and older. Beginners
welcome. Registration at
www.bookeo.com/northfield
required. 12 p.m. Free.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Speedy
Ortiz, Undertow Brass Band,
Rong, Kal Marks, Minibeast,
Sunburned Hand of the Man,
Dakou Dakou,* more. 12 p.m. \$.

Great Falls Discovery
Center, Turners Falls:
*Day of Remembrance:
Commemoration of the
349th Anniversary of the
Peskeompskut Massacre.*
Speakers, reconciliation
ceremony, music, light
refreshments. 1 to 3 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Savings Bank,
Turners Falls: *Gardening
Tips* with Peter Kretzenger.
1 to 2 p.m. Free.

Wendell Town Hall, Wendell:
*Celebration of Life for
Joshua Jay Dostis,* a.k.a.
Waffles. 2 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners
Falls: *Best of the '70s,*
with *DizzyFish* and the
Uptown Horns. 7 p.m. \$.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Film
& Gender, Nurse Joy, K.O.
Queen, Space Camp.* 7 p.m. \$.

Mount Toby Friends
Meetinghouse, Leverett:
Joe Jencks. 7 p.m. \$.

Colonial Theater, Keene:
*Steven Malkmus,
Mirah.* 7 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater,
Easthampton: *Cheap City,
Pearl Sugar, The Leafies
They Gave Me.* 7 p.m. \$

Mist Chalet, Holyoke: *Ye
Gods, Gentlemen, Phemale,
Ether Codex.* 7 p.m. \$.

Full Moon Coffeehouse,
Wendell: *Do It Now.*
7:30 p.m. \$.

Guiding Star Grange,
Greenfield: Contra dance with
*The Moving Violations, Lisa
Greenleaf* calling. 7:30 p.m. \$.

All Saints' Church,
South Hadley: *John Hughes,*
kora player, percussionist,
and vocalist. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Deep
Seize, Father Otter, Electric
Bonnie.* 7:30 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: *Frente
Cumbiero, Mica Farías
Gómez, DJ Shaki.* 8 p.m. \$.

Sulis Studio, Florence:
*It's Mandy, Jeff Coyne,
Andrew H. Smith, Dear
Ex World.* 8 p.m. \$.

Kilkenny's Pub, Keene:
*All Feels, Paper Castles,
Commemorative Cup.*
10 p.m. Free.

EXHIBITS

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls: *Art=Work,*
group show exploring how we value
handmade work, through June 6.

**Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners
Falls:** *Where We Are, Together,* paintings
by Cameron Schmitz, through May 26.

Montague Center Library:
Art/Poetry, Poetry/Art, group
exhibition running through July 2.

**Sawmill River Arts, Montague
Center:** *Vanessa Kerby,* guest artist
showing ceramics, through May.

**Rhodes Art Center, Northfield Mount
Hermon, Gill:** *Japanese Pop Art &
Landscape,* paintings by Greenfield
artist Kimiko Donohoe, through May 30.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett:
The Perennials, group show by
10 local painters, through May.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Portraits in
RED: Missing and Murdered Indigenous*

People, paintings by Nayanna LaFond,
through July; *New Roots in Riverbanks,*
exhibit about Eastern European
immigrants to the valley, and work by
painter Steve Howe, both through May.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield:
Lydia M. Kinney, solo exhibition;
The Overlap, GCC student group
exhibition. Both through June 13.

Looky Here, Greenfield:
A World Below, new paintings by
Scout Cuomo, through May 30.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield:
STEAM Art and Science, group show
of art that incorporates elements of
science, through this Sunday, May 18.

Memorial Hall Museum, Deerfield:
Courage and Peace, 21 paintings
by Robert Strong Woodward.
Through June 22.

**Mill District Local Art Gallery,
Amherst:** *Seen / Scene / Cene,*
group juried exhibition of artwork by
local trans women, cis women, intersex,

genderqueer, genderfluid, and non-
binary individuals, through June 26.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Confluence,*
paintings by Paula Hite, through May.

**Science & Engineering Library,
UMass Amherst:** *The Soil Beneath
Us,* mixed media works by Malaika
Ross about the rhizosphere; *Harvesting
Color: A Seasonal Journal,* art about
ecology and herbalism using a variety
of green alchemic processes by
Tonya Lemos. Both through May 30.

A.P.E. Gallery, Northampton:
River Valley Radical Futures, group
show of local artists envisioning a
future after capitalism, through May 25.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls:
Moments in Time, illustrations by
Fabio Deponte, through June 9.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne:
Copper Etchings in Bloom, by Bobbi
Angell, and *Dreams From My World,*
oil paintings by Trina Sears Sternstein,
both through June 29.

