

# The Montague Reporter

## Developer’s Solar Permit Lapsed, Says Town Lawyer

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**WENDELL** – The special permit underpinning the energy development company Nexamp’s plans to build a solar array on Lockes Village Road expired years ago, according to a lawyer hired by the town to review the matter.

The original special permit expired on January 15, 2022, according to an opinion submitted to the Wendell planning board on Monday by town counsel David Doneski of KP Law. That same day, Nexamp representatives requested that a public hearing scheduled for that night on the company’s application to amend the permit be postponed.

“That leaves us with no applicant, in my mind,” planning board chair Stephen Gross said at Monday night’s meeting. “It’s all here. It’s as clear as legalese can be.... Do we still have an applicant if the permit actually expired, and how do we respond to that if that is the case?”

see **SOLAR** page A4

## GILL SELECTBOARD ‘Six-Town’ Ballot Vote Would Need Home Rule Legislation

By KATE SAVAGE

At Monday’s meeting, the Gill selectboard discussed the future of school regionalization, debated whether to fine a local food truck for grease trap violations, and reopened the search for assessor staff.

Selectboard member Greg Snedeker, who also serves as vice chair of the six-town school regionalization planning board, put forward potential next steps in determining the future of the region’s schools.

The planning board is exploring whether every town could hold a vote on the question, rather than deciding the issue at town meeting. The question arose after it was determined that under state law Montague, which has a representative town meeting, must put the question on the town election ballot.

Snedeker said it was unclear whether a ballot vote would be allowed in Gill. “It may require a home rule petition, which could take too long if the vote’s going to be in spring,” he said.

Town administrator Ray Purington said he only had one previous experience with a home rule

see **GILL** page A5

## SHOVEL TIME AGAIN



A snow emergency was declared in downtown Turners Falls on Tuesday. Above: Clear passage on Third Street.

## Builders Put Down New Roots

By BEN GAGNON

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – Three first-generation immigrants with roots in Moldova and Uzbekistan – countries that declared independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s – are now living the American dream by partnering in First Generation Investments Group, a new company that is upgrading the housing stock in the Greenfield area.

After Moldova gained independence in 1991, Igor Komerzan’s father worked as a carpenter until the family joined a mass emigration in 1999 due to a plunging economy. Komerzan said he is thankful that he grew up in Greenfield, obtained a degree in criminal justice, and was

see **BUILDERS** page A6



Left to right: Igor Komerzan, Viktor Vlasenko, and Vee Falceanu, equal partners in First Generation Investments Group, at the company’s offices in Greenfield.

## High School Sports: A Turkey Day Basting

By MATT ROBINSON



Franklin Tech’s Hunter Donabue keeps an eye on Viking defenders as he gains yards for the Eagles during the Thanksgiving Day home game against Smith Voc.

**TURNERS FALLS** – On Thanksgiving Thursday, the Franklin Tech Football Eagles capped off a very successful 2025 season with a 45-0 shellacking of the Smith Vocational Vikings. The win improved Tech’s record to 8 and 3.

Thanksgiving is always a bittersweet experience. It’s the last event of the fall sports season, and folks who’ve gathered together weekly may not see each other again for months, or even years. And it’s not just the Franklin Tech families. Plenty of people from area high schools that no longer have football teams have been coming to their games regularly.

And although the Smith/Franklin matchup is relatively new, it’s grown into quite a rivalry, especially after Smith “upset” the Eagles

see **SPORTS** page A6

## MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD New Chief In Charge; Same Tax Split Kept

By JEFF SINGLETON

“Have you prepared a speech for us?” Montague selectboard chair Matt Lord asked Chris Williams, who is retiring this month as the town’s police chief.

“I just, you know... don’t like parties,” Williams responded. “I don’t like being recognized in large groups. But I do appreciate the kind words.”

Taxes, budgets, and capital projects dominated a relatively long selectboard agenda on Monday, but the meeting began with the board saying goodbye to one police chief and hello to another.

Selectboard member Rich Kulewicz said Williams had served as chief during “trying times,” and had done “a great job to get us stable.” Marina Goldman said she appreciated how accessible he was to her as a new selectboard member.

Lord presented Williams with a “wonderful keepsake” – a plaque honoring his 30 years of service – and town administrator Walter Ramsey held aloft a large certificate of commendation from state representative Natalie Blais, also signed by the Speaker of the House.

Williams was followed at the front table by the incoming police chief, Jason Haskins. Lord said there would be a “formal pinning

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

## G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE School District Bracing For Another Tough Budget Season

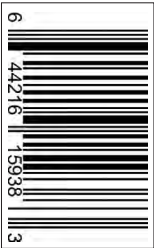
By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – Tuesday’s school committee meeting was the first in quite some time to be held remotely, via video chat, owing to the snowfall and declared snow day. The committee posts its agendas to allow remote meeting as a fall-back option, and this week the strategy was successful, attracting 8 out of the 9 members to a lengthy and often drudgerous online session.

Meetings might continue on each of the next two Tuesdays as well, as the committee’s work stacks up. The district has an interim superintendent this year, is entering a cycle of union contract negotiations, and, as it heard from business manager Joanne Blier this week, may be facing a challenging task in assembling a balanced FY’27 budget.

Blier ran through a preliminary budget report. The first tough news involved not money, but time: state aid figures are typically published the fourth Wednesday of January, she explained, which this year falls as late as it possibly can, on the 28th.

see **GMRSD** page A8



### We Effortlessly Made Yet Another Newspaper

A Great Job to Get Us Stable.....A1	Hoping to Double in Size Every Year.....A6	Tapping On the Glass While Smoking .....B3
Disguised as the Subscriptions Manager.....A2	In Math Class You Are Smelling Gas Fumes.....A7	One Or Two Wheels Are Off the Ground.....B4
Untethered From any Civilian Oversight.....A2	Some Woman in an Interesting Condition.....A7	When You Purr They Understand.....B4
Adjusted Their Furry Midtones.....A3	Through the Yard Like the Angel of Death.....B1	Efectos Indirectos en la Población General.....B5
Dogs Inside, Cold Air Outside.....A4	Ghosts Haunt Us in Local Street Names.....B1	Content Clown, Flower Sounds, Futon Lasagna.....B6
Some of the Land in the As-Driven Street.....A5	Can’t Help But Wonder if Tongues Were Wagging.....B2	Bunnies, Butterfly Swing, Blood Incantation.....B7
Caught in a Pinch Point.....A5	Like People You Would Find at an Airport.....B3	Pyramidal Chestnut-and-Chocolate Mound.....B8



# The Montague Reporter

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August 2002

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



NINA

Diana Pedrosa is seen here disguised as the subscriptions manager at the Montague Reporter office on a recent weekday morning. Diana answers your queries and solves your subscription quandaries at the back end of [subscriptions@montaguereporter.org](mailto:subscriptions@montaguereporter.org).

## Death From Above

“All the objections to the expansion of executive power and surveillance that were dismissed by liberals over the last eight years as the paranoid fantasies of constitutional obsessives, nit-picking civil libertarians, and anarchists suddenly appear more salient.... And many Americans who were lulled by a would-be benevolent philosopher-king.... woke up on November 9 regretting that nobody had even begun to dismantle the lethal machinery he was supervising.”

We wrote that in this space on November 17, 2016. Nine years later, we’re nine years deeper into remote surveillance, private military and intelligence contractors, drone assassination programs untethered from any civilian oversight, nuclear rearmament, individualized disinformation, AI target selection...

Next time there’s a chance, maybe we should try, uh, dismantling some of it?

### CORRECTION & REBUTTAL

Soon after our November 20 edition went to press, UMass Associate Vice Chancellor for News and Media Relations Emily Gest pointed out a factual error in our article, published jointly with *The Shoestring*, “As Contract Negotiations Stall, UMass Union Schedules Vote On ‘Confidence’ In Chancellor” (Page A1), and rebutted a characterization of the bargaining process promoted in the article by the university’s Professional Staff Union (PSU).

It was the UMass Amherst faculty senate – not the union representing faculty members – that voted “no confidence” in Chancellor Javier Reyes after the university’s mass arrest of anti-war protestors encamped on the campus lawn last spring.

Gest also disputed an assertion – made by PSU leaders, but reprinted without verification or rebuttal – that the university filing with the state Department of Labor Relations for a state-appointed mediator to investigate and resolve the contract dispute was akin to its issuing a “final offer.”

“At no point has the university positioned our proposals as a final offer,” she wrote. “We successfully used mediation in four other union negotiations this round: GEO, USA and two police unions. 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. Of the six settled contracts, the average bargaining sessions required was under 20. UMass has held 43 bargaining sessions with PSU-A with four more scheduled through December 4.”

We apologize for the errors, and appreciate the correction.

## Letters to the Editors

### Facts Lacked in Tract Access Fracas

There are two points that need to be made concerning Leverett’s “blueberry patch” lawsuit:

The first is that the Evanses own two tracts of land. The section of the blueberry patch “access way” on Tract I is, and always has been, private property with no legal right of way. Tract II is private property with a right of way deeded to the current owner of the King Property, which is the Leverett Conservation Commission, not to the general public. Any use of the term “right of way” or “easement” to describe all of the Evanses’ land has been incorrect.

These facts were only explained to residents by Leverett’s town counsel on the evening of the Special Town Meeting. No effort was made by Selectboard members to clarify the misunderstanding of residents before the Special Town Meeting, as evidenced by the posts on the LeverettConnects listserv. Residents were told the matter is in litigation, so the Selectboard is very limited in what they can say.

Did this really prevent them from explaining the facts about the two different tracts of land? Or was it intentional?

Pat Duffy, Selectboard chair, wrote a Letter to the Editor as a resident (“Supports Easement to Blueberry Patch,” October 30, Page A2) in which she stated: “This easement has existed since the 1950s and provides access for maintaining the meadow, blueberry patch, trails and town-owned land.” This publicly stated misinformation perpetuated the belief that the right of way is over all of the Evanses’ land.

I won’t get into the fact that the “access way” on the Evanses’ land does not border the King Property.

The second point is that the Selectboard chose *not* to put an end to the lawsuit. During the court-ordered mediation, the Selectboard could have agreed to the Evanses’ request of the Conservation Commission in January 2024, which was to inform the public that the land is private property. Instead of doing this, the Selectboard chose to pursue an eminent domain easement while waiting for the hearing in Land Court. At an October 17 meeting, the Selectboard unanimously voted to add the eminent domain easement article to the Special Town Meeting warrant.

The Selectboard knowingly voted to attempt to take control of private land. Leverett taxpayers paid

for a “taking plan” drafted by Harold Eaton and Associates, but it has never been shared with them.

With the failed eminent domain easement attempt, I hope the Leverett Selectboard will end its overreach of power and respect the rights of a property owner.

Disclaimer: I recently moved from Leverett to buy an affordable home, but I am still speaking out because I was one of the few to speak out against the lawsuit last year (see George Brace’s article “Neighbors Sue to Discontinue Public Access to Blueberry Patch,” September 5, 2024, Page A1), and because injustice is injustice, no matter where you live.

### Contributor Pausing, Pivoting, Checking In

Hi hello readers,

Joe R. Parzych, our longtime photo beat reporter guy, ran into writer’s block for the first time in years. Ran out of ideas. Please share new ideas about what I should cover. Send your tips to [Joerparzych@gmail.com](mailto:Joerparzych@gmail.com).

Anyways, because I will be taking a break from reporting on the photo beat, after the holidays I will come back in the new year busy working on a photography book I have been trying to get published as a first-time author. I am looking for a local publisher, and I am wondering if anyone recommends any. I am also doing other things, seeing family, friends, etc.

By the way, for the first time in my 27 years as a photojournalist I am switching gears from a DSLR camera to a mirrorless camera. It kind of reminds me of the days when I switched from 35mm film SLR to a DSLR camera. At some point I will do a photo essay / mini-review / behind the scenes from the point of view of a photographer using a mirrorless camera.

Please support our unique, one-of-a-kind local paper, the *Montague Reporter*. It has a lot of awesome writers, contributors, etc. who have been proudly serving our community since 2002.

**Maureen Ippolito**  
Montague

**Don Ogden**  
Florence

**Joe R. Parzych**  
Greenfield

### Elephant Painted With Too Broad a Brush

The recent op-ed in the *Reporter*, “Conditions Faced by Palestinians Justified” (November 13, Page A3) reminds this reader of the parable of the blind men and an elephant.

The writer seems to believe all “peace activists,” “progressive activists,” and “Montague” voters supporting an “anti apartheid mandate” are on the same page regarding the violence in Israel and Palestine. Sadly, such blindness of reality serves only to add to the intransigence and obstinateness that continues to prolong efforts to find peace and understanding.

**Don Ogden**  
Florence

The use of a broad brush to portray an extremely detailed scenario is, obviously, self-defeating. It is the very narrowmindedness of players on both sides of the debate that prevents them from finding any common ground.

Yes, it’s an age old problem, dating way past the creation of the ancient parable of the blind men. How can we invent Artificial Intelligence when our grasp of intelligence is so flawed?

**Joe R. Parzych**  
Greenfield

**Published weekly on Thursdays.**  
*Every other week in July and August. No paper the fourth week of November, or the final week of December.*

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# TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

It snowed!

Most area schools were closed Tuesday in recognition of the snow and its many dangers.

The Leverett selectboard meeting Tuesday night was also sadly cancelled, or postponed. “Man, I love snow-days,” our Leverett town hall reporter, George Brace, reported. It seems to have been rescheduled for next Tuesday night.

George is the sole proprietor of **Eldritch Goods**, a little used-things-and-oddities shop located right at the primary junction in Millers Falls. I don’t go in there often enough, and I don’t recommend it often enough to other people. So check it out. It’s great. Stuff all your stockings this year with his eldritch marbles and comic books.

Since we’re sold out of our classic black *MR* shirts in nearly every size – if you happen to know four small and six extra-small people, you can stuff the very last ones into all of their stockings – we’ve resupplied with a **whole new shirt batch**. This time we went in a very different direction. Longtime fans will recall this design, i.e. our nameplate serving starkly as your chestplate, from the paper’s first decade. We’ve reimagined it in white on blue.



These things are yours for \$20 to \$40, depending on a combination of how much money you have and how much you want us to keep doing journalism over here. Stuff ‘em into everybody’s stockings! Even your friends who don’t celebrate any holidays involving stockings. They probably have some stockings somewhere, and they will be delighted once they discover what’s in them.

Last week we ran one of our comics, *Cool Cats on the Ave*, without noticing it had been submitted with **no faces drawn on either of the titular cats** in any of its four panels. Their sightlessness remained an oversight, unflagged by the editor who scanned the strip, the staffer who transformed the digital file into grayscale and adjusted their furry midtones for newsprint, and by two usually exacting proofreaders.

I’m sure some of our readers noticed the blank cats, but no one mentioned it to us for nearly a week. As our Thanksgiving off-Thursday approached, one of our mailed subscribers, Sharon H., finally called in to voice her concern and inquire as to the cats’ well-being.

Reached for comment, *Cool Cats* creator Suzanne Snow-Cobb said that the irregularity was unintentional. “I usually do the faces after the watercolor step,” she explained. “I guess I forgot!”

For the first week of December – meaning up through this Sunday the 7th – **the Rendezvous is inviting its customers to donate on top of their bill to the Brick House Community Resource Center**, which is running a food pantry just down Third Street. Provided the customer is spending at least \$40, the restaurant will match up to \$5.

“When we opened our pantry in June, 2024, 37% of the households in Franklin County were food insecure, according to a 2024 Greater Boston Food Bank report,” Brick House director Tom Taaffe explains. “Demand in our pantry grew quickly. In our first full year, we served 2,000 people. One year later, the Greater Boston Food Bank reported that food insecurity in the county had increased to 50% of households.

