

The Montague Reporter

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Blueberry Easement Controversy Continues

By GEORGE BRACE

Tension over the Leverett selectboard’s response to a lawsuit in land court seeking to bar public access to a disputed right-of-way continued at Tuesday’s selectboard meeting, with close to 50 residents on hand at the town hall.

The board also expanded the police department and discussed guidance for next year’s town budget, among other business.

At a special town meeting on November 4, an article seeking to use eminent domain to claim a right-of-way over roughly 7,200 square feet of property on Shutesbury Road owned by David Evans and his daughter Julie Evans Marlowe was voted down 150 to 148. The article would have required a two-thirds majority to pass.

The land has provided the easiest access for decades to the Gordon King Life Estate, conservation land including a popular blueberry see **LEVERETT** page A5

GILL SELECTBOARD

Dog Deemed A ‘Nuisance,’ Not a Danger

By KATE SAVAGE

A two-year-old dog named Taco has been deemed a “nuisance” after injuring a passerby on West Gill Road. At Monday’s selectboard meeting, the board ordered Taco’s owner, Chad Powling, to keep the dog “humanely restrained” whenever he is outside and within 100 feet of public property.

The hearing came at the request of Tamra Little, who was reportedly bitten by Taco in late October. Little testified that Taco bit her arm while she was walking past Powling’s house. She continued her walk, but when she found she was bleeding heavily through her jacket, she called 911. She was taken to the hospital and received six stitches and a tetanus shot.

Powling said he hadn’t realized Taco had followed him outside. He said he saw the dog run over and jump on Little, and shouted for Taco to come back. He didn’t realize the dog had bitten her until an animal control officer contacted him.

“I’ve been a nervous wreck ever since,” Powling said. “I feel bad for [Little]. It was my mistake.”

Powling and two of his family members testified that Taco had no see **GILL** page A4

NO TABLE LEFT BARE



MAGGIE SADOWAY PHOTO

On Wednesday, a long line waited patiently on K Street for seasonal produce provided by the Food Bank of Western Mass: apples, potatoes, onions, and butternut squash. Students from Northfield Mount Hermon and Turners Falls High School carried heavy bags and baskets to nearby cars. The truck visits the senior center the third Wednesday of each month, and is open to all.

Officials Rethink Approach To Honoring Town’s Eldest

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – On Monday, selectboard member Marina Goldman proposed that the town take a fresh approach to the tradition of awarding a “golden cane” to the oldest citizen in town. “I met with [Council on Aging director] Roberta Potter today, just to see if she would help me keep it up,” Goldman said. “It’s been on the back burner... I don’t



Montague’s Boston Post Cane is kept in a display case at town hall.

know what the history of it is.”

According to the online Boston Post Cane Information Center, the modern “golden cane” tradition was initiated in 1909 as a marketing ploy by the *Boston Post* newspaper, whose editor sent golden-topped ebony canes to 700 towns in New England, each inscribed “To the Oldest Citizen of...” These “Boston Post Canes” were dispatched only to towns, and only to men, but women became eligible in 1930 – after “considerable controversy,” according to the website – and over time some of the towns became cities.

The *Post* went out of business in 1957, and maintaining the tradition has proven challenging. The canes, though the property of local selectboards, were originally “kept always in the hands of the oldest citizen,” but they were often lost, stolen, or not returned, and many came to be displayed at town halls while the honorees received replicas see **ELDEST** page A8

Patch Apartments Clear Two Bureaucratic Hurdles

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – First Generation Investments Group, the local company proposing to build two four-unit apartment buildings in the Patch neighborhood, received go-aheads in the last week from Montague’s conservation commission and planning board, sending the project on next to the building department for a permit.

The con com, which met last

Thursday, was required to rule on whether the construction would be subject to the Wetlands Protection Act. A corner of the vacant Tenth Street parcel, a 200-by-200-foot square, lies within a 100-foot “buffer zone” of a recognized wetland, and First Generation’s landscaping proposal would put about three and a half parking spaces and a dumpster in that buffer zone.

All of the land in question is

see **PATCH** page A3



Serviceberry, winterberry, and hazelnut would line the rear of the parking lot.

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Montague Moves Forward On Partial Demo of Mills, Seeking Additional Funds

By JEFF SINGLETON

“This is definitely an atypical project, both in its complexities and the funding, and then potential for additional funding if that comes through,” structural engineer Craig French of Tighe & Bond told the Montague selectboard Monday night. “There are a lot of hurdles to jump through.”

French’s firm is preparing plans for the demolition of the Strathmore buildings, a town-owned paper mill complex in Turners Falls, and he was discussing the options for stabilizing a small hydroelectric plant within the complex that the town

does not own. This was the second week in a row the issue topped the selectboard’s agenda.

At the same meeting the board approved using block grant funds for emergency food assistance, endorsed a state purchase of land along Ripley Road, requested that three housing rehabilitation grants be extended through next June, and had a long discussion about issuing “golden cane” awards to the town’s oldest residents (see article, this page).

Montague received an estimate from Tighe & Bond last February that stabilizing the paper mill’s powerhouse, now owned by Turners see **MONTAGUE** page A4

As Contract Negotiations Stall, UMass Union Schedules Vote On ‘Confidence’ In Chancellor



Members of several campus unions were at last week’s rally for the Professional Staff Union (PSU), whose contract covers hundreds of non-academic professional workers.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

AMHERST – For more than 500 days, unionized staff members working for the University of Massachusetts Amherst have been negotiating a new contract, but disagreements over pay increases and working conditions continue.

As part of a public pressure campaign to bring the university back to the bargaining table, members of the Professional Staff Union organized a rally outside Chancellor Javier Reyes’s office last Thursday. They say that the university has requested a state-appointed mediator – a step that means school leaders have put

forward their final offer and could be preparing to unilaterally impose working conditions union members find unacceptable.

“There are pervasive problems on this campus that prevent us from being able to give our best to all of our students,” Emmy Cooper, a PSU member and academic advisor at UMass Amherst, shouted through a megaphone. “We have a wages problem on this campus. We have a workload problem on this campus. We have a staff retention problem on this campus.”

More than 100 people stood in the cold wind outside the Whitmore see **UMASS** page A7

Six-Town Planning Board Eyes a Five-Town District

By MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – At its meeting Tuesday night, chair Alan Genovese told the Six Town Regional Planning Board (STRPB) that he planned to ask state officials if two school regionalization proposals can be sent to voters next spring: one for six towns, and one for five.

In his own town of Warwick, he explained, “some of the people on the school side feel very strongly” about Warwick Elementary School remaining independent.

Consultants have already run cost assessments for six-town and five-town districts, Genovese said, and advise that it “wouldn’t be much of a heavy lift” to modify the proposed regional agreement, though the school committee would need to be recomposed.

Montague representative Dorinda Bell-Upp asked how dropping Warwick might affect transportation cost projections. “We had two studies done,” Genovese said. “If anything, it reduces the transportation see **DISTRICT** page A4



No Paper Next Week. Try Reading This One Twice

A Dumpster in that Buffer Zone.....	A1	That Greedy Albatross Which Nags and Stalks Us All.....	B1
Also Uses Crystal Bowls.....	A2	Microchipped, Neutered, and Housetrained.....	B2
Remove, Fill, Dredge, or Alter.....	A3	Causing Only a Smudge.....	B3
The Problem of Sagging Wires.....	A4	Never Giving Way to Nihilism.....	B4
Calling for a Revolutionary War.....	A5	Dismissed as an Impractical Profession.....	B5
Inedible Mess Emitting Putrid Cadaverine.....	A6	Moose, Pie, Dragons, Angels, Stew.....	B6
These Impetuous Wanderers.....	A7	Freakbag, Minibeast, Bingo Brunch.....	B7
Scary Good at Reading Palms.....	A8	Jumbled in the Mind.....	B8

The Montague Reporter

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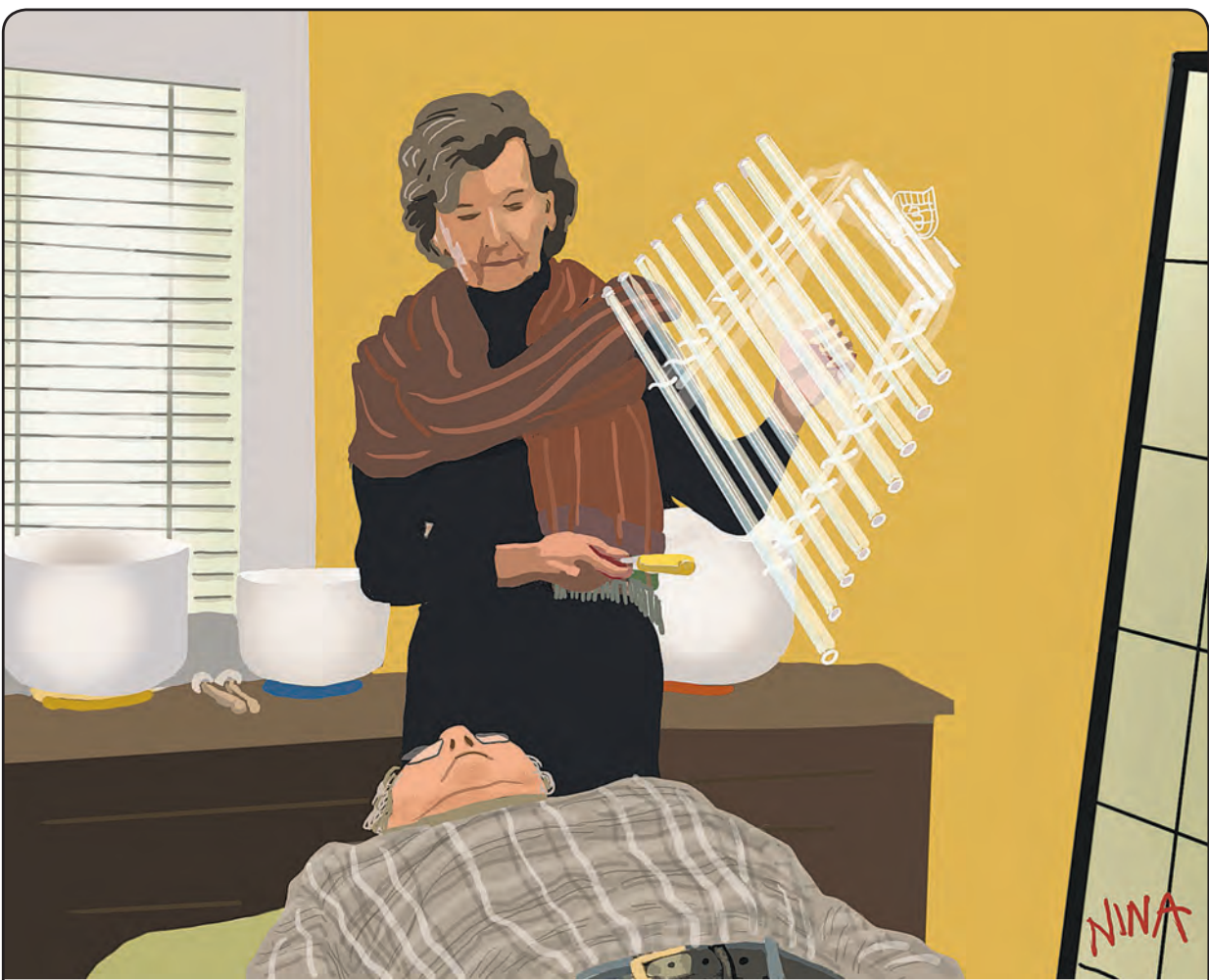
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August 2002

A Quiet Appeal

Some of our most trustworthy readers have already sent in donations to our annual *Montague Reporter* Writers' Fund appeal. If you didn't receive an envelope with your November 6 edition, never fear: it's a well-kept secret, but nearly any envelope can be used to convey your support to us, as can the little button at www.montaguereporter.org/donate/. Two weeks in, we're heartened by the early returns – including some very encouraging notes – and

a little nervous that if we don't bang the drum, the run will taper off. So: The fixed costs of printing and postage continue to rise, our paper continues to be sold dirt cheap, and our Board of Directors earmarks this annual appeal as funding for the writers, photographers, and editors who need just enough of it to keep at the work we love. There are a great many worthy, needy causes, locally and worldwide, but we would like the *Montague Reporter* to be one of yours.

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



NINA

Sheryl Sadler-Tnyon is a Reiki and sound healing practitioner in Montague Center. She has been in business as Touch of Sakura for the past five years. In this illustration, she is playing a glass harp during a treatment, but she also uses crystal bowls. Experience a sound bath with Sadler-Tnyon at the Bernardston Senior Center on Wednesday, December 10 from 1 to 2 p.m.!

Letters to

the Editors

Use of Foul Language

Dear Editors,

I read your paper faithfully. I truly believe your publication is solid. I find that I'll read a detailed article, very thorough by your reporters, and then see a watered down version a few days later in the *Greenfield Recorder*. Please keep up the good work!

What I disagree with is the use of foul language, specifically the "F" word in articles, specifically Miss Mudballs' recent thread.

I would hope in the future that those words please be edited out for the sake of your readers and the general public. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Rick Kostanski
South Deerfield

NOTE

An article in last week's edition, *Powerhouse Easements Pose Expensive Challenge For Paper Mill Demolition* (Page A1), was incorrectly bylined. The article was published as being written by Jeff Singleton, with managing editor Mike Jackson credited with having contributed "additional reporting." The article should have been jointly credited to both writers. Our apologies!

'An Ethical Duty'

I am a Jew in the Valley, and I'm in support of Montague voting to divest from apartheid.

Amnesty International and other leading human rights organizations have declared that Israel is imposing an apartheid system over the people in Palestine. We have an ethical duty to respond to grave human rights violations executed with our tax dollars in every possible way we can, on a local and national level.

Montague follows the lead of other towns in western Mass rising up against Israeli violence supported by the US. With overwhelming support from community members, the Northampton city council voted on September 18 to divest from the companies that manufacture and fund the weapons, machinery, and technologies that the Israeli military uses to surveil and kill Palestinians, destroy their homes, and enforce the country's apartheid system.

The International Court of Justice, the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, and Jeremy Ben-Ami, president of J Street, have all called Israel's actions in Gaza a genocide.

Israel's own military data as of May 2025, according to investigative reporting by *+972 Magazine*, *Local Call*, and *The Guardian*, indicates that the civilian death in Gaza is 83% of all people killed. The *New York Times* has estimated that 70% of deaths are women and children.

All reputable papers are in agreement that Gaza is in a state of famine. Gaza is starving because Israel will not allow sufficient aid trucks to enter.

The United Nations and international aid groups, including Doctors without Borders, Oxfam, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), have stated that the amount of aid entering is a small fraction of what is necessary. CNN reported in July 2025 that more than 100 aid organizations had signed a joint statement calling for an end to Israel's blockade, warning that aid workers themselves were at risk of starvation. Hundreds of people have already died from starvation and malnutrition.

The UN Human Rights Office reported that as of August 26, 2025, at least 247 Palestinian journalists had been killed since the war began – a higher number than all other modern wars combined. According to the UN, the number of children killed in Gaza since the start of the conflict in late 2023 exceeds the number of child deaths in several recent wars.

The leaders of Israel have been clear from the start about their intent to kill everyone and destroy all of Gaza. Our taxpayer dollars can go towards education, child-care, healthcare – not slaughtering Palestinians.

Mare Berger
Northampton

OP ED

An Open Letter to Rep. Jim McGovern

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – As you may know, I am a resident of Montague in your House district who has served on a range of local committees and is a loyal Democrat, almost never voting for the GOP. I have voted for you over the years, and will certainly continue to do so even if we disagree on specific issues or ideas now and then.

However, I am extremely skeptical of your arguments in favor of continuing to vote for the federal shutdown, and the frustration you express with those who did not. And this seems to dovetail with a lot of hand-wringing in the liberal media about divisions within the Democratic Party.