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CALENDAR

SUNDAY, MAY 18

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Protecting Kids on the Internet* presented by Everything Computers. Also on Zoom; email slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org for the link. 9 a.m. Free.

All Souls Unitarian Church, Greenfield: *Bicentennial Celebration* with morning services, catered lunch, gospel concert in the afternoon. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Califone, Amirtha Kidambi's Elder Ones, Joan Shelley, Aisha Burns, Sam Moss, Sunburned Hand of the Man*, more. 12 p.m. \$.

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Clothing Swap for Teens and Pre-Teens*, ages 11 to 19 years old. 1 to 3 p.m. Free.

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Moon Hollow*. 2 p.m. No cover.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Cymbal Sound Bath with Matt Samolis & Thadd Comstock*. 5 p.m. No cover.

Feeding Tube, Florence: *Matt Valentine, Samara Lubelski, Barry Weisblatt*. 4 p.m. By donation.

Lunder Center, Williamstown: *75 Dollar Bill, Alexander Turnquist*. 5 p.m. Free.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Swamp God, Plemp, Cute Hell, Recreational Vehicle, Max Julian Eastman, Dead Door Unit, Fricker, Dimension Viewer*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Ellis Paul*. 7 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Allysen Callery, Karen Zanes, Jacquelyn Roy, Federico Balducci*. 8 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Madeleine Peyroux*. 8 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Sun Ra Arkestra*. 8 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

The Brick House, Turners Falls: *Cooking Class and Community Dinner*. All welcome. Register with slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org, (413) 800-2496. 5 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Workshop, Make a Miniature Coffee Table and Everything On It*. Space is limited; register at tinyurl.com/GPLminitable. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Records, Greenfield: *Walt McClements, bobbie, Mental Drift*. 6 p.m. \$.

West Whately Chapel, Whately: *Bruce Molsky, Ale Möller*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wes Brown, Nat Needle, Bobby Danko* trio. 8 p.m. No cover.

Firehouse, Worcester: *Apes of the State, Sister Wife Sex Strike, Little Foot, Justin Arena*. 8 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, MAY 22

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *A Perky Pairing: Chocolate & Coffee*. Learn about the health benefits of dark chocolate and coffee with Kim Larkin. Register at (978) 544-6334. 6:30 p.m. Free.

In case you missed Space Camp, the Singing Priests of the Diocese of Springfield will give a concert at Our Lady of Peace in Turners Falls next Thursday, May 22.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *The Comedy Project Revue* with performances by local comedians, storytellers, improvisation artists, musicians, and playwrights. 7 p.m. By donation.

Our Lady of Peace, Turners Falls: *The Singing Priests of the Diocese of Springfield*. Sacred music and classics from the Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Carpenters, and more. 7 p.m. By donation.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Burst & Bloom Variety Show*, featuring *Tiger Saw*, comedy, magic. 7 p.m. \$.

Greenfield Community College, Greenfield: *Recital Chorus Annual Spring Concert*. Purcell, Handel, Gershwin, Lennon/McCartney, more. 7:30 p.m. Free.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Samia, Raffella*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MAY 23

Camp Keewanee, Greenfield: *Galactic, Leon Trout, Rebel Alliance, Jatoba, Pink Talking Fish*, many more. 12 p.m. \$\$.

Palladium, Worcester: *Nekrogoblikon, Rivers of Nihil, Revocation, Holy Fawn, Ov Sulfur, Inter Arma, Brat, Glacial Tomb*. 5 p.m. \$.

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: *Rebecca and Cynthia*. 6 p.m. Free.

Abandoned Building Brewery, Easthampton: *All Feels*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Four Phantoms, Greenfield: Book reading: *Vanessa Brewster, "No Such Thing As Fiction,"* with AT, *Shea Mowat*. 6:30 p.m. No cover.

Sena Farm Brewery, Worthington: *Two Wrong Turns, MIBBLE, Ruby Lou*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Second Annual Teen Performing Arts Showcase*, presented by the Brick House Community Resource Center. 7 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *2 Car Garage*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Institute for the Musical Arts, Goshen: *Lisa Sokolov/ Jake Sokolov-Gonzalez Duo*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Landowner, beetsblog, Pond 1000*. 8 p.m. \$.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Saul Williams*. 8:30 p.m. \$.