“With SNAP benefits in limbo and the cost of living – including food – rising, that demand is doubling again. At the same time, cuts to food security funding have also hit food banks and pantries too. But we remain committed to providing a full range of healthy food for those who need it. We are grateful for the support of community members and businesses like The Rendezvous, who have stepped up and helped us meet the rising need.”

(Full disclosure: I’m a former board member at the Brick House and am still slightly involved, volunteering as a member of its finance committee. I can attest that it’s stretching every dollar to connect resources of all sorts with neighbors of ours who need them, and that the food pantry in particular is absolutely slamming.)

This weekend through January 4, admission is free to the **Flynt Center of Early New England Life** at Historic Deerfield. They’ve got

all kinds of neat old stuff there, and the current rotating exhibit “explores the enduring interest in clothing our bodies to achieve fashionable shapes.”The museum is open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays.

The locally produced short documentary exploring the **impacts of the changing climate on Franklin County farms**, *Rising River’s Edge*, is streaming online now courtesy of the LAVA Center. Find it at [www.tixtree.com/o/lava](http://www.tixtree.com/o/lava) – they’re asking for a sliding-scale donation of \$5 to \$15.

“In the past two years, the county has experienced heavy rains, floods, late frosts, April snowfalls and drought,” LAVA, which funded the film’s production along with MassHumanities and greening Greenfield, writes. “The extreme changes in weather patterns and unpredictability of forecasts wreak havoc on our food systems and farms. This is in the face of the fact that 50% of Franklin County’s population faces food insecurity issues.... Featured farms in the film are Clark Brothers Orchards of Ashfield, Just Roots of Greenfield and Red Fire Farm of Montague and Granby. A local restaurateur is also featured: Stone Soup Cafe in Greenfield, a pay-what-you-can cafe.”


The Massachusetts Cannabis Business Association sent us a press release over our break week warning – or claiming, in any case – that “voter fraud is being routinely committed by the campaign seeking to make possession of marijuana a crime in Massachusetts.” They urged anyone who may have provided their signature to the Coalition for a Healthy Massachusetts without meaning to support the effort to recriminalize the herb to contact their town clerk.

There have been a ton of **referendum campaigns in this state for next November’s election**. This fall I watched several people I’m pretty sure don’t want to engage in voter suppression nod blankly and sign clipboards for people hoping to mandate voter ID and onerous voter-roll-scrubbing audits. That effort wasn’t among the 11 that cleared a local verification deadline in November, but the cannabis-outlawing one is, and as of press time we don’t know how many of the 11 made it past the formal state deadline this Wednesday.

The campaign to cap rent increases is still in the running, as is another attempt to force transparency on Beacon Hill committee votes, and the Nature for All Fund, which would tax golf courses and RVs to fund land conservation.

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

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OP ED

## From Municipal Commitment to Unified Action

By RICH KARSTEN

**LEVERETT** – The Town of Montague has proudly joined the Apartheid-Free Communities network and stands as a community with Palestinian people, immigrants, and everyone working for peace, justice, and equality, and it begs the question:

“What is next? How will Montague enact the pledge?”

For many, the public declaration of shared values and commitment to freedom, justice, and equality – for the Palestinian people and for all people – to oppose all forms of racism and discrimination as a community, provides a sense of security, optimism, and hope. For others it does not.

This is understandable. When the status quo, built on systems of apartheid and exploitation, is challenged, those who benefit feel shaken.

I am grateful that Montague, along with the pledge’s 974 other signatories (and counting!), is committed to taking action against apartheid. What form it takes is up to all of us. It may be education, ensuring *aparthood* is not normalized, or it may be ensuring the indigenous voice is always hon-

ored in our broader efforts for liberation.

For many communities, such as Northampton, action to end apartheid means *divesting* from human rights abuses. Northampton’s Jewish Voice for Peace activists with Northampton Apartheid Divest are not unlike the Jewish residents of New York City in 1933 and 1934 who, in response to Nazi Germany’s persecution, organized an economic boycott of German goods and services; a form of resistance to the *apartheid-like* discrimination in that country. That boycott was initiated by American Jewish organizations to protest the mistreatment of Jews, and it was supported by millions of people of conscience in the greater metropolitan area.

While the term “apartheid” is best remembered in the context of South Africa’s liberation struggle, the historical BDS (*boycott, divestment, and sanctions*) movement against Germany led by New York’s Jewish community was a significant anti-Nazi action.

These activists, yesterday and today, seek to challenge the powerful structures of oppression and dehumanization imposed by unjust political institutions through economic divestment initiatives.

On November 10, the Apartheid-Free

pledge approved by Montague town meeting was codified when the selectboard voted to send the resolution, along with a cover letter, to state representative Natalie M. Blais, state senator Joanne M. Comerford, and Governor Maura Healey.

An excerpt of the letter:

“In passing this resolution, Montague joins municipalities across the world working to end apartheid everywhere, including in Israel. Local communities such as Northampton, and faraway cities, such as Burnaby, British Columbia have also joined this effort in various capacities.

“We request you review the attached resolution adopted by the Town of Montague and please advise the Town of any actions to end apartheid you have taken or would like to assist the Town in performing.”

Together with town government, Montague residents have united their community by renewing this public pledge against all interlocking systems of racism and oppression, including action to end human rights abuses at home and in Palestine. This unifying anti-racism and anti-discrimination resolution has empowered Montague in a mutual alliance with seven other municipalities, 335 congregations

and faith-based organizations, 288 businesses, 271 solidarity organizations, and a variety of other organizations supportive of ending the crime of apartheid against the Palestinians.

Montague’s heartfelt solidarity and leadership have already inspired the Township of Wendell to initiate its own municipal resolution. In so doing, Wendell too is committing to working to end all support for Israel’s apartheid regime, settler colonialism, and military occupation.

Through unified action and moral consistency, we can build a world free of apartheid, starting with concrete action in our own communities: our workplaces, our faith congregations, and our municipalities.

Join the Apartheid-Free Communities at [www.WMC4P.org/pledge](http://www.WMC4P.org/pledge).

True security will only arise when justice and liberation foster healthy, interdependent community relationships that don’t rely on one group of people oppressing another. Thanks, and well done, Montague. You make humanity proud.


Rich Karsten is a member of Apartheid-Free Western Massachusetts and Jewish Voice for Peace. He lives in Leverett.

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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 Quarter, 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 action and in case of your failure to appear or answer, judgment by default will be taken against you as demanded 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  
Law Offices of Richard H. Dollison, P.C.  
5143 Palm Passage, Ste. B28/29  
P.O. Box 6135  
St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. 00804

NOTE: This defendant, if served personally, is required 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 publication or by personal service outside of the jurisdiction, 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 publication 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.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

‘Doorbell’ Dog  
Deemed a Danger,  
Must Learn to Chill

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Eight Wendell residents, two Franklin County animal control officers (ACOs), and a lawyer attended the public dog hearing that filled the bulk of the Wendell selectboard’s November 19 meeting. That count included three select-board members as well as the dog’s owner, Ben Schwartz.

The issue was the fate of Frank, an 85-pound hound who resident Leslie Godfrey said bit her wrist hard enough to puncture the skin as she, Schwartz, and others were leaving a board of health meeting after dark. She then recoiled, stepped back and tripped on the curb, fell backwards, and dislodged a dental bridge.

Schwartz did not dispute Godfrey’s story, though he said he might have told it differently. The incident, he said, started as he was opening his car door to give Frank a walk after the meeting, when Godfrey came near the car and reached over to pat Frank. He apologized for the incident, and said his insurance had paid for Godfrey’s medical expenses. She acknowledged that was true.

ACO Kyle Sweeney reported that when he went to Schwartz’s house, Frank bit him as well. Sweeney said that at the time of the incident Frank was out of compliance for his rabies shot, although he had been vaccinated, and out of compliance on his license. Schwartz corrected both issues after the complaint, Sweeney said, but not quickly.

Neighbors said they were not comfortable when Frank was out. Resident Lisa Peppin said that at the Bernardston engine show, Frank “was out of control.” Schwartz admitted Frank was barking that day, but said he was leashed and under control.

Schwartz said the dog is his “doorbell.” He works upstairs where he might not hear someone at the door, he said, but Frank’s barking lets him know someone is coming. The house and deck are surrounded by a secure chain link fence, and the front door has a dog opening but he can make it tight to keep dogs inside, cold air outside.

Schwartz said Frank is not vicious, but is high strung and spooks easily, and said he had already engaged a dog trainer.

The selectboard voted to declare Frank a dangerous dog. At that point, under state law, they were obligated to accept at least one of seven options, the most extreme being to euthanize the dog. They did not take that choice, but gave Frank and Schwartz other restrictions.

Schwartz will be required to install a bell at the gate to the fenced-in area that will ring inside his house, and to post a warning sign prominently on the fence. Frank must continue to be enrolled in training, including socialization, and when being walked in any public place the dog must be muzzled and kept on a three-foot leash. If tied up at the Wendell Country Store, Frank must not be near the front door.

Schwartz was given seven days

to comply. He said he wanted part of Frank’s training to include socialization among people. Maggie Houghton, Wendell’s retired ACO, agreed to help in that socialization.

Sweeney said that if Schwartz complies, he may ask for another hearing after six months if he thinks Frank is ready.

Other Business

Selectboard chair Laurie Di-Donato said she planned to attend the next Erving selectboard meeting, scheduled for November 24, to discuss options for the repair of the Farley Road bridge, which connects the two towns. The start of a relatively straightforward repair project revealed that much more work will be needed.

Selectboard member Paul Doud offered to join her, which would allow a quorum of the Wendell board to make a decision. (The meeting was postponed, and a visit from the Erving selectboard was on the Wendell board’s December 3 agenda.)

Treasurer Carolyn Manley said that as of that week, no town had left the Massachusetts insurance trust, good news for Wendell’s health insurance needs.

Highway commission chair Phil Delorey said he wanted to advertise for a part-time snow plow driver, and offer \$28.40 an hour to make the offer competitive. He had already checked with the finance committee.

Former open space committee chair Dan Leahy reported that Eversource plans to transfer a landlocked 50-acre property in Wendell to the state Department of Conservation and Recreation. He said that MassWildlife’s BioMap classifies the parcel as core habitat, and that being landlocked it is not facing development pressure.

The property is also conserved under Chapter 61B, so its tax bill is already low, and after the transfer it would earn Wendell payments *in lieu* of taxes (PILOT) from the state. The impact on Wendell’s finances is not great, he said, and may even be positive.



Sledders took advantage of Tuesday’s snow day on Unity Hill in Turners Falls.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Dental Care, Insurance Help  
Offered at the Brick House

TURNERS FALLS – Next Monday, December 8 the Brick House, in collaboration with the Franklin County Community Health Center, is offering a free pop-up dental health and health insurance support event.  
A dental hygienist from the Community Health Center will be at the Brick House from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and their Health Insurance Navigator will be there from 9:30 a.m. to noon. No appointment is necessary: their services are first come, first served.  
For dental services, if you are

pre-registered you will be seen before those who have not pre-registered. Registration forms are available at the Brick House; stop by or contact Stacey at [slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org](mailto:slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org) or (413) 800-2496 to make arrangements.  
This is part of a quarterly series the Community Health Center is offering through next spring, so they will be back at the Brick House on March 9 and June 8, 2026.  
The Brick House Community Resource Center is located at 24 Third Street in downtown Turners Falls. All are welcome.

SOLAR from page A1

After a short discussion, the planning board agreed to continue the public hearing until December 15, and in the meantime ask Doneski for his legal opinion on the town’s next steps.

Nexamp did not respond to a request for comment by press time.

Plans to build a 2.8-megawatt (MW) solar array on Lockes Village Road were originally approved by the planning board and conservation commission in 2018, but construction never began.

In late 2019, a Wendell special town meeting passed new zoning bylaws governing solar energy installations, which took effect at the end of 2020. After an unrelated proposal to build a 105-MW standalone battery storage system on Wendell Depot Road drew fierce local opposition, the board of health passed additional regulations in 2024 requiring a special permit for any stationary battery.

This summer Nexamp, doing business under the subsidiary Wendell Solar LLC, submitted an application to amend its plans for the Lockes Village Road array to add a 2-MW battery and permanent stormwater management system to the site. New incentives under Massachusetts’s SMART 3.0 program, which took effect this fall, favor the “co-location” of energy storage with generation.

This made Nexamp’s project the first to be subject to the new health board regulations, and public meet-

ings regarding the amendment application have been dominated by discussion of the potential health and safety impacts of a lithium ion battery fire.

Shutesbury-based attorney Michael Pill, who is representing abutters of the proposed project, has been a vocal attendee of these recent board of health and planning board meetings. In a letter sent to local officials on October 27, he argued that the company’s special permit had expired, based on a review of the town’s new zoning bylaws, state regulations, and special extensions granted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“One cannot seek to ‘amend’ a prior special permit that no longer exists because it has expired,” he wrote. “The applicant must submit a new initial application for a special permit and site plan review.”


On November 13, Pill filed a land court lawsuit against Nexamp arguing that his clients, Linda Hickman and Benjamin Schwartz, would be adversely impacted by the project, and that the company should be required to comply with the town’s 2019 zoning bylaws.

At Monday’s meeting, planning board member Joe Laur noted that Doneski’s opinion was “affirming Michael Pill’s position in substance.” The board agreed to seek clarity on the status of Nexamp’s application, and continued the hearing, at the company’s request, to its next meeting at 7 p.m. on Monday, December 15.



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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

# Rusty Roof, Erroneous Road, No Numbers, Helping Hands

By KEITH WATERS

The Erving selectboard met on Monday, November 24, and discussed with wastewater superintendent Pete Sanders the decommissioning of a large piece of equipment at the POTW#2 plant, which is owned by the town but operated by Erving Industries subsidiary ERSECO.

Sanders told the board that electrical conduits the company had apparently installed after the plant’s construction were blocking the removal of the equipment, a large belt press, and that the roof above it has a number of holes which, as he explained, he “could put his arm through and wave his hand.”

The board asked Sanders to keep an eye on the situation and keep them posted as it progresses, but signed off on surplusing the machine, which is valuable and must be sold at an open auction.

Sanders said that if the rusted roof panels are removed to access the press, “it would be fair” to ask that the roof be fixed.

The town has to address the Maple Street layout again. The issue started a couple years ago when, during road repairs, surveying showed that the town did not actually own the end of the street.

This put three homeowners in the position of owning homes with no legal road frontage. One granted some of the land in the as-driven street to the town, and the town allocated some land it already owned to try to make the layout as it should be.

Surveyors now report that this was unsuccessful, as there is still a strip of land, about a foot wide, between the road and the properties in question that is owned

by the town but not legally part of the road layout. The surveyors will need to be paid again to work on the issue. The selectboard hopes to solve it at no expense to the homeowners.

The November 24 meeting was originally supposed to include a meeting with members of the Wendell selectboard about the major repairs needed on the Farley bridge, which connects the two towns, but Erving chair Jacob Smith said he had decided to postpone that discussion as “we didn’t have numbers, or anything yet, to firmly have a conversation that could maybe come out with a decision.”

The Erving board was invited to meet in Wendell on December 3.

The town had decided to add a position to the highway department. One of the employees of that department had applied for an opening on the town’s fire department and was offered the job, but upon hearing there was a position open again at the highway department, asked if he could stay there.

The board agreed to grant his request, so the town is still looking for a fireperson.

Police chief Robert Holst recommended that officer Mitchell Waldron was deserving of a commendation for his actions to assist a climber who had fallen while climbing at Farley Ledges. The board was in full agreement.

The town also extended a commendation to citizen Todd Bucci, who was involved in locating and helping the screaming climber, even though, in Holst’s words, “being a civilian he was under no obligation to.”

Mike Jackson contributed additional writing.

