

# The Montague Reporter

Year 24 – No. 7

editor@montaguereporter.org

JANUARY 22, 2026

\$2

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

## G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE Schools Brace As Admin Staff Tasked With Finding Cuts

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – “What do we absolutely not want to give up, or we’ll be in trouble?” Gill-Montague school committee chair Jane Oakes asked Tuesday night, two and a half hours into a working session on the district’s FY’27 budget. “I’ve been a teacher when the budget here was so bad we took 0% for our raise... You don’t want to go there. None of us do.”

“I’d like to see what administration thinks – kind of the bare bones, ‘this is what we can function well with,’” said Montague committee member Steve Ellis.

“It’s going to be a challenge,” replied business director Joanne Blier.

At issue was a gap – still at \$2.2 million – between the revenues the district projects receiving next year and the expected cost of everything requested by its departments and principals. Insurance and retirement

see CUTS page A5

## WENDELL SELECTBOARD

## Town Seeks New Deal With Good Neighbors

By JOSH HEINEMANN

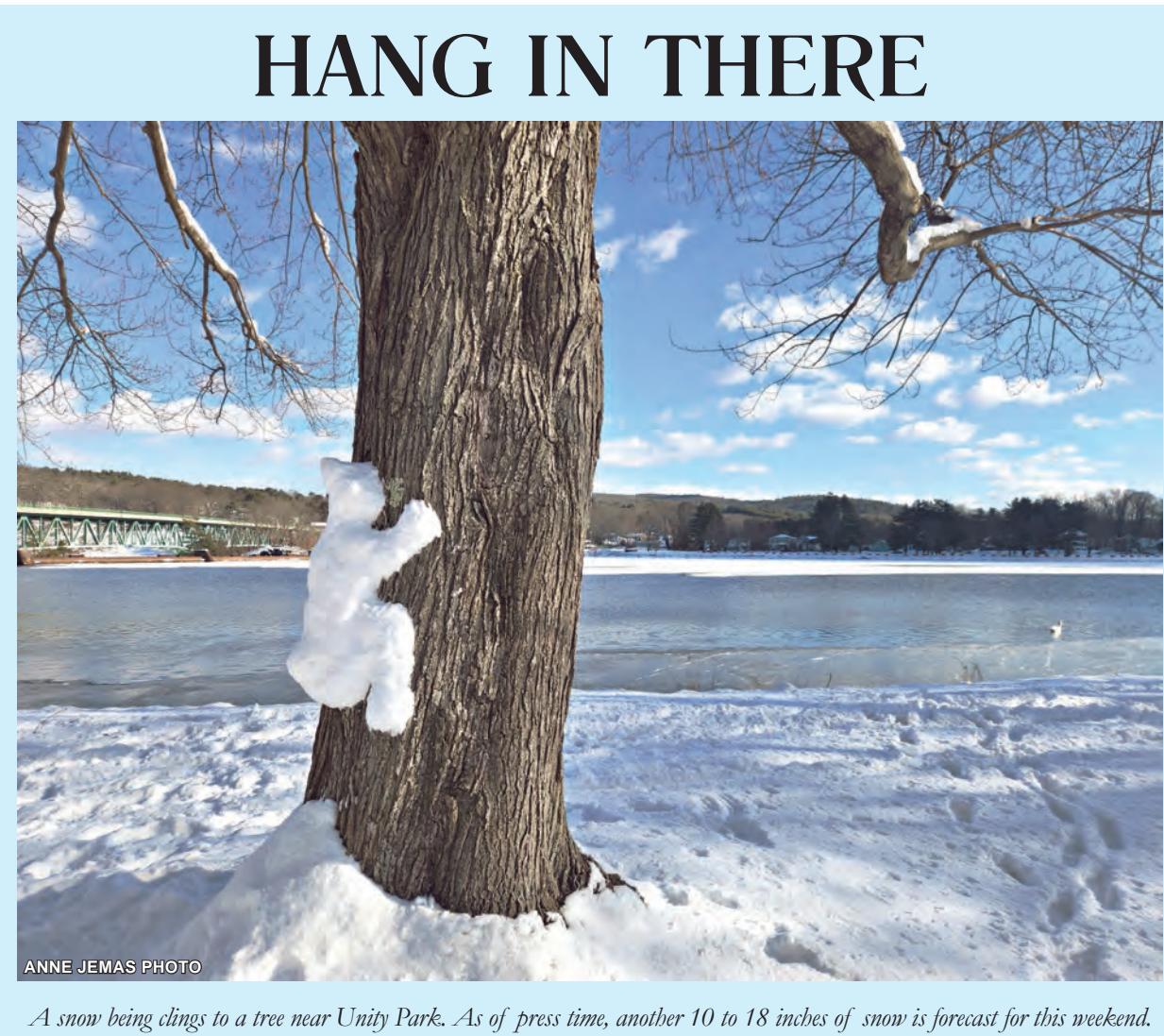
The year started gently for the Wendell selectboard on January 14 with a short meeting, and no effort to take over any neighboring town, though Wendell has issues that involve both New Salem and Erving.

The board discussed an update to the rental agreement between the town and the Good Neighbors food pantry. Chair Laurie DiDonato said Good Neighbors provides a huge benefit for the town residents, but their use of the town hall every Sunday takes town resources, and she was concerned about its long-term financial implications. The organization has made irregular donations to the town, but recently its finances have tightened.

