

# The Montague Reporter

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Greenfield Lieutenant Montague’s Chief Pick

By JEFF SINGLETON

The town of Montague will have a new police chief at the beginning of next year, after the selectboard authorized town administrator Walter Ramsey on Monday to negotiate a contract with Jason Haskins, who currently serves as lieutenant in the Greenfield police department. The decision came after extensive interviews with two finalists in executive sessions last week and a public discussion on Monday night.

The board also reviewed a provisional warrant for the October 22 special town meeting, approved a \$446,500 contract to create a “master plan” to address stormwater runoff in the Hill neighborhood of Turners Falls, and discussed plans for a November 18 special election to vote on a proposed new six-town school district.

The police chief decision began with a review by selectboard chair Matt Lord of the screening process. Last week, he said, the board held two days of non-public sessions

see MONTAGUE page A7

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

## Orange Crisis Sowing Fear In Smaller Mahar Towns

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Wendell resident, Swift River School committee member, and representative to the Mahar school committee Kate Woodward stayed to the end of the Wendell selectboard’s September 24 meeting before delivering the news from Orange.

The town is in dire financial straits, she reported, and with schools a large part of its budget the Orange selectboard is looking for ways to reduce its expenses including education. They established an *ad hoc* committee of two selectboard members and three citizens to look for ways to reduce what the town has to pay to the Mahar school district. Citizen Denise Andrews has formed a separate stakeholders’ committee with a similar aim.

School administrators met with the *ad hoc* committee, Woodward said, and are willing to meet with the selectboards of the three smaller towns in the Mahar district, Wendell, New Salem, and Petersham. They hope to get information to the smaller towns by December to be useful for the budget planning season.

The Orange selectboard has long felt the smaller towns have not been paying their full share toward the Mahar district, Woodward said, and it is considering dropping out of the district entirely.

This information was met with

see WENDELL page A6

## Chestnut Harvest Growing At Sunderland Tree Farm



Chestnut trees produce prickly burs that discourage animals from eating the starchy kernels within. Big River Chestnut Farm has special equipment to process the food.

By BEN GAGNON

**SUNDERLAND** – ’Tis the season for roasting chestnuts on Route 47 in Sunderland, where farm owner Jono Neiger, assistant manager Ellena Baum, and up to a dozen volunteers are shaking trees and gathering the harvest at Big River Chestnut Farm. Shaking the trees dislodges the prickly burs that each holds several chestnuts. A wire roller known as a Nut Wizard picks them off the ground.

Crews are out in the tree farm harvesting at least twice a day to stay ahead of the local squirrel population, which is also well aware what season it is. Starting October 4, the public is welcome to stop by every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to explore the farm, sit by the river, gather a few nuts,

and otherwise socialize as chestnuts are roasted over an open fire.

“We’re in the thick of it right now,” says Neiger, sorting smaller chestnuts from medium and larger sizes on a wire tray. “We appreciate the volunteers who help out, because we’re still on the early side of financial viability. We love introducing chestnuts to new people.”

The Saturday “pop-up market” will continue until December, or until supplies run out.

A much larger celebration featuring regional food producers will be held at the farm on October 11, including vendors such as Forestopia, Yellow Bud Nursery, Mycoterra, Perfect Circle Farm, Wing and a Prayer Nursery, Nutwood Farm, and They Keep Bees. The local band On The Lam and

see CHESTNUT page A6

## Fire Chief, Town Boards Probe Solar Battery Safety

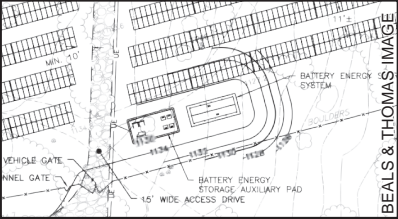
By SARAH ROBERTSON

**WENDELL** – Representatives from Nexamp Energy, the company applying to add a battery system to a proposed solar array on Lockes Village Road, visited the Wendell town offices Monday night and found a room filled with town officials and concerned citizens with many questions.

Prior to its scheduled public hearing on the solar project, the Wendell planning board held a joint meeting with the board of health and conservation commission so officials could confer about the town’s permitting process for battery energy storage systems (BESS) and discuss various fire, chemical, and environmental safety concerns.

Nexamp’s proposed battery would run at 2 megawatts (MW), a fraction of the 105-MW storage facility that a different company withdrew plans for last year, but is still being heavily scrutinized by the public.

“We’ve all been completely



After plans for a much larger storage system galvanized opposition in Wendell, the addition of a 2-MW battery to an already-approved solar project has come under scrutiny by town officials.

traumatized by the proposal earlier, and this isn’t that, but this sort of feels like a relative of that,” said planning board chair Stephen Gross. “If the facts on the ground ultimately demonstrate that we have a legal obligation to [allow] this – and it’s not as dangerous as we imagined, and the expense is going to be carried by the applicant and not by us – then maybe that will help to calm people down.”

With three new members, Richard Drohen, Richard Asmann, and

see BATTERY page A8

## Wendell’s State Rep Joined Week-Long Israel Program

By MIKE JACKSON

**BOSTON** – From September 14 to 18, a delegation of roughly 250 state legislators from all around the United States were led on a special tour of Israel sponsored by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

There they met with Israeli business leaders; toured the Holocaust Remembrance Museum and the sites of massacres of Israelis by Palestinians on October 7, 2023; looked over the fence at the extensively demolished Gaza Strip; planted eucalyptus trees in the Negev desert; dined with US Ambassador Mike Huckabee; and were addressed by Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, Chairman of the Knesset Amir Ohana, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Six of the participants were from Massachusetts – three Republicans and three Democrats – and one was Rep. Aaron Saunders, whose 7th Hampden district encompasses Ludlow, Belchertown, Pelham, Petersham, New Salem, and Wendell.

A *Boston Globe* article last weekend reviewed disclosures filed by each legislator about the \$6,500 in flight, lodging, and food expense covered by the foreign ministry. Each indicated that the program was “intended to promote the interests of the Commonwealth, a county or a municipality.”

During the third day of the trip, a commission of inquiry at the United Nations announced it had determined the Israeli state is carrying

see ISRAEL page A5

## High School Sports Week: Parental Unsportsmanship



Pioneer’s Dasia Mitchell (left) and Franklin Tech’s Faythe Sobieski vie for the ball in Northfield last Monday.

By MATT ROBINSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – This week the rains finally came down, delaying a golf match and setting up a four-team contest on Tuesday. The Franklin Tech linksmen also were able to squeeze in a two-player PVIAC invitational match and vocational playoffs in Acushnet.

Turners boys’ soccer remains untarnished after a tie in Hadley, and Tech’s Football Eagles got back on the winning track by defeating Pathfinder on Thursday. Turners and Tech faced each other in field hockey and volleyball.

**Football**  
*FCTS 21 – Pathfinder 7*

Last Thursday the Football Eagles welcomed the Pathfinder Pioneers in an attempt to get back on the winning track. It drizzled most of the game, and in the fourth quarter it started to pour. While it was wet, it was relatively warm, with a real-feel temperature of 75°.

The contest kicked off on a somber note as it was dedicated to the late Scott Fritz, who was an avid supporter of the cheer team and provided world-class chili during cold football games.

The Eagle defense kept the ’Finders in check for most of Thursday’s battle while the offense accrued over 300 yards on the ground. The Birds’ first score came early. On a third-and-4, Wyatt Whitman got the ball, rounded the corner and scampered into Pioneer territory. Two plays later Maxon Brunette ran it in for a touchdown and Cole Bassett caught the 2-PAT, giving Franklin an 8-0 lead.

On Pathfinder’s next possession the Eagle D pushed them back, forcing a fourth-and-20. After the punt they instituted a long, sustained drive behind the blocks of their offensive lineman, and Whitman scored with 2:43 left in the period to make it 14-zip. The Eagles’ defense kept the Pioneers on their heels for the remainder of the first half, and with 33 seconds to go

see SPORTS page A4

### Country Suddenly Great Again

Nut Wizard.....	A1	Disrupting the Ability of Pests.....	A6	Spinning the Gnomes.....	B4
Several River Otter Puppets.....	A2	A Little Monthly Amateur Paper.....	A7	Snuggling the Slipper.....	B4
Bulb Report, Rock Debut, Order Bots.....	A3	Constant Low-Level Electric Hum.....	A8	Existe Una Pluridimensionalidad.....	B5
Arguing With Cult Morons.....	A3	Son of Earth – Flesh on Bone.....	B1	River Full of Fruit, Fall Into Fiber.....	B6
Peered Down From a Little Airplane.....	A4	Some Sort of Dog Asleep.....	B1	Ants of the Suburbs, Ladybug Transistor.....	B7
Pretty Nasty Trash Talk.....	A4	Sulfur and Eucalyptus.....	B2	Hand-Pieced Carpenter’s Star.....	B8
Tired at the End of the Meeting.....	A4	Burrowing in the Grass.....	B3	Giant Thorns on a Honey Locust.....	B8





# The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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August 2002

## Keeping Flexible

“This ‘anti-fascist’ lie has become the organizing rallying cry used by domestic terrorists to wage a violent assault against democratic institutions, constitutional rights, and fundamental American liberties,” a national security order signed last Thursday by the president asserts. “Common threads animating this violent conduct include anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, and anti-Christianity; support for the overthrow of the United States Government; extremism on migration, race, and gender; and hostility towards those who hold traditional American views on family, religion, and morality....”

This document, the National Security Presidential Memorandum 7 (NSPM-7), decrees that “domestic terrorism” be made a national priority of law enforcement, while re-defining terrorism. Though the text focuses on violence, it includes a series of slipknots that, taken together, could broadly cover free speech and free association: “sophisticated, organized campaigns of... radicalization... designed to... change or direct policy outcomes...”

“There are common recurrent motivations and indicia uniting this pattern of violent and terrorist activities under the umbrella of self-described ‘anti-fascism,’” NSPM-7 asserts, before instructing the Joint Terrorism Task Force to “investigate... non-governmental organizations and American citizens... with close ties to... citizens, foundations, or influence networks engaged in... supporting entities that engage in activities that support or encourage domestic terrorism.”

Do *you*, reader, have ties to any citizens engaged in supporting entities that engage in activities that encourage radicalization designed to change policy outcomes?

On Monday, US Attorney General Pam Bondi sent a memo to the heads of the FBI, ATF, DEA, and US Marshals Service citing NSPM-7 and announcing that she was

forming a “temporary ICE Protection Task Force” to fund and train state and local law enforcement to, among other things, “disband and uproot networks... that promote... efforts to disrupt the functioning of a democratic society.”

On Tuesday, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth spoke for an hour to the hundreds of generals and admirals he had summoned to Virginia from bases across the planet. “You kill people and break things for a living,” he told them, before turning the podium over to the president.

“We should use some of these dangerous cities as training grounds for our military.... Many of our leaders used the military to keep peace,” Trump said. “Now they like to say, ‘Oh, you’re not allowed to use the military...’”


“We have great peace through strength,” he told the generals. “America is respected again as a country. We were not respected with Biden. They looked at him falling down stairs every day. Every day, the guy is falling down stairs. He said, ‘It’s not our president, we can’t have it.’ I’m very careful, you know, when I walk down stairs for, like, a month – stairs, like these stairs, I’m very – I walk very slowly. Nobody has to set a record! Just try not to fall. Because it doesn’t work out well – a few of our presidents have fallen, and it became a part of their legacy. We don’t want that. You walk nice and easy. You’re not having – you don’t have to set any record! Be cool. Be cool when you walk down, but don’t – don’t *pop* down the stairs. So one thing with Obama, I had zero respect for him as a president, but he would *bop* down those stairs. I’ve never seen it! *Da-da, da-da, da-da, bop, bop, bop*, he’d go down the stairs, wouldn’t hold on. I said, ‘It’s great. I don’t want to do it. I guess I could do it.’ But eventually, bad things are going to happen. And it only takes once.”

## CORRECTION

At the end of an op/ed in our September 25 edition, *Reflections on ‘Family Day’* (Page A3), we erroneously identified its author, Jenna Weld, as “a PEER Ambassador at the Brick House Community Resource Center in Turners Falls.” Weld actually serves as a PEER Ambassador at the Greenfield Family Resource Center, and was writing in her capacity as co-chair of the Parent and Family Engagement workgroup of the Communities That Care Coalition, which promotes the Family Day idea.

Our sincere apologies to Jenna, to everyone involved in each of these respective efforts, and to our readers for the mistake!

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



NINA

Janel Nockleby holds several river otter puppets in readiness for last Friday’s Kidleidoscope program at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls. Kidleidoscope is geared for kids ages 3 to 6, who must be accompanied by adults, and features stories, crafts, and activities about the natural world and wildlife. It takes place Friday mornings at 10:30 a.m. This week’s program is about leaves!

OP ED

## ‘Harmless’ Claims Not Accurate: Change Only Better Than the Alternative

By MIKE NAUGHTON

**MILLERS FALLS** – The account of the Six Town Regional Planning Board (STRPB)’s September 9 meeting (September 11, *Board Finalizes Agreement for Six-Town School District*, Page A4) states that “Escaping Pioneer had meant [for Warwick] escaping its ‘hold harmless’ status...”

According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), that’s not the case. In FY’24, Warwick’s first year as a separate district, it received an increase in Chapter 70 aid from its (calculated) prior year, but in both FY’25 and FY’26 a declining foundation enrollment has pushed them solidly into “hold harmless.”

Normally, that would only interest residents of Warwick, but later in the meeting Warwick’s example was used to support the claim that a merged district would be somehow starting fresh, and would somehow benefit by receiving more Chapter 70 aid than the three districts are receiving now.

Greg Snedeker reportedly said, “It’s a strong reason to regionalize.”

Based on my understanding of the Chapter 70 funding formula, this doesn’t make sense. Chapter 70 determines a cost for educating every student who attends a public school, based on their age and other factors. It adds up those costs for all the students that a town is responsible for educating, and the total is the town’s “foundation budget.” It also adds all the costs for students assigned to a particular school district, which is the district’s “foundation budget.”

A town may have students in more than one district, and a district may be assigned students from more than one town, but all the costs for all the students, whether you group them by town or by district, add up to the same number.

The formula also calculates a “local contribution” from each town, based on its relative wealth, and it divides that contribution among the districts of which that town is a member. Then, for each district, the formula takes the foundation budget, subtracts the local contributions, and arrives at a Chapter 70 aid amount.

This is where “hold harmless” comes in. If the calculated Chapter 70 aid is less than the amount that the district received in the prior year, then the district receives the amount from the prior year plus a small additional amount per student.