GILL from page A1

petition to the state legislature. “It was about as cookie-cutter, mom-and-apple-pie an issue that you can get,” he said, “extending the retirement date for a fire chief.”

“We had our vote on that in August,” Purington continued. “It got approved, finally, sometime in December. The legislature doesn’t move quick on these things.”

Purington suggested that the difficulty is part of the design: “If the home rule petition process was fast and efficient, the legislature would be inundated with them, and they don’t want that,” he said.

“It seems like a no-brainer,” said Snedeker. “It just seems very logical that if you’re going to allow one town, because it’s larger, to open up their vote for the entire day, it’s kind of unfair that you would require the other ones to only do it in a special town meeting.”

Snedeker also floated the possibility of giving the voters, whether at town meeting or the ballot box, two proposals: one agreeing to a six-town school region including Gill, Montague, Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, and Warwick, and the other to a five-town region without Warwick.

If Warwick, which has recently created its own municipal school district, votes to remain independent, the other towns could potentially regionalize without it – without returning to square one of the years-long planning process.

“The trick will be writing those ballot questions, or warrant articles, in a way that people understand, but is also still legally appropriate,” said Purington.

Call for Nudge on Grease

Functioning as a sewer commission and joined by commission member Jeff Suprenant, the selectboard debated how to encourage

the owners of Riverside food truck Cielito Lindo to comply with the town’s new sewer regulations. The regulations now require restaurants to install and maintain grease traps to keep fat out of the sewers, where it can congeal and is costly to remove.

“Just out of curiosity,” asked highway superintendent John Miner, “how would you shut somebody’s sewer off? There’s no valve.”

The requirements were sent to the business via a certified letter in August. Purington said he recently spoke with owner Rogelio Galvez Ovalle, who told him he had already contacted his plumber and was waiting for a response. Galvez said he believed there was already a grease trap installed, but he did not know where it was. If his plumber cannot find it, Galvez reportedly said he would install a new one.

Suprenant expressed frustration with the response. “It’s not moving fast enough for me,” he said. “I think he should be given a fine – a little wake-up call.”

Purington noted that the sewer regulations say that a first offense triggers a warning or notice. If he does not hear back from Galvez, he said, he could issue a warning and invite him to provide an update at the next sewer commission meeting.

Suprenant suggested the town could shut off the food truck’s sewer service if the owners do not comply.

“Just out of curiosity,” asked highway superintendent John Miner, “how would you shut somebody’s sewer off? There’s no valve.”

“We dig it up. Cap it,” answered Suprenant.

“So when he gets a grease trap, we dig it up and uncup it?” Miner asked. “You realize what month of the year it is, right?”

“Probably be cheaper to buy him a grease trap at that point,” said Charles Garbiel, chair of the selectboard and sewer commission.

Purington said that boards of health typically prefer businesses to spend their money on improvements rather than fines. He also noted that Galvez would “soon be caught in a pinch point,” as the next renewal cycle for food licenses includes the new sewer regulations.

“Those give, I think, 12 months for coming into compliance, but the clock is ticking at this point,” said Purington.

In other sewer news, Miner reported that the new Doppler flow meter, which measures the volume of flow through a pipe using sound, is now installed, providing easier and more accurate measurements.

The commission approved a sewer abatement of \$35 to commission member Suprenant for metered water that filled a spa, and \$240 to Chris Pelletier for metered water that filled a swimming pool.

Other Business

Gill’s board of assessors has announced they are going back to square one in their search for a staff member. The board’s preferred candidate for the job of assistant to the assessors turned down the offer. Instead of offering it to another candidate, board members Bill Tomb and Pamela Lester said they wanted to begin a new search for a higher-paid, more demanding position of principal assessor.

“It is true that there aren’t that many people certified as principal assessors – certainly not in this county,” said Tomb. “But perhaps we’ll still get some results.”



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## 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](http://www.montague-ma.gov/calendar).

## INVITATION TO BID

### Unity Park Playground Improvements Project

The Town of Montague is accepting sealed bids for the replacement of pour-in-place rubber surfacing, and the purchase and installation of a new play structure to replace two existing pieces of equipment at Unity Park in Turners Falls, MA.

Bids shall be submitted in a sealed envelope clearly labeled “Unity Park Playground Improvements Project” and be delivered to the Selectboard Office, Montague Town Hall, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, Massachusetts 01376. This IFB is offered per M.G.L. c. 30, § 39M and work is subject to Prevailing Wage Requirements.

Sealed Bids must be received by Wednesday, January 7, 2026 at 1:00 p.m., at which time all bid packages will be opened and read at the Town Hall Annex Meeting Room at the same address listed above. No exceptions or allowances will be made for late submittals.

A bidders’ conference will be held on Thursday, December 11, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at Unity Park, 56 First St., Turners Falls, MA 01376. Attendance is not mandatory but is strongly encouraged. The IFB is available at [www.montague-ma.gov/BIDS](http://www.montague-ma.gov/BIDS). Registration is required. Once registered, any addenda or notifications will automatically be sent to the email address of registrants on record. Written questions can be submitted to the Project Manager, Chris Nolan-Zeller, at [chrisn@montague-ma.gov](mailto:chrisn@montague-ma.gov) until Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

Qualified proposers who are Minority/Women/Disabled Owned Business Enterprises (M/W/D/BE) businesses are encouraged to apply. Other qualified proposers are encouraged to partner with disadvantaged businesses. A listing of certified disadvantaged businesses can be found at [www.mass.gov/sdo](http://www.mass.gov/sdo).

The Town of Montague reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals in total or in part as they may deem in the public’s best interest.

**By: Walter Ramsey, Chief Procurement Officer**  
**December 3, 2025**

*The Town of Montague does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or gender with respect to admission to, access to, or operation of its programs, services or activities.*

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DEPARTMENT OF  
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(G.L. c. 60, § 53)

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TO THE OWNERS OF THE DESCRIBED PROPERTY BELOW AND TO ALL OTHERS CONCERNED, YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT ON Thursday, December 18th, 2025 at 12 o'clock PM at Town Hall, pursuant to the provisions of General Laws, Chapter 60, Section 53, and by virtue of the authority vested in me as Collector of Taxes, IT IS MY INTENTION TO TAKE FOR THE Town of Gill the following parcel of land for non-payment of taxes due, with interest and all incidental expenses and costs to the date of taking, unless the same is paid before that date.

LIST OF PARCELS TO BE TAKEN			
Assessed to VINING MICHAEL			
A parcel of land with any buildings thereon, approximately 3.92 Acres located and known as FRENCH KING HWY shown on the Town of Gill Assessors Records as Parcel Identifier 226.0-0000-0026.0 and being part of the premises recorded in book 07793 on page 276 in the Franklin Registry of Deeds.			
Tax Year	Type of Liability	Assessed Amount	Unpaid Balance
2025	Tax	\$3,321.96	\$3,321.96

<u>Aimee Williams</u> Collector of Taxes	<u>Thursday, December 4th, 2025</u>	<u>Town of Gill</u> Name of City or Town
---	-------------------------------------	---

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**BUILDERS** from page A1

a police officer for 10 years, first in Bernardston and then Northfield.

In 2017, Komerzan began following in his father’s footsteps when he bought and started remodeling his first house. In 2019, he teamed up to form First Generation Investment Group with his brother-in-law Vee Falceanu, a software engineer who immigrated from Moldova to Greenfield in 2012.

Together, Komerzan and Falceanu began buying distressed properties, stripping them down to the studs, fixing them up, and getting them back on the rental market. With Komerzan in charge of re-modeling, Falceanu worked on the financial end, found renters, and managed the properties.

Breathing new life into dilapidated homes became a passion.

“As a software engineer I was talking to a computer all day for 10 years, and the money was good but I just got sick of it,” said Falceanu. “Now I’m talking to my partners and the owners and neighbors every day, and the joy comes from when you find a dump and put a lot of work into it and six to eight months later it’s a completely different building. That’s fulfilling.”

When Komerzan and Falceanu finished their first house in Greenfield, they invited a realtor for a walk-through in preparation for renting the units.

“After walking through the remodel, the realtor said she had never seen such a nice place in Greenfield,” said Komerzan. “Usually you find units that are old, dark, outdated – no AC, leaky windows, no washer-dryer. We like to bring it up to a higher standard with a clean, fresh look and modern amenities.”

After buying and remodeling one of the oldest houses in Millers Falls on Bridge Street, the former owner wanted to see what Falceanu and Komerzan had done with the place.

“We invited her back to see it

and she was literally crying, saying that her parents had always wanted to make upgrades but just never had the time,” said Falceanu. “To us it was the confirmation we needed that we were doing the right thing.”

Komerzan said taking pride in the final product is important to the larger business plan.

“We don’t just do a project and walk away,” he said. “What separates us is we’re still involved in the life of the building – we own it, and we manage it. We want to do a good job up front so we don’t have to go back and fix it later.”

In 2024, the business took a major step forward when Falceanu and Komerzan met Viktor Vlasenko at Providence Baptist Church in Greenfield. Vlasenko was looking for new opportunities after selling his Deerfield company, NUPRO, which designs and manufactures clear and protective polyurethane films for vehicles. Vlasenko was born in Uzbekistan, part of the Soviet Union from 1924 until declaring independence in 1991. The three men shared the experience of immigration, a devotion to the Baptist church, and growing families: Vlasenko has four children, Komerzan has three, and Falceanu two.

“We realized that the three of us together could really propel the business to another level,” said Vlasenko. “A lot of times there’s one owner, and they specialize in one thing. With the three of us and our different skills we can accomplish a great deal.” Vlasenko said his own talent for running a business started by observing his mother run a company in Uzbekistan that made sweaters.

The three men are now equal partners in the new First Generation Investments Group, having simply added an “s” to “Investment.” The firm now includes subsidiary or satellite businesses owned and operated by contractors who are also shareholders. This one-stop-shop buys properties, builds and reno-



Falceanu and Komerzan in October, surveying the vacant former industrial lot on Tenth Street in Turners Falls where First Generation plans to build two four-unit apartment buildings.

vates homes, and does full-service property management.

One of the new company’s first projects was buying 324 Main Street at the corner of Federal Street in downtown Greenfield. They’ve remodeled some of the interior, including their own offices, and TD Bank is one of their tenants. The firm has another property on School Street, where they keep their contracting equipment and vehicles.

Another big project received approval last month from the town of Montague: building a pair of four-unit apartment buildings on a vacant lot in the Patch neighborhood.

“I grew up here, so I’ve seen the issues of not enough work and housing in bad condition, so we decided to address these problems,” said Komerzan. “We know it’s not the hottest real estate market and

developers aren’t coming here. The inventory is so old that in many cases it’s uninhabitable, so we view it as an opportunity: If we do it right, we will stand out.”

Komerzan remembers his father being away for months at a time, looking for work as a carpenter in Moldova.

“There was no work and my parents wanted a better future for the kids,” he said. “Now we work long hours because that’s what it takes to get ahead. I think we all still believe in the American dream.”

Vlasenko said the company is always on the lookout to buy and renovate distressed properties, and is hoping to double in size every year. The only thing acting as a brake on progress is the difficulty in finding more employees. Right now they’re looking for an experi-

enced carpenter while beefing up their electrical services.

“We have a good crew, but the projects are adding up,” said Vlasenko. “We’re not looking for people to treat them like a number. We know they have families, and we want to treat them with respect. A lot of employers now ask people to do more work without compensation, and that doesn’t work. Here we take employees out to breakfast, get them out on the boat for fishing – we want to make it like a family.”

“It’s the American dream, right?” he continued. “It was very hard to live in Uzbekistan, you worked hard just for bread, so my family decided to pack up and try to find a better life. If we can help other families make a better life here, that’s a good thing too.”



**SPORTS** from page A1

last year in overtime.

There was no freezing rain this year, but it was still pretty chilly, and the wind was so strong that the “Let’s Cook” banner blew away before the players could crash through it.

The tone of the game was pretty much set on the first play as Smith almost fumbled away the kickoff. They retained possession, but were forced to punt.

Tech got the ball on their own 36 and ran a screen. Hunter Donahue caught the pass and outraced everybody to put the Eagles up 6-0. Then, in a play reminiscent of Refrigerator Perry, lineman Dillon Laffond bowled into the end zone to get Tech to 8 points.

After another Viking punt, Tech ran a “swinging gate” play, in which most of the players lined up on the near sideline, leaving just the center and two backs on the ball. This led to an offside penalty, but two plays later, Tech ran a sweep. Maxon Brunette got the ball, broke three different tackles, and raced into the end zone for a 51-yard touchdown. On the extra point attempt, Mason Bassett pitched the ball to Laffond who made it 16-0.

On the next drive, Smith got the ball on Tech’s 30 and made it to the six, setting up a first-and-goal. But Franklin’s goal-line defense held, getting the ball back deep in their own territory.

On the first play of the second quarter, Nathan Sabolevski scored to make it 22-0, and Nolyn Stafford added a 2-pointer.

And on it went. Smith was forced to punt again, and Brady Gancarz received the kick, followed his blockers and scored Tech’s 30th point of the game. Donahue got the

ball on Franklin’s next possession and raced 72 yards to make it 36-0, and Bassett ran a keeper to make it 38-0 at the break.

In the third quarter Jared Currier, who was out most of the year with an injury, was stopped just short of pay dirt, but stretched



Franklin Tech’s Justin Lent (left) and Carsten Couture (right) block a Viking pass reception during the second quarter of the Thanksgiving Day shutout. (The play would prove controversial: the referees ruled that it constituted pass interference, while Tech head coach Joe Gamache vociferously disagreed.)

his arms out past the chalk line to increase the lead to 44; a Joseph DiSciullo kick made it 45. The mercy rule then kicked in, and for the remainder of the contest the clock ran continuously.

The Vikings had their chances in the second half, but another goal-line defense preserved the shutout.

After the game ended, the trophy was handed back over to the Eagles, and individual accolades were awarded. Laffond was named the Outstanding Lineman of the day, and Donahue was awarded the MVP.

All told, Bassett completed six passes for 145 yards, a touchdown, and a 2-PAT; Stafford, Donahue, Brunette, and Currier were his targets. Brunette (96), Donahue (86), and Sabolevski (67) led the team in rushing yards, followed by Samuel Bodenstein, Currier, Cole Gamache, and Stafford.

On special teams, DiSciullo kicked off seven times for 234 yards and kicked an extra point, while Gancarz returned two punts for 88 yards, and Aaron Turner jumped on Smith’s lone kickoff.

Tech did not need to punt once.

Defensively, Laffond, Stafford, and Jackson Morey led Franklin in tackles, Donahue and Sabolevski registered sacks, Stafford caused a fumble, and Levi Dunn and Gancarz knocked away passes.

And so it ends.

For everyone except the cheerleaders, that is. While the rest of the student athletes are swapping their pads for sneakers and swim trunks, the Leaders are back in the dance studio, preparing for basketball season.



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**MONTAGUE** from page A1

ceremony in the new year” for Haskins, but that the board first needed to “make sure we’ve got the right bureaucratic wheels going.” The board voted to recognize that Haskins was now in charge of the Montague department, and to issue him a town credit card with a \$5,000 limit.

“It’s an amazing department – you guys have a fantastic crew here, so I’m very excited to work with them,” Haskins said, pointing to several officers in the audience.

**Taxes Fall, Rise**

The board held a tax classification hearing to determine the level of property taxation needed to fund the town budget and other expenditures, such as school assessments and capital projects, in the current year. Since the 1980s Montague has had a “split” tax rate, taxing residential property at a lower rate than commercial, industrial, and personal property (CIP). Last year the residential rate was set at \$15.21 per thousand dollars in value, while the CIP rate was \$24.26.

Director of assessing Adam Tocci, in his first year on the job, explained the process by which split rates are calculated. He was joined by the board of assessors, which had already voted to recommend keeping the “residential factor,” the percentage of the total property tax revenue contributed by residential owners, the same as last year.