It is my view that the current divisions among Democrats are an absolutely normal feature of American political parties, which since their creation in the 1790s have been uneasy coalitions which often divide along regional, economic, and cultural lines. This contrasts with another current party which, since the 2024 election, has been controlled by a cult supporting an authoritarian personality. Of course that could change, but I doubt it.

You made the tough decision to vote to keep the federal government shut down, primarily it seems because the Republicans would not commit to supporting the health subsidies in so-called "Obamacare." I strongly agree that the GOP's stance on this issue, which would no doubt leave millions of Americans uninsured, is appalling, but it is not at all clear to me that continuing

the shutdown somehow creates the math in Congress to extend those subsidies.

You are in Washington, and obviously I am not, so maybe you know something I don't. But your rhetoric is not very revealing or convincing. It is all about being tough, standing strong, and not giving tax cuts to the rich, which was typical of progressive Democrats. But how does this get the votes to avoid big cuts in my MassHealth?

To be fair, you backed off on some of that rhetoric during a Channel 5 interview on Sunday. You began, unfortunately, by saying you were "furious at the Democrats who caved," but then, fortunately, refused to be drawn in to the media-induced controversy over the leadership of Chuck Schumer, who in reality caved into the left wing of the party during the shutdown and whose perceived supporters the left now wants to "primary." (Sound familiar?)

I respect your passion for your beliefs. The drama in Washington was no doubt stressful for all Democrats. But those who voted the other way did not see a path forward by continuing the shutdown, and they are not just a bunch of weaklings.

More importantly, their stance shows that the Democratic Party is a diverse and sometimes fragile coalition. This is historically normal. It was certainly true of the Democratic coalition that dominated US politics from the 1930s to the late 1960s.

Jeff Singleton is a contributing reporter to this newspaper, though the views expressed here are his own. He lives in Turners Falls.

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or the final week of December.*

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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

No paper next week! A very **happy Thanksgiving** to all who observe.

We will return December 4 to begin a new volume: *Year 24, No. 1*. Since this newspaper began, the start of our volume-year has crept ahead a full two months. If we keep going at this pace it will eventually align with the calendar year. No one knows why this happens.

Our distribution manager Nina Rossi needs a **newspaper carrier in Greenfield**, or else a couple of less ambitious carriers, to bring papers to businesses and residences, about 30 stops altogether. “Great for a retiree or an adult/youth team,” she writes.

If you are a retiree or an adult/youth team and you are reading this and you can get to Greenfield on Thursdays, this would be great for you. Contact Nina at (413) 834-8800 for more information.

TFHS digital filmmaking and theater arts teacher Jonathan Chappell writes:

“Turners Falls High School’s **annual Scarecrow Contest** is officially underway again – a little later than usual, but with good reason. Students took extra time this year to push their creativity, and it truly shows in the quality and diversity of the designs. We have nearly 20 scarecrows on display, including a three-headed hydra, a giant centipede, a life-sized LeBron James, a fully suspended Spider-Man “webbing” the school, and, unexpectedly... Mao Zedong. It’s our most eclectic lineup yet.”

The scarecrow-makers compete for Scariest, Funniest, Best Use of Materials, Best Conceptual Achievement (always the best category), and Best Overall, and judging takes place next week.

We heard this from Jonathan on Wednesday morning and, as mentioned above, we will have no paper next week, so this column is the best spot for it! Readers are encouraged to go see the weird scarecrows and develop opinions about them. We may even have space on December 4 for a photo, if you take a good one...

Montague town planner Maureen Pollock let us know that the **Open Space & Recreation Plan forum** we promoted as a public service in last week’s Reporter (*Montague Launches Space Program*, Page A7) was viciously postponed from this past Tuesday to Wednesday, December 10.

“Oops on our part!,” says Maureen, blaming a “technical glitch.” Are there non-technical glitches? Anyway, it will now take place Wednesday, December 10 via Zoom and can be accessed at www.tinyurl.com/yp9a4mbe. Maureen promises to provide more info in our December 4 edition,

so please stay tuned. We are assured that the planning department values our input as a public.



An anonymous reader operating under the shadowy moniker “Found & Fun in Franklin County” sent in **this photo of a snowman**, or rather of a representation of a snowman in non-snow materials, and asked us to print the following communique:

“We live in Turners Falls and have concocted what we would like to be an anonymous snowman scavenger hunt to benefit the Food Bank of Western Mass. and also share some holiday fun around town. This week, we will be hiding 45 one-inch resin snowmen in businesses around Turners Falls. The snowmen each sit on a card that allows the finder to scan a QR code and post their find on our ‘Found and Fun’ Instagram page: www.instagram.com/foundandfunfranklincounty/

“For each post made, we will donate \$5 to the Food Bank. We hope all 45 little snowman gifts are found – though, regardless of the number found, we will still make a full donation by the end of December!”

Get to it, readers.



Supporters of Keep Massachusetts Home (www.keepmasshome.com), the **rent stabilization initiative** intended for next November’s statewide ballot, announced this week that they have more than surpassed the threshold necessary to qualify for the ballot with over 124,000 signatures. If passed by voters, the initiative would cap annual rent increases to increases in the cost of living.

It’s a very mild measure, pegging one good to a basket, though if inflation passes 5% rent hikes would hit a hard cap there. If your landlord lives in your building and the building has under five apartments, they’d be exempt from the law, and new buildings get a pass for the first 10 years.

Nurses at Cooley Dickinson reached a tentative agreement with the hospital on Tuesday, so a threatened one-day strike is likely off the table.

Last week at a reader’s prompting we mentioned the renewed crimes against humanity in Sudan’s Darfur region, and asked if anyone knew anything civilians here could do to help. One potential approach is to support the **IDP Humanitarian Network** (www.darfuridp.org), which operates mobile kitchens, clinics, and classes in the conflict zone.

Another is to focus on the United Arab Emirates, which is funding the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group. This leads us back to our own country rather more quickly than an examination of exports from Sudan (though many readers likely consume gum arabic harvested in the region).

From an October 28 *Reuters* article:

“Eric Trump was in Dubai on family business. Meeting with a Chinese businessman and his associates on the sidelines of a cryptocurrency conference in May this year... the pitch[:] Buy at least \$20 million of “governance tokens” in the Trump family’s crypto business, World Liberty Financial, and become part of a venture that Eric Trump predicted would soon embody the future of finance in America, according to a person familiar with the meeting....

“At the time, World Liberty was a fledgling business. It hadn’t yet created the cryptocurrency-based finance platform it promised after its September 2024 launch. It still hasn’t. Even so, the pitch apparently worked. On June 26, an obscure entity called Aqua1 Foundation, which said it was based in the United Arab Emirates, announced it was buying \$100 million of cryptocurrency tokens from World Liberty. It was the single largest known purchase of the so-called WLFI tokens at the time....”

Amazing how connected our world is.

Send your little bits of news to editor@montaguereporter.org.

PATCH from page A1

wedged between the 19th-century impoundment of the Turners Falls power canal and the main canal channel, dug in the early 20th century. The building lot is cleared of trees and includes old concrete pads left over from long-since-demolished industrial buildings, and is abutted on three sides by the FirstLight Power company.

“The property would be considered degraded,” town planner Maureen Pollock explained. “This would be an example of infill development.”

First Generation co-owner Igor Komerzan shared the landscaping plan with the commissioners, explaining that the gravel parking area would be “infringing” on the wetland delineation, though he said there was “ambiguity” as to the wetland’s exact status.

“It’s not a perennial stream,” Pollock noted.

Commissioner Al Averill, who had visited the site earlier that day, said he had a “little bit of concern”

about automotive oils leaching into the wetland. He recommended the topsoil on the property be maintained, as the sandier material below it is “not a very good filter.”

The plan calls for two red maples to be planted in the corner in question, as well as serviceberry, winterberry, and hazelnut bushes. The conversation turned to native grass species, and mixes thereof, and then to the whether the dumpster should be relocated.

Commissioner Sean Werle pointed out that if the con com determined the Wetlands Protection Act did not apply to such degraded land, it would have no standing to set any conditions on the project. He moved that the project be determined free of the Act’s jurisdiction, as it would not “remove, fill, dredge, or alter” the area in question.

This passed, 8 votes to 0, and the commissioners wished the builders well.

Komerzan told them First Generation plans to remain as landlords to the residents, and prefers to “do

everything in-house” so as to “not let things get out of hand, as far as upkeep and tenants.”

Co-owner Veaceslav Falceanu added that the company has spoken with a number of neighbors. “So far, everyone is happy,” he said. “We try to always work around and find ways to be nice wherever we go – we want to create friends, not enemies. That’s our goal.”

On Wednesday, six days later, the First Generation delegation returned to town hall for their second meeting with the planning board. On October 28, the board had granted them a special permit to site the multi-family dwellings within the town’s Historic Industrial zone, subject to a long list of special conditions.

This week the board reviewed the landscaping plan, an updated site plan, and sample photographs of the six-foot-tall screening the company plans to put up around the dumpsters.

At the board’s recommendation, the company had added six-foot-wide walkways up to each of the

four-unit buildings, and smaller walkways from each apartment’s back porch to the parking lot.

Pollock and planning board member Sage Winter praised the landscaping proposal, which included little bluestem grass, cinquefoil, and catmint as well as the maples, winterberry, hazelnut, and two varieties of serviceberry.

Winter pointed out that serviceberry fruit is edible.

After a short discussion, planning board chair Ron Sicard moved that “the conditions have been satisfied by the planning board at this point,” which passed 5 to 0. “I appreciate you didn’t cut any corners,” he told the company representatives.

One neighbor, Carlyn Saltman, asked if the fire department would weigh in on the plans, and pointed out that a building had burned last year “a stone’s throw away” on H Street. Sicard told her that this would fall under the jurisdiction of the town building inspector, who will “handle the next part” of the company’s request.

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Week of November 24

PAPER

Week of December 1

in Montague



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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
DIVISION OF ST. THOMAS
AND ST. JOHN

Case No. ST - 2025 - CV - 00292
ACTION FOR
DEBT FORECLOSURE OF LIEN
AND BREACH OF CONTRACT

CAPTAIN'S COMMAND AT BLUEBEARD'S
BEACH CLUB OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.,
Plaintiff,

vs.
TERRI SEVENE CAPUCCI, MICHAEL SEVENE,
JAMES C. SEVENE, JR., and "JOHN DOE"
being all unknown heirs, Successors, and assigns of
Barbara L. Sevene claiming a right, title, lien, estate
or interest in Week Number 10 in Villa Unit Number
225 in Captain's Command at Bluebeard's Beach
Club, an Interval Ownership Condominium,
Defendants.

SUMMONS

To: "John Doe", being all unknown heirs, successors
and assigns of Barbara L. Sevene and all persons
claiming a right title, lien, estate or interest in Week
Number 10 in Villa Unit Number 225 in Captain's
Command at Bluebeard's Beach Club, an Interval
Ownership Condominium, Parcel Nos. 100-A, 100-B,
and 100-C together with easements "A" and "B" on
Parcel 100- REM No. 4 Estate Frenchman's Bay Quar-
ter, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

Within the time limited by law (see note below) you
are hereby required to appear before this Court and
answer to a complaint filed against you in this ac-
tion and in case of your failure to appear or answer,
judgment by default will be taken against you as de-
manded in the Complaint, for

DEBT AND FORECLOSURE OF LIEN
AND BREACH OF CONTRACT.

PURSUANT TO COURT ORDER FOR SERVICE
BY PUBLICATION ENTERED BY HON. JUDGE
SIGRID M. TEJO ON NOVEMBER 4TH, 2025.

Witness my hand and the Seal of this Court
this 5th day of November, 2025.

TAMARA CHARLES
Clerk of the Court

By: Donna D. Donovan, Court Clerk Supervisor

Richard H. Dollison, Esq.,
Attorney for Plaintiff
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P.O. Box 6135
St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. 00804

NOTE: This defendant, if served personally, is re-
quired to file his/her answer or other defenses with
the Clerk of this Court, and to serve a copy thereof
upon the plaintiff's attorney within twenty one (21)
days after service of this summons, excluding the
date of service. The defendant, if served by publi-
cation or by personal service outside of the juris-
diction, is required to file his/her answer or other
defense with the Clerk of this Court within thirty
(30) days after the completion of the period of publi-
cation or personal service outside of the jurisdiction,
and to serve a copy thereof upon the attorney for
the plaintiff, and in the case of any form of mailing
requiring a signed receipt, within 30 days from the
date of receipt as indicated by the signed receipt.

GILL from page A1

history of violence before the inci- dent, and is frequently around other people and animals. “He’s been a good dog. He listens, he learns well, he’s smart,” said Powling. Powling suggested the injury could have re- sulted from Taco trying to play too roughly, rather than aggression.

“This dog, all he wants to do is play and play and play,” said Pow- ling’s mother Susan Gregoire. “It’s just terrible what happened.”

Animal control officer Kyle Dragon testified that Taco is vacci- nated and licensed, and that neither Taco nor his owner has a history of problems.

Little’s attorney John DiBartolo said his client didn’t want Taco to be euthanized, only to be properly restrained so he cannot injure other pedestrians and cyclists.

The board determined Taco was a “nuisance” rather than “dangerous.” Dangerous dogs must be restrained any time they are outside, but the “nuisance” label allows Taco to con- tinue to run and play freely within the woods at the rear of the family’s property, provided he stays more than 100 feet away from the road.

“I want to look at all the own- ers and say, ‘Don’t let this happen again,’” said selectboard member John Ward. “That’s a nasty-look- ing gash on her arm. Could that happen from a playful dog? Yes, it could, without that dog being a malicious dog.”

‘Mature’ Cop Hired

Police chief Christopher Red- mond recommended a number of proposed updates to the depart- ment’s detail policy, which the board unanimously approved.

The changes include police not having to wear a body camera while directing traffic. “It’s just impracti- cal,” Redmond said, “probably go- ing to be blocked by the traffic vest, and the battery’s never going to last a full day on standby.”

The new policies also recom- mend that officers “minimize stress” on cruisers while on detail duty by limiting idling and use of the vehi-

cle’s air conditioner, flashing lights, and camera.

The board appointed Darren Gale as a part-time police officer. Gale is currently a part-time officer in Ber- nardston and a firearms safety in- structor. When Ward asked if Gale was “a good fit for Gill,” police ser- geant John Richardson, who worked with Gale in Bernardston for 15 years, answered in the affirmative.

“He’s very mature, laid back,” Richardson said. “He’s not look- ing to make waves. He knows what small-town policing is about.”

The board approved a request to allow the town’s administrative clerk to work for the police depart- ment, provided the employee’s total hours for all departments do not exceed 19 in a given week. The ad- ditional time will be paid from the police budget. Redmond said he could use about one to three hours of administrative help each week, and pointed out that “civilian” wag- es are far lower than what an officer would be paid to do the work.

The department is replacing all three “mobile data terminals” in its cruisers, thanks to \$11,409 from the federal Edward J. Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant program, \$4,700 from the CONNECT grant the town received through the Frank- lin County Opioid Task Force, and \$1,000 from the town’s Northfield Mount Hermon donation account. The current vehicle-mounted tablets are from 2018, and are no longer covered by a warranty.

Penultimate Parcel

The board approved a conserva- tion restriction for 19 acres along Mountain Road owned by Dick French and Emily Samuels. The land abuts 59 acres which the cou- ple placed under conservation in 2019, and includes 10.7 acres des- ignated as “priority habitats of rare and endangered species.”

French said this is the 17th parcel of land he and his wife have con- served. The couple donated 10.5 acres of forest land to the town in 2022. He expects to conserve one fi- nal parcel of land next year.

DISTRICT from page A1

expense overall.”

Genovese said he planned to ask town selectboards for feedback on including a five-town option, as he did not think “anyone has the appet- ite” for starting the planning pro- cess over from scratch.

State funding for the STRPB has been extended through June, he announced, but the Office of Campaign and Finance Information advises that it cannot hire a profes- sional to promote the vote outcome. With private funds, anyone can reg- ister with their town clerk to create a ballot question committee.

Genovese suggested spending the remainder of the grant to im-

prove the STRPB’s website.