All three districts that are considering this merge are held harmless in FY’26. Warwick, relatively speaking, is in deepest. Its aid calculation was \$104,124, but it received \$392,384. Pioneer Valley is next: its aid calculation was \$2,603,475, but it received \$4,151,899. Gill-Montague is the shallowest: its aid calculation was \$7,879,322, but it received \$8,069,823.

You might think that a district’s receiving a lot more aid than the formula says it deserves is a good thing. It is, but only in the sense that the alternative is a lot worse.

The Chapter 70 formula is based on the premise that a district’s budget is directly related to its enrollment. But for small districts, that’s simply not true: if enrollment drops, there are still buildings to maintain, teachers and other employees to pay, and other costs that tend to go up over time. Level-funding state aid is better than cutting it, but it doesn’t help with those yearly increases. Funding those is left for the towns, and it’s a major reason why towns struggle to fund school assessments.

But back to the STRPB. The only ways that a new district would produce more Chapter 70 aid than the three districts are receiving now would be a) if the district’s foundation budget were to increase (remember, it’s the sum of all the students – the same students who are in the separate districts – so why would it increase?), or b) the towns’ local contributions were to decrease (they’re based on wealth, which wouldn’t change).

The Chapter 70 aid calculation for a merged district would likely be the same as the sum of the calculations for the separate districts, which is roughly \$2 million less than the aid that they are getting now. Starting fresh would mean giving up that \$2 million.

As it is, DESE has informed the STRPB that it would honor the “hold harmless” of the separate districts if they merge. Again, that’s good news only because the alternative is much worse. Being in “hold harmless” is not a good place to be, and a merged district would be *solidly* in hold harmless. It might be “starting fresh” in the sense that it’s a new district, but it would face significant financial challenges.

There are potential benefits to merging the districts, but a financial “clean slate” is not one of them.

Mike Naughton served on the Montague finance committee for 17 years, and was asked to join the STRPB to look out for Montague’s financial interests. He served on that board from the beginning until June 2023.

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# TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

There really are quite **a lot of things** going on.

Montague Reporter distribution manager Nina Rossi reports on the status of her millionth brainchild, our bulb-sale fundraiser:

“Here are the facts: **3,000 bulbs were sold**, with 350 of those donated through the Garden Angel program for Peskeompskut Park, the Great Falls and Unity Park Community Gardens, and the Montague Cemeteries. Those who are picking up their orders may come to the office on Saturday, October 11 between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Home deliveries will take place on October 11 and 12. Keep an eye on your porch or doorway for brown paper bags of bulbs!”

Many, many thanks to everyone who supported our fundraiser – we can look forward to a more colorful spring in 2026! And big thanks to Nina.



A rock at the corner of Cave Hill and North Leverett roads is now inscribed, helping its viewers orient themselves toward being in North Leverett, and also now bears a plaque

“[d]edicated to the past, present and future residents of Leverett,” a final effort and expenditure of the town’s observance last year of the 250th anniversary of its incorporation.

There’s a Phish tribute band playing the Shea tonight, reproducing in its entirety a concert I am **nearly 100% certain I attended as a teenager** in the millennium prior to this one. Huh! Well. I wish everyone involved the very best. Tomorrow night the theater is screening Paul Verhoeven’s *RoboCop*, which I know for a fact holds up.

Please see our Events Calendar on pages B6 and B7 for more stuff scheduled to go on in our Vicinity – a bug museum parade; a pierogi sale; a car show; Tom Ricardi’s always-incredible Birds of Prey presentation; the remembrance gathering this Sunday for the Farren; and various fall festivals, pop-up shops, craft lessons, open mics, and concerts. We list a lot, but we miss even more....

Over the past two weeks one or multiple consecutive **moose were reported** crossing the road in front of the Leverett elementary school, walking up Farley Road in Wendell with an injury on his left shoulder, crossing Wendell Depot Road in good health, and walking calmly along Stone Road with a single antler. The Leverett and Wendell email listservs were put to good use.

Please watch out for these noble, heavy beasts, and consider driving safely.

We also saw a photo online of **quite a snapping turtle** that had apparently exited the power canal last week when it was drained. Those things are crazy. And terrifying. I’ll never carelessly dangle my fingers in the canal again.

Three Friday evenings from now on the 17th our member in the United States Congress, Jim McGovern, will be at Leverett Elementary to

“talk about priorities and concerns for our town, the Commonwealth and the nation.” The event is organized by Leverett Together and tickets, which are free, are being accorded by priority to residents of that town until this Sunday, when they become available to all. If you want to gaze upon him or learn about whatever the heck is happening down in Washington, seats can be booked at [tinyurl.com/convowithjim](http://tinyurl.com/convowithjim).



Reader Mary Feeney of Turners Falls sent this photo of a **banana tree** kept growing on Central Street, which she mentions will soon be moved to winter lodgings at the airport industrial park. Impressive! Does it banana?

Hey: If we make more **MR tote bags** before December – what colorway should we use this time? Send preferred palettes to the email address at the end of this column. The last batch of white-on-black bags is all sold out.

On the topic of merch, we noticed Greenfield art space Looky Here complaining that their website had been swamped by fake orders from bots, and two days later it was our turn: hundreds of orders for our fundraiser wrapping paper. Irritating. We may be slow to fill real orders while we get it sorted out.... Why is social collapse so tacky?

Send your little bits of news to [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org).

## AT LARGE

# Risen Up Through the Ranks

By CHIPAINSWORTH

**NORTHFIELD** – Lori Streeter must pinch herself every morning when she wakes up knowing she’s the Franklin County sheriff. It was a long row to hoe, but Streeter reached the pinnacle by her own doing and her predecessor’s decision to retire mid-term. Three weeks after Christopher Donelan gave his notice in early January, Governor Maura Healey promoted Streeter from superintendent to interim sheriff.

Of 14 sheriffs in the Commonwealth, Streeter and Barnstable County Sheriff Donna Buckley are the only two women. Readers of James Lee Burke’s Louisiana-based mystery novels might want to compare her to a softer version of Helen Soileau, the sheriff of Iberia Parish, who keeps investigator Dave Robicheaux in line with the department’s rules and regs.

Next year she intends to lose the “interim” label by winning in the special election. According to the state Office of Campaign Finance, Streeter already has over \$16,000 in her campaign war chest, not including what was raised at a September fundraiser at the Schuetzen Verein in Gill.

“My strength is my experience,” the 61-year-old Streeter told New England Public Media, “working my way through the ranks.”

There’s no disputing that Streeter has earned her position. Born and raised in West County, she at-

tended Westfield State where she majored in criminal justice and minored in sociology.

In the mid-’80s she worked as a “spare” – a part-time corrections officer – for Sheriff Red McQuade and later at CHD Adolescent Treatment, a juvenile lockup on Worthington Street in Springfield. When Fred Macdonald was elected sheriff in 1992, Streeter returned to work as a spare until he hired her fulltime overseeing policy and procedure.

Other than the usual griping, former employees I’ve spoken with have said Streeter has treated them respectfully, attested to by the large turnout at the Schuetzen Verein. “She never did anything to me,” said one retired CO. “We got along.”

Republican Isaac Mass has formed an exploratory committee to determine the viability of running against Streeter, but at this writing the only candidate to have thrown his hat in the ring is Gary Gagnon. A former CO at the jail, Gagnon announced his candidacy on Facebook’s “Everything Turners Falls/Montague.”

Gagnon graduated from the Franklin County Reserve Police Academy on June 26, 2012, and worked the jail’s night shift. “He was kind of a renegade,” said a fellow CO. “You were lucky to get a word out of him.”

Gagnon’s platform is transparency. “I’m personally familiar of how power can be abused to silence whistleblowers,” he writes. “I will not use intimidation, termination,

false accusations, false charges, or other law enforcement agencies to silence others. These tactics need to stop. Lawfare intimidation of good people is too common.”

Gagnon’s bid to be sheriff smacks of 2004 when corrections officer Robert Hunter of Gill lodged similar complaints and opposed Macdonald in the general election. Macdonald garnered 74.9% of 34,409 votes to Hunter’s 25%.

### The Kirk Killing

On the day Charlie Kirk was assassinated, a South Deerfield woman posted on her Facebook page: “Thoughts and Prayers, Mother-fucker.” Two other Deerfield residents, both in town government, “liked” the post.

She subsequently deleted the post, but screenshots are forever. “Arguing with cult morons on fb is not the real work and certainly not the hill I’m going to die on,” she wrote.

She and her ilk aren’t cellar dwellers who only come out on the full moon. They live in nice neighborhoods and have nice homes, and they think everyone feels like they do.

But they are wrong. On September 21 a capacity crowd filled State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona and thousands of others stood vigil outside.

“I was out on the streets around the stadium about 4 a.m. and stayed for the ceremony,” said political commentator Mark Halperin. “I thought, ‘I wish everyone in

the country could be here, I wish everyone could feel the spirit and set aside their nitpicking about what they may not have liked about Charlie Kirk.’”

The defining moment came when Kirk’s widow spoke with a trembling yet strong voice and proclaimed: “On the cross our Savior said, ‘Father forgive them, for they not know what they do’.... That man, that young man.... I forgive him.”

After a moment of shocked silence, the crowd roared. It was a stunning and profound moment. There were no riots, no buildings burning or cars overturned, only peaceful grieving for a man whom they felt was trying to unite his country.

### Chicago Cop Story

There’s a saying that there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics. On August 25, Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson’s office reported that homicides were down 32.3% since he took office two years ago.

Maybe so – or maybe it’s how the crimes are tallied.

Years ago when my former wife and I were in the Bahamas, we met a couple from Chicago. He was a cop, and he told us about the death of a homeless man on the city’s south side.

The victim was found lying next to a building with his head bashed and a bloody two-by-four next to his body. Investigators arrived, cased the scene and concluded the

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death was accidental. The deceased, they said, had fallen off the building and hit his head on the two-by-four.

### Great Snake Hunt

This summer in Florida, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the South Florida Water Management District sponsored a \$25,000 Python Challenge.

Over 900 snake hunters converged on the Everglades and bagged 300 snakes, only a fraction of the estimated 300,000 that are slithering around killing native wildlife. The winner was a diminutive Naples woman who caught and killed 60 pythons.

The state needs more hunters and is paying \$50 for the first four feet of snake and \$25 for every foot thereafter. In the last eight years over 16,000 pythons have been removed.

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

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OBITUARY

Michael Burbank Idoine

10/10/1943 – 9/13/2025

**WENDELL** – In the early morning hours of September 13, 2025, Michael Burbank Idoine, 81, died at home in the arms of his wife of 60 years.

Michael's life began on October 10, 1943, as the first-born child of Jane Elizabeth (Burbank) and Leon Sumner Idoine in Toledo, Ohio. In his first five years, three more siblings joined him. Soon, they boarded a train for Frederick, Maryland where Michael spent his formative years.

Michael discovered early that he did not like school, though he went on to earn a MS in Regional Planning at the University of Massachusetts in 1993. He entered Drexel Institute of Technology in 1961, where he learned to read, inspired by a Faulkner novel. The following year he transferred to Western Maryland College and completed a BA in Psychology. It was a time of ferment, and in the interest of creating a more equitable campus culture Michael worked with students and faculty to advocate for the abolishment of fraternities.

He honed his writing skills, which he employed in support of peace and community building, conservation of working landscapes, recognition of women's voices, and for poetry. Among friends, colleagues, and

family his quiet, thoughtful speech often persuaded and surprised. Surprises came in the form of dry, spot-on quips as well as in his perceptive expression of closely considered ideas. He transformed his persistent idealism into productive work.

With his family, now including toddler twins, he moved to Wendell in 1971 with the intention of staying, making a life and serving among its inhabitants. During his 54 years in Wendell, he served as Town Meeting Moderator, Select-board member, and Finance Committee member, among other roles. A preference for behind-the-scenes instigating and coalition-building led him to co-coordinate activities of the Valley Peace Center in Amherst in the early 1970s, followed by the Wendell Concerned Citizens and the Route 2 Environmental Coalition in the 1980s. His role in designing the Low-Profile Alignment as an alternative to constructing a new highway (Route 2) on the south bank of the Millers River in Erving resulted in the protection of Bear Mountain in the Wendell State Forest.

Family life with Michael was highlighted with his love of music – both playing his guitar and listening to his extensive record collection – creating delicious stir-fried dinners, venturing into homeschooling

with his kids and quacking at their early teen ebullient energy. Various earnest efforts earned his signature praise word “tolerable.” After all, he was the serious dad!

Despite his reserved demeanor, he reveled in the hubbub of life among family, friends and neighbors. He last opened his eyes to see his 15-month-old great-grandchild.

In June of 1972 he peered down from a little airplane and saw a red tractor plowing a field. That led to his 53-year journey tending to the care and conservation of that land, Swallow Rise – a collaborative effort among friends and family. His goal, fulfilled in 2021 by the Swallow Rise Conservation Development plan, was to provide an affordable place for people to live, sustained in harmony with the fields and forest. His abiding interest was to create home on this land.

At the age of 51, he realized his dream of owning a sawmill. For several decades he trailered his bandsaw mill to sites where folks – with a pile of logs harvested from their land – wanted beams, joists and boards to build barns, additions and houses. The work satisfied him immensely. As with all his work, he approached the task at hand with creative thinking, commitment and integrity.

His parents, brother Christopher,



and sister Kathleen pre-deceased him. Josef Idoine (Barbara), his youngest brother, lives in Seattle. His friend, partner, and wife of 60 years, Karen Idoine, daughter Gillian Budine and husband Jeffrey, son Justin Idoine-Hu and wife Hui, along with grandchildren Aaron Budine (Talia), Emma Budine (Cole), and Mattie Budine (Jordan), and great-grandchildren Bradley Remillard, Charleigh Budine, and Nora and Miles Goyette, and six nephews remain to flourish in their lives.

Michael's family extends deep gratitude to friends, extended family, the kind medical professionals, and those from Pioneer Valley Hospice and Palliative Care who cared for and visited with Michael in his last months.

Interment at Swallow Rise in Wendell will be private.

Donations in Michael's memory can be made to the Wendell Historical Society, online at [www.wendell-historical-society.org](http://www.wendell-historical-society.org) or by check to the Wendell Historical Society, Box 941, Wendell, MA 01379.

SPORTS from page A1

Brunette scored Tech's third TD. Neither team could score for most of the third, but Pathfinder finally hit paydirt with six seconds left in the quarter, making it a 21-7 game That's when it started pouring. Franklin had some opportunities in the fourth, but key stops and drive-ending penalties kept them out of the end zone.

Brunette threw four completions for 64 yards and one 2-PAT conversion. On the ground, the Tech running machine amassed 306 yards, with Nathan Sabolevski leading the charge at 103. Sabolevski also made five tackles and two sacks, and knocked away a pass.