Tocci said that “plenty of people get hung up on” the tax rate, but that it “sets itself,” as it is determined by combining the “levy,” the total amount of property tax needed to fund the budget, with the total value of taxable property, which is determined by a state-regulated process.

The total levy this year, Tocci said, is approximately \$23,615,000, a 5.07% increase, so the town “spent about a million and change” more in its current budget. The total valuations of all property, meanwhile, amount to just over \$1.3 billion, a 5.44% increase.

He presented a chart of possible “shifts” from residential to CIP ranging from 30%, or 1.3, to 50%, or 1.5. Maintaining a CIP shift of 1.4 this year would produce a slight decline in the residential rate to \$15.13, and an increase in the CIP rate to \$25.07.

However, Tocci pointed out, due to increased valuations the average tax bill for a single-family home would increase by approximately \$413, or 9.17%. Tocci did not estimate an average increase for CIP owners, but projected impacts for a hypothetical small commercial property and large industrial property under different scenarios.

After expressing a good deal of concern over the shift’s impact on small commercial property owners, the selectboard voted unanimously to set the same split as the previous year. The board also voted not to create exemptions or discounts for open space property, residential properties used as primary dwellings, or small commercial properties.

**New Tech School**

The selectboard heard a presentation from Richard Martin and Elizabeth Bouchard, superintendent and business manager of the Franklin County Technical School, on their application to the state to build a new facility for the tech school. Montague, as one of the 19 towns

in the school district, would be required to pay a portion of the cost the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) does not cover.

Martin began with an extensive list of things wrong with the current building, originally constructed in 1974, and why it would be unrealistic to fix them. He focused on two of the costliest items – the electrical and mechanical systems, which he said were going “off and on and off and on,” and a leaking roof, which would require a “complete teardown.” The entire cost of rehabilitation of all the items, he said, is estimated at \$74 million “just to keep it afloat.”

These renovations, he added, would not address current state regulations for tech school buildings and programs, and would have to be financed by banks which are likely to require repayment within 15 years.

A new school building has been deemed eligible for state matching funds and 30-year financing, has been vetted for feasibility, and is now in the “schematic design phase,” according to Martin. He showed eight potential designs ranging from bringing the current building up to code to plans for a new, larger building that would separate the classrooms from the vocational shops.

Currently, he said, “when you’re in math class you are smelling gas fumes; you’re smelling the welding in your English class.” The district favors a new building estimated to cost \$197 million, he said, one of the “lower-cost options” reviewed.

**Franklin County  
Technical School  
superintendent  
Richard Martin  
estimated Montague’s  
assessment for the new  
school building would  
amount to “1.1 million  
[per year], for 30 years,  
on average.”**

Martin showed comparisons between the tech school and others in the state, both in terms of its academic goals and the cost of a new building, and a timeline indicating that the design – and the estimated cost to each town – could be ready for public votes next spring. Construction would begin in early 2028, with occupancy by the fall of 2030.

Montague’s assessment, Martin said, would be calculated using its share of the district’s total population, as well as its share of the total wealth as measured by property valuations. He estimated that this would amount to “\$1.1 million [per year], for 30 years, on average.”

After a discussion of a new state-mandated lottery system to vet applicants, the cost of the program, and enrollment projections – which are expected to decline along with school-age population – the presentation ended without the board taking a formal vote.

**Little Departments**

Ramsey reviewed the projected selectboard budget, as well as a long list of related budgets that the central office oversees, for the coming fiscal year. These include the expenses of town meeting, legal counsel, certain “shared costs” of multiple departments, and “intergovernmental” assessments from organi-

zations like the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and the Solid Waste Management District.

The board has asked departments for two budget requests this year: a “level services” budget, with increases only due to inflation and new collective bargaining agreements, and a version spending 2% less than that. This guidance was unevenly applied, as the town has little control over intergovernmental fees and as some functions are so limited, such as the town meeting moderator, that there was virtually no opportunity for reduction.

The farmers market, for example, will need an extra \$250 to keep the porta-potty open through next September at Peskeompskut Park, resulting in a 4.4% increase in its overall budget.

The board members voted to “endorse” all of the requested budgets, which will return for their own official approval at a future meeting.

**Tending Tombstones**

The selectboard informally approved a plan to assign the maintenance of seven of Montague’s eight public cemeteries, currently taken care of by a contractor hired by the cemetery commission, to the town’s public works department. The eighth, Dry Hill Cemetery, is maintained on a volunteer basis by Montague Center resident Mark Fairbrother.

The transfer, first broached by cemetery commission chair Judith Lorei, was justified by Ramsey as a response to the limitations of an unpaid volunteer board. “We generally don’t expect boards like that to maintain contracts of this value,” he said. “There’s a lot of administration that goes into a contract to make sure it’s properly procured and overseen.”

Ramsey said he believed the department could “easily handle” the cemeteries, but that public works superintendent Sam Urkiel had told him it would need more staff as the current three-person grounds crew is “maxed out” maintaining the town parks, various “street-scapes,” and the former Farren Hospital property.

Ramsey did not put a price tag on the staff increase, but noted that the current budget for cemetery maintenance is \$30,000. He suggested keeping the work in private hands “for now” – there is currently a one-year contract with Yellowstone Landscape of Chicopee – but later suggested the transfer “is going to show up in the budget” for FY’27.

**Other Business**

The selectboard approved a \$150,700 contract with the engineering firm Weston & Sampson for testing, design, bidding, and oversight services for a sewer rehabilitation project required under the town’s federal wastewater permit.

The project, approved by town meeting last spring, will focus on lining catchbasins and rehabilitating old sewer lines that combine stormwater and sewage, which occasionally cause “combined sewer overflow” into the Connecticut River.

At the end of the meeting, the board retired into an executive session to consider releasing the minutes of an earlier executive session concerning negotiations with the National Association of Government Employees. The board’s next meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 8.



## LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

*Here’s the way it was on December 3, 2015: News from the Montague Reporter archive.*

### Accident Waiting to Happen

Last week’s Montague selectboard meeting began with Matt MacMillan-Lego complaining about the signage at the corner of Third and Canal streets. He noted that as you come up the hill from the “paper mills,” signs that indicate that Canal becomes a one-way street in the opposite direction are virtually illegible. Trucks and other vehicles drive the wrong way on Canal, mainly to access the Discovery Center parking lot. “Some-

### Thankful for Mutual Aid

On Thanksgiving Day, a 3 a.m. grease fire in an eight-unit apartment building on Dry Hill Road brought out 17 fire departments and displaced seven residents.

“We’re so lucky to have our mutual aid system,” said Montague Center assistant fire chief David Hansen. “Other chiefs helped: one became our safety officer, another helped our operations division, and, of course, there was a department covering our station.”

## 20 YEARS AGO

*Here’s the way it was on November 23 and December 1, 2005: News from the Montague Reporter archive.*

### Good Clean Fun

“I never wanted to own a laundromat, but the space behind this one captured my imagination,” said Chris Janke, owner of the Suzee’s Third Street Laundry building.

This weekend, as part of the Arts and Icicles studio tour, the space has been turned into an art and performance destination. With assets including a cool space, clothing left behind in dryers, a creative cast of area residents and friends, and an unhampered imagination, Janke’s spin cycle went into overdrive.

Using left-behind laundry, Janke had four local designers create wearable art for a fashion show. The night will include a wine tasting sponsored by the Lady Killigrew

Café as well as live music from the Hallas Cowboys, the Cartwheel Club, and Sir Leaking Cloud.

### Bringing the Music Back

John “Klondike” Koehler, founder of Klondike Sound in Greenfield, is up to his ears in musical instruments: trombones, trumpets, guitars, a tuba, a banjo, and even pianos are among the diverse collection he has recently sent to New Orleans musicians after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

Koehler, as co-founder of the non-profit Katrina’s Piano Fund, has spent the last 11 weeks connecting donors from around the country with musicians in need. “We realized the Red Cross and FEMA and the Salvation Army would not be helping musicians get back to work... wherever they washed up,” he explained. Over \$40,000 worth of instruments have been donated.

## 150 YEARS AGO

*Here’s the way it was on December 1, 1875: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.*

### Turners Falls and Vicinity

Anchor ice formed in the canal Monday night, to such an extent as to stop the mills till morning.

Jones Brothers have adopted the cash system of doing business, and the other meat dealers will likely follow suit.

Ed. G. Peabody says he knows nothing about his opening a grocery store on Fourth street, as stated in the *Republican*.

The bridge commissioners have filed their answer to the petition of the Montague paper company for an injunction against the taking of any of their property for the location of the new bridge. The commissioners say that the notice filed that they had located the bridge was published through an inadvertence, that they had not filed such a location, and when

they do locate the bridge they don’t intend to encroach on any property of the Montague company. They therefore ask that the petition may be dismissed. The fact of the location being once placed on file, and a meeting to determine damages on the location having been held, the opponents of the bridge claim the plea of “inadvertence” to be a “thin” dodge. The case may be heard at the December meeting of the supreme court, or at some specially appointed time, but the probability is that nothing will be done in the matter till the April court.

W.W. Hosmer has shaken the dust from his feet, and dusted. It is yet a mystery why he absconded, and it will be long before the cause will be known. Two attachments have been placed on his stock, and the story has been closed. The general impression is that he has left some woman in an interesting condition, but there is not likely much to the rumor.



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GMRSD from page A1

The committee, however, must approve a preliminary budget before February 1, which means it will need to do so at its January 27 meeting, flying blind as regards exact state aid.

The Gill-Montague budget dance begins each year with Montague, by far its larger town, offering up a “preliminary affordable assessment.” The district then tries to build its budget around this large revenue factor; Gill’s much smaller contribution is calculated as an afterthought based on the number of students each town is sending.

This year Montague’s offer includes just 3.9% growth, and to worsen matters, Blier said, her best guess about the state’s Chapter 70 aid is “landing very close to hold harmless again,” a token per-pupil increase owing to an expected drop in the towns’ “foundation” enrollment, a demographic factor largely outside educators’ control.

A sliver of positive news, Blier said, was that the number of seventh-graders expected to arrive from Erving, which is not a member town in the district but pays tuition for each student it sends, is expected to go up.

“So, we’re gonna see an increase in our Chapter 70, we’re gonna see an increase in our town assessments, we’re gonna see an increase in our Erving tuition – but they’re not gonna add up to that much,” she lamented, before moving on to the other side of the balance sheet: projected expenses.

These will be driven by labor costs, including increases of “between \$500,000 and \$700,000” to meet obligations under the Unit A and Unit C union contracts, as

well as by health insurance, which Gill-Montague provides through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Group Insurance Commission (GIC). “In fiscal ’26, GIC increased by 11.7%,” Blier said. “In fiscal ’27, I’m estimating another 10% increase – or about a \$215,000 increase.”

This includes 156 employee plans and 141 retiree plans, she added.

The school committee took the news stoically.

**“All of us would like to see no positions cut,” Montague member Wendy Thompson added, “but we only have so many dollars.”**

“As a former superintendent for 20 years, it’s easier said than done,” Montague member Carol Jacobs said. “We’re gonna have to literally go through every line in the budget, every position, and make some very hard choices about where the money’s going to be spent.... We don’t want to create funding cliffs, but it’s almost like the state budget forces it.”

“All of us would like to see no positions cut,” Wendy Thompson added. “But we only have so many dollars. We have declining enrollment, and the state isn’t getting up very much money for us.... As a committee, we’re charged with making those hard decisions.”

Not all of the meeting was as grave as the business manager’s portion.

Interim superintendent Tari Thomas reported on moderate gains in student attendance, and also that a very low published figure of ad-

ministrator attendance – 86% – was discovered to have been a result of a “reporting error” in which sick and personal time off had been counted as staff absences.

“I am going to put in my newsletter a little article about trying to understand the admin attendance report, and what happened there, so the general public realizes what had occurred,” she told the committee.

Principals from each school gave presentations on their official school improvement plans, including Gill Elementary principal Walter Huston, who is retiring this month.

Thomas reported that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) informed the district on November 24 that its application for a major project to build a wing on Sheffield Elementary – in order to combine Hillcrest Elementary into that building, and close the latter school – had been “favorably reviewed,” and that it is being forwarded to the MSBA’s full board this month for a decision.

The final payment on the borrowing for major renovations to Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School decades ago, Blier said, are being made this year.

School committee chair Jane Oakes reported back from a meeting between committee members and students at the high school. The students, she said, were excited about the recent championship soccer season, gave “kudos” to golf coach Artie Burke, and would prefer to see “less healthy food” stocked in the district’s vending machines, as they believe is provided at other area schools.

“I don’t think we can do that,” Oakes said, “but we did write it down.”



Montague Community Television News

Faces Diligently Plastered

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

**TURNERS FALLS** – The many faces that keep Montague and its neighboring towns in motion are plastered all over the MCTV Vimeo page. See your favorite commission, committee, and board members hard at work in our coverage of local government meetings. Or learn about local author Al Miller and honored elders Don and Janee Stone in the recent local productions that feature them.

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.

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TOWN OF MONTAGUE  
Open Space & Recreation Plan

The Town of Montague is developing a new 10-year Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) to manage, protect, and enhance our conservation and recreation resources. This plan is shaped by a community engagement process to ensure it reflects the needs and interests of residents.

We encourage all community members to get involved!  
Here are some upcoming opportunities:

**Public Forum #1:** Wednesday, December 10, from 6 to 7:30 p.m.  
The project team will present an overview of existing conditions, outline the project process and schedule, and share best practices to support community goals. The main goal is to gather initial feedback on needs and opportunities.

Virtual via Zoom: [www.tinyurl.com/yp9a4mbe](http://www.tinyurl.com/yp9a4mbe)  
Meeting ID: 890 4405 5348 Passcode: 626369

**OSRP Survey:** Help us understand the community’s needs and concerns regarding open space and recreational facilities. Your feedback is vital to the planning process! Take the survey in English or Spanish via this link:  
[www.tinyurl.com/theOSRPSurvey](http://www.tinyurl.com/theOSRPSurvey)

**For questions or comments, and more information...**  
Contact Parks & Recreation Director Jon Dobosz ([redir@montague-ma.gov](mailto:redir@montague-ma.gov)), or Director of Planning & Conservation Maureen Pollock ([mpollock@montague-ma.gov](mailto:mpollock@montague-ma.gov))  
For more info about the OSRP process, visit the project website:  
[www.montague-ma.gov/p/1589/](http://www.montague-ma.gov/p/1589/)

Tip of the week ...

If a grease fire occurs, put a lid on it and turn off the heat. Never throw water on it as it will spread the fire. Do not move a burning pan, as it can ignite clothing or burn others.



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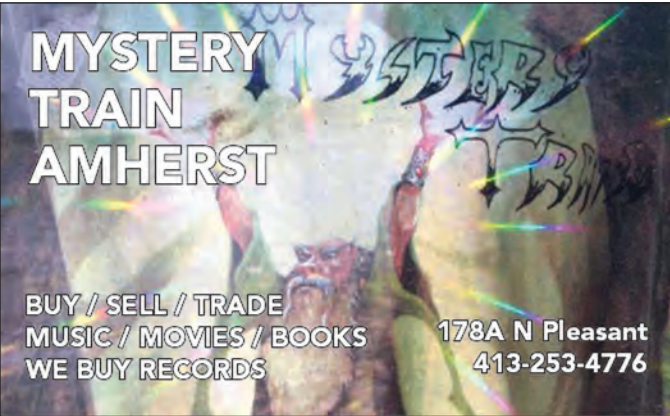
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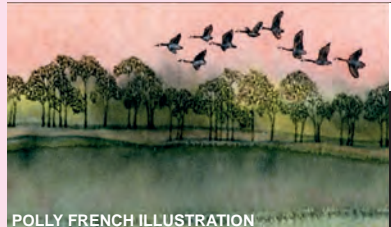
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MIKE JACKSON PHOTO



POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

WEST ALONG THE RIVER

SEE, DECEMBER  
Is HERE

By DAVID BRULE

**ERVINGSIDE** – “See, it’s December already,” I say to no one in particular, unless you count Nikolai. The Siberian is curled up on his rug, snowdog style, black nose in fluffy tail, in his spot between my Adirondack chair and the edge of the frozen deck.