Northfield member Deb Potee recommended recruiting young parents to help with outreach, as they can “speak to what they want for their child.... They’re the ones who will be dealing with, potential- ly a school that might have a popu- lation of 60 in four years.”

“At what point do people say, ‘We’ve gone over the cliff! Now I want to regionalize,’” Potee asked.

The Gill-Montague regional school committee held a meeting at the same time on Tuesday.

Business manager Joanne Bli- er reported that an “early look” at see **DISTRICT** next page

“My wife and I just love the land,” French told the *Reporter*. “I’m 84. I’ve been walking the land since I was eight years old,” he said. “I’ve gotten to know most of the trees since they were small.”

Other Business

The board approved a request to install a utility pole at 182 Main Road, after attendees aired com- plaints about Verizon’s responsive- ness. The pole will allow electricity and phone wires to reach a home at the address that has no property abutting the road.

Former fire chief Gene Beaubien, who lives across the street, said he was not fighting the new pole, but thought it was too close to an exist- ing pole and would do nothing to ad- dress the problem of sagging wires at the location. Beaubien warned that ambulances and fire trucks ap- proaching the property are at risk of hitting the wires.

Eversource technician Dave Me- agher said the low wires belong to Verizon, and the request should go to them. Beaubien said he had tried to reach the telephone company for a year and a half to no avail.

Neighbor Dan Flaggs said Verizon didn’t respond to his complaints un- til a truck on his property knocked down a wire and several poles.

The board voted to offer the po-

sition of assistant to the assessors to Gill resident Danielle Rousseau. Diane Sumrall, the former principal assessor, will continue to work part- time to train the new employee. The board agreed to check back on the status of Sumrall’s temporary em- ployment in January.

The board approved using the highway department budget to transfer the bucket assembly from the department’s 30-year-old truck to its 20-year-old truck, at an es- timated cost of up to \$4,000. High- way superintendent John Miner announced that the state is offering grants for culverts and unpaved roads, and he will try to get fund- ing for the town’s next “big-ticket item”: a front-end loader. He also proposed using Chapter 90 funds to get a new tractor, as his request for the funds has not been brought to town meeting for several years.

Bonnie Bloom was appointed to the energy commission through June 2027.

The town declared two heating oil tanks at the Riverside build- ing, and the oil inside them, to be “surplus.” Town administrator Ray Purington said he is explor- ing whether the oil can be used at another town building. If not, the town will “allow some- one to come take it off our hands,” or pay for disposal.

MONTAGUE from page A1

Falls Hydro LLC, could cost as much as \$10 million – roughly the total the town has in hand from grants and a Congressional ear- mark to fund the entire demolition.

A week ago the board was presented with four options ranging from a “base plan,” which would demolish five of the town’s nine build- ings using the current funding, to bringing down all nine and building new retaining walls on three sides of the hydro plant, which could add as much as \$5 million to the cost.

Board members generally supported a \$1,088,550 “amendment” of the town’s con- tract with Tighe & Bond to draw up designs, obtain permits, and implement some asbestos testing and abatement, but a final discussion and vote were postponed until this week to al- low more opportunity for public input.

Assistant town administrator Chris Nolan- Zeller began Monday’s discussion by going into detail about the existing funding, report- ing that he and town administrator Walter Ramsey were “continuing to make headway with getting buy-in from multiple [funding] partners at the state level,” but “haven’t heard back yet.”

Nolan-Zeller clarified that the original projected cost had included the “addition- al engineering and project management al- locations,” and that while the first stage of Tighe & Bond’s contract was covered by a separate MassDevelopment grant, the town had always planned to extend their work by

amending the contract. Moving on with the base plan in mind would keep the project on schedule, he said, while funding for total demolition is sought.

French was asked if the asbestos abate- ment included the hydro plant. “Yes,” he said. “I’ll say that with a question mark: depend- ing on if we have access.” He explained that the design phase would include “negotiating” with Turners Falls Hydro owner Eagle Creek Renewable Energy over access and other “potential issues or occupancies.”

After a brief discussion of the possibili- ty of taking the powerhouse by eminent do- main – which town planner Walter Ramsey said could lead to “years of litigation” which would not be financed by development grants – the board approved the amendment.

Block Grant Spending

The board approved a request from the Montague Food Security and Sustainabili- ty Coalition for an appropriation of \$3,250 to purchase produce and groceries for food pantries in Montague. The money will come from the “discretionary” fund of the Com- munity Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and be handled by the Brick House Community Resource Center, a social ser- vice agency in Turners Falls.

The request was presented by Tom Taaffe, the executive director of the Brick House. Taaffe said the project had previously been funded by the United Way, which covered 15

weeks of food from a local farm, but “pre- cisely when the 15 weeks were up, the SNAP crisis kicked in” during the federal govern- ment shutdown. Taaffe said the project was “an important lifeline for people who are hungry, and we’d like to continue it for a few more weeks.”

Ramsey noted that several town depart- ments are members of the food security co- alition, that a balance of almost \$68,000 sat in the discretionary fund, and that the appro- priation was consistent with the goals of the CDBG program.

The board’s vote to support the request was unanimous.

The board also voted to request that the state Department of Housing and Commu- nity Development allow three ongoing CDBG grants for housing rehabilitation to be ex- tended through June 2026.

Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Au- thority, which manages the town’s CDBG programs, told the board that the housing au- thority had received fewer applications for re- hab assistance than usual in recent years, and that a number of owners who did apply were ineligible under income guidelines.

McHugh said that the funds may also be repurposed from housing rehab to another use if there are insufficient qualified appli- cants, and that the grants in question would not be affected by the policies of the current federal administration, but that the FY’26

grants might. He added that staff at his agen- cy had recently attended a training on the up- coming grant cycle, and that officials were “carrying on as if all the money is there.”

Other Business

Nolan-Zeller expressed great pleasure at seeing the state Department of Environ- mental Protection removing contaminat- ed soil from under the town parking lot on First Street slated to be the site of affordable housing constructed by Pioneer Valley Hab- itat for Humanity.

A letter endorsing a request from the state Department of Fish and Game to purchase a parcel of land on Ripley Road from private owners was approved by the board. The land, 26 acres of open space wildlife habitat owned by Sam Lovejoy and Kathy Schermer- horn, sits next to a wide swath of similar land owned by Fish and Game.

Ramsey said the parcel is already subject to a “tax break” under the state’s Chapter 61A program, which reduces taxes on land con- served for “agricultural or horticultural” use, so the net loss in local revenue was only pro- jected at around \$500 a year.

At the request of the parks and recreation department, the use of public property was approved for the annual Sawmill River 10K road race, which starts and ends in Montague Center on New Year’s Day.

The next selectboard meeting will be held Monday, November 24.

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DISTRICT from previous page

the contribution Montague is offering for FY’27, the so-called “affordable” assessment, “did not come in as high as I was hoping.” Last year the assessment increased 4.3%, she said, but this year town officials predict growth around 3%, or about \$350,000 less.

At the same time, Blier said, the current year’s budget banked on state Rural Aid increasing from about \$150,000 to \$480,000, but less was awarded statewide and the aid will be \$404,740, adding a \$75,000 deficit.

Blier reported that recent repairs to the high school tennis courts had failed, and though she successfully lobbied for a \$75,000 state earmark to reimburse Montague and Gill for the expense, “we really need to basically tear them up and start over,” at about \$200,000 per court.

Blier said Montague is in a “difficult place” to receive capital requests, with a merger of Hillcrest and Sheffield elementary schools, a new county tech school building, and a new downtown library all on the horizon.

The state will reimburse 77% of the cost of a new Gill Elementary School roof. “If we have a just under \$4 million roof,” she said, “that would leave \$1.5 million for the town of Gill.”

Interim superintendent Tari Thomas shared an 11-page *Report of Entry Findings*, highlighting strength and weakness but warning of “a critical and immediate need to attend to the emotional and social interests and needs

of our dedicated staff,” and that “adults’ low expectations are negatively impacting student achievement.”

Thomas reported that candidates for Gill principal will be interviewed December 1 and 4.

Student representative Olivia Wolbach said high school students are planning a canned food drive at next Monday’s flag football game and bonfire, raising pledges for Monte’s March to benefit the regional food bank, and organizing a toy drive for Community Action Head Start.

The committee discussed the six-town proposal.

“I think a merger with Pioneer [Valley] would take Montague’s affordable assessment and throw it out the window,” Blier told them.

“The politics of budgeting would become more complex – absolutely,” said Montague member Steve Ellis. “But if we don’t merge, I am going to continue to be concerned that we lack that critical mass... We need to make sure we are not afraid to do things before we have a critical problem that creates an unrecoverable error related to enrollment.”

Ellis suggested the STRPB’s remaining funding could be used to carry out an in-depth survey of parents and students across the six towns. Gill member Bill Tomb, who serves on the STRPB, said he thought only about \$12,000 remained in the account.

The STRPB and Gill-Montague school committee will both meet next on December 2.



LEVERETT from page A1

patch. In January 2024, the Evans family locked a gate to the trail and asserted that a right-of-way granted in the 1950s, currently claimed by the town as a function of a conservation restriction, did not authorize the public at large to travel through the property.

The selectboard disagreed, and the Evanses filed a lawsuit against the town that June. The town responded with a claim seeking to maintain the historic use of the trail, and the case remains in the courts.

Selectboard chair Patricia Duffy and member Jed Proujansky announced at Tuesday’s meeting that the ongoing lawsuit means the board will likely be unable to comment on or answer certain questions, then opened the floor for public comment.

All four residents who spoke during the short time allotted for comment were critical of the board’s handling of the matter, and many expressed anger at being limited to 30 seconds per person.

Resident Silas Ball, who has helped organize support for the Evans’s position including a call to attend Tuesday’s meeting, was allowed to speak for longer because he had been added to the agenda. He criticized the board on a number of grounds, including their solicitation at a prior meeting of testimonials in support of the public use of the right-of-way while neglecting to seek opposing views.

Ball also complained of a lack of “transparency,” noting that since June 2024 all of the town’s deliberations had been held in executive session, no background information about the article had been provided to voters ahead of the special town meeting, and no “plan B” was offered. He said he believed that town counsel Donna MacNicol had expressed an intention to take the right-of-way through adverse possession if the eminent domain article failed. He called this possibility a “sneaky move,” and warned that it would create an even more expensive legal battle.

Ball said the Evans family has spent over \$40,000 in legal fees so far. “Residents shouldn’t have to spend money defending property rights,” he argued. The town’s fees to date have been approximately \$20,000, according to Proujansky.

Proujansky commented that he believed everybody was trying to do the best they can for the town.

“There’s enough divisiveness in the country right now,” he said. “Let’s not let it happen in Leverett.”

Selectboard member Tom Hankinson reported that he was planning to attend the “first direct meeting” between the selectboard and the Evans family on Wednesday in the hopes of “resolving the dispute once and for all.”

Reached for comment after Tuesday’s meeting, Duffy provided a written statement to the *Reporter*: “The town was sued, and so had to respond to the lawsuit. This required legal posted executive sessions. Since the Town Meeting, we have been moving forward with the family in what we hope is a positive direction. Accusations of sneakiness and bad behavior are misdirected and uninformed.”

Budget Ramp-Up

In a joint session, the selectboard and finance committee voted unanimously to recommend budget “guidance” for town departments of 2.5% maximum increases for FY’27, and that each department head should include a “level-services” budget with their request.

Fin com chair Phil Carter said the US consumer price index rose by 3.1% over the last year, but that it was necessary to do “everything we can to restrain spending.”

Fin com member Steve Weiss agreed that budgets should be restrained “as much as possible,” but said any uniform guideline would be “arbitrary,” and suggested that departments provide a level-services budget and a document explaining any changes from the current year. Weiss said that nearby towns have been using this method.

Police Force Grows

The selectboard approved requests from police chief Scott Minckler to hire a fifth part-time officer and to carry 40 hours of the chief’s vacation time over to 2026.

Minckler said availability of the department’s four part-time officers was spotty, that the addition of a fifth would help cover shifts, and that he has sufficient money in his budget to cover the cost.

The candidate he recommended, Connor Sormanti, is a full-time parole officer and has all the necessary certifications, passed all background checks so far, and showed “no red flags,” said Minckler. The board approved the request pending

a full background check.

Minckler said he has been unable to use all of his vacation time due to the staffing shortage. Two other officers will graduate from the police academy and begin regular shifts in December, he added, but will require several months of field training.

Grader Grant

Highway department superintendent Matt Boucher received the fin com’s unanimous recommendation to apply for a state pilot program grant of \$250,000 for a new road grader.

Replacement of the department’s 1998 grader is scheduled for several years from now in the town’s capital plan, but Boucher said the grant may not be available again in the future, and argued that it made sense to apply this year. The remainder of the estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 cost of the grader – the town’s most expensive single piece of equipment – could be covered by state Chapter 90 funding, but Boucher suggested the grant may have a better chance of approval if the town chips in as well.

Alternative solutions, such as sharing equipment with neighboring towns, were also discussed.

Other Business

Resident Apple Ahearn asked the selectboard to endorse a document titled “Declaration Defending Our Democracy, The US Constitution, and the Rule of Law.” Ahearn said similar resolutions have been introduced in 84 municipalities in 22 states, and explained the strategy as “kind of what we did in the Revolutionary War” with the Committees of Correspondence, urging that the federal government follow the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Resident Steve Nagy asked if Ahearn was calling for a revolutionary war.

“No,” she replied.

The board members said they would read the three-page declaration, and agreed to put the matter on the agenda for their next meeting.

The board unanimously agreed to a request from acting fire chief Amy Rice to support future maintenance and insurance costs for a rescue boat, if one is purchased by the Leverett Firefighters Association and donated to the town.

The board set a date of Saturday, May 2, for the annual town meeting.



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LEGAL NOTICE of PUBLIC MEETING

LEVERETT CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Leverett Conservation Commission, in accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act (MGL c.131 §40), will hold a public meeting on December 1, 2025 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Leverett Town Hall, 9 Montague Road, Leverett, MA to review a Request for Determination of Applicability submitted by Kriss Wanczyk for the installation of a replacement septic system in the 200’ Riverfront Area at **142 Depot Road**. The application is available for public inspection in the Conservation Commission Office on Wednesdays, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., or by appointment at (413) 548-1022 ext. 3.

This notice is also available at www.masspublicnotices.org.

LEGAL NOTICE of PUBLIC MEETING

LEVERETT CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Leverett Conservation Commission, in accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act (MGL c.131 §40), will hold a public meeting on December 1, 2025 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Leverett Town Hall, 9 Montague Road, Leverett, MA to review a Request for Determination of Applicability submitted by Judith and Tullio Inglese for construction of a single-family residence at **8 Ryans Hill Road**, involving grading within the 100’ buffer zone of a Bordering Vegetated Wetland. The application is available for public inspection in the Conservation Commission Office on Wednesdays, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., or by appointment at (413) 548-1022 ext. 3.

This notice is also available at www.masspublicnotices.org.

TOWN OF LEVERETT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC TREE HEARING

Notice is hereby given pursuant to MGL Chapter 40, §15C, and Section 4600 of the Leverett Zoning Bylaws of a joint public hearing of the Planning Board and Tree Warden at the request of the Town of Leverett Tree Warden to discuss the removal of trees along Dudleyville Road as part of the drainage construction project for the road.

The Public Tree Hearing will be held on **Wednesday, December 10th, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.** as part of the Planning Board’s regularly scheduled meeting at the Leverett Town Hall, 9 Montague Road. A link to join the hearing remotely will be available on the Planning Board’s posted agenda.

Trees to be discussed have been marked with an orange spray paint number which corresponds to the ID# listed in the chart at right for identification along the Road. Additional trees to be removed, that are not subject to a tree hearing, have been marked with an orange dot.