The Eagles will try to stay on track this Friday as they host the Ware Indians.

Volleyball

FCTS 3 – TFHS 2      Smith Voc 3 – FCTS 1

TFHS 3 – Greenfield 0

Last Thursday three Tech volleyball teams came to Turners' gym. I stayed for the ninth grade and JV games, but had to leave for football during the varsity battle. And what a battle it was! The game stretched to five matches, with the Eagles taking the rubber 15-8.

The next day, the Smith Voc Vikings sailed into town and beat the Eagles 3-1. It was a pretty good crowd, though at one point the game paused and both teams and the officials looked at a rather loud father sitting behind me. After a few tense moments and a silent plea from one of the players, play resumed.

In the first match, the Vikes went on a tear. Tech shot out to a 6-0 lead in the second, but Smith clawed their way back to 24-23. That's when it got a little confusing. After the next volley it seemed that Smith had scored the tying point, but the officials awarded the points, and with it the match, to the Eagles. Some of the regulars prodded me to ask why. The scorekeepers had no idea, so I asked the line judge. He explained that the ball had landed out of bounds, so Tech got the point.

When I got back to my seat, one of the fathers said softly, "But I think one of our girls touched it..." I offered to tell this to the judges, but he chuckled and shook his head.

Smith took huge leads in the next two matches and coasted to victory.



Turners Falls' libero Abby Moffatt serves to Pioneer during the first set Wednesday night in Northfield. Thunder swept the Panthers, 3-0.

On Tuesday, Turners swept the Green Wave 3-0 in Greenfield. Greenfield has an interesting rule for spectators. With the exception of the Greenfield student section, no one is allowed to sit in the bleachers behind the benches, except the JV girls and those of us in the media. A 14-year-old roamed the gym, shoeing latecomers along when they attempted to sit in the forbidden section. Though the Turners fans were remote, they made their voices heard, singing and chanting through the matches.

Powertown won the first by 12, but Green came alive in the second. Volleys went on forever, with impossible saves, sliding digs, and second-hit taps, but Blue held on to win it 25-21. Turners took a substantial lead in the third match, but Green refused to go away.

As the Wave narrowed the gap the Turners contingent seemed to be getting nervous. Finally, with the Thunder leading by a mere two points and Greenfield serving, the ball went long for a fault, handing Turners the victory.

Cross Country

Greenfield 15 – Palmer 15 – TFHS 45

On Wednesday the Greenfield and Palmer cross-country teams came to the Bob Avery

Course and competed against Turners.

In the boys' varsity meet the Thunder could not field five runners, so they were awarded a 45. Lucian Carlo placed eighth at 20:03.

In the girls' meet, *none* of the teams had five runners, so no scores were awarded. Olivia Wolbach finished second with a time of 24:00, and Amber Marcy fourth with a 24:12.

Lucas Edmonds finished first in the boys' JV meet, breaking the tape in 15:39 on the 1.8-mile shortened trail.

Soccer

TFHS 0 – Hopkins 0      Athol 3 – FCTS 1

Pioneer 3 – FCTS 2      TFHS 7 – Greenfield 1

FCTS 4 – Pioneer 1

In soccer, the Thunder boys came back from Hadley last Friday with a scoreless tie against the Hopkins Academy Golden Hawks. Turners dominated play, making 13 shots on goal, but were unable to kick into the net. The Blue D kept the ball in the Hopkins end, and Jackson Cogswell only had to make three saves. The tie preserved the Turners boys' unbeaten streak.

The Tech boys, meanwhile, were booting it out with the Athol Red Bears. I headed to the soccer pitch after the Smith Voc volleyball game and found Franklin up by a goal, courtesy of Dylan Duvall with an assist from Santiago Buri Rosales. That lead held until halftime, but Athol scored three unanswered goals in the second half to take the match 3-1.

On Monday the Tech girls lost against Pioneer up in Northfield. Mady Lynde and Layla Hammond scored Tech's two goals, and Carly Walsh gave an assist.

On Tuesday, while the Turners girls were sweeping Greenfield on the volleyball court, the boys were routing the visiting Green Wave on the soccer pitch. As I headed back to town a source informed me that Turners was trouncing Greenfield, so I headed over to the Tech game instead. Powertown went on to beat Greenfield 7-1, with Yolvin Ovalle kicking in two of the goals.

When I reached the Tech, I found the Eagles were having their way with the Pioneer Black Panthers. It was a little chilly, but that didn't damper the crowd – especially the 15 or 20 students cheering from the stands.

Golf

Athol 165 – FCTS 173

Hopkins 175 – TFHS 186

Last Thursday could have been one of those long days: tee time for Turners-Tech golf was scheduled for 3 p.m., the schools' three volleyball games were on the docket, and the Eagles had their night football game against Pathfinder. But the rains finally came, and golf was postponed to a quad match on Tuesday.

Tech got back in the swing on Monday, as Braeden Talbot and Jack Day tied for third in the PVIAC Two-Ball Invitational golf-off.

Tuesday saw the quad match, with Tech and Turners competing against Athol and Hopkins at Thomas Memorial. It was interesting seeing a swarm of kids clad in four different colors on the practice green. On Wednesday five Tech golfers traveled to Acushnet to compete in a vocational tourney, though I didn't hear the results as of press time.

Field Hockey

FCTS 1 – Mahar 0      FCTS 2 – TFHS 0

Last Friday the Franklin Tech Field Hockey Eagles went to Orange, where they edged out the Mahar Senators 1-nil. The Eagles made 11 shots on goal, but only one made it past the goalie – courtesy of Talia Pederzini, with an assist by Teagan Donahue – to earn the victory.

On Wednesday night Tech and Turners went stick-to-stick at Turners Falls High, and the Eagles came away with a 2-zip win. Amelia Rider scored the first goal, assisted by Donahue, and Pederzini scored the second assisted by Rider.

With less than five minutes left in the third quarter, the official blew the whistle, jogged to the sidelines, and conferred with the coaches. Apparently, one of the parents was targeting a player with some pretty nasty trash talk. The Athletic Director was summoned, order was restored, and play resumed. At the break, the official came to the scorer's table and lamented how unacceptable it is for an adult to act that way at a high school sporting event.

I won't mention the player's name – or even the team they play for – but I will agree wholeheartedly that it is unacceptable for adults to berate children who are just playing a game.



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TUE-SAT

4-9



ISRAEL from page A1

out a genocide in the Gaza enclave in response to the 2023 attack. The *Globe* quoted Democratic state representative Alan Silvia of Fall River as objecting to criticism of the trip in that context: “The genocide took place on October 7 two years ago,” Silvia reportedly told the newspaper. “If Israel wanted to commit genocide, they can do it in 15 minutes.”

The *Montague Reporter* reached out to Saunders to ask about the program, which was named “50 States, One Israel,” and his own motivations for participating in it.

“I was asked by the Consul General’s office if I wanted to go, and I accepted,” Saunders said in a telephone interview. “And I was very clear with them – and certainly anyone who I’ve had the opportunity to discuss the trip with – that I have deep reservations about the Netanyahu government, about the way that the war in Gaza has been prosecuted, about the expansion of settlements.”

The Ludlow Democrat, first elected in 2022 and re-elected without opposition in 2024, currently serves as vice president of the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts. He described the trip as “fascinating on a number of levels,” and said that it has “led to some really good conversations.”

“Being reacquainted with the cultural and economic connections that Massachusetts and Israel share really underscored the nuance and complexity of the situation that Israelis and Palestinians live with day in and day out,” Saunders continued. “That, quite frankly, feels like it gets oversimplified in the States – it’s either you’re for one side or for another.”

Participants were not given a chance to meet with members of opposition parties when they visited the Knesset, he acknowledged, or to voice criticisms of his govern-

ment’s policies to Netanyahu. Still, he said, he appreciated the opportunity to “really be able to hear the striking differences politically that exist in Israel” in other conversations throughout the trip.

“What I brought to the members of the foreign ministry that I spoke with about my view,” Saunders told the *Reporter*, “and what I believe the general view of my district is, is that the civilian casualties in Gaza demand a different path for resolving the conflict. You cannot believe that the only way to root out Hamas and have a secure Israel is the approach that has been taken over the last two years.”

Asked whether he felt his criticism was heard, Saunders paused.

“It was the best that I could do, given the position that I have and the opportunity that I had to share those sentiments with senior people in the Israeli government,” he replied. “Had I said no to the trip – which probably would have been easier, it may have been a little less controversial – then I wouldn’t have had the opportunity. Then I would have been able to say, for sure, my voice *hadn’t* been [heard]. But at least now I have the opportunity to say it may have.”

According to an itinerary attached to another legislator’s disclosure form, the delegates flew in to Tel Aviv on September 14, and the next morning took a “[t]our of the Old City of Jerusalem, including the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Western Wall,” then visited the World Holocaust Remembrance Center before lunch. They were then addressed at the Knesset by Saar, Ohana, and Netanyahu before enjoying an evening reception.

“He was very heavy on the historic partnership between the US and Israel,” Saunders said of the prime minister’s remarks. “We got, certainly, the Netanyahu version of what Hamas in Gaza, and the Pal-

estinian Authority generally, represents to the Israeli people. I think that was an opinion that’s not shared by everyone in Israel, and it was what you would expect from a political speech from the perspective of a head of government.”

The 7th Hampden rep described both the group’s visit to the Nova Festival site, as well as “being able to look across into Gaza, and see the destruction that’s happening in Gaza City,” as “moving.” “I had never been that close to a war zone before,” he told the *Reporter*.

Saunders repeatedly compared the spectrum of Israeli public opinion toward Netanyahu’s government to Americans’ views on the Trump administration, and spoke positively of the time spent traveling with his Massachusetts Republican colleagues: “We know that we probably couldn’t be further apart on a whole bunch of domestic issues, but to have this recognition – and this happened on a number of occasions – to say, ‘Okay, well, we can agree on some things,’ and then you get into the conversation – it’s like, ‘Oh, maybe there is some light at the end of the tunnel.’”

Since his return, Saunders said, he has encountered “more curiosity than outright opposition” in response to his participation. “That being said,” he continued, “I have gotten a smattering of folks who I guess maybe I’d say are not interested in having the discussion. But that’s one of the beauties of democracy, that all those opinions are available to us and could be shared freely.”

Montague’s state representative, Natalie Blais, told the *Reporter* she had not received an invitation to the program, and an aide to state senator Jo Comerford said she did not either.

Additional reporting was contributed by Dusty Christensen.



The Consulate General of Israel to New England posted photographs online of the 50 States, One Israel participants planting eucalyptus trees near the city of Ofakim in southern Israel. Above, left to right, is the Massachusetts delegation: state senator Peter Durant, representative Alan Silvia, representative David Muradian, senator Rebecca Rausch, representative Hannah Kane, and Saunders. (“It wasn’t lost on us that we may need to send a new flag over to update them,” Saunders commented.)

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**WENDELL** from page A1

stunned silence. The move would leave Wendell, New Salem, and Petersham paying the entire cost of running the school, and would also leave 400 students from Orange with no school to attend.

Takeover by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) was also mentioned. Wendell selectboard member Adam Feltman said it was not good when Holyoke went into state receivership.

Health insurance is a major driver of the Mahar district's growing expense.

**Special Agenda**

At the September 24 meeting the Wendell board also came close to finalizing the warrant for the October 15 special town meeting. After a small adjustment the warrant was posted on the town website.

Article 3, which set the date for this town meeting, would allow the selectboard to negotiate and enter into a payment *in lieu* of taxes (PILOT) agreement with Wendell Solar, LLC for a 2.79-megawatt solar array with associated battery storage at 69 Locke Village Road for a term of 20 years.

Article 1 would raise the demand fee for

real estate and excise tax to \$25, and the municipal lien demand fee to \$50; Article 2 would raise and appropriate \$13,924 for the reserve account; and Article 4 would transfer \$10,000 from the building rehab account to the building repairs account, to help pay for repainting the library.

Article 5 would transfer \$1,200 from the rehab account to the planning board expense account in order to pay a planning board clerk through 2025, covering meetings related to the proposed solar project.

**Landfill Limbo**

Treasurer Carolyn Manley said the state Department of Environmental Protection, with nothing in writing, has spent \$30,000 a year monitoring, repairing, and maintaining the demolition debris landfill at 202 Mormon Hollow Road. The agency spent over \$3 million stabilizing the slope which extends almost to the Millers River.

The owner is liable if anything happens, but the owner has no money, and the property was now under tax taking. Manley said she cannot act on the property until the town takes it through land court, but she recommended that Wendell stop movement in that direction.

The selectboard agreed to withdraw the town's tax taking effort from land court. The landfill will stay with its present owners, in limbo.

**Paint Funds**

Manley relayed a statement from the finance committee that the town simply does not have \$22,000 for painting the library exterior. She offered postponing the work, possibly stopping after repair and priming, or seeing if the sheriff's office can provide labor, prisoners, as they are doing for the senior center exterior.

Woodward said prisoners also painted at the Swift River School during the summer. Manley said she would talk with librarian Miriam Warner about other possibilities.

Fin com member Garrett Sawyer said the problem came from the original design, which did not include gutters, but project manager Phil Delorey had gotten that problem taken care of.

Manley suggested that the town consider returning utility bills and construction or maintenance costs to each department, within that department's regular annual budget request. The library, the highway department, and the senior center would therefore have a

record of how much they are spending.

Bills were paid that way once, she explained, but then electricity bills for departments were consolidated. She thought the old way allowed easier access to helpful information.

**Other Business**

In order to allow debt-excluded borrowing for a new fire department tank truck to extend past five years, the selectboard declared that vehicle's useful life to be 20 years. Fire chief Matt O'Donnell said the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) considers the useful life of a fire vehicle to be 15 to 20 years.

The board approved criminal offenders' records information (CORI) requests for library workers and volunteers, who might work directly with children, and for Good Neighbors volunteers, who may go into homes with children or elderly and vulnerable adults.

Following the planning board's recommendation, the selectboard appointed Tom Siefert as planning board clerk through to December 26.

Jeff Budine was appointed as Wendell's representative to the school committee for Franklin County Technical School. His term will end on June 30.

**CHESTNUT** from page A1

musician Bill Shontz will perform.

Neiger planted 450 chestnut trees on his 7.5-acre farm in 2018 and gathered about 200 pounds of nuts in 2022. After a late May freeze wiped out the 2023 crop, the harvest jumped to 800 pounds in 2024, and should get close to 1,000 pounds this year.

As the years go by, the harvest is expected to increase exponentially.

It takes more than 20 years for chestnut trees to fully mature, but after that they can produce chestnuts for several centuries. In the meantime, Neiger and other regional tree farmers will continue their efforts to build a market of consumers for when harvests really start to roll in.