I whisper in his ear the news of it being December, our favorite month. He lifts his eyebrows to acknowledge the obvious fact.

Or maybe I am murmuring this to the mourning doves too. I have a bounty of doves this morning, a few modest and constant juncos, odd pocket change worth of sun-dry sparrows.

The doves are plump as they should be, given all the free cracked corn I toss to them every morning. If this were Virginia or one of the Carolinas, breast of dove would be a tasty morsel fit for a Thanksgiving or Christmas Eve appetizer. Down South, if quail or pheasant are scarce, bagging a dove or two will do!

But we don’t shoot doves up here.

There is someone out there, however, who will do what he needs to do to get a dove. That’d be the Cooper’s hawk, or maybe crazy Henry the young goshawk. Henry comes through the yard like the Angel of Death, disguised as a gray thunderbolt. His sits on a bare branch biding his time, his topknot askew, muttering to himself, sometimes twitching, sometimes sitting stock still.

He is known around here as a hooded assassin. The birds know he’s deadly, perhaps a little crazy, a real psychopath, and they all warn the neighborhood to hide.

For sure, in a bit, Henry will fly off, still famished, to cross the river and raid the marsh across the

way, maybe picking off a hapless rodent, vole, or woodrat.

I’d gladly offer up one of the annoying squirrels that hang about this place.

So this is December, and I’m half cockeyed with the joy of the frozen morning and hot coffee.

Back a week ago, November clouds scudded across the sky, hurrying eastward to do battle and resist the wane warmth of the rising sun.

They were over the coast before long, trying to push into the breeze off the Atlantic where they surely dropped their scarce moisture over the cattails of a North Shore estuary.

Just last week I peered through the woods to the whispering river, westward bound. In this season it flows in a slight headlong rush, singing until it bangs up against the immovable cliff-line of Mineral Mountain, then reluctantly shifting northward for a mile to meet the mighty Connecticut.

Our backyard river barely voiced a suggestion of a song all summer. The baking drought stifled the river music. Only the smallmouth bass were happy with the warm waters of August, stirring them to leap up at anything that touched the surface of their shallow river ceiling.

Sooner or later, the rains brought an end to the drought, and the river recovered, retrieving her song. The renewed music comes like a soft murmur through the trees to reach my ears here on the back porch.

November, that drab gray Pilgrims’ month, flew by at the speed of light.

Autumn chores somehow mostly got neglected. The leaves needed raking, the house needed prepping for winter, the cordwood needed splitting and stacking. I should mention the frog pond too that needed dredging.

Maybe I’ll get to all that, dodging early snowstorms in December.

This November was a month of departures. A dear cousin up on Crocker Avenue pulled up stakes, sold the house, and is probably gone for good.

Born in this village, then having moved away for sunnier pastures, she came back to help ill and failing family members. Her gift to us during her 12-year stay back in her native town was her ability to dig deep into family histories. She found stories long

see **WEST ALONG** page B3



EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH

Evening grosbeak,  
Coccothraustes vespertinus.

Above: Tuesday’s snow, on the “bypass stretch” of the river below the Turners Falls dam and the White Bridge.

HISTORY

Of Love, Loss, and Libraries

By PAM RICHARDSON

**WENDELL** – A few weeks ago, Wendell’s former library building – now a community and senior center – received a new coat of paint. Admiring it, I got to wondering about the beginnings of the Wendell Free Library. The nuts and bolts were easy enough to uncover, but I found a story, too – a story about Wendell’s first librarian, a woman named Julia Kavana.

As a genealogist and local history sleuth, I delight in reconstructing the lives of ordinary people now gone from us. Sometimes it’s easy and fun to do. Other times – as in this case – it’s harder. And sadder.

In 1824, a “social library” formed in Wendell. It required paid subscribers, however, and seems to have faded away over time.

Then, in 1890, the Massachusetts Library Act put in place a state library commission to establish free public libraries, and in 1894 the Town of Wendell voted to accept the terms of that legislation.

The new commission sent 154 volumes to Wendell to get its free library up and running. This donation was followed by generous gifts of books from Mary Needham Phelps, wife of a prosperous Wendell lumberman, and from Lillie Sohier of the elite Cabot-Lowell clan, who had been the mover and shaker behind the Library Act. The library was housed in Wendell’s Town Hall, and was open on Saturdays from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m.

That first year, the town established a three-member Library Board of Trustees and appropriated \$50 for library expenses, half of which constituted the annual salary for the newly-hired librarian, Julia Kavana.



COURTESY OF THE WENDELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Wendell’s first librarian, Julia Kavana, is second from left in this circa-1895 photo. Beside her is Henry James Smith, her employer and an original Wendell Free Library trustee.

Records show that Julia Cavanaugh – she later changed the spelling of her last name – was born just before Christmas in 1858 to working-class parents, Thomas and Eliza Cavanaugh, who had emigrated from Ireland to Newport, Rhode Island. Over the ensuing years, her father worked at various jobs including coachman, gardener, and church sexton while her mother kept house for Thomas, Julia, and Julia’s two sisters.

see **LIBRARY** page B2

RECIPES

CHESTNUTS ROASTING, BOILING, PURÉED...

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

**LEVERETT** – In the 19th century Henry David Thoreau described Massachusetts’s chestnut forests as “boundless,” so you’d think that period cookbooks would have recipes for chestnuts. They don’t.

At least not until 1884, when Mary Lincoln included a recipe for chestnut gravy in *Mrs. Lincoln’s Boston Cook Book*. Fannie Farmer republished this recipe in her 1896 *Boston Cooking School Cookbook* along with four more chestnut recipes, one of them for Devilled Chestnuts, which were made by browning them in butter then zapping them with the devilish heat of Tabasco and cayenne.

But shortly after that book’s publication, chestnut blight, a fungal disease accidentally imported from Asia, struck, and by the mid-20th century it had killed all the chestnut forests. Their ghosts haunt us in local street names. Turners Falls has its Chestnut Street, as do Athol and Hatfield, North Leverett has Chestnut Hill Road, and Springfield’s main thoroughfare is



HOPLEY PHOTO

Chestnuts, complete with the burr, on display at the Leverett Village Co-Op.

another Chestnut Street.

Occasionally we see the chestnuts of the past in memoirs or diaries. Indigenous Americans included them in stews. In the 1830s teenaged Louisa Kimball Comins of Leverett gathered and sold them to the local store to raise money to buy clothes. Sixty years later, Ellsworth Barnard could quickly fill his lunchbox with chestnut windfalls as he returned from school

in Shelburne. He ate some immediately and took the rest home for boiling or roasting.

Perhaps such straightforward cooking methods explain the lack of written recipes: nobody needed directions for these simple procedures.

The good chestnut news is that they are again being grown locally by entrepreneurs such as Jono Neiger, who operates Big River Chestnuts in Sunderland, where he grows and sells a blight-resistant Chinese variety, and Bill and Connie Gillen of Sunset Farm in Amherst, who sell some of their harvest at the Saturday farmers market on the Amherst common.

At this time of year, supermarkets also have imported chestnuts. So, while we can simply boil or roast chestnuts as our forebears did, we can also explore the many intriguing chestnut dishes of other countries.

Chestnuts grow particularly well around the Mediterranean. They used to be a staple of poor people because, unlike most nuts, they have as much carbohydrate as wheat or

see **RECIPES** page B8



# Pet of the Week



## ‘LUNA’

Meet Luna, an adult female mixed-breed dog. Luna’s people describe her as calm, smart, fun, affectionate, independent, protective, and snuggly. She is a loving companion who enjoys walks, hikes, and spending time off leash whenever it’s safe to do so.

Luna is an independent girl who appreciates her space, but when she’s ready for affection, she leans in and loves the attention. While Luna adores people, she does not get along with other dogs, and she will need to be the only dog in the

home. Luna is current with shots, spayed, housetrained, and micro-chipped. She is good with children, but does not get along with cats.

If you’re looking for a sweet, outdoorsy dog to join your life, Luna might be the perfect match.

Luna is currently living in Leyden, and there is no adoption fee. To apply, find “Available Community Animals” under the “Adopt” menu at [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org). A potential adopter must submit an application, interview and meet the pet, and sign an adoption contract.

### LIBRARY from page B1

In 1880, Julia was 21 years old, living with her parents in Newport, and working as a dressmaker, but then we largely lose track of her for quite a while due to the 1890 federal census having been destroyed by fire.

The next available census is from 1900 when Julia was 42 years old and living in Wendell, Massachusetts with a 68-year-old man named Henry James Smith for whom she worked as a housekeeper. Or, at least, that’s what they told the census-taker.

So, what happened during that 20-year interval? Who was Henry Smith? How did he and Julia, two people from very different socioeconomic backgrounds, meet? With an almost 30-year age difference between them, what kind of a relationship did they cultivate? And how did they end up in Wendell?

Henry James Smith, born in 1831, was the son of Amos Smith, a Brown University graduate and a leading Providence cotton dealer. Henry grew up with privilege – a fancy address, servants, a summer home in Newport overlooking Narragansett Bay – and inherited substantial sums when his father died in 1877. He married well, had four daughters, prospered in the cotton business, and retired while still young.

In 1880, when Julia was 21 and working as a dressmaker, Henry James Smith was 48 years old, a retired merchant, and living in Providence with his wife, four daughters, one cook, two maids, and a coachman.

At some point after the death in 1883 of Henry’s wife, Eliza, it seems likely – but not provable due to the loss of the 1890 census – that Julia was hired by Henry as a domestic servant. If so, she would have been in his employ when her mother, also named Eliza, died of pneumonia in 1887, when her father remarried in 1889, and when Henry sold his Providence mansion in 1891 to his daughter, yet another Eliza, for \$1.

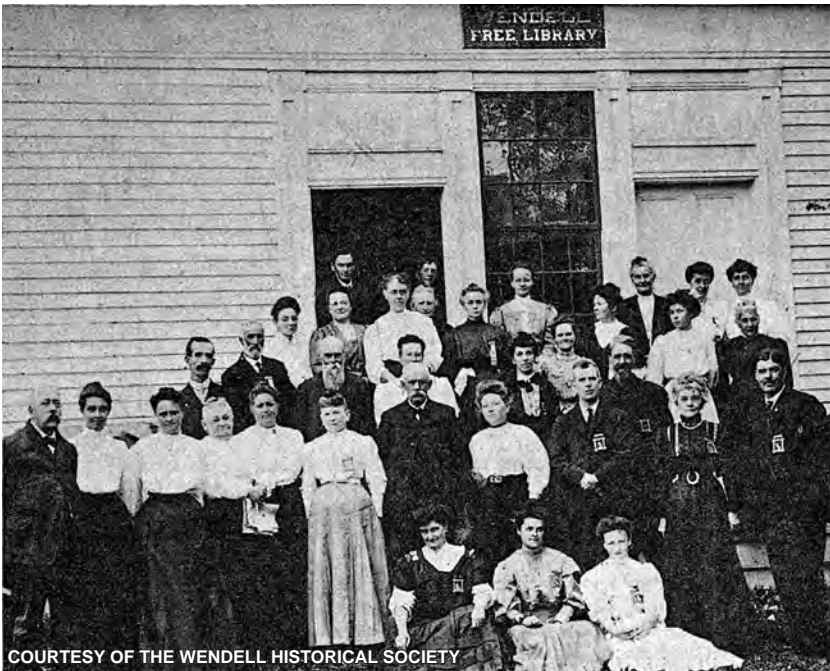
Deed records show that in 1892, Henry purchased for \$200 a 50-acre property “with buildings thereon” on West Main Road – Montague Road today – in Wendell. What possible reason could he have had for relocating to this rural outpost, in decline by almost any measure? There are no clues. Henry bought the property from the wheelwright Erastus Smith, but despite their shared last name they were unrelated.

On the very same day that Henry bought his 50 acres from Erastus Smith, Julia bought land from his wife; Henry’s and Julia’s properties abutted each other.

Two years later, in 1894, the Wendell Free Library hired Julia to be its librarian and appointed Henry to its Board of Trustees. The two other trustees were Charles Ballou, a Wendell-born farmer and horse-dealer who served on the selectboard for 40 years, and Cora Stearns, a public school teacher who rose to the position of superintendent of schools for Wendell, Shutesbury, Leverett, and Erving.

Although Henry Smith was a recently-arrived outsider, he was made Chairman of the Board.

Wendell’s annual town reports from the turn of the century contain updates on the Free Library. These mostly relate to the growing volume



*This photo is thought to have been taken in 1895 at the celebration of the newly-established Wendell Free Library. Research suggests that Henry Smith and Julia Kavana are standing in the first row at the far left, and that Charles Ballou is seen at the far left of the second row.*

of books and Julia’s increasingly urgent appeals for more space, though in 1897 we are told that “the Chairman and the librarian attended a meeting” of the Massachusetts Library Club in Northampton at their own expense.

From the get-go, then, Henry and Julia presented themselves, in one sense or another, as a unit, and I can’t help but wonder if tongues were wagging over the relationship between “the Chairman and the librarian.” Was their relationship in fact more personal, more intimate? I suspected so, and was therefore not surprised to discover that in 1903 Henry legally transferred his Wendell real estate to Julia – and that the following year, they were quietly joined in marriage by the Justice of the Peace in Wendell.

The *Greenfield Recorder* reported often on Julia’s comings and goings, notifying readers of such things as her attendance at various library association meetings, her trips to Boston to purchase new books, a vacation to Niagara Falls, a sleigh accident, her award of second prize at a Locke’s Village speaking contest, and a prolonged stay in a Boston hospital for the treatment and removal of a tumor. The paper’s announcement of the couple’s 1904 wedding identified Julia as having been Smith’s “housekeeper for about fifteen years,” which supports the theory that she had been working for him three years before they came to Wendell.

In 1904, the *Recorder* also reported that “Julia Kavana accepted the position of librarian at Amherst College.” However, there is no record of Julia Kavana Smith ever having worked there. And after this, news items concerning Julia are rare, and it becomes harder to track her.

Deed records, though, reveal that Henry and Julia sold their Wendell real estate in 1906 to Julia’s younger sister, Harriette Kavana Brine, “for \$1 and other valuable considerations.” The reason for this “sale” is unknown, but it apparently didn’t interfere with Harry’s and Julia’s residence on the property. They continued to live there until Henry died of pneumonia and “old age” on March 17, 1909. He was 77 years old.

A month later, Julia bought the real estate back from her sister, but nothing further appears about her until the July 1, 1911 *Greenfield Recorder* announced that “Julia Kavana Smith of Los Angeles called on friends in Wendell last week” –

although I have been unable to find any evidence of Julia’s having lived in California.

And in January 1912, Julia sold “for \$1 and other valuable considerations” all her Wendell real estate to Charles Ballou, who was still a member of the library Board of Trustees. The last mention I could find of Julia in the news occurred in March 1912 when she donated three rare newspapers from the late 1700s to the Orange *Enterprise & Journal*.

The one remaining trace of Julia is the record of her death, age 62, at the Brattleboro Retreat in Vermont on December 18, 1920. The Retreat was an institution well known for its humane treatment of people with mental illness. The cause of death was recorded as “chronic interstitial nephritis and arteriosclerosis,” that is, both kidney and vascular disease.