ID #	Over 10" DBH	Species
1	Y	Maple
2	Y	Maple
3	Y	Birch
4	Y	Birch
5	Y	Cluster (3)
6	Y	Birch
7	Y	Maple
8	Y	Black Birch
9	Y	Maple
10	Y	White Pine
11	Y	Red Oak
12	Y	Pine
13	Y	Hemlock
14	Y	Hemlock
15	Y	Hemlock
16	Y	Hemlock
17	Y	Hemlock
18	Y	Hemlock

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

MONTAGUE ZBA #25-13

Notice is hereby given that the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, December 10th, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.** VIA ZOOM and IN PERSON at the Montague Town Hall upstairs conference room, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA at the request of **Gina Govoni of Rural Development Inc.** for a Special Permit for Front Setback reduction to 13.5 ft where the Zoning requires 15 ft, Rear Setback reduction to 10.10 ft where the Zoning requires 30 ft under Sections 5.1.3 -Alterations; 5.5.3-Dimensional Relief and 9.2 of the Zoning Bylaws located at **10 Unity Street (Map 07, Parcel 016), in the Residential 1 (RS-1) District**. The filing is available for review at Town Hall. In-person meeting details and remote meeting login information can be found at www.montague-ma.gov/calendar.

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TECHNOLOGIES

Consider the Pickle

By JOSH WATSON

TURNERS FALLS – The food writer Harold McGee, in his book *Nose Dive: A Field Guide to the World’s Smells*, suggests an experiment likely first performed thousands of years ago: place some vegetable matter, perhaps a sliced cucumber, in two identical bowls, and cover the vegetables with water. In one bowl also add a spoonful of salt. After a few days or weeks you’ll have a bowl of pickles, with all their attendant aromas (“sour, cheesy, musty, cucumbery, floral”), and in the other bowl an inedible mess emitting “putrid cadaverine.”

In both bowls the cucumbers were impregnated with acids produced as microbes consumed the vegetable cells; the trick is to produce the right acid.

The verb “ferment” is derived from the Latin *fervere*, to seethe or boil. Any cucumber, left to itself, will succumb to microbes. In the unsalted water, it will seethe with anaerobic microbes consuming, among other things, sulfurous amino acids. However, a solution of the right salinity will provide an environment which allows the salt-tolerant microbes to thrive, to seethe and boil for the good of our tables.

T.L. Brunton, a 19th-century medical doctor and researcher who ran experiments on fermentation – and who may have coined the word “cadaverine,” according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* – marveled in the August 1, 1891 edition of

The British Medical Journal at the advances in medical understanding spurred by Louis Pasteur’s experiments with microbial fermentation.

“For even amongst these minute organisms the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest exists,” Brunton wrote, “like that which Darwin pointed out so clearly in the case of higher plants and animals. When two microbes are growing together, one may choke or destroy the other, just as weeds in a garden may choke the flowers...”

It is lactic acid with which we associate the taste of a pickle; and in our brine, first *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* thrives and begins to produce this acid, and as the lactic acid level increases and that bacteria declines, *Lactobacillus plantarum* begins to dominate. Apart from being deliciously sour, lactic acid is a probiotic contribution to our human microbiome.

The taste of acidity, while unpleasant if isolated, is a vital component of flavor, whether it comes from lactic acid, or vinegar, or citrus, or the sourness of yogurt. But, as Samin Nosrat points out in her 2017 book *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*, acid is a balancing ingredient, an ingredient that, like salt, reveals more intensely the flavor of other ingredients.

Think of the difference between the blandness of milk and the tang of a sharp cheddar. On the pH scale, the lower the number the more acidic, and between lime juice (just north of 2) and baking soda (8.45),

fermented cucumbers and sauerkraut fall between Dijon mustard and canned tomatoes, somewhere between 3 and 4.

In a 2019 article in the *Journal of Food Science Technology* titled “Culture fermentation of *Lactobacillus* in traditional pickled gherkins: Microbial development, chemical, biogenic amine and metabolite analysis,” Yusuf Alan tracks the development over 60 days of the acid content, salt content, and pH levels of six batches of gherkin pickles, five of which are brine fermentation only.

In each case, the acid and salt levels rise and then level off, and the pH level drops to the acidity we associate with a good sharp pickle (see figure at right).

Pickling with brine can be a delicate operation, as the salinity has to be strong but not-too-strong, and the brine temperature kept within a certain range.

Things can go wrong. Some years ago I shared my own recipe for refrigerator pickles with a friend. A couple of weeks later I called to ask her how they turned out and there was a long pause on the other end. “It didn’t work,” she said, and I understood.

But an intuitive approach is not uncommon. In the 2021 paper “On pickles: biological and sociocultural links between fermented foods and the human gut microbiome” published in the *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine*, authors Andrew Flachs and Joseph D. Orkin, investigating how our local or traditional fermented diets can lead to microbiomes that vary across cultures, ask several participants how they create their brines.

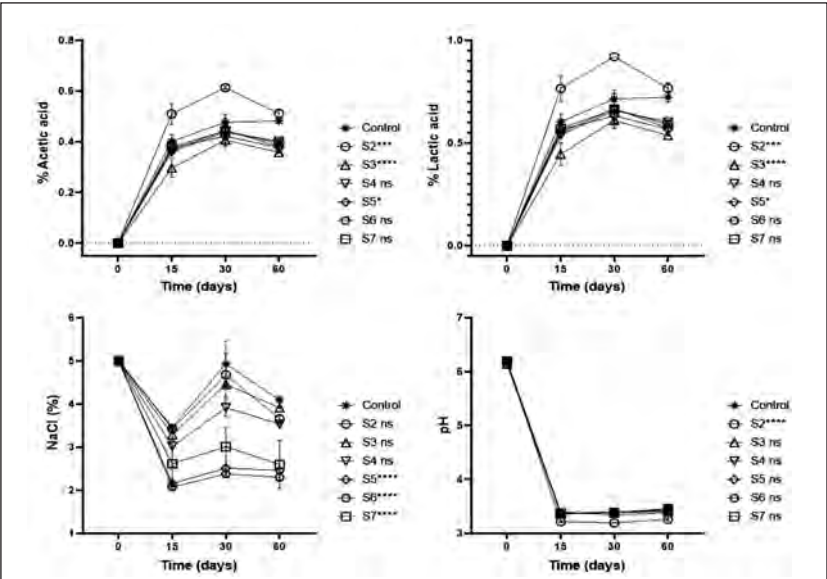
“When I make a brine I like it to taste like the sea,” answers one.

Another, a “trained cook and fermentation entrepreneur,” answers, “I don’t really do anything, I mean, I’m not making the vegetables ferment. I’m just creating an environment where that will happen. You know, I’ve learned along the way certain things to make sure that I have a better result, but I’m not actually fermenting things... I set it all up and I step out of the way.”

Flachs and Orkin contend that

the local traditions of fermentation our communities create, and the meals we make from those fermented foods, cause our microbiomes to vary across cultures, and, in that way, come to represent those cultures. We become the fermented foods we eat, and we carry those traditions with us.

Commercial fermentation requires a more rigorous approach than winging it. Not long ago, Katie Korby, the fermentation manager at Real Pickles in Greenfield, took me on a tour of the facility. Their pickling process is pure brining, no added microbes or yeast, no sterilization. They distribute only in the North-



Clockwise from top left: Changes measured in the levels of acetic acid, lactic acid, pH, and salt as six batches of gherkin pickles ferment. From Alan, Yusuf, “Culture fermentation of *Lactobacillus* in traditional pickled gherkins” (*Journal of Food Science Technology*, August 2019).



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UMASS from page A1

Administration Building listening to speakers, echoing pro-union chants, and holding signs that read, “No Contract, No Confidence.” Rally organizers distributed flyers, styled like wedding invitations, inviting Reyes to the union’s December 3 vote on whether members have “no confidence” in his leadership.

“What we need at UMass Amherst is a chancellor who will stand up for all of us, our students, staff, and our community. What we have is the exact opposite,” said Andrew Gorry, a co-chair of PSU.

Emily Gest, a spokesperson for the chancellor’s office, said that the protestors’ critiques are misdirected, and that the university has always bargained in good faith with unions.

“The Chancellor does not serve, and has never served, on the bargaining team,” Gest said in an email. “For the Chancellor or any party other than those designated as such to directly participate in the bargaining process would be inappropriate and counter to best practice in labor relations. The Chancellor appoints a team of labor relations specialists to serve as the university’s bargaining team.”

Jonah Vorspan-Stein, a PSU staff organizer and office manager, said that Reyes is still largely in control of union contract negotiations.

“While Chancellor Reyes has refused to attend any bargaining sessions, we understand that he is personally driving his team’s positions – including their takebacks and hardline strategies at the table,” Vorspan-Stein wrote. “Chancellor Reyes has spoken publicly and frequently about his desire to see PSU members’ cost-of-living increases tied to supervisor evaluations.”

After 38 bargaining sessions with no agreement, the university filed a petition last month with the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations requesting a state-appointed mediator. The filing states that the “impasse” exists over issues to do with wages, employee evaluations, sick leave, “anti-privatization,” excessive workloads, non-exempt compensatory time, bias and discipline, and grant-funded employees.

“Requesting the assistance of a mediator is a standard part of collective bargaining, codified in state law, that any party can request after substantive bargaining does not lead to resolution,” Gest said.

To date, 43 bargaining sessions with PSU’s “Unit A” employees have taken place, with four more scheduled through December 4.

According to Gest, six other unions have settled contracts in fewer than 20 bargaining sessions.

Some of those unions, though they all have separate contracts, were engaged in putting forward several “joint proposals” during the most recent round of bargaining. Vorspan-Stein said that the unions saw progress on some of those proposals, including the university committing to build a new childcare facility, which was the multi-union coalition’s central childcare demand.

“The unions also developed a few shared bargaining planks, such as ‘Raising the Floors’ for our lowest-paid members – which remains a key sticking point in PSU bargaining,” Vorspan-Stein said.

“It is becoming increasingly clear to me that Chancellor Reyes is not here for the common good,” Cooper, the PSU member and academic advisor, said to the crowd at last week’s rally. “Over the last 17 months, Chancellor Reyes has directed his team to bully us, stonewall us, delay us, mislead us, lie to us, and refuse to actually engage with any of these potential solutions.”

According to PSU leadership, the university’s filing for mediation means the school has put forward its final offer. It contains conditions that PSU finds unacceptable, including changing part of employees’ pay increases tied to cost-of-living-adjustment rates, and implementing a “merit pay” system with raises distributed to individuals based on job performance.

“The university is not attempting to replace cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) with merit pay,” Gest said. “The university’s proposal has been to continue having COLAs as part of the compensation system, but to integrate a performance-based compensation element alongside the COLA. Details on these proposals have been presented multiple times throughout the bargaining process.”

“We are saying ‘no’ to this Hunger Games university where members have to compete for their basic cost of living increases, and ‘no’ to a university that’s run like a corporation,” Gorry said to applause at the rally.

After the rally, demonstrators marched into the office building to deliver the “no confidence” vote invitations to Reyes’s office. The union representing faculty and librarians on campus, the Massachusetts Society of Professors, has already voted “no confidence” in the chancellor over the university’s mass arrest of anti-war protestors camping on the

campus lawn last spring. The university’s filing for mediation and final offer are now before the state Department of Labor Relations, which will assess the negotiations so far, decide whether there is truly no more room for compromise, and potentially force a deal. The threat of impasse has been used in negotiations with several other campus unions, according to PSU.

“This is a legal weapon that has very rarely been used by UMass historically, but under Chancellor Javier Reyes’s short tenure in Amherst, has now either been triggered or threatened at nearly every campus bargaining table,” Vorspan-Stein wrote. “Our state’s labor laws are unfortunately broken. While a non-binding ‘mediation’ process may sound harmless enough, the threat lies in what comes after: the power for an employer to impose its terms unilaterally – including takebacks – on its workers without any agreement or consent.”

PSU, which operates under the Massachusetts Teachers Association, has about 2,400 members at the university’s Amherst and Boston campuses. Both groups are in negotiations with the university leadership, but Gorry said that Amherst employees are not being offered the same conditions as their Boston counterparts. While UMass employees in Boston are bargaining for a \$60,000 annual salary floor and pay increases based on longevity, he said, the university has refused to offer Amherst employees the same conditions.

According to Gest, different proposals have been offered to the units “based on the different economic factors affecting each campus.”

Gorry also said that UMass Amherst employees would be required to work remotely during weather emergencies, whereas Boston employees would not have to work at all.

“You look at the difference in treatment and you have to ask, ‘Why does Javier Reyes hate his employees so much?’ I’m serious – is this what pride in the flagship university is supposed to look like?” Gorry said. “We don’t believe it’s too late to reset this relationship and turn things around, but that all depends on Chancellor Reyes changing course and treating us with respect.”

This article was published in partnership with The Shoestring (www.theshoestring.org).



PSU co-chair Andrew Gorry (at left) addresses the crowd at last Thursday’s on-campus rally.

LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on November 19, 2015: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

ing in the Montague Reporter did not “jive with” what had been said at the October 5 meeting.

Contracts and Survey in Gill

Cool on the Hill

On Monday, the Gill select-board meeting began with a visit from Ivan Ussach of the Gill historical commission. Ussach sought the town’s permission to survey on the Riverside Municipal Building property during the upcoming Phase II of the Battlefield Grant project.

The board approved the preliminary survey.

Resident Bill Tomb expressed his view on whether former district teachers should serve in negotiating over teachers’ contracts. “There was no conflict of interest,” he said. “My feeling is that it is sad that people would feel that perception is reality.”

Tomb added that he felt report-

Not all the cool shops in Turners Falls are downtown. PICKED: Art, Antiques, Furniture and More is just up the hill, and it is very cool indeed.

If you find yourself in need of a black shirt that once belonged to Johnny Cash (certified authentic); a life-sized cast iron horse’s head; a tractor-seat kitchen stool; or a free book – yes, most of the books in the shop are free – head on up the hill to PICKED at 194 Millers Falls Road.

The shop was opened two months ago by Jeremy Young and Lauren Grenier, who combined their skills and appreciation of interesting merchandise in the venture.

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on November 17, 2005: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Wishing the Skate Park A Speedy Recovery

After two years of neglect, the skate park in Turners Falls may soon be open once again. Suffering from neglect, a shortage of funds, and a decline in interest on the part of volunteers, the site now features ramps covered with peeling paint and a few broken benches.

Only the weeds, and the youth who climb over the fence to do kick flips, breathe a sign of life into the place.

A Quorum in Wendell

A cheer went up in Wendell town hall on November 9 when a 10th person walked in from the rainy night, making a quorum of the special town meeting. Two more townspeople entered in the next few minutes, but they received no cheer, as business was already under way.

The entire warrant was passed.

150 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on November 17, 1875: News from the Turners Falls Reporter’s archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

Hail, rain and snow. Oh, yes, this is a salubrious climate.

Dibble & Potter have bought a large lot of soft wood which they are selling at \$6.00 per cord.

The German singing school is making fine progress.

Road Commissioner Adams has struck a spring in blasting out the K street extension, necessitating more labor than was anticipated. He is getting along finely with the work.

D.M. Randall has bought a plantation down south. A plantation, mind you. We twice inquired the size of it, and learned at one time that it was 80 acres, at another time 800 acres.

A disappointed individual who could not secure a partner at the dance on Monday night, deliberately pulled out his wallet and offered to pay a lady \$5 if she would dance with him. But she wouldn’t trade,

and he was left upon a low shore.

Fred Colle has returned from a three week hunting excursion with much game. A half-starved dog came to his camp in the woods and remained several days, when a half dozen men came and accused Fred of stealing the animal and were going to pound him for it. But Fred’s gun explained to the fellows that he did not steal the dog, and also intimated that they had struck the wrong camp.

The most thoroughly disgusted man with the post office regulations lives in this town. He is in the habit of sending his clothes to a laundry in Troy NY by packet post and his bundle the other day contained a handkerchief with a note written on it, which was discovered by the post office folks, and the package was charged at double letter rates, amounting to a couple of dollars.

The tramp season has fully set in, and the business promises to be as good if not better than last year. Constable Allen puts up on an average ten of these impecunious wanderers nightly.