Ralph's Rock Diner, Worcester: *Nurse Joy, Nanny, Feminine Aggression, Dollflower, Sleep Destroyer*. 8:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Torie Jock & Damage Control Band*. 9:30 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, MAY 25

Black Birch Vineyard, North Hatfield: *Helen Hummel*. 1:30 p.m. Free.

Abandon Dream, Turners Falls: *Frank Hurricane, Rare Geese*, more. 4 p.m. By donation.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *beetsblog, Or Best Offer, bobbie, AT & The Fantasy Suites*. 7 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bird Week, Tiger Moth, Train Gang, Sleep Destroyer*. 8 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, MAY 27

Camp Keewanee, Greenfield: *The Machine, Llama Lasagne, Escaper, Start Making Sense, Dead Man's Waltz*, many more. 10 a.m. \$\$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Klezmer Brunch*, with *Myrtle Street Klezmer*. 10 a.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Ralph White, Colby Nathan, Recreation Vehicle, Frozen Corn*. 8 p.m. By donation.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Combo Chimbita*. 8 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, MAY 29

Energy Park, Greenfield: *Katie Clarke & Larry LeBlanc, Pat & Tex LaMountain, Small Change*. 6 p.m. Free.

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

The Drake, Amherst: *Holder, Gun to God's Head, Dream Fatigue, Retract, Meetinghouse*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MAY 30

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

Pink Edwards, Greenfield: *bobbie, Snowglove, Almanac, ZBS.FM*. 7 p.m. \$.

Next Stage Arts Project, Putney: *Geneviève Racette*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Birth (Defects), Cinnamon, Ice Rasta*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

looking forward...

SATURDAY, MAY 31

Four Phantoms, Greenfield: *Heavy Metal Bardlesque*. 21+. "Dungeons & Dragons meets burlesque." 6 p.m. \$.

Pioneer Valley Brewery, Turners Falls: *TSB Rock Band, Jimmy Just Quit*. 7 p.m. No cover.

FRIDAY, JUNE 6

Third Street, Turners Falls: *Cloudbelly, Michi Wiancko, The Rockin' Puppies*. Outdoors. 5 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, JUNE 7

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Family Fishing Day*, with activities at the Center and Barton Cove. Children must be accompanied by an adult. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Records, Greenfield: *Franklin's Mint, Anthony Pasquarosa*. 2 p.m. Free.

SUNDAY, JUNE 15

Jewish Community Center, Amherst: *Leverett Community Chorus, Caravan Chorus*. Benefit for Doctors without Borders. 4 p.m. \$

SUNDAY, JUNE 22

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Daughter of the Vine, Yawni, Mibble, Daniel Gay*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, JULY 11

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

WEDNESDAY, JULY 16

Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum, Hadley: *Afro-Semitic Experience*. 6:30 p.m. \$

SATURDAY, AUGUST 2

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Barrett Anderson Band*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 23

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Iris Dement*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRI-SUN, AUGUST 29-31

Millers Falls Rod & Gun Club, Montague: *RPMFest* feat. *Conan, Ghoul, Horrendous, Chained to the Bottom of the Ocean*, many more. Camping. Full schedule TBA. \$\$.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 30

Antenna Cloud Farm, Gill: *Kinan Azmeh & CityBand*. 6 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Godspeed You! Black Emperor*. 7 p.m. \$.

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SCENE REPORT

Ritual of Tribute: Capable ‘13’ Extends Star’s Aura to Shea

By CHARLOTTE MURTISHAW

TURNERS FALLS – First, for the overburdened parents of a Taylor Swift-obsessed tween reading this: Yes, if 13: A Celebration of Taylor Swift comes to your town, it’s probably the best \$20 you can spend on your spawn. They play the radio edits of the hits, thoughtfully insert an intermission for hyperventilation and Taylor trivia, and seemingly check all the boxes a die-hard Swiftie could hope for.

Even older fans – clad in seemingly legitimate TS tour merch – appeared to have a satisfying evening at the Shea Theater last Saturday, for hundreds of dollars less than the authentic experience. Basically, if what you want is to spend two hours with the concept of Taylor Swift, you’re golden.

In fact, “You’re amazing,” as lead vocalist Beth Zaje told the crowd, which consisted mostly of guardians and groups of 7- to 12-year-olds kitted out in Taylor motifs (think sparkles, friendship bracelets, extremely long hair), who – payment tiers be damned – clustered religiously at stage front.

Naïve to the conventions of patter, one devotee rejoindered from the crowd. “You are!” she cried ardently, her thin voice star-struck and convicted. The adults smothered back smiles.

Think what you will about Taylor Swift, or pop, or celebrity culture: It was very pure. It was also cute to see so many kids having the time of their lives, and doubly so after realizing it was likely the first live concert for many.