"This is a long-term vision – it's a waiting game," says Neiger. "We're eight years in and still at the very early end of things."

Meanwhile, Neiger and Baum have been busy this year on a project aiming to establish a cooperative of tree farmers in the region, supported by a \$90,000 grant from the state Department of Agricultural Resources.



Big River Chestnut Farm owner Jono Neiger shows off pawpaw fruit, ripe for picking this time of year.

The funds allowed him to buy eight pieces of equipment to process and store nut harvests. The equipment runs the gamut from sorting to washing and heat treating, including a peeler, a hammer mill to break up the nuts, and a grain mill to make flour. Another \$55,000 was recently approved for a walk-in cooler.

"There's a lot of pieces we're bringing together here and we hope to create a hub for a cooperative of farmers," says Neiger. "Chestnuts are ready for prime time, and we're only one grower. We were able to get the grants partly because there are a lot of people who are starting to grow them and need access to this kind of equipment."

While chestnuts are not a popular staple in America, people with a background in Europe and Asia are used to seeing them on the dinner table in one form or another. A starchy carbohydrate that's low in oil and protein, chestnuts can be processed into flour and used to make bread and beer.

Unfortunately, imported chestnuts are often stored improperly and tend to dry out, which doesn't help their reputation. On the other hand, there's not enough local supply yet for food producers to rely on to make bread or beer.

But Neiger is all in. In 2023, he started leasing five acres in Easthampton to plant more trees, and at the same time went under contract with a landowner in South Deerfield to start a large tree farm on 67 acres along Settright Road.

When chestnut trees are fully mature after about 20 or 25 years, they produce about 2,000 pounds per acre, Neiger explains.

"Once we get going, it will be a big thing," he says. "There are people around here who are willing to invest their wealth in a long-term vision and want to be part of doing something good." He currently sells all his chestnuts at the farm or at farmers markets, but anticipates eventually selling to restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, and breweries.

But Neiger and other tree farmers aren't putting all their nuts in one basket. Also growing at Big River Chestnut Farm are hazelnut trees, walnut trees, and pawpaw trees, which produce a large oval-shaped fruit that tastes like a combination of mango and banana. A row of coppiced basket willows produce rods for weaving.

Between the chestnut trees are rows of fruit trees and bushes producing elderberries, persimmon, black currants, and aronia. He also practices silvopasture, which means running sheep among the chestnut trees to provide shade for the animals and manure for the soil while disrupting the ability of pests to make a home in low-lying vegetation.

Neiger says he is thankful that western Massachusetts was at the forefront of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) concept in the late 1980s, based on European and Japanese models. He hopes to see a fully developed regional food industry eventually replace the need for trucking in produce from across the country and the world.

"These trees will produce for hundred of years," he says. "It'll be something generations to come will be able to harvest, and it's another step toward a regional food industry. We have CSAs for veggies, meat, grain, mushrooms, and cheese, and with chestnuts we're just identifying another gap in the regional farming system."



Top: Dave Tipfer, founder of Simple Gifts Farm in Amherst, helps sort chestnuts at Big River. Above: Assistant manager Ellena Baum uses a wire roller to gather chestnuts off the ground.

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MONTAGUE from page A1

during which each of the three selectboard members, without discussing their questions with the other members, separately interviewed each candidate for roughly an hour. They had also reviewed earlier interviews by the screening committee that selected the two finalists.

Town administrator Walter Ramsey said this process conforms with the restrictions of the state open meeting law, which prohibits boards and committees from discussing hiring matters in private.

Selectboard member Rich Kuklewicz and police chief Chris Williams, who plans to retire in December, both said the screening committee had chosen two “highly qualified” candidates and that they had “formulated” their thoughts on a preference, but wanted to hear the discussion.

Lord said he had enjoyed both of the interviews, and that they had “made [him] feel really good about the town, that we could attract very strong candidates.” Haskins, he said, had a “stronger connection to the town... You can have all the accomplishments possible and you just can’t conjure that.”

Kuklewicz agreed, saying he felt Haskins was a “better fit” than the other finalist, Brandon, Vermont chief of police David Kachajian.

Board member Marina Goldman said she had also enjoyed the process, and that after talking with Williams she believed that Haskins would be better able to “hit the ground running.”

There followed more discussion involving members of the screening committee, a number of whom attended Monday’s meeting virtually.

“The process made me very proud to be part of Montague,” said screening committee member Leigh Rae. “Helping to choose the chief of police made me much more aware of what our police officers do.”

Former Montague police officer Doug Brown, who also served on the screening committee, said that they had narrowed the choice to the “cream of the crop,” and that he agreed with the emerging consensus in favor of Haskins.

The board then voted unanimously to hire Haskins as chief, directing Ramsey to negotiate a contract with him with Goldman’s assistance.

Candidate Enthusiastic

“I’m truly honored to be considered the top candidate for the Chief of Police position,” Haskins told the *Reporter* on Thursday when reached for comment.

While there was “still the matter of negotiating a contract” with the town, he said, he described himself as “enthusiastic about the opportunity and excited about the prospect of serving the people of Montague,” adding that the Greenfield and Montague departments “have always shared a strong, cooperative relationship.”

Haskins said that though he moved frequently while growing up, he has always had “many personal and professional connections” with the town, and many of his family members are longtime residents.

“I spent most of my upbringing in Turners Falls, and proudly consider myself a ‘Turners Falls kid,’ Haskins said. He graduated from Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) before going on to attain a masters’ degree in criminal justice from Southern New Hampshire

University, and according to his resumé is currently working toward a PhD at Keiser University.

Haskins first joined the Greenfield department in 2007 as a community policing officer and worked his way up to his current position as lieutenant in 2022. He also simultaneously served as the police chief in Colrain from August 2009 to January 2016.

**Haskins graduated from Franklin County Technical School and served for “about 25 years” as a substitute teacher in the school’s Culinary Arts program. “I spent most of my upbringing in Turners Falls, and proudly consider myself a ‘Turners Falls kid,’” he told the *Reporter*.**

Additionally, he told the *Reporter*, he served “for about 25 years” as a substitute teacher in the Culinary Arts program at FCTS.

“I’m confident that my experience, proven leadership abilities, and the professional relationships I’ve built over the years will serve both the department and the Montague community well,” he said.

One Article Punted

The selectboard discussed an initial version of the warrant for the October 22 special town meeting.

The formidable document contained 17 articles, which included giving the assessors power to negotiate a 16-year tax agreement with Kearsarge Energy, which would reduce revenue from two solar facilities the company owns in town but avoid a negative ruling by the state appellate tax board; adding a new category to the zoning by-laws and rezoning the former Faren Hospital property in Montague City; acquiring the property at 38 Avenue A, the potential site of a new library, from the town’s economic development corporation; and declaring Montague an “apartheid-free zone” in response to Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

The board did not object to most of the articles, which it will vote on at next Monday’s meeting. It “punted” one article to the spring annual meeting, which would allow establishments with beer and wine licenses to serve liquor, and changed the order of the warrant so that an article enacting a tax on short-term rentals will be next to an article broadening property tax exemptions for qualifying veterans.

Turners Falls resident Maddox Sprengel requested that the article on apartheid, which had been introduced by a citizens’ petition, not be placed last on the agenda because “people get tired at the end of the meeting.”

Kuklewicz said that petitioned articles generally appeared at the end of the warrant, though they often produced extended debate. Lord said he would be willing to consider moving the article up, but not before the more complex agenda items.

Ramsey offered to discuss the matter with Elizabeth Irving, the interim town meeting moderator.

Footbridge Defeated

On the infrastructure front, the footbridge over the power canal from Canal Street to the former

Strathmore Mill has been removed by the FirstLight power company and now lies on the canal floor, empty from the annual September drawdown (*see photo, Page B1*).

“It’s cool to see, if anybody has a chance to go see it,” said assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller, noting that FirstLight had agreed to pay for the cost overage caused by unexpected hazardous materials removal.

Nolan-Zeller went on to announce that the town was creating a repository for documents relating to the Strathmore Mill cleanup and demolition project on its website, as required under a grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. The repository can be found under the “Latest News” section of the town website and currently contains 10 files.

“Those documents can be super boring,” Lord said, “but they’re also super interesting.”

The board approved a \$446,500 contract with the engineering firm Fuss & O’Neill to produce a “master plan” to address stormwater runoff on the Hill, which contributes to both erosion and combined sewer overflows. Nolan-Zeller said the contract will leave \$12,250 from a state grant for related activities, such as public outreach and supplies for community workshops.

Other Business

The selectboard approved a liquor license for Cocina Lupita LLC, a Greenfield Salvadoran restaurant opening a second location on Avenue A this fall.

Ramsey announced that the board has approved a new agreement with the police patrol officers’ union. Funding for increased payroll expenses is included on the October 22 draft warrant.

The selectboard discussed a memo from town treasurer Eileen Seymour requesting that they approve a “discount” for the two stores selling barrel trash stickers, similar to the one received by stores selling weekly trash stickers. The “discount” would mean the stores receive approximately 3% of the revenue, which the town otherwise allocates toward trash hauling costs.

Seymour also recommended that the sticker prices, which have not increased in 18 years, be revisited.

The board members approved Seymour’s proposal for the barrel stickers without taking a formal vote, but said they wanted more “analysis” before changing the prices, including what other towns charge for trash stickers and historical data on hauling costs.

Ramsey said that the town had not yet received official notification of the proposed regional agreement consolidating the Gill-Montague and Pioneer regional school districts. As reported last week, Montague will need to hold a special election to approve or reject the new district because it has a representative town meeting, and the other five towns are deciding at open town meetings. According to state law, the election must be held between 35 and 50 days after receiving the agreement.

Ramsey reported that the arrival of the agreement was “imminent,” and confirmed the November 18 date for the election as previously reported.

The next selectboard meeting will be held Monday, October 6.



LOOKING BACK:  
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

*Here’s the way it was on October 1, 2015: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.*

Dispute Deepens  
Over Bargaining Reps

In stark contrast to the previous meeting of the Gill-Montague school committee, the public seating area was overflowing on Tuesday. As the members took their seats, a room packed full of teachers stared back at them.

Karl Dziura, an English teacher at TFHS and president of the Gill-Montague Education Association, sat down at the microphone and read a prepared statement

about upcoming collective bargaining over three-year contracts.

The previous meeting had become contentious when Sandra Brown, school committee chair, announced her choices for contract subcommittees, saying she would not appoint any former teachers to the team tasked with negotiating teacher contracts. After that meeting Brown told the *Reporter* that she felt it was “extraordinary that the teachers tried to influence the composition of the district’s negotiating team. They want to get teachers on the team to negotiate for teachers,” whereas school committee members are “supposed to be negotiating for the whole district.”

20 YEARS AGO

*Here’s the way it was on September 29, 2005: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.*

Barramundi Fingerlings

Montague Center resident Josh Goldman hopes to have bigger fish to fry in a year, if his planned \$2 million, 19,000-square-foot expansion to the 58,000-square-foot indoor fish farm in Montague’s industrial park pans out.

Goldman, who built the facility in 1990, explained, “We have established national distribution; this expansion will enable us to grow larger fish.” Formerly known as AquaFuture and acquired last year by the Western Australian company Australis, the farm is already the biggest indoor fish farm in North America, measured by the volume of water in its ten 150,000-gallon tanks. The company, which

Uphill Struggle

The recent valuation of the Northfield Mountain pumped storage facility shows the value of the massive hydroelectric facility’s property in Erving has declined by more than \$54 million since 2002.

Erving board of assessors chair Jim Carpenter said that people’s tax bills “will definitely go up” in town, since the facility pays more than 90% of Erving’s property taxes. He explained that with the rising price of oil, it costs more for the utility to pump the water up the mountain than they make when it runs down through the turbines.

150 YEARS AGO

*Here’s the way it was on September 29, 1875: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.*

Turners Falls and Vicinity

The woods defy the painter’s art to imitate them.

The walls of the new Griswold mill are all but ready for the roof.

A couple of ladies caught a string of black bass on the river the other day.

The Clark & Chapman machine company have patrons in every part of New England.

Fred Chaffin of Montague City has commenced the publication of a little monthly amateur paper, which he calls the *Press*.

No delegates were sent to the Democratic convention at Worcester from this town last week. We guess there are no democrats in town, although the voting last year was rather queer for republicans.

Ferryman Jones, while making some grippers to be used in hauling on the ferry rope, Thurs-

day, slipped from his seat, and in throwing out his hand to save himself, cut his right hand severely between the thumb and fore-finger.

The Turners Falls Lumber Company are disposing of hundreds of logs to be used for spikes in the new railroad bridge of the Green River at Greenfield. A temporary slip has been built at the ferry where the logs are taken out of the river and loaded on four-horse teams.

The Montague company have successfully laid their aqueduct pipe over the deepest part of the river that could not be dammed conveniently. The pipes were put together with knuckle joints and lowered from a pontoon bridge, and secured on the bottom with stone ballast. The aqueduct will be completed in about a month.

Reader, when you know of any local news which you have reason to believe we have not heard, why don’t you tell us of it? You will always receive our sincere thanks for information.



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BATTERY from page A1

Joe Laur, and a new clerk, Tom Siefert, the planning board was able to continue the public hearing, which began in July but was postponed in August due to resignations and scheduling conflicts.

The 2-MW lithium iron phosphate battery would be about the size of a shipping container, installed on the southern edge of a proposed 11.6-acre solar array on land owned by Jake Doody. While plans for the array had originally been approved in 2018, the state-incentivized addition of an onsite BESS has brought the project back before town boards for approval.

Since 2018, however, the rules have changed. In 2024 the state attorney general struck down a Wendell bylaw, introduced by a citizens’ petition and approved at town meeting, that would have required a special license and size restrictions for BESS, but the Wendell board of health also passed its own regulations requiring a special permit focused on noise mitigation, emergency preparedness, and financial solvency.

Massachusetts also passed legislation last year requiring energy infrastructure permitting to be streamlined at a local level. The current draft of the new regulations, which are expected to be finalized next spring, would require municipalities to approve or deny a single “consolidated permit” within one year of receiving an application for an energy project. The state now also offers funding to help municipalities review and appeal decisions.

“At the end of the day, with the state hanging over us with their regulations, we have little chance but to just modify this and make it as painless as possible,” said Drohen.

Fire and Water

Wendell and New Salem fire chief Matthew O’Donnell shared an analysis of what it would take for his department to respond to a BESS fire, which it would not be able to extinguish with water. Firefighters are trained to let battery units burn out while protecting the surroundings with copious amounts of water, staying 100 feet away to avoid potential exposure to toxic gases.

O’Donnell explained that water can react with chemicals in the units to create “really nasty things, like hydrogen fluoride, which will go right through our gear and bind to our bones... We don’t want to get anywhere near this unless we have to.”