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The Week In High School Sports

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – Last Saturday, November 15, the Franklin Tech Eagles were eliminated from the statewide vocational playoffs in the quarterfinal round by the Cape Cod Regional Voc Tech Crusaders, 30 to 16.

It looked good for Tech initially. On the opening kickoff, Maxon Brunette received the ball on the 20-yard line, cut right, and ran down the near sideline all the way into the end zone, giving Franklin a 6-0 lead with a mere 13 seconds gone in the game. He then capped off his own score by converting the 2-pointer to increase the lead to 8-0.

The Crusaders did not fold,

though – in fact, a minute and 30 seconds later, they tied it up.

At the end of the quarter Hunter Donahue made an incredible over-the-shoulder catch, keeping the Eagles’ drive alive and leading to their next score. At 7:42 of the second period, Brady Gancarz pounded into the end zone and Mason Bassett hit Cole Bassett to make it 16-8.

On the next drive, Cape Cod faced a third-and-8 on their own 37, but a screen pass fooled everybody, leading to a first-and-goal from the 8-inch line. A QB sneak made it 16-14, but Tech denied the 2-point conversion to maintain a thin lead going into the half.

In the third quarter, a beautiful one-handed catch gave Cape Cod

another first-and-goal, and at 4:58 they took the lead, 22-16. Two minutes later, off a long run after an interception, they scored again to widen it to 30-16.

Franklin had some chances in the fourth quarter. Their defense kept the visitors out of the end zone, but their offense was unable to put together sustained drives and the Crusaders held on to win and progress deeper into the playoffs.

Quarterback Mason Bassett completed six passes for 53 yards. His targets were Donahue, Brunette, Nathan Sabolevski, and Cole Bassett. Brunette (58), Gancarz (27), and Sabolevski (26) led the rushing attack in yards, followed by Wyatt Whitman, Donahue, and Mason Bassett.

On defense, Nolyn Stafford, Whitman, and Donahue led the team in tackles, Sabolevski and Cole Gamache made sacks, Stafford nabbed an interception, and Gancarz, Stafford, Donahue, and Carsten Couture all knocked passes away. On special teams, Joseph DiSciullo kicked off three times for 101 yards, and made three punts for 103, while Brunette, Donahue, and Gancarz ran back kicks.

The loss does not end Franklin Tech’s season. At home on Turkey Day, they will try to avenge last year’s overtime loss to the Smith Vocational Vikings.



DAVID HOITT PHOTOS

Top: Franklin Tech’s Max Brunette threads through a crush of Cape Cod Crusaders during last Saturday’s small-school vocational state quarterfinal at Turners Falls. Seventh-seeded Cape Cod Tech dashed championship hopes for the second-seeded Eagles with the 30-16 upset. Above: Tech running back Brady Gancarz (right) gains yardage for the Eagles, with Crusader Chaz Thomas in hot pursuit.

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ELDEST from page A1

or memorial buttons.

Greenfield’s cane was lost for years, but found in a public works department vault and displayed in a glass case at town hall; its gold head was subsequently stolen, then located at an auction house and restored. Former mayor Bill Martin attempted to revive the tradition, but the last award we were able to find evidence of in Greenfield occurred in 2016. City clerk Kathy Scott told the *Reporter* the cane is currently stored in a vault.

In Montague the tradition appears to have lapsed after 1996, and former administrative assistant Wendy Bogusz, now town clerk, tells us the town’s cane long gathered dust in a town hall closet. As a result of the advocacy of resident John Reynolds, the award was reinstated in 2014, with the cane displayed in a glass case and decorative medallions or buttons given to recipients.

The most recent winner was Maxine Davis, who received the award in September 2024 and passed away several months later. Davis grew up in Iowa and moved to Massachusetts at the age of 19 after marriage. According to the *Greenfield Recorder*, she went on to raise six children as a single mother, working for 35 years in food service at UMass Amherst.

There was concern among town officials that Davis’s passing so soon after receiving the award might create the impression that the cane is “jinxed,” Goldman told her fellow selectboard members, but the gentleman her research revealed is the current oldest citizen enthusiastically embraced the honor.

Lee Evers, she said, “talked my ear off” when told he was “the top guy on the list,” which included four residents over the age of 100.

“After like 15 minutes, he was like ‘It’s nice talking to you, but I gotta go,’” she recounted. “He was going to St. Kaz to read palms, which he does every Thursday at 5!”

Evers’s son David told the *Re-*

porter that his father was born in 1923 in the Bronx, and moved to Los Angeles as an adult to help develop the Barbie doll for Mattel. After an earthquake he came back East, and in the 1970s moved to Franklin County, where his son lived.

David built a house for his dad in Montague Center. He is also a member of St. Kazimierz Society, where his father currently reads patrons’ palms each week. “He’s scary good at reading palms,” David told us.

Goldman said she had asked Potter how the town could honor all the people on the list, and Potter suggested that the COA could “have a little party” for them at the senior center. When Evers heard this he wanted “to do it right away, like last Thursday,” Goldman added, but Potter suggested December 11, when a get-together was already scheduled.

Selectboard member Rich Kulewicz supported that date, and suggested that the center host an event every year “to keep it going.”

He also urged Goldman to look at the medallions given to honorees. “Maybe I’m just not appreciating the beauty of them,” he said, “but I thought it was time for [something] maybe a little bit nicer.”

This energized selectboard chair Matt Lord, who said he knows “a few people who are into making buttons,” and could lead an effort to “spruce up the design a little bit.”

“It’s 2025,” Lord added, “and consent is important. We have someone who is clearly very consenting to being a golden cane recipient, but in the future, if someone else did feel it was cursed, we might want to have a plan on how we deal with that.”

Just before publication, Evers called us to say he was looking forward to the December 11 event at the senior center, though he seemed surprised he had been awarded the cane.

“Living here is much better than living in LA,” he said. “The people here are beautiful! I’ve earned \$147 at St. Kazimierz.”



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Above: Reader Don Plante shared this pic of seasonal finery.

THEATER REVIEW

Drama Club Brings Poe to Greenfield

By RAY DIDONATO

GREENFIELD – If you were under the mistaken opinion that Halloween is the only time of year for the spine tingling, think again.

On a cold Friday night in November, trees stripped of leaves and woodstoves alight with households cuddled by the cozy fire, I ventured to Greenfield High School to watch the GHS Drama Club production of *Nightfall with Edgar Allan Poe*, a stage adaptation of several dark tales by Edgar Allan Poe. The production ran for a total of three performances on the 14th and 15th.

Nightfall is written by Emmy-, Tony-, and Pulitzer-nominated playwright Eric Coble, who was born in Scotland but, according to his biography, “raised on Navajo and Ute reservations in New Mexico and Colorado.”

Under the co-direction of faculty members Anna Hartmann and Deborah Potee, the troupe of actors and crew brought to life three Poe stories, where the poet himself is injected as the main character into his own morbid tales as we enter his mind.

The black-box-style theater setup, which diverted us away from the auditorium seats to a more inti-



Edgar Allan Poe (Henry Anhalt) pleads with The Raven (Juliette Potee) as the narrators (Kali Lewis, Camden Toponce, and April Rooney Adams) look on.

mate and playful circle on the stage, allowed the audience to feel the emotion of the performance. The simple set consisted of period-looking pieces of furniture and simple door and window frame construction, which helped draw attention toward the actors themselves.

We are first introduced to Poe (Henry Anhalt), sitting at a desk, musing. The poet is then joined by three other narrators (Kali Lewis,

April Rooney Adams, and Camden Toponce). The scene begins standard enough, seeming like an innocent recital of a well-known poem, but the emotion builds as Poe laments love lost.

It is then that the Raven (Juliette Potee) bursts through the door, feathered and wearing a black mask, Death itself, that greedy alb-tross, which nags and stalks us all,

see **DRAMA CLUB** page B5

BOOK REVIEW

Ian McEwan, *What We Can Know* (Knopf, 2025)

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

LEVERETT – The title of Ian McEwan’s latest novel, *What We Can Know*, suggests a definitive answer to the question it poses. But that’s not quite what readers get. Rather, the novel looks at the ways we try to discover what we want to know, what problems we encounter, and what we do with the knowledge we acquire.

We could, for example, learn about the past through studying history or literature, which is what Tom Metcalfe does. A lecturer in English at the fictional South Downs University, he narrates much of *What We Can Know*, so it’s through his eyes that we see the England of 2119, when the novel is set.

It’s a bunch of islands, all that remains since the Inundation that drowned most of the country. As a result, Oxford’s Bodleian library is now housed in the mountains of North Wales, and the Cotswolds, formerly a region of rolling hills, are a bunch of small islands, reachable only by low-tech boats that

scarcely resemble today’s ferries.

How did this come about? The Inundation was caused by a nuclear weapon that failed to reach its American target and landed in the Atlantic, provoking a tsunami that killed millions. Tom and his fellow academics look back on our time as a period of great, but chaotic, energy: “What brilliant invention, what bone-headed greed. What music...

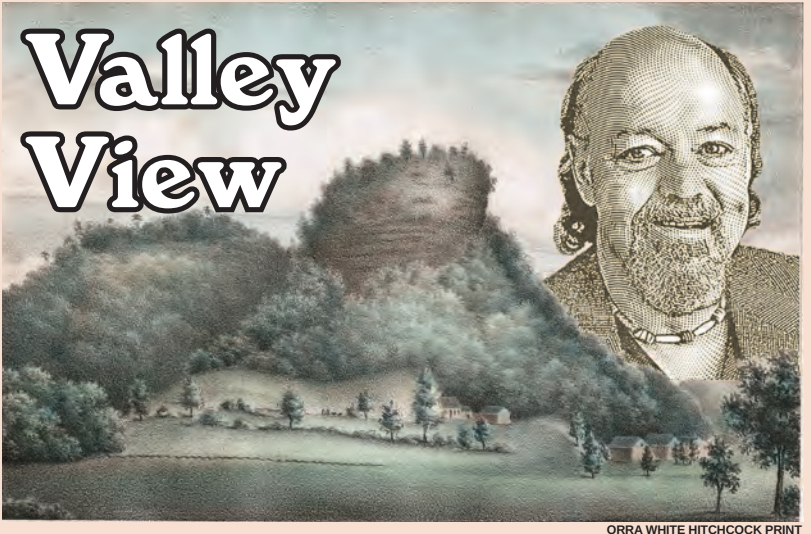


what wild breaks and sense of humor: people flying 2,000 miles for a one-week holiday, buildings that touched the cloud base, razing ancient forests to make paper to wipe their backsides...”

Food was plentiful and varied, and many people lived lavish lives. But they – we, that is – were living through what Tom’s world calls the Derangement. Everyone knew about global warming, knew the weather was hotter, the glaciers were melting, the seas were rising, but did little about it. Some argued against the idea of climate change, among them the poet Francis Blundy, “a brilliant man but such a fool” in his own wife Vivien’s opinion.

In 2119 everyone lives on protein cake and drinks acorn coffee: housing is cramped, transportation difficult, life expectancy is 62, and there are hardly any flowers, trees, or animals. Visits to America are impossible without the protection of a warlord, because of fighting among “various armies and their offshoots.” The hegemonic power

see **BOOK REVIEW** page B8



Valley View

‘I Did Love Hunting...’

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Sunday morning. Gray, soggy and still. A bit foggy. Somber daybreak ramble in the rearview.

I’m seated in the everyday parlor. Reclining. Feet up. Laptop on my thighs. Autumnal thoughts spinning, swirling, gusting – drifting off to my old pheasant-, grouse- and woodcock-hunting coverts.

What unleashed this train of thought? Probably the damp, raw, overcast weather. None better for following eager, agile, tail-wagging flush-and-retrieve gundogs through thick, mucky coverts – an impenetrable alder row here, a swampside poplar grove there, windborne cattail fuzz, ragweed and goldenrod dust tickling your nostrils through bloodletting, briar-laced tangles.

We’re now more than halfway through the six-week upland bird-hunting season and I haven’t dug out my tattered Filson oil-cloth bibs, laced up my 16-inch Bean Hunting Shoes, shouldered my side-by-side – or even bought a license. At this point, it’s looking like it’s not gonna happen, for the second straight year. Old friends would find that shocking. But here I sit, halfway into my eighth year of retirement, with no regrets or laments.

I had my day.

For many decades I hunted hard, wearing myself ragged before arriving at work to battle deadline. I savored the exercise and challenge in brisk fresh air, always fine-tuning my wing-shooting and dog-handling skills.

Now battered and bruised from years of punishment, my eyesight not what it used to be, and many of my best hunting buddies dead, I just don’t need it and have nothing to prove.

My physical out of a valued physical activity reminds me of my last years on the softball diamond. At 41, I was losing my edge. My legs were shot, my speed gone, my arm and desire to continue weakening. I abruptly

called it quits, and never looked back. Haven’t swung a bat since, or even entertained the thought of doing so. Not once.

I probably should have walked away after blowing out my knee on the baseball diamond in May of 1976. But I discovered softball and had to swallow my pride, robbed of my speed and agility. Fifteen years later, I learned that life could be enjoyable without the Grande Ole Game and its dug-out camaraderie.

I now realize the same thing about upland bird hunting and owning gundog companions. I don’t need it, thank you.

That’s not to say I’ve lost my hunting instinct. Quite the contrary, the pull is strong when digging for information about various topics related to nature and place. Seems there’s always something new on the agenda to satisfy my hunting needs.

Toward the end of this past summer, a dear workaholic friend expressed to a mutual friend his concern about my decision to stop hunting. He didn’t understand how a man who enjoyed wing-shooting like I did could just walk away, cold turkey. Had something gone awry? The torn Achilles tendon five or more years back? Something else he was unaware of?

“No,” our mutual friend responded. “I think he just moved on to other interests.”

The questioner wasn’t convinced. He was about to have a litter of fine, top-pedigree English Springer Spaniel puppies on the ground, and wanted to give me one of my choosing. A generous offer, indeed, but one I politely declined. I didn’t need new dog responsibilities. Problem was that, after losing my last gundog to a dreadful poisoning, I had discovered the freedom of not having to care for a dog year-round for the pleasures of a six-week hunting season.

Meanwhile, the man the breeder had conferred with, and with whom I have hunted many miles of dense cover over the past three

see **VALLEY VIEW** page B3

Pet of the Week



‘WALKER’

Meet Walker, an energetic adult Staffordshire Bull Terrier/Rottweiler mix, who loves squeaky toys and chasing his ball and laser pointers. Walker’s people describe him as goofy, sweet, athletic, enthusiastic, clever, independent, and protective. After exercise and stimulation, Walker becomes a couch potato.

He is good with kids and dogs, and is current on his shots, micro-chipped, neutered, and housetrained. While he has had some training, this handsome fellow can still be re-

active to cars, people, and dogs on walks, and would do best with an experienced adopter. He needs additional training and more exercise to reach his full potential.

Walker is located in New Salem, and has no adoption fee. To apply to adopt this gallant pup, find “Available Community Animals” under the “Adopt” menu at www.dakinhumane.org. A potential adopter must submit an application, interview and meet the pet, and sign an adoption contract.



A Still-Growing Part of the Solution

By LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE CENTER – Activists in the Sixties and Seventies had banners and bumper stickers that said, “If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem.” It inspired a lot of activism and social change, and I think of Montague Neighbors as an extension of that spirit.

The local all-volunteer non-profit organization is a form of local activism that deals in solutions. It addresses dignity and social isolation among elders, and offers a sense of purpose to its volunteers who provide rides, help with small household tasks, social visits, and more to people over 60 who live in Montague.

In a political climate scarred by division and anger, anything that brings out the best in people by bringing them together with good intent is a worthy endeavor and worth celebrating, which is what happened last week when about 35 members and volunteers gathered for lunch at the Gill Montague Senior Center to celebrate the one-year anniversary of Montague Neighbors offering services.