Amps, instruments, sequins, lights, fluffy costume coats... Of course it all seemed glamorous to the tots, especially on Zaje, who ran very capably through the Taylor songbook with a voice which sounded honed on musical theater. That’s a compliment – it’s how she managed to carry the hammy edginess Swift herself can’t always sell convincingly, with backup from harmonizing vocalist Kiara Davis. (Of course, Zaje was playing Swift, but Swift is supposed to be portraying herself, so the starlet is at a

marked disadvantage.)

As someone who has never exactly intentionally listened to Taylor Swift, I will admit that sometime between the *Tortured Poets Department* track “I Can Do It With a Broken Heart” and “All Too Well” (the 10-minute version – this was clearly for the fans), my mind started to drift, and two main thoughts bubbled up.

First: Ironically, Swift is most likeable when she drops the girl-next-door act and instead writes about the pressures and pitfalls of megastardom, partially because she can be funny when she’s not so focused on staying relatable. See 2022’s “Anti-Hero” for further proof: “Sometimes I feel like everybody’s a sexy baby / and I’m the monster on the hill.” That’s so wacky. Out of context, it could be Bjork.

Second: What makes a cover band good? The Shea has seen no shortage of tribute acts as of late. A few weeks ago, Rebels: A Tom Petty Tribute and Big Yellow Taxi: The Music of Joni Mitchell – Phony Mitchell was right there! – headlined back-to-back; Fleetwood Mac dupe Little Lies visited in February; and Four Sticks will play Led Zeppelin on May 30.

These nostalgia groups aren’t just because no big names will stop in Turners Falls: the fine bookers at the Shea pulled Suzanne Vega in February, and Judy Collins is coming in July. So why?

Ironically, a good cover and a good cover band are entirely separate entities. For the most part, faithful renditions don’t get much traction, or feel otherwise lacking; covers succeed when an artist can draw something new out of a song, or add their own stamp. Johnny Cash’s cut of Nine Inch Nails’ “Hurt” is the classic example, and his entire *American Recordings* sessions demonstrate a fearsome ability to take possession of other people’s tracks.

To look at a more contemporary example, and possible counterargument, country stud Luke Combs’ staid Top 40-charting “Fast Car” (2023) doesn’t deviate much from Tracy Chapman’s original, but try that with



Beth Zaje (center left) served Taylor Swift, and Taylor Swift fandom, at the Shea Theater last Saturday.

a song even 10% less well-written and see how it turns out.

Unless it’s an explicit part of their framework, a cover band should probably hew as close to the source material as possible. At the end of the day, cover bands are substitutes for artists whose live acts may be inaccessible for a variety of reasons: too expensive, too far, too dead, or too broken up. Performing in facsimile as a service to both the fans and the artists, cover acts are avatars for the originals, extensions of their auras, drag queens of fandom.

This puts an obvious limitation on how “good” any given cover act can ever be; sharp, charismatic, technically skilled, sure, but not so much that they transcend the source material. In a crushing treatise on a Christian rock festival, music writer John Jeremiah Sullivan parsed that genre thusly: “It’s message music for listeners who know the message cold ... it’s supposed to serve as a stand-in for, not an alternative to or an improvement on, [mainstream rock] groups. In this it succeeds wonderfully. If you think it profoundly sucks, that’s because your priorities are not its priorities; you want to hear something cool and new, it needs to play something proven to please.”

This is also the way of cover bands.

And therein lies one of the contradictions of 13: A Celebration of Taylor Swift: the unexpected disorientation of seeing a backing band situated so close to their pop-diva proxy. In the name of research, I doomed my YouTube algorithm and reviewed some recent Taylor Swift concert footage. Lots of backup dancers and strutting; nary an instrument in sight, unless Taylor herself brought out a guitar, flourishing it as a magician might a rabbit. It’s part of her legend, of course, the girl with the guitar – which didn’t make it not a real instrument, but did make it part prop, part costume, a sort of Chekhov’s guitar.

The weirdness of seeing the musicians onstage at Saturday’s show had nothing to do with the quality of 13’s band, who were skillful, but rather the ways in which the instrumentation normally gets buried within the catacombs of Swift’s standard sugar-glazed pop production. Certain songs’ original slick sheen turned sweaty under the spotlight, muddled and brought down to earth, though I doubt the true believers cared.

Filled with the spirit, the band staged a post-show meet and greet in the Shea lobby, complete with photo ops with their adoring fans. It was as close to Taylor Swift as most of us will ever get.

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