O’Donnell said BESS fires are exceedingly rare, but that if one were to break out, it would take mutual aid from several surrounding towns and five different water supplies to pump the required 1,000 gallons per minute of water onto the surrounding forest and solar panels for four hours.

Wendell currently has three identified water sources, and one is Bowens Pond, which is slated to be drained soon when Mass Audubon removes its dam. Once filled, each

tanker truck would have about three minutes of water available at the pressure necessary to spray 100 feet.

“This isn’t a simple task that Nexamp is asking us to do,” O’Donnell said. “I’m very concerned about having sufficient water.”

Nexamp’s plans do not include an onsite water source, but O’Donnell said he will request one, as well as an access road around the facility, a step-by-step incident action plan, and compensation for the additional equipment and staff hours.

“Has anyone done a calculation of how much water is available in all our fire ponds?” asked Lisa Hoag, a neighboring property owner. “Also, a massive amount of water would be being released right within the boundary of the Quabbin watershed, for which there is a tributary probably a half mile away.”

O’Donnell said he plans to meet with representatives of the state Division of Fire Safety and Nexamp for more information before submitting his final comments on the company’s application.

The likelihood of a BESS catching fire is very small, he emphasized, and multiple redundant safety mechanisms would be built in. O’Donnell said the company has offered to provide the town with gas meters, personal protective equipment, and annual training.

“From the fire service perspective, what the engineers are telling me is that I’m asking questions that a lot of the bigger towns aren’t even asking,” O’Donnell said. “And that’s how these things become safer and more regulated.”

Health and Wealth

Nick Santangelo, a civil engineer with Beals and Thomas, the firm hired by Nexamp, said the company intends to submit its special permit application to the board of health “very shortly.”

The health board’s regulations require applicants to share extensive chemical safety and emergency management details, acquire a \$10 million insurance policy, and maintain a fund for disaster mitigation and decommissioning, among many other things. If the board decides to hire a consultant to review the application, the applicant must cover their fees.

Nexamp’s proposal appears to comply with the requirement that no BESS may be constructed within 50 feet of a property line, or 150 feet of a water supply well or septic system.

Regarding noise concerns, Santangelo said the company plans to install a sound barrier around the battery to keep the ambient noise below 3 decibels (dB) at the property line, which is below the board of health’s limit of 10 dB above ambient or “pure tone” conditions.

“We in Wendell treasure silent peace and the sweet sounds of nature,” said Hoag. “We would be subjected to a constant low level electric hum. That is not the ambient sound of nature. This is a false

comparison.”

Some officials pondered whether changes made to comply with the health board’s regulations could require an applicant to submit revised plans to the other boards, which would begin the entire process of public hearings and review anew.

“The application for the board of health will contain similar information, but more as it relates to the battery,” Santangelo said. “Everything that’s being proposed will be consistent across all of our plans.”

Nexamp senior vice president of business development Michael Cucchiara insisted that the application to the health board would not entail changes to the original plan.

“The board of health does not have the ability to impact zoning and/or setbacks – that would be, obviously, in your purview,” he told the planning board. “It’s really about health and safety questions.”

Cucchiara said he was surprised to hear that the planning board intended to wait for the health board’s decision, which could take months, before making its own.

“You’d be surprised how much we deal with health and safety here,” Asmann replied. “It’s really the responsibility of all the other boards to report to the planning board on a special permit application.”

Time and Tide

Asked about Nexamp’s anticipated timeline for the project, Cucchiara said the company would like to be certain whether to move forward with the proposal by January in order to qualify for state incentives, and to align with National Grid’s plans to upgrade the electrical substation at Wendell Depot.

“That could be pretty challenging for us from a position of protecting this project and safe harboring for investment tax credits,” he said. “But you have every right to say that’s my problem.”

“The board of health hasn’t even received an application, let alone begun the process of hiring an outside consultant to review it,” said member Jim Frank. “I can’t conceive this would ever be completed by the end of the year.”

The planning board discussed establishing a fund, paid for by the applicant, for mitigating damage and decommissioning the structure, which the health board also requires. An article on the October 15 special town meeting warrant would establish an account to receive these funds.

Doug Tanner, who recently resigned from the planning board and once served as chair of the finance committee, warned that such payments must be negotiated before the applications are approved by each board.

Laur asked several questions that prompted a broader discussion about the costs and benefits of various chemical-battery technologies, including sodium-ion batteries, which are larger and less efficient, but argu-

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ably safer, than lithium ion technology. Nexamp director of energy storage solutions Mohamed Kassamali said that the technology chosen for the project is the safest commercially viable option presently available.

“Sodium-ion is really kind of coming to [the] age right now where a lot of R&D is being spent into it, but there is not a commercially viable product at scale,” Kassamali said. “You need a lot of commercial experience to make it commercially viable... We’re probably three years off from that type of data.”

The specific battery Nexamp plans to use is manufactured by Contemporary Amperex Technology Company, Limited (CATL), a Chinese firm that also manufactures sodium-ion electric vehicle batteries.

“If this project didn’t include the

battery, and it was a solar project without the BESS, I imagine 90% of the fears and concerns would go away,” said Gross, the planning board chair.

The public hearing was continued until a tentative date of Monday, October 27 at 7 p.m. and the conservation commission plans to conduct a new wetlands delineation of the site in November.

In March, the state Department of Energy Resources is expected to release its final guidelines as to how municipalities must streamline their permitting protocols.

“We’re not in a hurry. We’re still in the information-gathering phase,” Gross said. “Some of our timing is out of our control, if we’re looking for answers and we have to wait for them.”



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Above: As of 10 a.m. Monday, the former Keith Paper Company employee footbridge rested on the power canal bed. “Sans trumpeting and fanfare,” photographer Ed Gregory reports, “the 111-year-old, metal, 11-panel, rivet-connected, Pratt through truss construction bridge, with its 153-foot main span, met its demise at the hands of the Sessler Wrecking Company out of Waterloo, New York. The bridge will be ‘cut up’ and sent to a salvage yard in New York.”

# THE PHOTO BEAT: THREE THOUSAND WORDS

Photo correspondent Joe R. Parzych reports:

“Aaron Moody [at right] is both a farmer and a special education teacher at local schools. He co-owns the new Moody Farms, located in Bernardston at 100 Brattleboro Road, with his wife Stephanie Moody. They have a farm store where they sell a variety of jams and small dairy products, and also local beef and poultry.... I met Aaron on the spur of the moment. I was at the farm with my dad, buying jam from one of his Class of 1980 classmates from the Tech school— she sells jam at this farm, and many other places – and I happened to have my camera with me.”

see PHOTO BEAT page B3



IMAGES AND INFORMATION BY JOE R. PARZYCH



# MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

Interview by J. BURKETT and TROY CURRY

**TURNERS FALLS** – This week we have another interview... this time with our olde ex-Valley comrade, Aaron Rosenblum! As far as music stuff goes, Aaron is a “field recordist, sound artist, record label guy, and musician” – both solo and in long-running bands like Son of Earth and Sapat.

Son of Earth just played their 25th anniversary show

**LXXXIII: Aaron Rosenblum**

see MUSIK page B8



at Feeding Tube Records, and hopefully it won’t be another 25 years before we see them again in the area. Aaron recently took the time to answer some questions from his home in Maine...

**MMM:** Could you talk some about Son of Earth’s origins? Did you all know each other well beforehand?

**AR:** Matt Krefting and I went to high school together, in New York, and shared some musical and literary interests. Matt and John Shaw met during orientation at Hampshire College, where we all started in the fall of 1999. Matt and I arrived at school with guitars, John did not, so Matt and I started something like a “guitar noise duo.”

We were listening to a lot of Charalambides and Thurston Moore’s records with Nels Cline (and everyone else) and Loren Mazzacane Connors, and I guess we were going for something like that... and it seemed to require guitars.

That was basically the distinction, which is ludicrous in retrospect, given that as a group we now play all kinds of non-instruments – tortilla chips, water, trash. Then, on the first day of our second semester, John appeared with a bass, so he was in!

I don’t know whether our ever-shortening name aligned with the way our music became more focused, but we went from “Son of Earth – Flesh on Bone Trio” to “Son of Earth – Flesh on Bone” to “Son of Earth,” getting quieter and more minimal along the way.



## WEST ALONG THE RIVER

### THE GARAGE AT RUBIN’S CORNER

By DAVID BRULE

**TURNERS FALLS** – We had been driving past the gate for a week or so, noticing that it was shut, and barring the entrance to the lot. Why was Rubin’s Garage closed?

We figured Benny was on vacation, although we never knew him to close down the garage even for a week in August. But as another week went by with still no sign of opening, we figured something was up.

The place looked strangely vacant after a steady 70-year run of business, maybe even longer than that. The old cars that had been sitting in the lot outside the garage doors for years were no longer there. It was pretty clear that the last of erstwhile mechanics who had come and gone over the years had put up their tools for the last time and had gone away.

I sensed it was time to take out my Village Sketchbook once again to write about one of the last generation of local Garagemen.

Benny’s garage, if you’ve never been there – and almost everyone in town has at some time or another – was a time capsule, a preserved bit of the heydays when there was a gas station and garage in almost every neighborhood in town. This was quite possibly the last one of that bygone era.

When you stepped into the place, it smelled of oily rags, old tires, a little exhaust from time to time, a faint whiff of cigar smoke, all that a throwback to the 1950s. At least it was for me.

I always looked forward to going to Benny’s, poking my head into what passed for his office. It’s a cluttered and cozy sort of a space, the desk and its old-fashioned adding machine on the top, some sort of dog asleep who occasionally growled from his cushion or yapped at the customer without

bothering to get up.

It was always a good occasion for banter and complaints about the weather, which was always too hot or too cold depending on the season, some good-natured cussing and occasional f-bombs, which passed for conversation while the car was being inspected or worked on.

As I mentioned above, Rubin’s garage is a time capsule. It’s got all the non-politically-correct atmosphere that you would want and expect in a garage: postcards from appreciative customers on vacation, quite a few cards from the early ’60s with babes in bikinis in Florida, plenty of testimonials to Benny and his father Meyer, and the usual inventory of slogans that make up the working-man’s Americana:

*You don’t have to be crazy to work here...but it helps!*

Or, *I feel like a mushroom – everybody keeps me in the dark and feeds me xx###!*

I’m taking advantage of this time to write about that garage shutting down with a twinge of nostalgia, because when I was a kid, my own father was one of those mechanics from that era so long ago. He was a part of that world when garages did not have computers and smart tablets, or data sheets, and no tools for foreign cars. Definitely no Japanese or German makes ever made it through those doors. The War was too close in the recent past for the men who lived through it.

My father, Art, plied his trade in town with the likes of other men with names like Skip Escott, Bob Kirk, Bill Beaubien, Chick, and of course his own boss Dickie Williams.

So for me, there’s a link between Benny’s and Williams’ Garage, my father’s place of work. He began working for Dickie in the late 1930s, took time away to spend four years in the South Pacific on

see WEST ALONG page B4



End of an era: the gate at Rubin’s, closed this week.



# Pet of the Week



DAKIN HUMANE SOCIETY PHOTO

## ‘MAYA’

Looking for a pup with personality, energy, and a heart full of love? Meet Maya, a 10-month-old Rhodesian Ridgeback/Dachshund mix. Maya is playful, curious, and ready to bond with her forever family.

Maya lives with three children and loves playing with them. She thrives on doggy playdates and would do great in a home with another playful pup or access to regular dog park time. She’s still learning her manners and needs a family committed to continuing her behavioral training. With dai-

ly exercise and guidance, Maya will grow into an ideal companion. Maya loves being outside and going on walks, and would do best with an active person or family. She is spayed, housetrained, up to date with shots, and microchipped.

To apply to adopt Maya, now living in East Longmeadow, find “Available Community Animals” under the “Adopt” menu at [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org). A potential adopter must submit an application, interview and meet the pets, and sign an adoption contract.

## Senior Center Activities OCTOBER 6 THROUGH 10

### GILL and MONTAGUE

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

**Monday 10/6**  
10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
1 p.m. Kitchen Club  
4 p.m. Tech Class

**Tuesday 10/7**  
9 a.m. Chair Yoga  
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday  
3 p.m. Tai Chi

**Wednesday 10/8**  
Foot Clinic by Appointment  
10:45 a.m. Outdoor Yoga (weather permitting)  
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

**Thursday 10/9**  
1 p.m. Pitch  
5 p.m. Fall Forum / AI  
6 p.m. Six-Town District Forum

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

### ERVING

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**Monday 10/6**  
9 a.m. Good for U  
10 a.m. Seated Fitness  
12 p.m. Pitch Cards  
1 p.m. Yoga

**Tuesday 10/7**  
8:15 a.m. Nail Clinic  
9 a.m. Stretch & Balance  
10 a.m. Line Dancing  
11 a.m. Social Stringer  
11 a.m. Coffee with Cops

**Wednesday 10/8**  
9 a.m. Interval Training  
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics  
11:30 a.m. Bingo

**Thursday 10/9**  
9 a.m. Barre Fusion  
10 a.m. Pilates Flow  
12 p.m. Senior Tech Help

**Friday 10/10**  
9 a.m. Quilting Open Sew

### 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. The next clinic is October 21.

Luncheons are the fourth Friday at town hall. For more information, contact (413) 548-1022 or [coa@leverett.ma.us](mailto:coa@leverett.ma.us). Check the town newsletter or the LeverettConnects listserv for info.

### WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is November 5. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.



## Islands of Escape: Martha’s Vineyard? Cape Cod? It’s Cheaper in Italy!

**SOUTH DEERFIELD** – There’s something about islands that makes us believe we’re escaping. Maybe it’s the ferry ride, the salt air, the way the mainland fades behind us. I’ve spent many summers on Cape Cod and Martha’s Vineyard, but this year I traded clam shacks for calamari and headed to Italy’s Tyrrhenian coast.

Ischia and Bacoli offered a different kind of island escape – the first, an island steeped in thermal waters, and the second, another town, like Falmouth, right on a Cape.

Let’s start with Ischia. It’s the kind of place that feels like it’s been quietly thriving while the rest of the world is busy Instagramming Amalfi. The ferry from Naples takes an hour and 15 minutes, but the transformation is immediate. Gone is the chaos of Naples; in its place, a volcanic island dotted with lemon trees, pastel villas, and thermal spas that smell faintly of sulfur and eucalyptus.

Ischia is a six-mile-wide island with towns Forio, Ischia, and Lacco Ameno. It packs a lot into such a small size.

We stayed in Forio, on the island’s western edge. We had a spacious two-bedroom Airbnb called Chez Marie, with balconies, big bedrooms, a full kitchen, and terraces with views that looked like they belonged in a painting. My partner Mary painted one of these lookouts during a colorful sunset.