The death certificate throws a final twist into the story by stating that she had been living at “the place of death” for “11 years, 1 month and 15 days.” Assuming this is true, Julia began living at the Brattleboro Retreat on November 3, 1909, about seven months after Henry’s death. This would make her Los Angeles residency a fabrication.

The 1910 and 1920 censuses give no indication of her whereabouts, but probate records, filed by Julia’s brother-in-law after her death, reveal that he had to pay \$1,927 out of his own pocket to the Brattleboro Retreat for seven years’ worth of boarding Julia there; the previous four years must have already been paid for. He also paid undertakers to transport and bury Julia at Providence’s Swan Point Cemetery next to her husband, where her tombstone identifies her simply as “Julia K., 2nd wife of Henry James Smith.”

This is not the ending I had anticipated as I researched Julia’s story. She appears to have had a zest for life and, in the snippets printed in the *Greenfield Recorder*, she was praised as efficient and practical, generous and hard-working. However, her father died of “senile debility,” and she may have inherited some gene that brought about the same thing in her.

At the very least, I hope that Julia was informed – and was able to appreciate – that just before she died the Wendell Free Library finally acquired a building of its own, something she had pushed for in her ten years of dedicated service as Wendell’s first librarian.



## Senior Center Activities

### DECEMBER 8 THROUGH 12

**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 12/8**

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
12 p.m. Pot Luck  
1 p.m. Beginning Yoga

**Tuesday 12/9**

9 a.m. Chair Yoga  
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday  
3 p.m. Tai Chi  
4 p.m. Spanish Lessons

**Wednesday 12/10**

Foot Clinic by Appointment  
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

**Thursday 12/11**

1 p.m. Cookies & Carols and the Golden Cane

**Friday 12/12**

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

**Tuesday 12/9**

9 a.m. Stretch & Balance  
10 a.m. Line Dancing  
11 a.m. Social Stringer

**Wednesday 12/10**

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

**Thursday 12/11**

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

**Friday 12/12**

8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Quilting Open Sew

**LEVERETT**

Chair Yoga classes are held Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom. Foot care clinics are the third Tuesday of each month. The next clinic is December 16. Luncheons are the fourth Friday at town hall. For more information, contact (413) 548-1022 or [coa@leverett.ma.us](mailto:coa@leverett.ma.us). Check the town newsletter or the LeverettConnects listserv for info.

**WENDELL**

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is January 7. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

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WEST ALONG from page B1

buried and hidden in the family’s memory which changed our lives’ trajectory forever, and introduced us to ancestors we had never met.

Also leaving us in November was an old TFHS friend who finally sold his house on Oakman Street where he grew up. That was where, in those carefree days, we listened to Dylan and Baez before they were household names. Now that house is sold and he’s settled in the City, giving in to the logic of practicality.

Everything passes, everything changes, you just do what you think you should do.

As for me, I’m adjusted to these November farewells, taking away friends and birds of summer.

But I’m ready for December, bring it on! This 12th month has always been the Magic Month for me, full of birthdays, bright lights, and cold mornings.

I contemplate the new month, snug in an old woolen coat, heavy

like a buffalo robe from centuries back. I got this old coat maybe 30 years ago from LL Bean when they still made quality goods from real material, no synthetics. Real wool, knee-length, heavy hood, flannel-lined. Worn and torn pockets, but good enough for porch sitting at 20 degrees. My family would never let me out the door wearing it in public.

I keep my eye and ear peeled for the cheery winter song coming over from the stand of birches or the pine tree grove along the river.

Winter finches, especially the evening grosbeaks, are promised this year. It’s been years since they filled the upper village streets with their silvery bell calls. They used to clamor into our feeders, 15 at a time, garrulous, jostling, and as full of good humor as my French-Canadian aunts and uncles of long ago.

They will arrive, I’m sure, the woods will fill up with snow as they used to. And I’ll be waiting to savor this month when, for the one time of the year, we all grow young again.



FILM STUDIES

# A Different Kind Of Christmas Carol

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – I have seen several movie versions of *A Christmas Carol*. Some of them have been the traditional telling of the story, pretty much how Charles Dickens wrote the story. But there have been a few other versions with different settings, and different versions of certain characters.

One, called *Christmas Cupid* (2010), was set up to feature a story like the original one, only to have the main character’s love life being the focus. The ghosts are her exes, and Chad Michael Murray is in the cast. That is one somewhat different version of the story.

A couple of others that have done what I have mentioned are *Ms. Scrooge* (1997), featuring Cicely Tyson as Scrooge, and *Ebbie* (1995), a Lifetime Television version of the movie with Susan Lucci as Ebbie Scrooge, the head of a department store.

One that has a fairly different setting is one in the world of the music industry, with Vanessa Williams as a music diva named Ebony Scrooge. That one is called *A Diva’s Christmas Carol* (2000), and I should mention that the ghost that shows her her future is a real TV show, *Behind the Music*.

Another version of the movie that I would call insanely different is *Ebenezer* (1998), in which Jack Palance plays Scrooge, in a Wild West setting, which is very cool for this story to be put in. The ghosts basically fit what you expect ghosts to be in that setting. One is a Native American, and another is a soldier. It’s a very unique way to go about telling the story, and something that has hardly been done before.

*Christmas Above the Clouds* (2025) is a new Hallmark Channel movie that also focuses on a woman’s love life, with Erin Krakow as “Ella Neezer” and Tyler Hynes as her ex – and love interest. This one has

her dealing with all of it on a plane, and the ghosts look like people you would find at an airport or airplane. One looks like a flight attendant and another dresses like a pilot.

So this movie basically does what *Ebenezer* did with the ghosts in the story. Her love interest is literally on the flight with her.

One that I would say is similar to *Christmas Cupid* is *We’re Scrooged* (2023), featuring a pair of high school sweethearts who get help with one more chance with each other. The cast features Tamara Duarte as one of the sweethearts, and Sergio Di Zio as the Ghost of Christmas Past – the ghost of their high school guidance counselor.

The other ghosts are far more unique. The future one, in particular, is very original. I had never seen anything like this version of the ghost. It’s a very grim, dark version of what kind of people the main characters will become if they continue on their current path.

This story has been told so many times in the movies. Some versions have been different, but not too original. I found *Christmas Above the Clouds* to feature a very original setting, the Ghost of Christmas Future from *We’re Scrooged* to be the most original ghost, and *Ebenezer* the most unique take on the story I have seen overall.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

## Fake Bill; Rabbit in Custody; Coffee Toss; Saddle Scam; Surprise Grenade/Paperweight; High Female; Chilling Bear

Monday, 11/17

6:27 a.m. Walk-in states he struck a deer on Route 47 and his vehicle is damaged. Unsure if deer is still alive. Report taken.

9:16 a.m. Officer conducting an inspection at Pipitone’s Sport Shop per firearms regulations.

3:36 p.m. Caller reporting wire down on High Street. Verizon contacted.

5 p.m. Caller reporting two-car accident at Sunderland and Gunn roads. No injuries, fluids, smoke, or flames. Control advising X9 on scene.

Tuesday, 11/18

10:41 a.m. Water department employee located a used needle in the area of Swamp Road.

12:39 p.m. 253 Pharmacy employee has a counterfeit bill that was used yesterday along with images of the person who used it. Investigated.

1:52 p.m. Caller from Walnut Street states he saw someone dressed all in black walk onto his porch; party may have taken something from his mailbox. Male party matching description seen walking on Montague City Road. All units out with male party. Party was leaving business cards for people in the area.

3:32 p.m. 911 report of pellet stove fire on Main Street. Transferred to Control.

4:25 p.m. Injured rabbit on South Prospect Street. ACO has rabbit in custody.

Thursday, 11/20

6:08 a.m. Caller states there is a horse in the road on the corner of Greenfield and Hatchery Roads; he almost hit it. Horse back home.

3:06 p.m. Fire alarm at Turners Falls High School. Shelburne Control states TFFD is requesting the police department.

4:04 p.m. 911 caller from Third Street states he went outside for a moment and a random person was on the porch; they spoke for a moment and the other party left. Wanted this on record in case it happens again. Report taken.

Friday, 11/21

2:25 p.m. Officer flagged down about a hit-and-run. Heading to K Street to speak with the other driver. Report taken.

2:41 p.m. Caller states that several hundred dollars were taken from her bank account. Advised of options.

Saturday, 11/22

1:13 p.m. Report of a gray-faced dog with an orange scarf loose near L and Spring streets. Unable to locate.

3:06 p.m. Caller states she got a new phone number from Verizon years ago and another person has been using that number to get credit cards and reward cards, most recently at CVS. Advised of options.

9:47 p.m. Caller states there are four kids hanging around the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge and one was leaning over the railing. Unable to locate.

Sunday, 11/23

1:34 p.m. Walk-in states that while in Food City on Friday, a cashier and two other employees confront-

ed her and accused her of stealing a plastic shopping bag that had medication in it two weeks earlier. She admits to taking the bag; however, it was empty. She is going to bring in the bag on Monday.

Monday, 11/24

6:02 a.m. 911 caller advises that while he was driving, an individual driving an older Jeep passed him at a high rate of speed and threw something, possibly coffee, at his vehicle. Caller advises he followed vehicle to Deerfield Packaging on Industrial Boulevard. Officer spoke with caller and other party; will follow up this morning.

6:34 a.m. Caller from L Street reports her vehicle was keyed overnight; would like this logged.

9:09 a.m. Walk-in states that he thought he had hired a reputable person to fix some lawn equipment for him; however, after his machinery was picked up, he never heard from the guy again. Investigated.

11:40 a.m. ACO responding to Avenue A to pick up a small dog and take it to the shelter. The owner is being transported to the hospital, and may not be home for a while.

1:44 p.m. Caller would like on record that on Friday someone broke into her car at Fifth Street and Avenue A and took her and her husband’s cell phones and wallets. Advised caller to contact banks and credit card companies.

1:45 p.m. Walk-in reports that she bought a horse saddle from a woman on Facebook who listed her company as Dutchess Bridle & Saddle out of Montague, MA, which does not exist. Caller flew from Michigan to pick up the saddle, which she paid \$2,000 for, and arrived at the Sunrise Terrace address the woman had given her, which turned out to be false. The woman claimed her daughter was in the hospital so she couldn’t meet her. Caller contacted the actual business, which is out of Montague, NJ, and spoke with the owner, who was advised of the scam. Report taken.

2:28 p.m. Walk-in party in lobby, possibly under the influence. Officers on duty investigated, determined there was not an issue.

2:48 p.m. Caller concerned about a former tenant who keeps hanging around the property on Seventh Street. Referred to an officer.

7:08 p.m. Caller reports that he just bought a house on Warner Street. His mother was there cleaning today and noticed something that looked like a hand grenade between the shower and the ceiling.

States they have not moved it. Contacted previous homeowners, who state it’s a paperweight, but are not comfortable removing it. Officers will meet caller at residence. Detective requesting bomb squad be contacted. State police on scene. Object cleared. All units clear.

Tuesday, 11/25

8:26 a.m. Caller reports that every morning when he drives down Turnpike Road, people are walking on the side of the road instead of the sidewalk. Referred to an officer.

8:53 a.m. Detail officer on Federal Street advising someone backed into a telephone pole, causing damage. Vehicle no longer on scene. Appears to be old Eversource pole with preexisting damage; Eversource advised. Involved operator back on scene.

Wednesday, 11/26

9:53 a.m. Caller reports that he believes his vehicle was hit at Our Lady of Peace Church on Monday evening. Did not notice damage until yesterday.

8:11 p.m. Caller states she is out of town and her daughter, who is home on Pleasant Street, has friends over. The caller can see them on camera and would like an officer to go and have them leave. Unfounded.

9:02 p.m. 911 call from Rendezvous employee who states a female there is really high and is causing a disturbance; they would like her removed. Services rendered.

Friday, 11/28

4:57 a.m. Caller states she was walking her dog by Greenfield Savings Bank this morning and was approached by a male party who wasn’t making a lot of noise. Caller moved to the other side of the street as the male approached, and he stayed near the bank. Caller advises that while she was walking back home, the male was still by the bank and was tapping on the glass while smoking cigarettes. Units checked area; nobody matching description located.

10:10 p.m. 911 caller from Montague Street states there is a bear between the fences of his and his neighbor’s yards. Officers advised. Caller called back stating the bear is still there and he would like someone to try to run it out of the area. States he has been watching it for 20 minutes and it’s just chilling under a tree. Officer states police are not going to disturb a bear that isn’t doing anything, and that it will move along when it’s ready. Caller called back stating the bear took

see MPD next page

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**MPD** from previous pg off toward the north.  
**Saturday, 11/29**  
11:01 a.m. 911 caller reporting fire alarms sounding and the smell of something burning coming from an apartment at Wentworth Congregate Housing. Transferred to Shelburne Control. PD responding. Officer reports no flames seen.  
**Sunday, 11/30**  
1:36 p.m. Motorist on Swamp Road got hung up on a structure at the end of a driveway and now one or two wheels

are off the ground; she fears the car will tip over. MCFD toned out by Shelburne Control. Tow requested for winch-out. Caller is a Walmart delivery specialist and at the time of the accident, two packages remained undelivered. One recipient could see her package was stationary on Swamp Road and arrived on the scene; package retrieved. Documented that exchange took place, as caller stated she could not electronically record pickup.

2:45 p.m. Caller from L Street states that a female neighbor keeps harassing them about where they park their car. Today she opened up the car door while they were in the car and started yelling at him. Advised caller of options; called involved female and advised her of options as well.  
8:04 p.m. 911 report of accident in Gill at the lights across the bridge. Officers requested to divert traffic off bridge. Services rendered.



# The Sawmill River 10K Run

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**  
**MONTAGUE CENTER** – The Montague Parks & Recreation department (MPRD) is taking registrations for the Annual Sawmill River 10K! The Sawmill Run is scheduled for Thursday, January 1, 2026 in Montague Center.  
The road race will begin promptly at 10 a.m. near the Village Common on Main Street. Race day registration will begin at 9 a.m. at the Montague Common Hall at 34 Main Street.  
Divisions include *Youth*, 17 years and under; *Open*, 18 to 39 years; *Master*, 40 to 49 years; *Senior*, 50

to 59 years; and *Senior+*, 60 years and up. We will also be holding our first 2-Mile Walking Route!  
Online registration is available for both the 10K Run and the 2-Mile Walk at [www.runreg.com/sawmill-river-10k-run](http://www.runreg.com/sawmill-river-10k-run) until December 31, or call MPRD at (413) 863-3216 to receive a registration form and additional information. The entry fee is \$30 if paid by noon on December 31, or \$40 thereafter.  
Hot and cold refreshments will be provided while supplies last. This event benefits MPRD's Sponsor-A-Child scholarship program.