In the course of that year, there were 185 service requests ranging



Gill Montague Council on Aging director Roberta Potter (standing) visits with attendees at the celebratory lunch for Montague Neighbors on November 8.

from household tasks to rides, pet care, and more. Helen Gibson Uguccioni, the president of the board, hoped to bring together people from Montague’s five villages who are united in their dedication to this organization but may not have met.

It worked!

“I sat with some familiar-looking faces and people I did not know, yet I was quickly brought into the conversations,” says Trish Mailler of Montague Center. “It was so nice to learn something new from a neighbor in town, and be privy to some of their stories. The mood was so upbeat, I couldn’t help but smile. And the food from Diemand Farm was excellent!

“I decided to become a paying member that afternoon, since this program helps everyone, and in these difficult times I feel that it’s a really important program to support. So, a big thanks to the women who got the ball rolling for all of us over a certain age!”

As the organization becomes more visible, men are also joining the ranks.

“I recently retired, and finally had some extra time,” says Rick Henning, who lives just outside the village of Montague Center. “I was looking for an opportunity to serve and get to know more people in town. Montague Neighbors sounded like just the right organization with a great mission, and I’m happy to have joined. They have a wonderful group of volunteers who offer rides to appointments, run errands, help with technology, and more. They have a great database to match the volunteers with service requests. Neighbors helping neighbors is the way to go.”

Those are the words I hoped to hear when I began attending organizational meetings a few years ago, but hopes and wishes alone would not have brought this to fruition. To say that Helen Gibson Uguccioni has been a force is an understatement. She has recruited board members, rolled up her sleeves and learned to build a website, encouraged, inspired, cajoled, and persuaded people to get involved in one of the many committees – and she’s not done yet.

To continue to grow, Montague

Neighbors needs more members and volunteers. And the need for services will only grow. National and local demographics show a giant population bulge among aging Baby Boomers.

People who make the time to volunteer for Montague Neighbors aren’t duplicating services that are already available; it fills gaps left by other organizations.

It helps Roberta Potter, chair of the Council on Aging (COA) do her job. “I refer at least two people to Montague Neighbors every week,” she says, “mostly people who need transportation, which the COA does not do. Sometimes they’re uncomfortable using FRTA, and sometimes it just doesn’t work out for them.

“I’ve also hooked up a few people for just friendly visits. Social isolation is a big problem and Montague Neighbors can help with that. It is really addressing some problems that the COA cannot and that LifePath cannot – it’s a huge service to the older members of our community. And sometimes, just being a member of something with a well-defined purpose feels good.

“I hope more people will join. The membership fee can be waived, if necessary.”

As we approach the holidays, a gift membership to Montague Neighbors would be an original and thoughtful present. Deciding to get involved could be a gift to yourself, an opportunity to serve, connect to your community, and make a significant difference in someone’s life. There’s no weekly work requirement. Like the best part-time job, you can make your own hours. And volunteers do not need to be 60.

There’s no denying the vulnerability that comes with aging. At 80 or close enough, things happen, even the most independent people need help that’s hard to find, and federal budget cuts are trickling down to the local level and impacting services.

I can either watch it all in dismay, or try to do my best to be part of the solution. I can be a member/volunteer, and maybe you can, too.

To learn more about Montague Neighbors, call (413) 672-3095 or visit www.montaguevillages.org.

Senior Center Activities NOVEMBER 24 TO DECEMBER 5

WENDELL Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is December 3. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.	9 a.m. Stretch & Balance 10 a.m. Line Dancing 11 a.m. Social Stringer Wednesday 12/3 9 a.m. Interval 10 a.m. Chair Aerobics 11:30 a.m. Bingo 1 p.m. Veterans’ Services Thursday 12/4 9 a.m. Barre Fusion 10 a.m. Pilates Flow 12 p.m. Brown Bag 12:30 p.m. Tech Help Friday 12/5 9 a.m. Quilting & Open Sew	6 p.m. Library Trustees Tuesday 11/25 9 a.m. Chair Yoga 12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday 3 p.m. Tai Chi 4:15 p.m. Spanish Lessons Wednesday 11/26 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo 4 p.m. Mat Yoga Thursday 11/27 <i>Closed</i> Friday 11/28 <i>Senior Center open; no classes or programs</i> Monday 12/1 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 1 p.m. Kitchen Club 4 p.m. Beginning Yoga Tuesday 12/2 9 a.m. Chair Yoga 12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday 3 p.m. Tai Chi 4:15 p.m. Spanish Lessons Wednesday 12/3 9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo 4 p.m. Mat Yoga Thursday 12/4 1 p.m. Pitch 3:30 p.m. Montague Neighbors Friday 12/5 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 2 p.m. Chair Dance
ERVING Open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Daily snacks and coffee. Fitness room and pool table open. Monday 11/24 9 a.m. Good for U 10 a.m. Seated Fitness 12 p.m. Pitch 1 p.m. Yoga Tuesday 11/25 9 a.m. Stretch & Balance 10 a.m. Line Dancing 11 a.m. Social Stringer Wednesday 11/26 9 a.m. Interval 10 a.m. Chair Aerobics 11:30 a.m. Bingo Thursday 11/27 <i>Closed</i> Friday 11/28 <i>Closed</i> Monday 12/1 9 a.m. Good for U 10 a.m. Seated Fitness 12 p.m. Pitch 1 p.m. Yoga Tuesday 12/2 8:15 a.m. Nail Clinic 8:30 a.m. Nurse	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 December 16. Luncheons are the fourth Friday at town hall. For more information, call (413) 548-1022, email coa@leverett.ma.us , or check the town newsletter or the LeverettConnects listserv. 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 11/24 10:15 a.m. Aerobics 11 a.m. Chair Exercise 4 p.m. Beginning Yoga	

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VALLEY VIEW from page B1

and a half decades, has reached out a few times about teaming up for a hunt. “Get your license,” he implored on the first attempt. “They’re stocking out in back of Bob Thayer’s again. You’d love it.”

It’s true. I did love hunting that Hopewell Swamp covert on the Hatfield-Whately line, not to mention chatting with Thayer and enjoying his Yankee twang. He had attended many a square dance with my grandfather, Waldo Willis Sanderson, and his girlfriend Isabelle, and thus took a shine to me.

Thayer was the gamekeeper and one of the stockers of pheasants raised in the Hatfield Fish and Game Club pen near his home. He used to call me on the phone with tips about his stocking routine. So, I knew every inch of his property and that of the abutters, and shot many a cackling cock pheasant, whistling woodcock, and startling partridge there before he died and his farm was sold.

But why return to this challenging covert physically compromised by slower reflexes, unsteady knees and, most importantly, diminished eyesight? The eye doctor tells me my eyesight isn’t that bad, but I know it ain’t what it used to be.

To describe my eyesight woes to doctors and their nurses, I like to explain to them that, “I used to be able to sit at the base of a tree and count the ants walking along a branch 10 feet overhead. Now, without my glasses on, I squeeze toothpaste on the wrong side of the brush.”

Such realizations negatively impact a shooter’s confidence, and regardless of the game, confidence is the key to success. The confident competitor tackles difficult challenges with aplomb, consistently outperforming timid companions.

How can I win? Whether looking through newfangled progressive lenses or the trusty old non-prescription shooting glasses I purchased when my eyesight was superior, my vision isn’t sharp and true. So how can I possibly shoulder a shotgun with my same old confidence? And without it, how can I possibly maintain a tolerable success rate?

That said, who knows? Maybe one of my buddies will catch me in the right mood and succeed in coaxing me back into the field before the season ends in a couple weeks. It’s not out of the realm of possibility.

Even though I’d enter the field harboring doubt, I believe that if everything lined up just right, I could still execute a quick, accurate shot on a cackling cock pheasant or fluttering grey ghost screened by brushy obstructions.

Having experienced the routine thousands of times, there’s always a chance, despite my balky knees and diminished eyesight, that my flying target will fold up and drop lifelessly into the soggy tangles.

Wishful thinking?
Likely not.

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



New Club Member; Fallout of Breakups; Barrel of Water; Guardrail Crash; Dogs Found; Many Alarms Sounding

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Monday, 11/10

9:18 a.m. Caller concerned about a silver vehicle in the Fourth Street alley with people inside smoking something. Vehicle located; occupants advised of complaint.

6:48 p.m. Caller reports an earlier road rage incident. Operator made threats to kill involved female during an altercation. Advised of options.

Tuesday, 11/11

2:04 a.m. Caller reports that an individual is currently sleeping in a vehicle in the area of Franklin and Newton streets. Caller advises the radio in the vehicle is turned up loud and disturbing the caller's sleep. Officer advises contact made with registered owner of vehicle. Party advised of complaint; music turned down.

10:49 a.m. Alarm company reporting alarms sounding at Millers Falls Rod & Gun. No problems; new club member set off alarm. 11:14 a.m. Following a traffic stop on Lake Pleasant Road, a 35-year-old Millers Falls woman was arrested and charged with speeding, improper operation of a motor vehicle, operating under the influence of liquor over .08%, and negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

4:02 p.m. 911 caller from Lake Pleasant Road reporting female is on her way to his house and he does not want her there. Caller is not home; would like an officer to go to the residence and make sure she doesn't enter the property. Officers speaking with vehicle parked on side of driveway. No answer at door; appears no one is home. Female advised to make arrangements to retrieve belongings at another time.

9:52 p.m. 911 caller reporting that there is an intoxicated male attempting to break into a property near her in the area of Second and L streets. Attempting to drive away. Banging on door for past 10 to 15 minutes. All units on lookout

for male party. Officer providing courtesy transport for male to Greenfield.

10:40 p.m. 911 caller reports that two people in a vehicle in front of her house in the area of the First/Second Street alley were arguing with each other. Caller states that car then drove away. Referred to an officer.

Wednesday, 11/12

9:07 a.m. Employee from Casella called to say he would like on record that a female resident on Bridge Street came out and started yelling at him because he did not pick up her garbage. He had left a sticker on it last week stating they could not pick it up because the barrel was full of water. This week, the barrel was still full of water. The woman came out and started yelling; he told her she needed to empty the barrel so he could take it, but she refused.

10:14 a.m. Caller from K Street would like on record that her neighbors, who have been harassing her, have been shining lights and pointing cameras into her apartment.

10:18 a.m. 911 caller states that a fox that looks mangy and injured is walking around across the street from her home on Millers Falls Road. Animal control officer (ACO) notified. Unable to locate. Caller advised to call back if fox is seen again. Another neighbor called and said the fox was at the house across the street. ACO notified.

1:03 p.m. 911 caller from Fourth Street states that multiple smoke alarms are sounding in a nearby apartment building. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

1:37 p.m. Employee of Element Brewing would like an officer to respond to take a report after a delivery truck scraped the side of their building. Delivery service was making a beverage delivery, and during the process of backing in or pulling out of the dock, the cement was scuffed, causing only a smudge and no structural damage. De-

livery service dispatch requesting to have the event documented due to policy. Same on record.

3:15 p.m. 911 call reporting minor two-car accident at Millers Falls and Turners Falls Roads. No injuries, fluids, smoke, or flames. Insurance information exchanged.

4:08 p.m. Caller reporting \$946 was taken from their EBT at Food City. Caller advised of options.

10:03 p.m. 911 caller from Randall Road reports he hit a deer. Damage to vehicle. Called once he was home. Referred to an officer.

Thursday, 11/13

10:12 a.m. Caller states that when she was in Massachusetts in June, she met a male party and lent him money. He paid her back and quickly asked for more money, which she lent him. Since then, she states, he has not paid her back, and he is now threatening her. Advised of options; requested to have incidents and events on record.

3:35 p.m. Caller from Lake Pleasant Road states that a male party is on his property and he doesn't want him there. He told the party to leave, and he burned out on the property. Additional caller reported that an involved party was operating a vehicle while intoxicated, and he smelled pot. Both parties would like to speak to an officer. Officer spoke with both parties and advised them of options.

5:17 p.m. 911 caller witnessed a vehicle crash into a guardrail near Food City and cross the center line several times; there should be damage to passenger side of vehicle. Officer located vehicle and took pictures of the damage. Female called stating the neighbor came over and told her that cops were taking pictures of her truck, and she wants to know why.

8:18 p.m. Caller from Taylor Hill Road is concerned that the front door to a green house across from Smiarowski Road is open;

would like an officer to check it out.

Friday, 11/14

11:11 a.m. 911 caller from Morris Avenue requesting fire department to evaluate smoking heating stove. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

4:03 p.m. Summons issued for violation of an abuse prevention order.

11:06 p.m. Caller reporting a green truck on Central Street whose alarm has been sounding for over half an hour. Attempted number at house for owner; call went straight to voicemail. Officer advises the battery has died and the alarm is no longer sounding. Owner advised.

Saturday, 11/15

8 a.m. 911 caller from Federal Street states her smoke alarms are sounding and she doesn't know why. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

10:26 a.m. 911 caller from Sunderland Road reports that some alarms are sounding in their home and they don't know why. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

11:01 a.m. 911 caller from Third Street believes his oven is malfunctioning and may be about to blow up. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

3:43 p.m. Caller states he and his girlfriend broke up; he took what he could with him, but she is telling him that she is going to put the rest of his belongings outside. He wants to know if she can do that. Officer spoke to both parties; they are going to try and figure it out.

6:18 p.m. Walk-in party brought a dog to the station that she found at Unity Park. Dog has no tags, but does have a harness and leash; brown; not neutered. Party believes it is a bull mastiff. Officers taking dog to shelter. Dog dropped off at shelter; paperwork filled out.

Sunday, 11/16

9:47 a.m. 911 caller reports that the car he was in just got hit by another car at Third and Canal streets. Both vehicles are heavily damaged. No injuries reported at time of call. TFFD toned out for fluids in road. Officer also requesting EMS to evaluate due to a hard impact. AMR toned out by Shelburne Control. Rau's requested to tow both vehicles.

7:40 p.m. Caller from VESH in South Deerfield states that a good person brought a dog in and they checked the microchip. The microchip came back to an identified party, but they are unable to reach him. The person brought the dog home and will bring to the shelter in the morning.

THEATER REVIEW

At the LAVA Center: ‘The Time Is Now’

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – The LAVA Center did a three-day festival of nine play readings connected to climate change, Friday, October 24 to Sunday, October 26, in collaboration with an organization called Climate Change Theatre Action. Each day focused on one of three themes – resilience, urgency, and hope – and featured three plays from the organization’s 2025 collection, “The Time Is Now.” Each play was followed by a discussion.

I was able to catch two plays on the third day of the event, which started at 2 p.m. that Sunday. The day’s theme was “The Time Is Now For Hope.”

One of the plays was *All Its Tainted Glory*, by Georgina HL Escobar, performed by Guy Fiero, Priscilla Mollard, and Holly Sroka. This play seemed to be a discussion between a school principal and another person about a speech the principal is about to give to parents about programs for their kids. The other individual also discusses what they can do for the kids with these programs.

It almost seemed like a one-act play, and the applause by the audience seemed to indicate that it was reasonably well-enjoyed. Like I said, the theme of the third day involved hope, and I think that fit nicely with this play. It certainly seemed to be trying to offer some hope.

Another play that day was *A Letter From the Ocean* by Caridad Svich. This one was performed by

Charmaine Sutton. It sounded like a person was speaking of history, and of people who have come and gone.

The whole thing sounded like a metaphor about climate change, and how people have to do something about it – or how people can still have hope after some of the rotten things they have been through. That is my understanding about how this play fits with the theme of hope. People really seemed to enjoy that one.

One thing that came to mind for me is that I would be very surprised if at least one play didn’t help get the message across that climate change is a problem, let alone three plays doing that. The plays I heard during the third day of this event were very nice to hear.

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By CASEY WAIT

TURNERS FALLS – Dear readers, Apologies for the long stretch between columns. Last month I was unable to write due to the “October slide,” a term some of us sickos use to describe the rapid increase in symptoms chronically ill folks often experience at the beginning of autumn due to temperature and barometric pressure fluctuations, seasonal allergens, and more. For me, this has largely looked like more migraines, chronic pain, intense fatigue, and unending insomnia.