Five nights cost us \$1,161 – that’s \$232 a night for a setup that would’ve easily run double on Cape Cod, if you could even find something with that kind of space and charm. And Mediterranean views!

Ischia is famous for its thermal baths. Negombo, for example, was my favorite: a sprawling garden of pools carved into the hillside, each with a different temperature and mineral composition. After a few hours of alternating between the two pools, I emerged feeling like I’d been rebooted.

At a separate thermal spring, we walked down hundreds of steps to the famous Serrara Fontana. The beach there had a part where super-hot water emerges from the rocks, creating a bath right in the ocean. It was well worth those long steps.

Getting around Ischia was refreshingly simple. The island’s bus system is a marvel of Mediterranean efficiency – if you don’t mind a little chaos. For just €10 (approximately \$11), we purchased five-day unlimited passes that allowed us to hop on and off buses that crisscrossed the island. They go everywhere: beaches, thermal parks, hilltop towns, and ferry ports. They come frequently, sometimes every 10 minutes, sometimes in dramatic clusters like migrating birds.

Were they crowded? Absolutely. At times, I was wedged between a German tourist with a snorkel and



The terrace with the million-dollar view on the island of Ischia, near Naples.

a local grandmother carrying a basket of lemons. There was something charming about it, like being part of a moving village. When the machine broke and could not read our passes, the riders shrugged. Oh well. No worries.

### Across the Bay

Bacoli, just across the bay, is less known and even less touristy. It’s technically on the mainland, but it has the soul of an island – quiet, self-contained, and surrounded by water. The town sits atop ancient Roman ruins, and you can wander through the remains of villas and bathhouses that once belonged to emperors.

I visited the Piscina Mirabilis, a massive underground cistern that looked like a cathedral built for Poseidon. It was cool and damp and echoey, and I half expected a toga-clad ghost to float by. Our Airbnb in Bacoli was perched above the beach and harbor – so close to the water we could hear the waves clinking against the boats.

Two nights cost \$661. No resort fees, no parking meters, no laminated checkout instructions taped to the fridge. The neighbor knew where the Airbnb was, and we followed him to the door around the corner. After we got in and saw the terrace view, we thought, “What a find!”

The food in Bacoli was simple and perfect – grilled octopus, lemony pasta, and wine that tasted like sunshine. Upon arrival on a Sunday, we found an open restaurant, but with no menu. The owner said they had octopus salad and gnocchi, and everyone was happy. We dined with vines above our heads and the late afternoon light filtering in.

It was a pleasant scene, complete with a large local family dining, sipping the local white wine called Ischia Bianco, and watching the children play.

And here’s the kicker: Italy was cheaper. Yes, even with airfare.

### Adding It Up

It sounds improbable, but the see **TRAVELS** next page

## Comparing Rental Rates: July 2025

Accomodation	Location	Notes / Highlights	Weekly Rate
Studio Apartment	Ischia Porto, Italy	Central, walkable, basic amenities	\$470 to \$585
1-2 Bedroom Apartment	Casamicciola, Italy	Sea views, modern furnishings	\$750 to \$1,050
Mid-Range Villa	Fioro, Italy	Garden, some with pools	\$1,400 to \$1,990
2-Bedroom Cottage	Oak Bluffs, MV	Renovated, quiet street in Lagoon area	~ \$1,750
1-Bedroom Bunkhouse	Chilmark, MV	Private beach access, AC, no kitchen	~ \$2,000
Luxury Villa with Sea View	Fioro, Italy	Panoramic views, private pool, upscale decor	\$2,800 to \$5,970
3-Bedroom Townhome	Edgartown, MV	Wifi, AC, charming interior	~ \$3,000
Exclusive Detached Villa	Ischia Town, Italy	Spacious, premium location, high-end finishes	\$3,510 to \$7,020
3-Bedroom Katama House	Edgartown, MV	Near South Beach, sleeps six	~ \$4,800
Cape-Style Home	Vineyard Haven, MV	Four beds, patio, quiet setting	~ \$5,000
4-Bedroom Colonial	Edgartown, MV	Walkable to town, sleeps 10	~ \$5,500

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Easy to reach by ferry, Ischia is off the coast near Naples.

**TRAVELS** from previous page math doesn't lie. In Cape Cod, I paid \$275 a night for a modest rental in Eastham – no AC, no view, and a mattress that felt like it had survived the Reagan administration. Add the 11% lodging tax, and suddenly I'm shelling out over \$315 a night to listen to my neighbor's leaf blower at 7 a.m.

Factor in the \$900 round-trip flight from Boston to Naples, and I still came out ahead. It's a strange feeling to realize that flying across the Atlantic, soaking in Roman ruins, and eating grilled octopus under the stars is more affordable than driving two hours to sleep next to a Dunkin' Donuts.

Another factor that tilted the math in favor of Italy was the taxation on vacation rentals. In Massachusetts, since 2019, there has been a state tax of 5.7%, and each town imposes their own rate on top of that up to 6%. In some towns, there is even a water tax – bringing the total taxes up to a whopping 14.45%!

This doesn't exist in Italy, or it's hidden in the overall costs.

Comparing Cape Cod to Ischia and Bacoli feels unfair, like pitting clam chowder against *linguine alle vongole*. They're both good, but one has a bit more flair.

Ischia and Bacoli offered a kind of travel that felt restorative, not just recreational. There were fewer distractions, fewer people speaking English, and more moments of genuine awe. I didn't hear a single leaf blower. I didn't see a single person wearing a Vineyard Vines shirt. There was no Dunkin' to be found.

I loved listening to the sounds of people speaking Italian, and the proximity to good food and wine right at the beach.

That said, Cape Cod has one thing Italy can't replicate: the smell of pine and salt marsh, the sound of a screen door slamming, the feeling of being home in Massachusetts. Not only that, but the Cape remains less than a three-hour drive versus the hassle of an international plane trip.

There's a reason I keep going back, even when the traffic gets worse. It's familiar, it's easy, and it's ours.



HARTISHORNE PHOTO

One of Ischia's beaches.

**PHOTO BEAT**  
from page B1

Right: Moody Farms co-owner Aaron Moody shows off the honey at the farm store.

"It was a cool opportunity for coverage," Joe continues.

"He told me he knows Matt Robinson, who covers sports for the paper. It was such a cool place to check out."



JOE R. PARZYCH PHOTO

... For more information on the farm, check out their Facebook page, 'Moody Farms, LLC,' or their website, moodyfamilyfarm.com.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG**

## Flowers Flipped Over; Gunfire From Gun Ranges; Driveway Dispute; Burrowing Turtle; Stolen Property

**Monday, 9/22**

2:55 p.m. Multiple residents on Second and L streets report vehicles speeding in the area. Many vehicles are cutting up the First Street alley and speeding up to Avenue A because First Street is closed. It's becoming very dangerous for the residents and their children. Referred to an officer.

3:44 p.m. Caller from G Street states there is a male on the back steps with a rifle that has a silencer on it. Found to be a pellet gun; he is trying to deter rodents from the back yard. Officer informed the caller that the male was shooting varmints – as it was, a rat. She is concerned that he is shooting squirrels because she feeds them.

4:12 p.m. Caller from Federal Street states he was just bitten by a dog and is bleeding from the calf. Officer states dog is up to date on shots until April 2027. Animal control officer arrived and investigated.

6:33 p.m. Caller from East Taylor Hill Road reports that a neighbor's dog pooped in her driveway, and a thing that has flowers in it was flipped over. Caller wondering if MPD could have an officer fingerprint it as her cameras had a blind spot and didn't get anything. Caller called back and was wondering if her street could be added to a drive-by patrol. Report taken.

8:03 p.m. Caller from Greenfield Road states there is a bear in a tree by their duck coop; a bear has been in the yard for each of the past five days. States the bear has not harmed the ducks but has eaten eggs; would like an officer to check the area.

**Tuesday, 9/23**

5:37 p.m. OnStar notification of a vehicle crash on East Chestnut Hill Road. No response from people in vehicle. Moss yellow

Volvo. Received second call confirming accident; car blocking road; no wires involved; party is reportedly out walking around. Poor reception. FD and EMS requested; Shelburne Control contacted. Tow company on scene.

5:42 p.m. Caller from Federal Street states there is a gold Crown Vic that has been parked across the road for hours with very dark window tint. This is making the caller's daughter concerned. Vehicle broke down around 5 p.m.; operator told homeowner that AAA is en route. Car is off the road and not a hazard. Officer requesting dispatch contact AAA to see if they have someone responding. Spoke to AAA; they confirmed that a call was placed and a tow truck is responding.

**Wednesday, 9/24**

8:33 a.m. Caller concerned about sound of gunfire or small explosives in the Millers Falls Road/Wentworth Avenue area. Sound is gunfire, coming from a gun range across the river. No issues.

4:06 p.m. 911 caller reporting two-car accident near Nouria. No injuries, fluids, or smoke. Referred to an officer.

11:26 p.m. Caller reports hearing what sounded like a vehicle into a guardrail at Randall Road and Greenfield Road. Officer checked length of Greenfield Road; no vehicle or damage seen.

**Thursday, 9/25**

9:13 a.m. Report of a hypodermic needle by a storm drain on Griswold Street. Item retrieved.

10:34 a.m. Caller from Lake Pleasant Road would like to speak to an officer about ongoing harassment. Called back; no contact.

3:35 p.m. 911 report of a two-car accident at Sunderland and Reservation Roads. No injuries or fluids. Montague x9 on scene and remaining until PD

arrival. No damage; all advised of options.

3:40 p.m. 911 caller from Central Street reports that a group home keeps taking his belongings and refusing to give them back. Officer requesting CSO; CSO en route.

4:48 p.m. Caller from Avenue A reports that there is a pitbull puppy in the apartment next to hers that has been howling for an hour. She wants it removed from the apartment. Referred to an officer.

5:11 p.m. 911 caller from Fifth Street reporting multiple fire alarms sounding in the building. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

5:16 p.m. Walk-in looking to file a report and press charges regarding an assault that took place a couple of weeks earlier. Advised of options.

5:43 p.m. 911 caller from Park Street states a neighbor is putting sticks in her driveway; states that the neighbor claims it's his driveway, but it's hers. Officer spoke with all parties and advised them of options.

6:38 p.m. 911 caller reports that a man with a purple handbag was going into people's cars near the Pizza House and grabbing change and other personal belongings. Caller states his car was broken into but nothing was taken. Officers checking area. Pizza House employees state they have not seen or heard anything. All surrounding streets and alleys checked; negative findings.

7:36 p.m. 911 caller reporting a tree down on Swamp Road. Area still passable. Officer moved tree to side of road.

8:58 p.m. Caller reporting tree down on Route 63 south of Montague Center. Caller called back stating the tree had been moved.

9:22 p.m. 911 caller reports he thinks he heard a gunshot near Fourth and L streets. Area checked; unable to locate.

**Friday, 9/26**

9:47 a.m. Anonymous caller from Park Villa Drive states there's a woman in her building who she believes drives a vehicle while smoking pot; wants complaint on record. Report taken.

10:51 a.m. Party previously reported missing called in stating he is not missing; he is at a hospital in Newton. Located in system.

1 p.m. Caller from Second Street reporting a sewage backup in her basement. Attempted to call DPW; not in office today. Does have a plumber coming. DPW advised.

3:36 p.m. Walk-in states that her child is getting inappropriate text messages; would like to speak to an

officer about it.

10:11 p.m. Report of suspicious person on Fourth Street. Officer checked area and spoke to a female party who stated that she lost something and was looking for it. Clear.

**Saturday, 9/27**

10:21 a.m. 911 open line with arguing in the background; no response to standard greeting or silent call procedure. While units were being dispatched to the mapping location, caller briefly came on line, then disconnected. Caller immediately called back and reported a minor vehicle accident in the parking lot by the basketball courts at Unity Park; stated the other driver was yelling and arguing with her and her teenage son. Caller advised no injuries.

Instructed caller to return inside her vehicle with her son and lock the doors; remained on line with caller until officers arrived.

11:34 a.m. Report of a turtle burrowing in the grass near the Eleventh Street bridge. Caller states she tried calling the local Environmental Police number without success. Provided caller with EPO dispatch 800 number.

2:32 p.m. Walk-in requesting options re: ongoing noise issue with a neighbor on Randall Wood Drive. Advised of options.

3:21 p.m. Aubuchon store manager states a female came in and stole a bunch of stuff, then took off in her car. Pool float, glow sticks, and a flashlight reported stolen. Officer heading back to store with stolen items. Officer states female was released and will have to appear in court. Summons issued.

5:52 p.m. Caller from Court Square states she is hearing gunshots and would like an officer to respond; she is concerned that it is close by and may be happening in her yard. Officer spoke to party and could hear shots being fired; going to speak to neighbors to see if they know anything about it. Officer learned that neighbor has an outdoor shooting range set up and is shooting targets. Range is over 500 feet away and not facing toward any houses. Officer filled caller in on findings; she is OK with it.

7:03 p.m. 911 hangup call; upon callback, man states the dog stepped on the phone. No police service necessary.

**Sunday, 9/28**

6:10 p.m. Walk-in would like to speak with an officer about property stolen from a Millers Falls Road address. Officer gave party a statement form to fill out and bring back.

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WEST ALONG from page B1

various aircraft carriers. He came back in 1945 when the War was over and took up where he had left off, staying on until he retired in the '70s.

So I spent a lot of time there in Williams' Garage in the 1950s, where my father toiled six days a week and never lost his sanity in spite of the boss's eccentricities.

Whenever we visited my father at work he treated us to sodas and candy bars. In those days we took time out from playing the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* in the Unity Park wading pool, where the skate park and field house now stand. Barefooted, we'd have to hotfoot it over the scorching asphalt for a root beer or grape soda in the cool garage.

The office there was always a place of wonderment for a 12-year old boy. The clanging of the cash register, the ringing of the pressurized air line sounding out over the noise of the garage, indicating a customer had pulled up for gas.

Most of all, high up on the walls of the office were all the pinup calendars, just far up enough to make it difficult for youngsters to really see. I have to say, though, that's where we all got our first glimpse of a buxom and appealing Marilyn Monroe, smiling coyly at the viewer without a stitch on her. We would cast a glance up there every once in a while, but didn't want to be caught staring by the grownups.

Benny's office always reminded me of those days. The man himself always made the visit worthwhile: unlit cigar, dapper moustache, infectious good humor. The greeting was always the same:

"Take a break!"

He knows everyone in town, and be-

yond. He's *helped* everyone in town, and I'm sure all those people owe him a favor. He'd always drop everything to come out to help you get the car jumpstarted or take a look under the hood. Luckily for us, he's not intent on calling in all those favors!