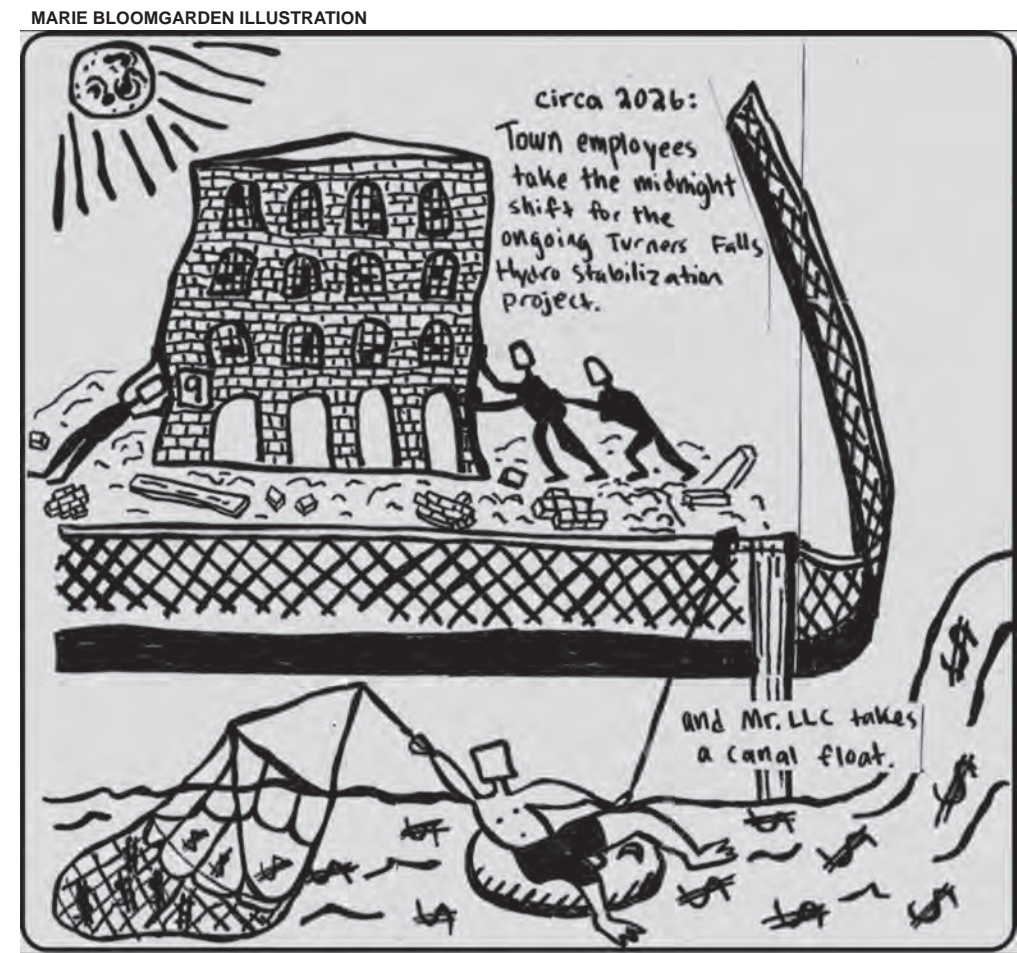
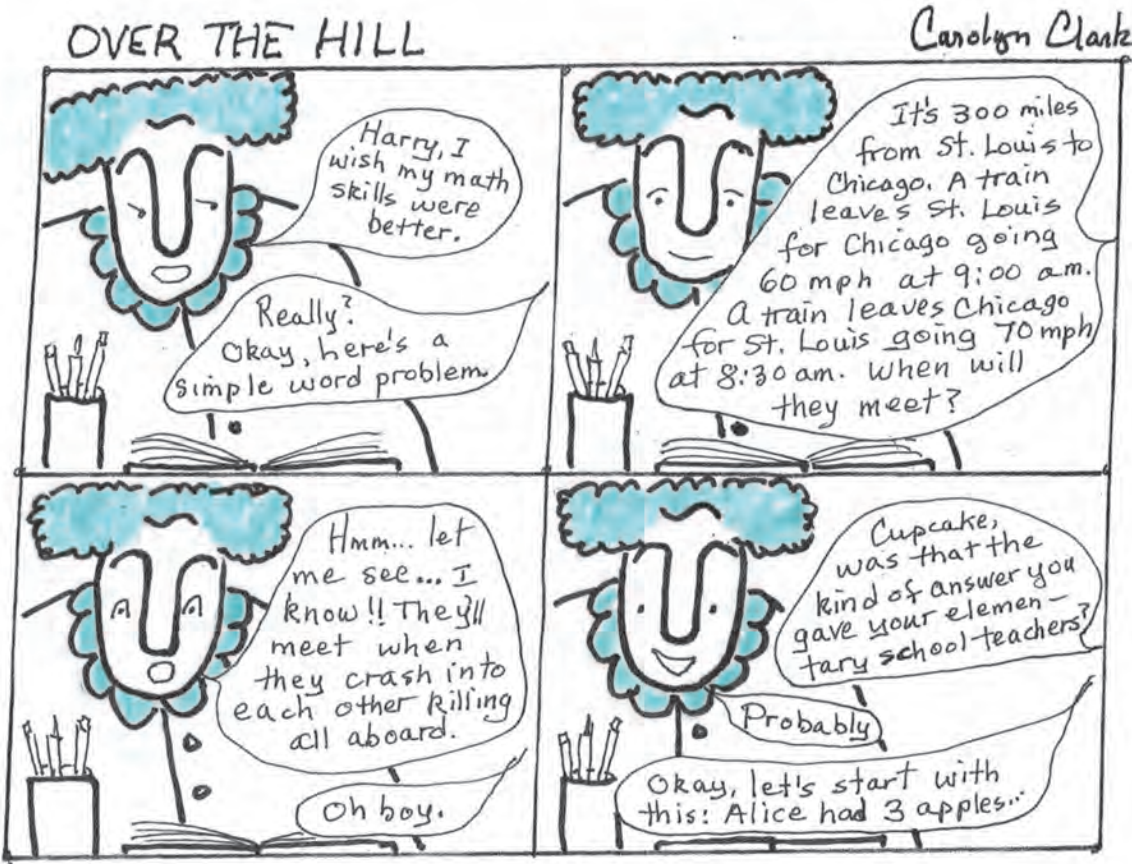
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# Aquí se habla español

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



ANÁLISIS

## Caminos inciertos: Las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y Venezuela en 2025.

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

**GREENFIELD** – La relación entre Estados Unidos y Venezuela ha sido larga, compleja y marcada por diversas vicisitudes como ciclos de tensión, acercamientos puntuales, sanciones, acusaciones de narcotráfico, denuncias de violaciones a los derechos humanos y choques diplomáticos. En estos momentos, ambos países atraviesan una de sus fases más delicadas en años, con un aumento significativo de la retórica agresiva, medidas unilaterales y gestos que muestran simultáneamente confrontación y pragmatismo.

Este artículo busca explicar la situación actual, integrar los últimos acontecimientos y dar voz a las personas cuyas vidas están en el centro de estas decisiones.

Durante más de dos décadas, Washington ha utilizado sanciones económicas y financieras como herramienta central para influir en su política sobre el gobierno venezolano. Aunque en sus primeras versiones en los años 2000 fueron relativamente limitadas, las sanciones se intensificaron notablemente a partir de 2017, afectando a altos funcionarios, empresas estatales estratégicas y redes vinculadas, según los Estados Unidos, con la corrupción, la represión interna o las actividades ilícitas.

Estas medidas han complicado las transacciones internacionales, afectado inversiones y exacerbado las dificultades en la producción petrolera, pero también han tenido efectos indirectos en la población general como restricciones en importaciones, limitaciones para repatriar capitales y condiciones que dificultan la recuperación económica.

En el plano político, uno de los puntos más delicados para las relaciones entre los dos países, ha sido la disputa sobre la legitimidad del gobierno de Nicolás Maduro. Las controversias electorales de 2018 y 2019 llevaron a que parte de la comunidad internacional, incluida la administración estadounidense de aquel entonces, reconociera a Juan Guaidó como presidente interino.

Sin embargo, en 2023 Washington dejó de reconocer este gobierno formalmente, abriendo la puerta a una relación más pragmática y técnica, más centrada en la negociación de temas concretos como son las detenciones, los pasos fronterizos, y las operaciones humanitarias, más que en la legitimidad plena del poder.

Entre 2022 y 2024 se desarrollaron diversos contactos discretos e intercambios limitados, entre los que están incluidos episodios de liberación de detenidos estadounidenses a cambio de gestos diplomáticos de Washington. Estos episodios demostraron que, incluso en contextos de sanciones e insultos públicos, existía margen para acuerdos puntuales de carácter humanitario.

No obstante, 2025 trajo de nuevo una fuerte escalada dialéctica marcada por declaraciones públicas, autorización de operaciones clandestinas y movimientos militares que han tensionado la región.

En octubre de 2025, el presidente de Estados Unidos, Donald J. Trump, confirmó en declaraciones públicas que había autorizado a la Agencia Central de Inteligencia (CIA) a realizar operaciones encubiertas dentro de Venezuela, con el argumento político de combatir redes de narcotráfico y proteger la

frontera estadounidense. La confirmación de medidas de inteligencia, algo que es muy poco habitual en declaraciones presidenciales, marcó un punto de inflexión en la comunicación entre ambos gobiernos.

Trump incluso sugirió la posibilidad de acciones terrestres si las medidas marítimas y aéreas no surtían efecto, y ha empleado una retórica que deja abierta la posibilidad de escaladas mayores en un futuro inmediato.

La tensión se acentuó a finales de noviembre cuando el presidente Trump publicó un mensaje en redes sociales diciendo que el “espacio aéreo sobre Venezuela y sus alrededores debía considerarse cerrado en su totalidad”, generando alarma entre aerolíneas, gobiernos y organizaciones internacionales. El anuncio, que no incluyó detalles operativos oficiales, ni siquiera una coordinación clara con organismos como la Federación Federal de Aviación o el Pentágono, provocó incredulidad incluso dentro de círculos cercanos a la administración estadounidense y una fuerte reacción del gobierno venezolano, que calificó esta declaración como un acto colonial y una violación de la soberanía.



Esa revocación de permisos no sólo complicó la conectividad regional aérea, sino que tensó aún más las relaciones diplomáticas. La Asociación Internacional de Transporte Aéreo (IATA) y otras organizaciones exigieron al gobierno venezolano a reconsiderar las medidas, advirtiendo de las consecuencias económicas y humanitarias para pasajeros, repatriaciones y comercio.

Además, varias rutas de logística crítica y vuelos de repatriación quedaron temporalmente afectadas, lo que generó problemas para ciudadanos venezolanos que se han quedado fuera de las fronteras del país y para las aerolíneas que habían suspendido servicios siguiendo avisos de seguridad.

El gobierno de Caracas respondió con un gesto que es una mezcla de firmeza y al mismo tiempo, una oferta de diálogo. Por un lado, Maduro proclamó en sus intervenciones televisivas que “hagan lo que hagan, no van a poder con Venezuela. Somos invencibles,”

una frase destinada a consolidar sus bases políticas internas y a disuadir eventuales opositores. Por otro lado, el gobierno reiteró que está dispuesto a hablar cara a cara con representantes estadounidenses, pero únicamente en condiciones que respeten la soberanía nacional y sin “últimátums.”

Esa combinación de desafío público y gestos diplomáticos condicionados es un rasgo recurrente de la estrategia oficial venezolana de los últimos años y del gobierno de Maduro.

El gobierno de Maduro ha respondido a estas estrategias de Trump enviando una misiva a la Organización de Países Exportadores de Petróleo (OPEC) alegando que con estas medidas el presidente estadounidense quiere controlar las reservas petrolíferas de Venezuela.

En diciembre de 2025, Donald J. Trump le dio al presidente venezolano Nicolás Maduro un ultimátum: debería abandonar el poder inmediatamente. Mientras tanto, Maduro rechazó la demanda y habría pedido una “amnistía global” para él y sus aliados.

Al mismo tiempo la Asamblea Nacional de Venezuela retrasó una sesión extraordinaria ya

prevista para investigar los recientes ataques de EE. UU. a embarcaciones venezolanas, que fueron acusadas de narcotráfico por el gobierno de Donald Trump y que dejaron decenas de víctimas. La postergación de la sesión no fue explicada por el gobierno de Maduro. Este hecho indica que Venezuela está sufriendo una crisis interna y posiblemente cierta desestabilización en sus propias filas.

Mientras tanto, los efectos sobre la población venezolana siguen siendo agudos. Millones de venezolanos han emigrado en la última década y estos flujos migratorios han generado presiones humanitarias en países vecinos y han roto el tejido familiar de muchas comunidades. Las encuestas de los años 2024-2025 mostraban que más del 40% de la población contemplaba la posibilidad de emigrar fuera de Venezuela y que más de un millón de personas consideraban hacerlo en un corto plazo de tiempo.

Las razones son muy variadas: expecta-

tivas de cambio mínimas, crisis económica prolongada, inseguridad y servicios públicos degradados. Además, la fuga de profesionales, entre los que se incluyen médicos, ingenieros y docentes. Esta situación ha provocado lo que los expertos llaman pérdida de capital humano, y posiblemente dificultará una recuperación futura.

Los testimonios personales y humanitarios pueden aportar matices que no aparecen en las cifras. El relato frecuente entre quienes permanecen en Venezuela es el de la incertidumbre educativa de los niños y el desgaste de los servicios de salud, mientras que quienes están en la diáspora hablan de los obstáculos para regularizar su estatus en terceros países – por ejemplo, títulos universitarios o libros de familia – y de la nostalgia por la familia que dejaron atrás.

Respecto al plano internacional, la situación se encuentra en una mayor competencia geopolítica. Rusia, China e Irán han fortalecido sus lazos con Caracas en materia económica y, en el caso de Rusia, también en cooperación militar. Estas relaciones complican aún más cualquier arreglo bilateral con Estados Unidos, pues introducen múltiples intereses externos que funcionan como elementos de freno o palanca según la coyuntura.

La designación por parte de Washington de estructuras como el denominado “Cártel de los Soles” como organización terrorista extranjera y el incremento de la presencia naval y aérea estadounidense en el Caribe han sido interpretados por Caracas como parte de un plan de asedio que exige respuestas contundentes.

Los gobiernos de los países de la zona, desde Argentina hasta México, tienen miedo de esta escalada ya que creen que puede complicar la situación de la zona, e incluso provocar un conflicto bélico. El gobierno del presidente colombiano, gran enemigo de Trump, dijo en declaraciones públicas que el cierre del espacio aéreo debe considerarse completamente ilegal.

Los analistas políticos mencionan tres escenarios principales en los que puede desembocar esta situación: una escalada sostenida que podría involucrar más sanciones y presión militar; un *statu quo* tenso y manejable mediante canales discretos; o un proceso de negociaciones más estructurado que ofrezca un alivio gradual de sanciones a cambio de verificaciones sobre derechos humanos y procesos electorales transparentes.

El camino que se elija tendrá consecuencias inmediatas sobre la vida de millones de venezolanos y sobre la estabilidad regional.

En conclusión, la relación entre Estados Unidos y Venezuela en 2025 exige atención sobre hechos verificables y un enfoque que priorice la protección de la población civil. Los discursos duros y las operaciones encubiertas complican la paz regional; sin embargo, los canales diplomáticos abiertos, aunque frágiles, ofrecen la única vía para contener daños mayores.

Por el bien de la población, la comunidad internacional debería fomentar mecanismos de diálogo que permitan acuerdos humanitarios verificados, alivios puntuales de sanciones por resultados concretos, y la reanudación segura de conexiones aéreas y comerciales que hoy están en riesgo.

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# EVENTS

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## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4

Four Phantoms Brewery, Greenfield: *Tabletop Roleplaying Night*. "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, Greenfield: Documentary, *Kili Big* (2021), followed by discussion with the director and filmmaker. RSVP at [www.gcc.mass.edu/events/kili-big/](http://www.gcc.mass.edu/events/kili-big/). 6 p.m. Free.

Buoyant Heart, Brattleboro: *oh you are, The Freeps, Sisyphus Feat, Content Clown*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Honey & Spike: An Evening of Queer Comedy*. 8 p.m. \$.

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5

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

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Reading the Streetscape Walk*. "Learn about the unique architecture of Turners Falls on this accessible 1.25-mile downtown walk." 3 p.m. Free.

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls: *Sadie's Bikes Gumball Takeover*, with art by *Flower Sounds, Sean Berthiaume*. 5 to 8 p.m. Free.

Dreamhouse, Turners Falls: *Soup's On*, homemade soup and bake sale benefit for Save the Center School. 5 to 8 p.m. \$.

Veterans Mall, Greenfield: *Santa* arrives; music by *Twice as Smart, Música Franklin, Stoneleigh Burnham School*; community caroling; tree lighting. 5 p.m. Free.