I’m writing to you now, not because I necessarily feel better – I don’t – but because over the past several days, the disabled and chronically ill community lost two very important figures in our movement, and I want to honor them.

Alice Wong, an unparalleled and passionate advocate for disability justice, Palestinian liberation, and cross-movement solidarity, died on Friday, November 14 of an infection. She was only 51. A few days

earlier, leftist cultural commentator and Long COVID advocate Leslie Lee III died at 43. At the time of writing, his cause of death has not been disclosed.

I don’t remember when I first came across Alice Wong’s work. She was such a towering figure in disability justice spaces that I think I just kind of always knew her name. Her ongoing work with the Disability Visibility Project (DVP) – a website, podcast, book, and art project – gave so many sick and disabled people the language to understand our experiences and affirmed that the rage so many of us feel at our treatment by ableist society is not only justified, but holy.

In the words of my friend, Beatrice Adler Bolton, “Through DVP and every collaboration she touched she cultivated a vast, intergenerational ecosystem of disabled writers, thinkers, organizers, and storytellers. She didn’t hoard influence – she redistributed it. She understood that visibility without redistribution is just optics, and she refused to play that game.”

Alice was constantly lifting up other

sick and disabled people, including those in Gaza. With her “crip” comrades Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha and Jane Shi, Alice Wong helped found Crips for eSims for Gaza, which helped supply Palestinians in the Gaza Strip with subscriber identity modules, or eSIMs, so that they could use cell phones. “Disabled people around the world are raising funds to get as many eSims as we can into Gaza,” their website states, adding that over 18,000 have been sent since December 2023.

Donated eSims have been and remain one of the key ways people in Gaza have been able to communicate with the outside world since the genocide began in 2023. This work is ongoing, and could use your continued support – visit CripsForEsimsForGaza.org to get involved.

Leslie Lee III, host of the leftist media and culture podcast *Struggle Session*, is one of the people I credit with helping me hone my politics in my mid-20s. Whether he was outlining the enduring relevance of such cyberpunk classics as *Blade Runner* or *RoboCop* to our current political landscape or arguing for Medicare for All, Leslie was always pushing us to see the world with clearer eyes while never giving way to nihilism. He wanted a better, kinder, more interesting world for all, and had no patience for those who lack utopian imagination.

While Leslie had always been politically astute, his diagnosis with Long COVID in

2023 only made his critique of racial capitalism sharper, as it gave him a deeper understanding of the eugenic impulse at the core of capitalism’s death cult.

A quick scroll through Leslie’s X profile will give you a sense of just how unrelentingly smart, funny, and dogged he was in his fight against rampant COVID denialism, even when it meant fighting with comrades on the left. He wasn’t afraid of rocking the boat, because he refused to throw sick and disabled people under the bus.

A lot of us could do with taking to heart Leslie’s final tweet, published a week before his death: “please start taking COVID seriously before more people have to suffer and die.” We couldn’t spare him his life, but we can dedicate ourselves to preventing future needless deaths by wearing N95 masks in public places and advocating for universal healthcare.

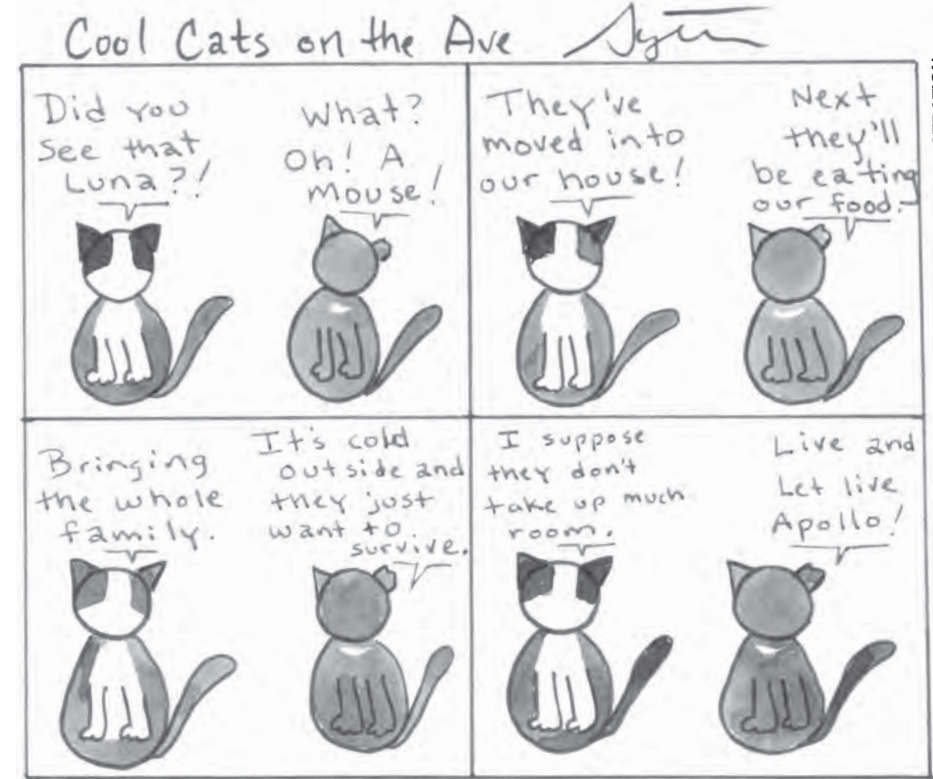
Leslie’s family could also use support in covering funeral costs. You can contribute at www.gofundme.com/f/1leeiii.

If this is the first time you’re hearing of Alice or Leslie, please explore the vast bodies of work they left behind. I promise you’ll be changed for the better.

To Alice and Leslie – Thank you for your lives. I will never forget you. And I will never forgive the forces that led to your early, untimely deaths.

With love, rage, and grief,

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DRAMA CLUB from page B1

and more cruelly takes from us those we love – in the case of Poe, his beloved Lenore.

Poe asks, “Is there balm in Gilead?” To that the Raven’s answer is simple: “Nevermore.”

The set darkens, and we are next introduced to Edgar (Rooney Adams) arriving at the House of Usher, a house of “gloom” and with noticeable “decay,” and the infamous crack zig-zagged to its foundation. Edgar quickly encounters Roderick Usher (Lewis), who is clearly unwell, complaining about the decrepitude of the illustrious house and the physical decline of sister Madeline (Juliette Potee). Adams, who steals the show as Edgar, plays straight and logical to Roderick’s increasing madness.

Then, in an eerie sequence, the audience sees Madeline, dressed in white, hauntingly walking in the dark.

Before long, Roderick pronounces that Madeline has died – only, are those fingers poking out of the casket in the cellar? As tension builds, effectively and to the point that even Edgar is unnerved, we hear a deathly scream and witness the true *Fall of the House of Usher*.

Next, the audience enters the dwelling of an old man (Toponce), whose caretaker, Poe (Anhalt), becomes fixated on the old man’s pale, blue, lifeless eye. The audience is left wondering, however, if the eye is a mere rationalization. We listen as caretaker Poe argues he is completely rational (did anyone say Poe wasn’t?), having calculated and not rushed the killing of the old man.

And so, we enter the story of *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

But Anhalt cleverly betrays the caretaker’s supposed rationality, and the audience knows there’s something off-kilter here. In come police officers (Nemo Davis and Rooney Adams) investigating a scream heard by neighbors. Davis plays a hilarious and perfect funny to Adams’ straight-laced detective, and then it all unravels for the

killer, who is left raving. Though really from the very beginning of the story the caretaker (Poe) clued us in by saying, “How then, am I mad?”

Poe is credited with writing the first modern American detective story, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” where he introduces readers to crime scene analysis and deduction. In juxtaposition, one could argue that *The Tell-Tale Heart* introduces us to criminal psychology, and its inherent knack of tripping up the perpetrator.

Actors inhabit characters and psychology not their own, but they also put themselves out there for the world to watch, and these young players performed well.

I caught up with co-director Anna Hartmann after the show. Hartmann said she wanted “to thank everyone who came out to see the play, for supporting a small local youth theater program, and for taking a risk and opening themselves up to seeing a show based on literature that is less of a feel-good story and leans darker and more dramatic.”

That risk paid off for cast, crew, and audience alike, and *Nightfall* delivered, in what was a true look at the darker side of the human condition.

The GHS Drama Club had been in hiatus since the pandemic, but in 2023 Hartmann and Potee brought it back to life. Recent performances have included *Myth Adventures* in March 2024, also written by Coble, and *The Somewhat True Tale of Robin Hood*, written by Mary Lynn Dobson, this past April.

The club plans to run Gary Peterson’s dramatic adaptation of *The Secret Garden*, a children’s book by Frances Hodgson Burnett, in late March. Look out for announcements and get your tickets!

Interested members of the public may donate to the GHS Drama Club by mailing a check, payable to GHS Drama Club, to Attn: Drama Club, Greenfield High School, 21 Barr Avenue Greenfield, Massachusetts 01301.



Edgar Allan Poe (Henry Anhalt) attends to the Old Man (Camden Toponce) in *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

THE SECOND VERSE: Making It Work for Local Musicians

By LUKE DEROY

TURNERS FALLS – In the heart of Williamsburg, the first snowflakes drift down Main Street, swirling softly in front of a blue-grey building whose standing board proudly boasts *the best chocolate cake*. Another sign hangs in the window: “Sunday Live Music.” The venue is a new chocolate maker called **Tangle**. While the cake may have its champions, I’m partial to their sweet potato brownies. Their autumn warmth hits me as I open the door.

Inside, an acoustic guitar reverberates throughout the space, with vocal accompaniment carrying clearly enough to anchor the room without overwhelming it. The layout is thoughtful: a lounge-like area tucked in the back for those seeking conversation, and a cluster of tables up front where couples and small groups sit facing the performing artist with quiet intrigue. The music feels like neither background nor spectacle, but something woven into the environment.

Tangle is quickly becoming a rare kind of venue. It is welcoming, intimate, and genuinely supportive of musicians. Its owners have begun forming partnerships with local artists, and are fostering a generous tipping culture. The crowd seems as willing to give back to the musicians as they are to refill their mugs with European hot chocolate.

And while alcohol is available, it’s clearly not the main draw. These 2 p.m. Sunday shows provide an alternative to the usual late-night bar gigs, and Tangle’s bookings already extend into next year.

For a working musician, a warm, consistent venue with a built-in audience is a small miracle. The positive energy in the room is as present as the aroma of sweet treats, making the music feel like a natural extension of the atmosphere.

Near the front sits a silver-haired man with kind, bright eyes. He leans back comfortably, applauding after every song. At first glance, he blends in with the rest of the patrons. Yet in his spare time he spends countless hours finding new ways to infuse the local music scene with the material and financial value that matches the emotional and social value it already provides.

His name is **Rob Longley**, and over the past few months I’ve come to know him as one of the fiercest advocates for musicians in Western Massachusetts.

In my last column, I mentioned the Williamsburg Porchfest. Rob was the architect behind it. He scheduled, organized, and secured funding for the musicians. Anyone who passed through on that late-summer day experienced an event that simply would not have come together, at least not with the same heart, without him.

A Williamsburg resident with roots in nearby Hawley, Rob admits he has little formal experience as a music organizer, but has taken it upon himself to funnel opportunities, resources, and clarity into a community of musicians struggling to stay solvent.

Rob has created a workbook, an online course, and a collection of documents aimed at helping songwriters and performers take control of their art and their careers. Too often, music is dismissed as an impractical profession. The revenue streams – teaching, session work, licensing for TV and film, streaming royalties, merch, and live performance – are rarely obvious to those outside the industry, but they exist. And Rob, though not a musician himself, has taken great care to gather, refine, and share the information artists need to survive and, ideally, thrive.

Sounding Like Western Mass Feels

With venues like Tangle and advocates like Rob helping to shape the local landscape, it’s no surprise that western Massachusetts continues to produce remarkable artists. Among them, **Cloudbelly** stands out.

Cloudbelly may be a “local band,” but they are

quickly outgrowing that label. Formed in Turners Falls just before the pandemic, they’ve performed multiple times at Arcadia Folk Fest, and regularly perform in New York, Pennsylvania, and around New England.

They continue to gain traction for good reason. They’ve built an organic and devoted fanbase through the combination of Corey Laitman’s vulnerable songwriting and Nate Mondschein’s immersive, detail-rich production. Guitarist Sam Perry adds the ambient textures that have become central to their sonic identity, and newest member Ciarra Fragale rounds everything out with melodic bass and climactic backing harmonies.

Cloudbelly’s sound has been described as both “intimate and cinematic,” blending digital and analog elements with a warmth reminiscent of Sufjan Stevens or Joni Mitchell. Corey’s acoustic guitar work echoes the intricacy of Fleet Foxes, Bon Iver, and other modern folk acts while remaining unmistakably their own.



Cloudbelly interests me not only because they live down the street. Their music genuinely makes me feel something. It’s emotional and cathartic. They weave folk roots with experimental textures, and approach lyrics with conceptual depth, embracing themes of identity and belonging.

One of the strongest connections I feel when speaking with Corey comes when they say, “What writing does for me is putting me back into relationship with my inner life.” I believe a focus on our inner landscape can be a key contributor to our individual and collective evolution. Their philosophy mirrors what I find best about the culture of western Massachusetts: reflective, community-rooted, and deeply concerned with what is happening both inside and around us.

For Corey, songwriting allows “a rare moment to visit internally”; they tell me that what they hope to offer listeners, and what they themselves receive from the process, is “an opportunity to feel privately.”

Their latest full-length release, *i know i know i know* (2024), marked a clear point in the band’s evolution. With another full-length album planned for early 2026, Cloudbelly stands poised to continue expanding outward while remaining grounded in the region that shaped them.

They are performing at the Shea Theater on November 29 with Bella’s Bartok and the Rocking Puppies. I’ve already got my tickets!

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EVENTS

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20

Montague Center Library, Montague: *Bilingual Music and Movement*. 10 a.m. Free.

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

Lyman Plant House, Smith College, Northampton: *Art Show Reception* for Koanbanchinemma (do you see the light (in me)), exhibit of works by six Nipmuc artists, cultural and land stewards. 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Free.

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Photography Reception*, Philip Johnson. 5 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Art Show Reception*, Swift River School students. 6 p.m. Free.

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

Four Phantoms Brewery, Greenfield: *Evening Pub Sing*. 7 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Open Stage*, five-minute time slots in any form of art or entertainment. 7 p.m. By donation.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Nathan & the Zydeco Cha Chas*. 7 p.m. \$.

Amherst Books, Amherst: Author *Corinne Demas*, reading from her latest novel, *Daughters*. 7 p.m. Free.

Earle Recital Hall, Smith College, Northampton: *Songs in the Key of Sage: Alt '90s*. 7:30 p.m. Free.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *gen/loss, Sweetness the Point of Song, Rivka Nisinzweig*. 8 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Florry, John Andrews & The Yawns*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour: Moose*. Ages 3 to 6. Story, activities, and crafts. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Lofi Creativity Zone*, writing and drawing drop-in for grades 6 to 12, 4 to 5 p.m.; *Dino Makerspace*, "travel back in time to craft prehistoric projects," 5:30 p.m. Free.

Leverett Village Co-op, Leverett: *Pie-a-Palooza*, with stories and music by *Jackson Gillman*, and pie for sale. 6 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Teen Night*. 6 to 8 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Erin McKeown, The Snap Dragons*. 7 p.m. \$.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Two-Step Night* with *Les Taiauts, The Honky-Tonk Angels*, country karaoke. Masks required. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *North Country Band*, with special guest *Brian Dolzani*, Neil Young tribute. 8 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Psychedelic Farm Girls*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Modern Ego, The Stress Balls, Neponset Monastery, SPU*. Benefit for the Franklin County People's Fund. 9 p.m. By donation.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *French/Breton Jam Session*. 2:30 p.m. Free.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Arthur Terembula*. 5 p.m. No cover.

St. Kaz, Turners Falls: *Pookah's Soup CSA*, with stew, cornbread, pickles, and cocktails and music by *Chris Gray* and *Beth Lewand*. 6 to 11 p.m. No cover.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Movie, *The Dark Crystal* (1982), with opening music by *Adipocere*. 7 p.m. \$.