He's still part of the oral history, and one of the legends of Turners Falls.

But now, it's good-bye to Benny's Garage. The gates are closed, probably for good.

Over the recent years I've heard it's been hard for him to find help, and that's understandable. Most young mechanics, graduating from the Tech School, would have a hard time adjusting to working in that dark and old-fashioned throwback of a garage. They are surely attracted to the new corporate dealerships with workplaces all fresh paint, electronics everywhere, highly computerized automobiles, and impeccably-dressed employees greeting you with set, memorized phrases.

To be sure, we still have the younger generation of locally-owned auto shops, like Rau's and Mark's over in Montague Center.

But you can be sure that nowhere will you find the boss sitting in the office with a half-lit cigar and a cranky dog. There'll be no f-bombs, no pinups, not even a cash register, no oil on the floor, no Friday afternoon happy hours in the back room. It's all gone with the years.

So here's to Benny, probably the last of the oldtime garagemen. His doors are closed. We expect he'll be enjoying his days of retirement after decades of serving the community in his last-of-a-kind vanishing garage world, as that world fades away in the rearview mirror.



AT THE FAIR

Gammy's Windspinners

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – I look to the Franklin County Fair as one of those places to try and find artists to profile. This year one of the people I met there was Brenda Narvaez, a type of craftsperson.

I especially liked the items she makes that she calls windspinners, and the art on them.

"I've been doing sublimation crafting for about two years now, but I've been crafting in various styles for over 25 years," she told me. She gave me a couple of photos to use with the article on those windspinners. One had a cartoonish image of a gnome on it. It was very nice-looking.

She told me it was the first time she was at the Franklin County Fair, and that she looks forward to doing it next year. "I had such a great time!," she mentioned.

"Sublimation has really taken off lately, especially because it allows for so much customization," she said. This is how she prints images on the windspinners. She said they are one of her favorite items to make, though are just not big sellers. She is currently working on ways to make them more eye-catching, and experimenting with adding chimes to them to make them stand out a bit more.

Brenda is a self-taught artist. She told me she has learned from lots of YouTube videos, plus good old-fashioned trial and error. She truly loves doing it most of the time, she said, but she has had some disappointments along the way.

Brenda told me she mostly sells her work at craft shows, fairs, and in person to friends and family. She lives on Springfield Street in Chicopee. She uses the name "Gammy's Craft House" when it comes to her art. She also has a Facebook page, "Gammy's Crafts," where you can see exactly what she brought to this year's Franklin County Fair.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Brenda Narvaez printed this image of gnomes on the windspinner using dye sublimation.



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# Aquí se habla español

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



## El Mes de la Herencia Hispana

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

**GREENFIELD** – Como cada año, del 15 de septiembre al 15 de octubre, celebramos en los Estados Unidos el Mes de la Herencia Hispana (*Hispanic Heritage Month* en inglés). Este mes es una celebración y un reconocimiento de las historias, culturas y contribuciones de los ciudadanos estadounidenses o que residen en los Estados Unidos y cuyos antepasados o ellos mismos llegaron de España, México, el Caribe y América Central y Sudamérica.

La fecha del 15 de septiembre es importante porque coincide con los días en que se celebra la independencia de España de varios países latinoamericanos: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras y Nicaragua; y muy cerca, el 16 de septiembre, México celebra su independencia, y un poco más tarde, Chile el 18 de septiembre.

El objetivo de la celebración de este mes de la Herencia Hispana es, o debería ser, aumentar la visibilidad de las comunidades hispanas y latinoamericanas, fortalecer el orgullo cultural, educar al público no hispano sobre la diversidad cultural, y promover la concordia entre pueblos. Se trata no solo de festejar, sino de reconocer la lucha, las culturas, las aportaciones, las voces y las historias de todos estas personas que muchas veces suelen estar al margen del relato dominante.

Es un buen momento para reflexionar sobre la identidad múltiple. Cuando los medios de comunicación, o los políticos intentan definirnos dentro de un conjunto global, no se dan cuenta de existe una *pluridimensionalidad* de la identidad y que tenemos identidades complejas que han sido modeladas por diferentes factores como puede ser la raza, el idioma, la geografía, el género, las creencias y las culturas de nuestros antepasados.

Ser latino, latinoamericano o hispano (ni siquiera tenemos claro qué nombre emplear) es ser hispano, latino, indígena, afrodescendiente, mestizo y por ello, debemos reconocer y hacer saber que la herencia hispana no es una cultura monolítica, sino un mosaico de colores y formas que incluye variaciones regionales, lenguas, razas, costumbres, géneros de expresión artística, espiritualidades, gastronomía y mucho más.

La celebración del mes de la Herencia Hispana debe ser una invitación para que todas las comunidades participen: hispanohablantes, angloparlantes o de otras raíces, y así podamos aprender unos de otros, que sea un evento para unirnos y no separarnos. La rica diversidad nos hace más grandes.

Aunque el condado de Franklin es mayoritariamente blanco, hay una comunidad hispana viva que aporta a nuestra area una variedad cultural y humana. Según los censos más recientes, aproximadamente el



Poster realizado por estudiantes de Turners Falls High School.

5% de la población del condado se identifica como hispana o latina (fuente: *BeautifyData.com*).

Si vemos los datos desglosados tenemos que:

- En 2022 se estimaba que 3.813 personas en el condado de Franklin se identificaban como hispanas, lo que representa alrededor del 5,37 %.
- En el censo de 2023, de los 3.922 individuos que se identificaron como hispanos o latinos, el 78,9 % era de raza blanca, el 9,2 % de raza negra, y el 7,2 % se consideraban birraciales, es decir, de dos o más razas.
- Respecto al origen de esa población hispana, casi la mitad (cerca del 47,8 %) son de origen puertorriqueño, seguidos por mexicanos con un 12,4 % y otros países de Centro América o sudamericanos con un porcentaje total del 10,8 %.

Las cifras anteriores nos dicen que, aunque somos una comunidad minoritaria en el condado de Franklin, hay una presencia significativa y merece ser visibilizada, reconocida y activamente integrada en la vida comunitaria. Por otra parte, las cifras no avalan en totalidad la riqueza de las identidades, como las familias mixtas, las comunidades bilingües, y los nuevos inmigrantes, que muchas veces no aparecen reflejados en el censo del gobierno.

En 2025, la localidad de Montague (0,28%), seguida por Sunderland (0,32%) tienen una porción importante de hispanos y latinos dentro del porcentaje de la población local.

Y si hablamos de nombres de latinos famosos, tengo que decir que no siempre los nombres de figuras hispanas conocidas se asocian con Franklin County, pero ello no significa la ausencia de talento, liderazgo o impacto. En el ámbito local hay maestros, educadores, trabajadores, cocineros, emprendedores, artistas, promotores culturales, traductores, profesionales de la salud, líderes espirituales, activistas y muchas otros oficios y personas cuyos nombres no se conocen a gran escala pero que sí transforman la vida de cada día de nuestra pequeña comunidad hispana en Franklin County.

Para contextualizar la herencia, es útil recordar algunas figuras hispanas que han tenido impacto nacional o regional. Aunque no son

del condado de Franklin, sus logros resuenan en toda la comunidad hispana de EE. UU.

### Políticos y activistas:

- **Sonia Sotomayor**, la primera jueza hispana de la Corte Suprema de Estados Unidos;
- **Luis Muñoz Marín**, primer gobernador electo de Puerto Rico, vital en la historia política latinoamericana;
- **Dr. Helen Rodríguez-Trías**, pediatra y activista puertorriqueña-estadounidense;
- **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** (AOC), congresista de Nueva York de origen puertorriqueño; influyente en la política progresista;
- **Julián Castro**, político mexicano-estadounidense, exalcalde de San Antonio y exsecretario de Vivienda.

### Músicos y actores:

- **Gina Rodríguez**, actriz puertorriqueña-estadounidense, protagonista de *Jane the Virgin*;
- **Bad Bunny**, Cantante puertorriqueño, estrella mundial del reguetón y trap latino;
- **Eva Longoria**, actriz y productora mexicana-estadounidense, reconocida por *Desperate Housewives* y su activismo;
- **America Ferrera**, actriz hondureña-estadounidense, ganadora de un Emmy y nominada al Oscar por *Barbie*;
- **Pedro Pascal**, actor chileno-estadounidense, famoso por *The Mandalorian* y *The Last of Us*;
- **Camila Cabello**, cantante cubana-estadounidense, exintegrante de *Fifth Harmony* y solista de éxito;
- **Ozuna**, cantante puertorriqueño, figura central del reguetón.

### Astronautas:

- **Franklin Chang-Díaz**, astronauta costarricense-estadounidense, voló en 7 misiones del transbordador espacial;
- **Ellen Ochoa**, ingeniera y astronauta mexico-estadounidense, primera mujer latina en el espacio y exdirectora del Centro Espacial Johnson de la NASA;
- **José Hernández**, ingeniero y astronauta mexico-estadounidense, voló en la misión STS-128 y es promotor de la educación STEM para jóvenes latinos.

### Deportistas:

- **Canelo Álvarez**, boxeador mexicano, campeón mundial en múltiples categorías;
- **Carmelo Anthony**, baloncestista puertorriqueño-estadounidense, estrella histórica de la NBA;
- **Alex Rodríguez** (A-Rod), beisbolista dominicano-estadounidense, uno de los jugadores más reconocidos en MLB.

### Periodistas y escritores:

- **Jorge Ramos**, periodista mexicano-estadounidense, figura clave en Univisión y defensor de la comunidad latina;
- **Isabel Allende**, escritora chilena cuyas novelas han cruzado fronteras;
- **Lin-Manuel Miranda**, compositor, creador del musical *Hamilton*, con raíces puertorriqueñas, figura que ha promovido visibilidad latina en el teatro y la cultura popular.

### Científicos:

- **Dr. Anthony Atala**, médico español-estadounidense especializado en medicina regenerativa, pionero en el uso de células madre para crear órganos;
- **Dr. Carlos del Rio**, médico mexicano-estadounidense, especialista en enfermedades infecciosas y VIH, profesor en Emory University;
- **Dr. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa**, neurocirujano mexicano-estadounidense, emigró como trabajador agrícola indocumentado y hoy dirige programas de investigación en cáncer cerebral en la Clínica Mayo.

Al destacar estas figuras, mi objetivo no es escribir una lista exhaustiva, sino inspirar a los lectores locales a valorar las conexiones que tenemos con una historia más amplia y hacer ver que nuestra comunidad es parte de la historia nacional e internacional. Y para los lectores que no sean hispanos, les invito a conocer un poco más todo lo que los latinos han aportado a los Estados Unidos y a reconocer el valor de nuestra cultura y nuestra lengua.

Y para que la celebración de este mes sea más viva, **les comparto algunas sugerencias** para que puedan apoyar durante este mes, o durante todo el año.

- **Ferias y festivales hispanos locales:** La mejor forma de conocer y celebrar es asistir a ferias culturales, conciertos, noches de poesía o danzas latinas en universidades, escuelas, bibliotecas y centros comunitarios locales.
- **Talleres de música, baile o gastronomía latina:** Ya sea clases de salsa, bachata, música andina, tamales o arepas, estos talleres generan interactividad y acercan nuestra cultura a todos los públicos.
- **Lecturas de autores hispanos y cine en español:** Las bibliotecas locales organizan sesiones de lectura bilingües o proyección de películas en español con discusión posterior.
- **Exposiciones locales:** Visitar exposiciones fotográficas, arte vi-

sual o muralismo latino en galerías comunitarias o centros culturales.

Es recomendable revisar calendarios municipales o preguntar directamente en bibliotecas y centros culturales del condado.

No todos estos lugares son específicamente hispanos, pero vale la pena visitarlos porque promueven **la diversidad cultural, las artes y la historia** de la región, incluyendo conexiones multiculturales:

- **MASS MoCA** (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art), en North Adams, no muy lejos pero accesible para una excursión cultural, a menudo presenta arte contemporáneo con artistas internacionales, incluidos latinoamericanos.
- **Bibliotecas públicas del condado:** las bibliotecas (Greenfield, Montague, Shelburne) pueden tener colecciones de literatura hispana, organizar clubes de lectura o conversación en español y acoger charlas culturales.
- **Escuelas y universidades de la zona:** a veces clubes de español o departamentos de idiomas tienen exposiciones, ferias culturales o semanas hispanas.

Además de visitar, puedes promover que estos lugares incorporen narrativas hispanas: solicitar que incluyan autores latinos en exhibiciones, que dediquen espacios a arte latinoamericano, que inviten oradores latinos locales o que desarrollen colaboraciones con comunidades hispanas.

**Algunas ideas pueden ser las siguientes**, atreváse a explorarlas:

- **Murales y arte urbano.** investigar si hay murales en Greenfield, Turners Falls o Montague con temática multicultural o latinoamericana. Incluso proponer nuevos murales comunitarios es una forma de embellecer el espacio público y dar visibilidad.
- **Recorrido literario local.** Buscar librerías con secciones en español, tiendas de libros usados con literatura latinoamericana o ediciones bilingües.
- **Apoyar negocios latinos locales.** Si en tu zona hay restaurantes, tiendas, mercados o servicios propiedad de hispanos, compra ahí y promuévelos. Por ejemplo: Cocina Lupita, El Nopalito, Cielito Lindo y Posadas.
- **Contribuir** con donaciones o voluntariado en organizaciones que trabajan con comunidades latinas en Franklin County como Center for New Americans.

- **Invitar** a escuelas y organizaciones locales a organizar eventos de intercambio cultural con comunidades latinas. Un buen ejemplo son Stone Soup Café y The Brick House.
- **Escribir**, entrevistar y publicar historias de miembros de la comunidad hispana local – jóvenes, ancianos, emprendedores – para darles visibilidad en medios locales como este periódico.

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CALENDAR

looking forward...

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *alone-a, Raub Roy*. 4 p.m. By donation.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14

Leverett Library, Leverett: Author *Richie Davis*, reading from *True Tales From Extraordinary Lives*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: Play, *Swamped*, written and directed by Court Dorsey. 7:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17

Leverett Elementary School, Leverett: *A Conversation with Congressman Jim McGovern*. See [tinyurl.com/convwithjim](https://tinyurl.com/convwithjim) for more info and to make reservations. 6:30 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *LifePath Walkathon*. Donate, create walking teams, and have fun in support of Meals on Wheels and other programs. 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. By donation.

Great Falls Discovery Center: *Archaeology Month: Indigenous Fishing Along the Kwenitekw*. Presentation, activities, and more. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free.