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

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

Shutesbury Athletic Club, 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.

Born Again Vintage, Northampton: *Olive Klug, Silvie's Okay, Sable Island Pony, A Day Without Love*. 6 p.m. \$.

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, 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. \$.

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Used Book Sale*. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$.

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

Downtown Greenfield: *JingleFest*, with shopping, activities, music at several venues. See [www.tinyurl.com/jinglefestGF25](http://www.tinyurl.com/jinglefestGF25) for schedule. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *Shutesbury Holiday Shop*. Handmade work from over 40 local artisans. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free.

Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center, Northfield: *Destination Alaska*, presentation by riverboat captain Ryan Leclerc. 11 a.m. Free.

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *Crafternoons: Dry Felting Workshop*. Participants create a felted bird. 1 to 3 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Danse Café*, traditional holiday music. 1:30 p.m. Free.

East Street Studio, Hadley: *Play, Swamped*, written and directed by Court Dorsey. 2 p.m. \$.



*Elephant 6 indie-pop doyens The Ladybug Transistor hit the Drake this Friday night.*

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Komos Cowboys, Mike Donovan*. 4 p.m. By donation.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *CitySpace Bluegrass*, open jam. 4 p.m. Free.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *PWRUP, Mephiskapheles, Stop the Presses, Futon Lasagna, Threat Level Burgundy, Backyard Superheroes, Llama Tsunami, Jon Berman*. 4 p.m. \$.

Four Phantoms Brewery, Greenfield: *Dan Belmont / Steve Kurtz Jazz Quartet*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

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

Mount Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Carrie & Michael Kline, Joe Blumenthal & Jim Armenti*. 7 p.m. \$.

House show, Leverett: *Magick Lantern, Flynn Bryan, Eli Elkus*. 7 p.m. By donation.

# EXHIBITS

**Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls:** *Will Close*, paintings showing the beauty and complexity of the natural world, with text from experts and longtime New Englanders. December 7 through January 31.

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

**Montague Center Library, Montague:** *Mark Mariani*, pastel paintings, through January.

**Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center:** Guest artist *Annaleah Moon Gregoire* presents paintings at the gallery in December and January, with an opening reception next Saturday, December 13, from 1 to 4 p.m.

**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.

**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.

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

**Festival of Miniatures, Brattleboro, Vermont:** Over 50 downtown storefront windows are transformed into miniature worlds: tiny train stations, whimsical dollhouses, snow-flecked terrariums, and diminutive handcrafted furniture created by local artists and shop owners. Through December.

**Gallery A3, Amherst:** *Small Wonders Holiday Show and Sale*, through December 23, with an opening reception this Thursday, December 4, at 5 p.m.

**Downtown Amherst:** *Hats: A Celebration of the History and Culture of Millinery*, townwide exhibit showcasing historic and modern hat designs and the history of hat making in the region. Through January 4.

**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*.

**Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls:** *Magic of Moonlight*, group exhibit by member artists and crafters, through December.

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

**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.

**Tabor Gallery, Holyoke Community College:** *Hypercolor*, five artists using brilliant color to explore spirituality, memory, intuition, time, and rebellious joy. Artists are Sunny Allis, Kim Carlino, Donnabelle Casis, Andrae Green, and Sharon Leshner. Through December 18.

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CALENDAR

Bombyx Center, Florence:  
*Tom Rush*, accompanied by *Matt Nakoa*. 7 p.m. \$.

Rat Trap, Holyoke: *Dusters, The Brolic, Human Ignorance*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wendell: *Carol Devine and the Mighty Fine*. Benefit for No Assault & Batteries. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Bunnies, Princess Ghoul, Burial Grid*. 8 p.m. \$.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7**

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *Holiday Shop*. Work from over 40 local artisans. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free.

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Sound Bath with Brandy Lefsyk*. Limited spaces, first come first seated, no registration. 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *First Sunday Word*, with five-minute slots and featured writers. 1 p.m. By donation.

East Street Studio, Hadley: *Play, Swamped*, written and directed by Court Dorsey. 2 p.m. \$.

Greenfield High School, Greenfield: *Franklin County Community Chorus Holiday Concert*. 3 p.m. \$

Northfield Mount Hermon Memorial Chapel, Gill: *Vespers*. Choral and orchestral music, carols, readings. 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Free.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *id m theftable, Federico Balducci*. 4 p.m. By donation.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Stella Silbert & Liz Tonne, Mike Bullock & Vic Rawlings*. Book launch for Nat Baldwin's *Antithesis*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Besnard Lakes, Gold Dust*. 7 p.m. \$.

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 8**

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

Wendell Senior Center, Wendell: *Memory Café*. "Social gathering for people living with changes to their memory or thinking and the people who care about them." 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Embroidery Workshop*, for ages 13 and up. Register at [www.tinyurl.com/GPLembroidery](http://www.tinyurl.com/GPLembroidery). 6 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Owen Manure, Jeff Gallagher, Desi Lowit*. 8 p.m. By donation.

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9**

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Knitting Night*. 5 to 6:45 p.m. Free.

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *Old Time Radio Christmas Special*, presented by Brian Casey: "Listen to holiday radio from the 1940s." 6:30 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: *White Hills, Pink Mountaintops, Willie Lane & Ski Patrol*. 8 p.m. \$.

*Now in its 41st year, Welcome Yule: A Midwinter Celebration "invites all to gather in the warmth of an English pub and around a solstice fire to mark the seasonal shift from dark to light" at the Shea Theater next Friday and Saturday, December 12 and 13, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 14 at 2 p.m.*

*"We're all in this together, celebrating the turn of the year," says artistic director Jinny Mason (above left), who has been involved in the intergenerational song, dance, and storytelling event since its inception. See [welcomeyule.org](http://welcomeyule.org) for more details.*

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10**

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Book Group, Art Spiegelman's Maus I*. 3 p.m. Free.

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

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Matinee movie, *You Can Count On Me* (2000). 4 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Writers Read* featuring *Jan Maher, Jovonna Van Pelt, Lindy Whiton, Matthew Barlow, and Vanessa Query*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Marigold, Easthampton: *The Shoestring Trivia Night*. 7 p.m. By donation.

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

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11**

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

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Environmental Book Group*. Hage and Marcotty, *Sea of Grass*. 3 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Magical Winter Lights*, holiday magic show for ages 6 and up. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Book Club*. Sonia Purnell, *A Woman of No Importance*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Film, *The Social Dilemma* (2020), documentary-drama. Discussion about social media and AI follows. 5:45 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Ryan John Clary, Mark Schwaber, Jared Knapik*. 9 p.m. By donation.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12**

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.

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

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13**

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Holiday Craft Fair*. Handmade and local crafts and products, raffle, food. Fundraiser for the library. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free.

Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center: *Kids Nature Art: Solstice Lanterns*. Materials provided. For ages 4 to 10. Limited space; register at [www.bookeo.com/northfield](http://www.bookeo.com/northfield). 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Free.

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

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Winter Market* with music by *Oddball Song Creations, Frogtones, Gogo California, beetsblog, Impure Luck*. 12 to 5 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Savings Bank, Turners Falls: Selectboard member *Marina Goldman* meets with constituents. Light snacks. 1 p.m. Free.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: Reception for *Annaleah Moon Gregoire* art exhibit. 1 to 4 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Kids' Holiday Party*. Crafts and snacks while you wait for Santa. 1:30 to 3 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule: A Midwinter Celebration*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: *sinonó*, with *isabel cresco pardo, Lester St. Louis, and Henry Fraser*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Cursive, AJJ*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Winds of Alluria, Neonach, The Oracle, Three Dragon Alley, Hyponova*. 8 p.m. By donation.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Coyote Young*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14**

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Welcome Yule: A Midwinter Celebration*. 2 p.m. \$.

Second Congregational Church, Greenfield: *Creating Community in Difficult Times*. Presentations, music, and a community meal. 2 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Danse Café*, live holiday music. 2:30 p.m. Free.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Creative Writing, Holding Hapoleon, Strange Pains*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

**looking forward...**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17**

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Matinee movie, *First Cow* (2019). 4 p.m. Free.

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18**

Tourists, North Adams: *Lexi Weege*. 8 p.m. Free.

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19**

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Unagi, Dome Lettuce, Soma79*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20**

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Solstice Party*. "Celebrate the shortest day of the year with crafts, cocoa, tea and snacks." 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Free.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *That's A Wrap!* Pop-up market with Mrs. Claus, vendors, Fill-A-Bag with art supplies. 12 to 5 p.m. Free.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *LS Camp, Edo G, Bonnie Stone, Pharaoh Bacon*. 8 p.m. \$.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21**

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

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31**

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Noon Year's Eve Party*. Crafts and a kid-friendly countdown. 11 a.m. Free.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bella's Bartok, Film & Gender, DiTrani Brothers*. 9 p.m. \$.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 3**

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wendell: *Butterfly Swing*. Benefit for the Coffeehouse itself. 7:30 p.m. \$.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 23**

BUI Skatepark, Brattleboro: *Balmora, Sin Against Sin, Wisdom & War, Fifth War, Violent Protest*. 7 p.m. \$.

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 24**

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

**SUNDAY, MARCH 29**

Palladium, Worcester: *Blood Incantation, Emperor*. 7:30 p.m. \$\$.

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1**

The Drake, Amherst: *Ryan Davis & the Roadhouse Band, Rosali*. 8 p.m. \$.

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10**

Iron Horse, Northampton: *The Mekons*. 7 p.m. \$.

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**RECIPES** from page B1

potatoes. In Italy and Spain they were so important that people dried them for out-of-season use. They also made them into flour for bread.

Nowadays dried chestnuts are reconstituted with sweet wine to make a luxury dessert, while chestnut flour is the main ingredient of *castagnaccio*, a sweet Italian cake enriched with raisins and pine nuts. You can find chestnut flour in some Italian groceries and online. It's useful in gluten-free cooking.

In France there are two words for chestnut: *chastaigne* for uncultivated ones, which typically have two or three nuts clustered inside a prickly shell called a burr, and *marron* for chestnuts hybridized to produce a single large nut. This is the chestnut that is candied into expensive *marrons glacés*. Sixteen steps are involved in their making, hence their priciness.

Not quite so dear are jars of chestnuts in syrup. An 1890s advertisement for Raffetto's imported French Marrons explains their origin: "Marrons are very large and flavorful chestnuts which are grown in Southern France and Italy. They are imported by Raffetto in the shell, the nut-meat removed whole, preserved in pure sugar and

vanilla syrup, then packed in glass jars to keep indefinitely."

In Amherst, Emily Dickinson's sister-in-law Susan Gilbert Dickinson included Marron Pancakes for dessert in the menu list she compiled, presumably using imported chestnuts, while her Roast Beef with Roasted Chestnuts could use the local crop.

Beloved chestnut dishes from France include chestnut tart and Mont Blanc – called Monte Bianco in Italy – a pyramidal chestnut-and-chocolate mound topped with whipped cream to imitate the snows of the famous mountain. Spain has several confections teaming chestnuts with chocolate, and a stew of beans and chestnuts with chorizo.

In Turkey there's a pilaf of lamb with chestnuts. Britain is too cool to grow chestnuts, but nonetheless imported Italian chestnuts are tossed with Brussels sprouts for winter holiday meals. Other classic chestnut recipes from Europe include chestnut soups and several chestnut pastries.

To prepare chestnuts, first wash them, then make a cut starting on the flat side and going most of the way round the rounded side, but not cutting into the nut itself. Drop

them into a pan of water and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the nuts a few at a time with a slotted spoon and, protecting your hands from the heat, strip off the shells and the skin that lies underneath. (Keep the remaining nuts in the hot water until you're ready to deal with them; if they cool, the shells re-attach themselves.)

This task sounds fiddly, and it is. You can avoid it by buying ready-shelled chestnuts from the supermarket. Whole cooked chestnuts imported from Italy or China come in plastic bags, while specialty food stores have French *puréed* chestnuts in cans or tubes, either sweetened for making desserts or plain for savory dishes.

As for cooking the chestnuts you shell yourself, you can simmer them in water. After about 15 to 20 minutes they will be tender, and you can eat them as is with a sprinkle of salt or use them in recipes such as the ones on this page.

While some recipes for chestnuts desserts can be challenging, these savory recipes are straightforward. For ease of measuring, half a pound of prepared chestnuts, either home-made or store-bought, is about 20 large ones.



**CHESTNUT SOUP WITH HERBY OYSTER CRACKERS**

*2 Tbsp. olive or other oil*  
*1 medium-large onion, chopped*  
*1 celery stick, chopped*  
*1 large carrot, cut into disks*  
*1 leek in 1-inch pieces (optional)*  
*8 oz. (18 to 20 large) cooked chestnuts*  
*1 quart chicken stock or vegetable broth*  
*1 bay leaf*  
*1¼ tsp. thyme*  
*½ cup heavy cream*  
*sugar, sherry, or Worcestershire sauce (optional)*  
*2 Tbsp. butter*  
*¾ tsp. oregano*  
*1 cup oyster crackers*  
*salt and pepper to taste*

Heat the oil in a saucepan and stir in the onion and celery. Cook gently for five minutes, then



stir in the carrots, the leek if you are using it, and the chestnuts. Then add the stock, bay leaf, and a half-teaspoon of the thyme, plus

salt and pepper to taste. Simmer this for 30 minutes, or until the vegetables are very soft. Let it cool until handleable.

Discard the bay leaf, then *purée* the soup in a blender or with a stick blender. Return it to the pan, stir in the cream, and taste. Add 1 to 2 tsp. of sugar if you need to balance the flavors. You could also brighten it with a quarter-cup of sherry or a tablespoon of Worcestershire sauce if you like.

Reheat and serve garnished with the herby oyster crackers. Make these while the soup is cooking: melt the butter over low heat, stir in the oregano and the other ¾ tsp. of the thyme, and then stir in the oyster crackers. Season with salt.

*Serves 4 to 6.*

**BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH CHESTNUTS**

*about 1½ lb. Brussels sprouts, stalks and outer leaves trimmed*  
*1 cup chestnuts, either pre-cooked or packaged*  
*3 Tbsp. butter*  
*nutmeg, preferably freshly grated*  
*salt and pepper to taste*  
*2 slices cooked bacon (optional)*



When they're hot, season with grated nutmeg. Also toss in the bacon, cut into half-inch pieces, if you are including it. Finally add salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately.

*Serves 4, but can be multiplied for a crowd.*

**CHESTNUTS WITH BEANS AND CHORIZO**

Chorizo made for cooking can sometimes be hard to find. You can substitute its Portuguese cousin *chouriço*, or use kielbasa or Italian sausage.

*1 medium onion, chopped*  
*3 Tbsp. olive oil*  
*2 or 3 garlic cloves, minced*  
*½ lb. (about 20 large) boiled or store-bought cooked chestnuts*  
*1 small cinnamon stick*  
*2 or 3 cloves*  
*1 bay leaf*  
*dash of Spanish paprika (pimenton)*  
*salt and pepper to taste*  
*1 can butter (giant) beans, or cannellini beans*  
*12 to 16 oz. cooking chorizo or other sausage*



HOPLEY PHOTOS

Gently fry the chopped onion for about 8 minutes, or until it is soft. Add the garlic and cook for a minute longer, then stir in the chestnuts and cover with water. Add the cinnamon stick, cloves, and bay leaf, and season with the paprika, salt, and pepper to taste. Simmer until the chestnuts are tender.

Meanwhile, lightly brown the

sliced chorizo or other sausage in another pan. When the chestnuts are tender, add the chorizo to the first pan along with the drained beans. Keep the bean liquid.

Cook for 5 minutes. If you need to thicken the sauce liquid, do so by adding the thick residue from the can of beans, or by stirring in a few mashed beans.

*Serves 4.*

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