Singer-songwriter Erin McKeown plays Northampton's revitalized Iron Horse this Friday night.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Omoo Omoo, Masma Dream World, Sunken Cages*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Marigold, Brattleboro: *ZBS.FM, Dialog Talk, Azizam, Feldspar00000*. 8 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Hedge; Babe, Wait; Nanny; Scorpion Porch*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Tori Jock & Damage Control*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Leverett Crafts & Art, Leverett: *Reception* for *Oh Beautiful Glass* group show. 12 p.m. Free.

EXHIBITS

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Migrations*, paintings curated by GuateMaya Art and Culture Connection featuring scenes of village life, Mayan culture, and the history of Lake Atitlan in Guatemala, through December 4.

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls: *Local Local*, small works by 21 local artists using material from Franklin County, through January 4.

Montague Center Library, Montague: *Elizabeth Long: Quilts*, through November. In December and January: *Mark Mariani*, pastel paintings, with a reception Wednesday, December 3 from 5 to 7 p.m.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: Guest artist *Ruby Henry* presents hand-tufted rugs during November.

Rhodes Art Center, Northfield Mount Hermon, Gill: *Primal Reflections*, paintings by Walker Antonio, through December 12.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Flora, Fauna, and Fantasy: a Leverett Homecoming*, Elena Watson and Julie Kumble share works inspired by scenes of Leverett, through December.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: *Oh Beautiful Glass*, group show by glass artists, with paintings by *Susan Mulholland*. Through November, with a reception this Sunday, November 23, from 12 to 6 p.m.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Silent Auction Art Exhibit*, works donated by local artists and assemblages by Andy Rothschild for sale to benefit LAVA; *Sixth Annual Community Art Show*, work by 36 local artists. Both through December 20.

Artspace, Greenfield: *Gray Matters*, monoprints by Karen J. Axtell, through this Friday, November 21.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Tuna Croquette*, works by Charlotte Treiber, through November.

Clarkdale Fruit Farms, Deerfield: *Doorways*, self-guided audio-visual tour with sculptural doorways and sound pools by multiple artists, through November.

Von Auersperg Gallery, Deerfield Academy: *Chameleon*, sculptures by Alicia Renedette and paintings by Scott Reilly, through December 19.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *Whimsical Dreams*, group show by member artists, through next Monday, November 24. *Magic of Moonlight*, November 25 through December.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Glass: Color, Light and Motion*, mosaics, stained glass, and glass painting by Sam Meyers; *Robert Osborne: Optical Confusion*, aluminum and glass sculptures exploring light, perception, and structure. Both through December.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Artwork Looks Inward and Outward*, paintings by John Krifka and photographs by Larry Rankin, through November 29. *Small Wonders Holiday Show and Sale*, December 3 through 23.

Mead Art Museum, Amherst College: New exhibits include *A Contentious Legacy: Paintings from Soviet Ukraine*; *Spaces That Hold: Swapnaa Tamhane*; *Re/Presenting: An Activity Gallery*; and the installation of Fred Wilson's chandelier *Dramatis Personae*.

Lyman Plant House, Smith College, Northampton: *Koanbanchinemma (do you see the light (in me))*, works by Nipmuc artists, cultural and land stewards Rachel Healing Willow Bayliss, Willow Daly, Keely Curliss, Scott Strong Hawk Foster, Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines, Jr., and Kimberly Toney. Opens today, Thursday, November 20, with a reception from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Festival of Miniatures, Brattleboro, Vermont: Over 50 storefront windows throughout downtown will be transformed into miniature worlds: tiny train stations, whimsical dollhouses, snow-flecked terrariums, and diminutive handcrafted furniture created by local artists and shop owners. On view November 28 to December 31.

CALL FOR ART

The Art Garden, Shelburne Falls: Submissions for *Pockets of Possibility*, a community exhibit about the possibilities of resilience, beauty, hope, wisdom, community, and courage in dark times, are due by December 2. One piece per person will be accepted in any medium including performance. There is no fee. Find out more at theartgarden.org.

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CALENDAR

Hutghi's, Westfield:
Teen Driver, Cop/Out, Green Street Fiends, Ovarieasy + friends. 2 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Young@Heart Chorus* presents *10 Alarm Fire: We Won't Shut Up!* 3 p.m. \$.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Allysen Callery, Joshua Burkett, Karen Zanes.* 4 p.m. By donation.

Haze, Northampton: *Sable Island Pony, Erin Morse, Alyssa Kai.* 7 p.m. \$.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Sophie Becker*, ventriloquist; *Raub Roy; Joshua Burkett.* 7 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Allysen Callery, Karen Zanes, Triiish.* 8 p.m. No cover.

Asbestos Farm, Hadley: *Britt Brideau, Candle Opera, The Glue, Goldsetter.* 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour: Thanks to the Animals.* Ages 3 to 6. Story, activities, and crafts. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Rare Geese, Matt Krefting, Boss Finzi, Perfect Nails.* 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Fool & The World, Sundown Sirens.* 9:30 p.m. No cover.

Whately Town Hall, Whately: *Mr. Sun* play Duke Ellington's *Nutcracker Suite.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

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

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4

Four Phantoms Brewery, Greenfield: *Tabletop Roleplaying Night.* "Come meet new friends and play a session of Mork Borg, Shadowdark, Dungeon World, or something you've never heard of using dice you didn't know were possible." 5:30 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Community College Dining Commons, Greenfield: Documentary, *Kili Big* (2021), followed by a discussion with the director and the filmmaker. Refreshments provided. RSVP at www.gcc.mass.edu/events/kili-big/. 6 p.m. Free.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Silverback Swing.* 6 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: *Tropidelic, The Quasi Kings, The Palmer Squares.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Comedy Open Mic.* 9:30 p.m. No cover.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5

Greenfield Community College, Greenfield: *GCC Community Chorus* annual holiday concert. 12:15 p.m. Free.

Element Brewing Company, Millers Falls: *David Brule & His Irish Band.* 6 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Jacob Kordas.* 6 p.m. No cover.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *Shutesbury Holiday Shop.* Handmade work from over 40 local artisans. Also *Soups and Stews*, dinner to benefit the Friends of the M.N. Spear Library. 6 to 9 p.m. Free.

Four Phantoms Brewery, Greenfield: *Middle Dewey.* 7 p.m. Free.

Looky Here, Greenfield: Performance, *The Lady of Shalott.* 7 p.m. \$.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Smack Dab Queer Open Mic.* 7 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Eggtooth Productions presents *The Nightmare Before Dragmas.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

Next Stage Arts Project, Putney, Vermont: *An Irish Christmas.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Minibeast, Hammer Party, SWRM.* 9:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12

Downtown Turners Falls: *It's A Wonderful Night In Turners Falls.* 4 to 8 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Holiday Craft Fair.* Handmade and locally-produced crafts and products, raffle, food. Fundraiser for the library. 4 to 8 p.m. Free.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Holiday Craft Fair.* Handmade and locally-produced crafts and products, raffle, food. Fundraiser for the library. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

Magpie, Greenfield: *Big Hat Bingo Brunch.* Fundraiser for Looky Here. 11 a.m. \$.

Tourists, North Adams: *Hammydown.* 8 p.m. Free.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14

The Hoff, Holyoke: *Rose House, bobbie, Pearl Sugar, The Classics.* 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Two-Step Night* with *Les Taiauts, The Honky-Tonk Angels*, country karaoke. Masks required. 7:30 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Jimmy Just Quit.* 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2

Iron Horse, Northampton: *NRBQ and the Whole Wheat Horns.* 7 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 3

Iron Horse, Northampton: *NRBQ and the Whole Wheat Horns.* 7 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Movie, *Before Sunrise* (1995), with opening music by *Kath Bloom.* 6:30 p.m. \$.

SUBMITTED IMAGE

Ventriloquist Sophie Becker (right), hailed by the New York Times as "an unlikely practitioner of a lost vaudevillian art form" in a glowing long-form profile this fall, performs this Sunday evening, November 23 at Epsilon Spires in Brattleboro. Raub Roy and MR contributor Joshua Burkett will provide opening sets.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Sensory Friendly Hour.* Low lighting and sensory activities for preschoolers. 9 a.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Presentation Night.* "Want to nerd out in a fun, supportive environment?... We will provide a laptop and a projector, for slides or reference materials, a mic, a timer, and an eclectic, community oriented audience." Hosted by *Olivia Nied.* 8 p.m. No cover.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Adult Book Group.* Rebecca K. Reilly, *Greta and Valdin.* 10 a.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: Movie night, *Death on the Nile.* Refreshments. 5 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: *The Lemonheads, Erin Rae.* 7 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Dilemastronauta y La Tripulación Cósmica.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Book Club.* M.T. Anderson, *Nicked.* Copies available at the library. Refreshments. 2 p.m. Free.

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Chuck & Biscuits.* 6 p.m. No cover.

Marigold, Easthampton: *Jesse & The Rippers, Atomic War Machine, Tysk Tysk Tysk.* 7 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *JARV, Coyote Reverie, Nahte Renmus, Subtex, Robscure.* 8 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 1

Deerfield Community Center, Deerfield: *Wreath Making Workshop.* Materials provided. Register at www.tinyurl.com/DeerfieldWreaths. 12 to 3 p.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. Free.

Faith Church, Greenfield: *Writing workshop* with artist and performer Terry Jenoure. 6 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: Film, *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (1942), with an introduction by local film and theater historian Jonathan Boschen. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Sweepers, Half, Swamp God, Freakbag, Together.* 7 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2

Deerfield Community Center, Deerfield: *Wreath Making Workshop.* Materials provided. Register at www.tinyurl.com/DeerfieldWreaths. 1 to 4 p.m. and 5 to 8 p.m. Free.

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *River Valley Quartet.* 6:30 p.m. Free.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3

Deerfield Community Center, Deerfield: *Wreath Making Workshop.* Materials provided. Register at www.tinyurl.com/DeerfieldWreaths. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free.

Montague Center Library, Montague: Artist reception for *Mark Mariani*, pastel paintings. 5 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Tony Trischka.* 7 p.m. \$.

Palladium, Worcester: *Cattle Decapitation, Aborted, Frozen Soul, Tribal Gaze.* 7 p.m. \$\$.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24

The Mill at Shelburne Falls, Shelburne Falls: *MillWorks! Makers & Art Market.* Over 40 resident and guest makers and artists including Charlie Adams, Jeremy Sinkus, and Marian Ives. 4 to 9 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Comedy Project Open Mic.* 7 p.m. By donation.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: Movie, *The NeverEnding Story* (1984), with opening music by *Neonach.* 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *LuxDeluxe.* Benefit for the Food Bank of Western Mass. 7 p.m. \$.

Tourists, North Adams: *Hayden Pedigo, Jens Kuross.* 8 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wide Open (Jam) Night.* 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Montague Congregational Church, Montague Center: *Pancake Breakfast.* 8:15 to 10:15 a.m. \$.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Reese Fulmer.* 6 p.m. No cover.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Ronnie Earl & The Broadcasters.* 7 p.m. \$.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Joel Veena*, Indian slide guitar, with *Yousuf Kerai*, tabla. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Bella's Bartok, Cloudbelly.* 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Cousin Greg, Bunnies, Technicolour Ltd.* 8 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: *Prewn* record release show, *Robber Robber.* 8 p.m. \$.

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BOOK REVIEW from page B1
has become Nigeria.

Tom specializes in English history and literature from 1990 to 2030, and is obsessed by Blundy’s sonnet sequence *A Corona for Vivien*. A “corona” is a series of 15 sonnets linked by their theme, and by the technically difficult rules that the final line of each sonnet repeats as the first line of the next sonnet, and that the 15th sonnet, which must make coherent sense, is formed from the first lines of the preceding fourteen.

Blundy is considered a peer of Seamus Heaney as a major poet of his time, and he believes that his *Corona* is his finest work. He writes it on vellum and presents it to Vivien at a birthday dinner in the second decade of the 21st century, where he recites it to the nine others around the table. It’s never heard or seen again.

But Tom believes it still exists: For him, “The poem had become by its non-existence a repository of dreams... a focus of unhinged reverence.” The first two-thirds of *What We Can Know* records his quest to find it.

Tom’s account of what he finds in the letters and other documents of Francis Blundy, Vivien, and their circle is detailed. For example, he tells us that Vivien cooked quail with wine and mushrooms for her birthday dinner party and accompanied them with cauliflower and roast potatoes. He even knows which variety of potatoes she used, because she had noted her preference in a letter to her sister.

His description of Vivien’s food is evocative, but is it correct? His colleague and partner Rose argues that he cannot really know what Vivien cooked. Yes, he agrees, but

he asserts that his commitment “to vitality” warrants reasonable conjectures based on his knowledge that Vivien was fond of quail, that they often ate cauliflower, and that she had recorded her preferred roasting potatoes. “Historical research,” he claims, is “a dance with strangers I have come to love.”

Rose counters with Wittgenstein’s rule. “Whereof you do not know, thereof you must be silent.”

Here we have two versions of history: Tom’s vivid and likely version, and Rose’s faith in a stricter literal account. Both have their limits.

There are also human limits to what we can know. We can only answer the questions that we ask. As Tom points out, scholars know very little about Shakespeare, much of it gleaned from bare public records, because his culture did not reflect on individuals and their emotions in the ways that subsequently developed and which we now take for granted. In effect, every era picks and chooses what it wants to know, what it decides to bother with. Shakespeare’s era chose differently from ours, so there’s much we cannot know except by inference.

Memory is another human limit. While still in his early forties Percy, Vivien’s first husband, had developed Alzheimer’s. He was a talented craftsman, a maker of violins, a banjo player, and a hiker who knew the names of flowers, trees, and birds. Vivien adored him, nursing him as his condition worsened.

In comparison, she admires Blundy’s technical skill as a poet and actively sought a relationship with him even before Percy’s death. But while she loves Francis and enjoys her life with him, she comes to despise his potential for

aggression and manipulation, and the circumscribed interests that ensure he cannot tell a dandelion from a buttercup.

While Tom narrates the first two-thirds of *What We Can Know* as a quest for the lost poem, the final third is narrated in Vivien’s voice, as her memoir. In it she speaks directly of her life as Percy’s wife and carer, and then as Francis’s wife. Most importantly, she speaks of her own motives and actions. Though she knows that personal history is “jumbled in the mind,” she strives for a “plain account.”

What Vivien delivers is another form of history: autobiography. In her case it is crafted in the form of an apologia – an explanation of motives and actions. Is it reliable? Some literary critics argue that all writing is fiction because of the ways it is shaped by its writer.

Then, as Francis Blundy observes, “We all experience some form of Percy’s amnesia. Nearly all of life is forgotten.”

So, what we can know remains a question. Reading Ian McEwen’s exploration of what we know is thought provoking. It’s also a delight because his prose is never less than deft, his characterization is astute, and his observations on our time and what may be the future are intelligent and intriguing.

As McEwens’ characters note, we forget a lot. Plus, readers of novels know that much of what we read fades in the memory. No doubt readers will find this to be true of the detail of *What We Can Know*. But the issues it raises, and some of its observations, will linger long – and perhaps pique our responses to the circumstances we find ourselves in.



Montague Community Television News

An Autumn Alive With Activity

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – The Bug Museum Parade, *Life With Bill*, the Migration Festival, the Veterans Day ceremony, two Halloween celebrations, and more – our town is alive with activity this season!

Find all these videos and even more on Montague Community Television’s Vimeo page, which you can find linked through our website, Montaguetv.org, by clicking the “Videos” tab. There you can find folders

directing you to all of our archived Montague and Gill selectboard meetings, past and present.

If you would like to make a video, or if you know of an event that should be filmed, let us know. You can come by the station at 34 Second Street in Turners Falls to talk with Dean or Deirdre, Mondays through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can email us at infomontaguetv@gmail.com or even call us up at (413) 863-9200.

And if you see us out there filming, say hi!

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