The National Spiritual Alliance, Lake Pleasant: *An Evening With Luke DeRoy*. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Documentary screening, *La Liga*, on immigrant farmworkers in Vermont's dairy industry. 7:30 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25

Four Phantoms Brewery, Greenfield: *Slobdrop, Illicify, Breaking Up, Two Wrong Turns*. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Stone Church, Brattleboro: @. 8 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Nova Arts, Keene: *Hot Dirt, Terraces, Dinger*. 7 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9

Bowker Auditorium, UMass Amherst: *Brandee Younger Trio*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5

The Drake, Amherst: *The Ladybug Transistor, Giant Day, Jeanines*. 8 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5

Conway Center, Conway: *Festival of the Hills*. Parade, skillet toss, logsplitting, history talk, book sale, fried dough, etc. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free.

Kringle Candle, Bernardston: *Annual Fall Market*. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

Apex Orchards, Shelburne: Presentation, *UMass Entomology Fernald Club*. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Poetry, Stories, Spoken Word* feat. Bill Mailler and Howie Faerstein; open mic with 5-minute slots. 1 p.m. By donation.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Staged reading of *The Turnaway Play*, presented by the Reproductive Justice Task Force of FCCPR. Benefit for The MAP Project. 2 p.m. \$.

Our Lady of Peace Church, Turners Falls: *Gathering of Remembrance of the Farren Memorial Hospital*. 3 to 5 p.m. Free.

Institute for Musical Arts, Goshen: *Joy Conz, June Millington, Lydiah Dollah*. 3 p.m. \$.

Lady Killigrew, Montague Center: *All Feels, Ollie Schechter, Matt Fero*. 4 p.m. Free.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Erica Dawn Lyle, barbie.ai*. 4 p.m. By donation.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Julian Gerstin Sextet, Taylor Ho Bynum & Tomas Fujiwara*. 5 p.m. \$.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Community Contra Dance* with the *Monday Night Session* and friends, Will Mentor calling. All dances taught; all ages welcome. Proceeds benefit accessibility fund. 7 p.m. By donation.

Kitchen Garden Farm, Sunderland: *Kimya Dawson, Sylvie's Okay, Olive Klug*. 7 p.m. \$.

HOPE Center for the Arts, Springfield: *Béla Fleck, Edmar Castañeda, Antonio Sánchez*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6

Faith Church, Greenfield: *Writing workshop*, with artist and performer Terry Jenoure. First of a three-month series. 6 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Fiber Group / Mending Circle*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

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

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Keeping All Kids Safe*. First of a four-part workshop about social media and technology safety. 5 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Craft Circle*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Drop-In Knitting/Crafting*. 6 to 8 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: *Water From Your Eyes, Her New Knife*. 8 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Music and Movement*, for toddlers and their caregivers. 10 a.m. Free.

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Afterschool Activities*. Games, makerspace, snacks. 1:30 to 3 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Readings Group*. William Shakespeare, *King Lear*. 3 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Read to Marley*, a gentle therapy dog. 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Free.

Montague Center Library, Montague Center: Artist reception for *Elizabeth Long: Quilts*. 5 p.m.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Veretski Pass, A Glezele Tey*. 7 p.m. \$.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Beth Orton, Sam Amidon*. 7 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *The Tallest Man On Earth, The Still Tide*. 7:30 p.m. \$

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Los Microwaves, Genre Is Death, Battlemode, Chaki the Funk Wizard*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Falltown String Band*. 8:30 p.m. No cover.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Nice & Easy Walk*. 10 a.m. Free.

New Salem Preserves, New Salem: *Village Neighbors Meet-Up*. Drink cider and enjoy the vista. 2 to 4 p.m. Free.

Montague Center Library, Montague Center: Senior Tech Time, *Artificial Intelligence: Basics and Beyond*. 5 p.m. Free.

Gill-Montague Senior Center, Turners Falls: *Six-Town Regional Planning Board* information presentation. 6 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Ben Tousley*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Deep Thoughts, Northampton: *Hazel Basil; Virgo's Moon; Hush, Puppy*. 7 p.m. \$.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Tiger Bomb, Mal Thursday Quintet, Ray Mason, The Oranges*. 7 p.m. \$.

Institute for the Musical Arts, Goshen: *Harris Eisenstadt October Trio*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Harvest and Rust*, Neil Young tribute. 8 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Henderson's Blues Band*. 8 p.m. No cover.

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

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Kalbells, Erica Eso*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *The Leafies You Gave Me, Hot Dirt, beetsblog*. 8 p.m. \$.

First Churches, Northampton: Ambient Church presents *Michael Stearns*, with live light projections. 8 p.m. \$.

Great Falls Harvest, Turners Falls: *Sunburned Hand of the Man, Zachary Cale, Nathan O'Flynn-Pruitt*. 8:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *DJ Lucas, 22BB, Don Gadi*. 9 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Dead Tooth, Ruby Lou*. 10 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Costume Swap*. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free.

Big River Chestnuts, Sunderland: *Chestnut Festival*. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free.

Ashfield Center, Ashfield: *Ashfield Fall Festival*, with *The DiTrani Brothers, Ashfield Community Band*, more. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *LAVA Film Festival*. Screenings and discussion with filmmakers. See [thelavacenter.org/lava-film-festival](https://thelavacenter.org/lava-film-festival). 1 to 9 p.m. \$.

United Church of Bernardston, Bernardston: *Roast Beef Supper*. Seatings at 5 and 6:15 p.m. \$.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: Reading, *Miriam Saperstein, Stephanie Cawley, ebs sanders*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Norma Dream*, album release party, with the *Mia Friedman Band, Dream Choir, Young at Heart Chorus*, pizza by *Augustine's Pizza Club*. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10

Four Star Farms Brewery, Northfield: *Library Trivia Night*. Teams of one to six players. Bring your own food. 6 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Arena Civic Theater presents *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. Benefit for TransHealth. 7 p.m. \$

All Souls Church, Greenfield: Documentary, *Rising River's Edge* (2025). Discussion afterward with filmmakers. 7 p.m. By donation.

HOPE Center for the Arts, Springfield: *Makaya McCraven*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Silas Will*. 9:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *LAVA Film Festival*. Reception at 5 p.m., films at 7 p.m. Discussion with filmmakers. See [thelavacenter.org/lava-film-festival](https://thelavacenter.org/lava-film-festival). Free and \$.

Retreat Farm, Brattleboro: *Tholpavakoothu*, puppet troupe from Kerala, India. 6:15 p.m. \$.

Born Again Vintage, Northampton: *Sapien Joyride, Tiger Moth, Go Go California, Oddball Song Creation, Ants of the Suburbs*. 6:15 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Square Dance* with *Devilish Mary's Stringband*, Sally Newton calling. Jammers welcome. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

Local indie-rock wallflowers *All Feels* play a free show this Sunday afternoon at the Lady Killigrew café – at long last, live music is returning to the Bookmill!

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MMM from page B1

**MMM:** Also, could you tell us how you started “Hank the Herald Angel Recordings”?

**AR:** One day in 1999 or 2000, during some rare moment when we weren’t all in the same room, Matt and John started Apostasy Recordings. I was part of that project from nearly the beginning, but being permanently prone to feeling left out – even of things I was directly involved in! – I must have decided I needed my own label as well, at least as a vehicle for releasing my first solo CDRs.

I ever-so-slowly branched out to releasing music by others before contracting back down to mostly just a vehicle for my releases, like a recent cassette of field recordings I made at the 2013 Kentucky State Fair.

**MMM:** Any favorite or most memorable shows you’ve played?

**AR:** I’m going to bend this one into most memorable shows I’ve booked. And it’s every Michael Hurley show I ever had a hand in, starting with the one you [Josh] played with him at the Hampshire College Tavern in 2001. That was the first time I ever saw him. Sorry about the trouble with the vocal mic during your set, which I remember intensely and hope you’ve forgotten!

I ended up putting on quite a few more shows for Michael over the years, hosted and fed him many times, and we had some of the most bizarre and wonderful conversations and phone calls of my life – right up there with several middle-of-the-night phone calls from Arthur Doyle when Hampshire was slow to pay him for a gig we had him play in the Tavern around that same time...

All of those times were my favorite times, and as I said to another friend of Michael’s after he passed away, I’ve never gotten over the shock of realizing we were friends, and I don’t guess I will.

**MMM:** Oh cool. What about fave SOE shows? I remember one at the Yod space, with Conrad laughing outside...

**AR:** That’s a hard one. The most recent Son of Earth show, in June at Feeding Tube in Florence, was delightful. That it took place in the Valley, with an audience of folks some of whom have been seeing us since the early 2000s, and who are among the small number of people who can track our progress from

know-nothing kids smashing about in piles of junk to whatever we are now – it was oddly poignant.

On our way out the door after the show, local legend Chris Doolley asked, “When you started, did you think Son of Earth would be around 25 years later?”

One of us answered something like, “We probably did think so, which was absolutely the wrong thing to think, but turns out to have been right!”

**MMM:** Any new solo recordings? Or field recordings?

**AR:** Getting my solo work out into the world has always been kind of a challenge, freezing in the headlights of choice in the studio. On the other hand, live performance or my audio and video installations force me to finish things, so all it takes is saying “yes” and then I’m committed.

It’s also always felt easier to push away my solo work in favor of collaboration – recently I have been working on some duo material with my dear friend Kris Abplanalp (from Louisville, Kentucky’s Sapat) and contributed violin, tape loops, and sampling keyboard to Ryan Davis’s incredible new record, *New Threats From the Soul*, and Shutaro Noguchi’s equally charming and soon-to-be-released *On the Run*.

I’m as confused as I am honored to have been invited to participate in the wild sessions that created those records.

**MMM:** How about any good stories about the Cherry Blossoms?

**AR:** There are only good stories about the Cherry Blossoms! Every time I have ever seen or played with them I have had the same feeling of revelation I felt the first time. And, again, as with Ryan and Shutaro, I just can’t comprehend my luck at having been invited to sit in with them from time to time, or to watch Peggy Snow paint, or to talk to John Allingham about his adventures and his songs. John was the first person I ever met who had been to Cairo, Illinois – made famous in Henry Spaulding’s 1929 [song] “Cairo Blues” – which inspired me to visit that godforsaken town on my own.

One time, Peggy and John picked me up in Louisville on their way from Nashville to a Cherry Blossoms gig in Chicago. We stopped in Indiana to take a walk along the Wabash River on a short, seemingly unremarkable trail near an RV park-



Long’s quilt Summer, 2021, 20½” by 13¾”.

EXHIBIT

Elizabeth Long: Quilts

**MONTAGUE CENTER** -- Quilt artist Elizabeth Long has shared her exquisite textile creations with family, friends, and patrons since she took up the craft in 1970.

She recalls her first project as a hand-pieced “carpenter’s star,” one of the most notoriously difficult patterns to assemble. Liz worked on stitching the blocks during her son’s Little League games, but ultimately set them aside when she could not find quite the right color of fabric to complete the quilt.

It took a trip to Nantucket two years later to locate the perfect shade of cotton. Liz’s patience and keen eye for color were later rewarded when *Carpenter’s Star* was featured in *Ladies’ Circle Patchwork Quilts* Magazine.

A resident of Montague Center, Liz has received such prestigious awards as Best of Show at the Eastern States Exposition and Purchase Awards from the Slater Museum in Norwich, Connecticut. Liz has more recently delighted her apartment-building neighbors with a series of small door hangings, which she changes with the season.

*Elizabeth Long: Quilts* is on exhibit at the Montague Center branch library, with an artist reception next Wednesday, October 8 at 5 p.m.

ing area. Like Cairo, it was a place of really subtle beauty, where many might not see any beauty at all, but John and Peggy were alert to everything – the bend in the river, the giant thorns on a honey locust tree.

And that’s basically what the Cherry Blossoms do, musically and lyrically and in Peggy’s paintings – find beauty where others wouldn’t even think to look.

**MMM:** Anything new that is inspiring you?

**AR:** I have an amazing union contract and a relatively flexible work schedule – these are the things that allow me the space to be inspired at all. Perhaps as a result, lately I’m inspired and excited by live shows in a way I haven’t been for a while.

Ben Hersey came through here this spring and did his incomparable, indescribable, genius, utterly-committed thing. Russ Waterhouse and Mary Staubitz performed a totally-engaged duo that just glowed with attention and consideration while still benefiting from chance happenings and Bluetooth disconnections.

Christoph Heemann just came through and played a set that was a master class in navigating the dangerous terrain of dynamics. I’ve seen locals-to-here E. Jason Gibbs and Grace Bedwell play some great, not-too-long, not-too-loud sets recently, as well.

I should say that all of these were

on bills organized by Skot (Id M Theft Able) as part of his “Does” series at the Apohadion Theater. That’s already more great sets in half a year than I feel like I saw in the several years preceding.

**MMM:** Any literature or films you are fond of right now?

**AR:** Maine is producing a lot of great fiction at the moment. Morgan Talty’s two books, *Night of the Living Rez* and *Fire Exit*, are both excellent, and Meghan Gilliss’s *Lungfish* is a deeply harrowing read. All three evoke the sort of knife’s edge that many actual lives teeter on here in Vacationland.

**MMM:** Any old west Mass, or Mystery Train, stories? Do you miss living here?

**AR:** For a while in 2004 and 2005, I worked at the Jones Library in Amherst. Among the greatest perks of this job was that it was 500 feet from the old Mystery Train. To the best of my recollection, I was in to see you every single day on my lunch break, after which I would head down to Henion Bakery for a slice of their poppy seed cake.

I’m still happy with my decision to split from the Valley when I did, 20 (!) years ago – I needed to go do whatever it was I needed to do and am still doing out here in the world. But I’m glad everyone who has stayed or arrived since then is there, and I’m always happy to visit.

All the friendships and connections have survived just fine in my absence – very likely better than they would have if I had stayed!

**MMM:** Any final jokes, or other music stories?

**AR:** One of the funniest music memories I have is of Son of Earth being heckled by Matt St-Germain of Freedom From records at the messy, memorable, rain-soaked Pasture Festival in Soldier’s Grove, Wisconsin in July of 2004. Heckling our kind of delicate, nearly-in-audible improvised music isn’t something I can really get behind, and is something I would never do.

But Matt did something truly original and delightful – he heckled us at the miniscule volume of our own music, just whispering taunts from inches away from us in the front row! I doubt anyone could even hear him doing it except for us. (And my MiniDisc recorder!)

When I brought it up to Matt years later, he was deeply embarrassed and apologetic, but it was truly ingenious in its way. He wasn’t talking over us (which we got plenty of), or ignoring us (same), but meeting us exactly where we were.

To be sure, I was livid about it in the moment and as the recording reveals I gave him back some of his own medicine, but I have been delighted by the memory of it for so much longer than I was annoyed.



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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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