Selectboard member Adam Feltman said Good Neighbors should at least have general liability insurance. There has been no cause for a claim in the years Good Neighbors has used the town hall, but their use is the most regular and most frequent of anyone, he said, so their risk is greater than anyone else’s.

Town engineer Jim Slavas has told the selectboard the generator serving the town hall is a discontinued model, operating past its projected use span, and compatible parts are not available. He was able to make one more repair, he said, but was unable to install a controller to rotate emergency electricity distribution among the appliances in the

see WENDELL page A5



ANNE JEMAS PHOTO

A snow being clings to a tree near Unity Park. As of press time, another 10 to 18 inches of snow is forecast for this weekend.

## HANG IN THERE



ANNE JEMAS PHOTO

A snow being clings to a tree near Unity Park. As of press time, another 10 to 18 inches of snow is forecast for this weekend.

## On the Ave: A Good Place For a Barber



JACKSON PHOTO

Ronny Sierra (left) is Turners Falls's newest barber.

## High School Sports: A Rebuilding Year

By MATT ROBINSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – This week the Turners Falls co-op swim teams won two more decisive victories. There are two team meets left on the docket, and in February their fastest swimmers will compete in the individual postseason contests.

In basketball, the Franklin Tech boys went one-and-one this week, and are poised to qualify for the playoffs. The Turners boys, who lost two close ones, are now riding an eight-game losing streak.

The Turners girls almost saw their first victory of the season but were upended in the fourth quarter by John J. Duggan Academy, and the Tech girls, who beat Pathfinder but lost against Mohawk, are currently sitting at 4 and 8 with five games remaining in the regular season.

### Girls' Basketball

Duggan 32 – TFHS 23  
FCTS 50 – Pathfinder 43  
Pathfinder 52 – TFHS 28

Mohawk 65 – FCTS 44

The Duggan Maroon Jayhawks came to town last Thursday, January 15, and came from behind to defeat the Thunder.

This was arguably the best game of the season for Blue. They ran coordinated plays, fought for rebounds, and notched up their aggressive game, swarming the ball carriers and wrestling for steals.

Not to be outdone, the Jays matched their physical play, and soon both teams were racking up fouls. This led to a low-scoring affair, and after one complete, they were in a 6-6 knot.

The second quarter saw more

see SPORTS page A6

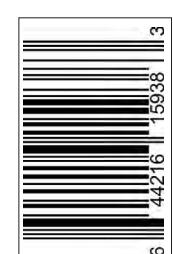


DAVID HOTT PHOTO

Jojo Hayman shoots from the free-throw line last Thursday. Hayman was the high scorer for Turners Falls with 11 points in the loss to the visiting Duggan Academy Jayhawks.

### Reassuringly Similar to Several Previous Editions

Swarming the Ball Carriers.....	A1	The Mouse That's In the Snake's Throat.....	A5	No Idea Who Took the Excavator.....	B3
Beyond the Confines of Our Borders.....	A2	Dribbled It Out to Ice the Win.....	A6	About Confronting the Wolf.....	B4
Too Much Content Pouring Through.....	A3	A Speckled Orange-and-Yellow Mixture.....	B1	A Good Group Scream.....	B4
Led to the River's Edge.....	A3	Against the Edges of Violent Forces.....	B1	The Lazy Lull of January.....	B5
Kept Warm in a Special Machine.....	A4	Lugging Her Mother's Baton.....	B1	Groundhogs, Love Crumbs, Dark Crystal.....	B6
Mostly Made Up of Rain.....	A4	Unearned Confidence in Falsehoods.....	B2	Cinnabun, Smut, Blonk, Klug, Takaat.....	B7
Anyone Who Knows the Code.....	A5	Nearly Exterminated the Mongrel Canines.....	B3	Enjoys Their Dug-Up Texture.....	B8



## Connecticut Pols Call for Crackdown On Overflows

By JEFF SINGLETON

**MONTAGUE** – Last week the *Hartford Courant* dramatically reported claims that municipalities in Massachusetts were pumping millions of gallons of “raw sewage” into the Connecticut River, which was making its way across the border into Connecticut. That state has recently undergone an aggressive and costly program to eliminate its “combined sewer overflows” (CSOs), structures that combine sewage and rainwater drainage which can spill over into waterways during heavy weather.

Many CSOs were constructed near the turn of the 20th century, and continue to plague older industrial municipalities – and now violate federal Clean Water Act regulations.

Several Republican legislators in Connecticut who had asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in December to address the problem were reported by the *Courant* as expressing outrage at the federal agency’s “underwhelming” response.

“The amount of sewage being

see CRACKDOWN page A4

## Rep Seat to Stay Empty

By REPORTER STAFF

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – As of press time last week, the *Montague Reporter* wrote it “had not received confirmation” from Massachusetts House Speaker Ron Mariano’s office “of a decision on the matter of a special election” to replace resigning 1st Franklin state representative Natalie Blais (*Rep Steps Down Early; Seat May Stay Empty*, Page A1). Later that day, Mariano confirmed that a special election will not be held.

“Just after the House placed Blais’ resignation letter on file during Thursday’s session,” *State House News* reports, Mariano “announced that he will not call a special election to secure representation for the rural district.... Mariano’s office said Secretary of State William Galvin “outlined a number of logistical concerns regarding a potential special election in the 1st Franklin District.”

Special elections are scheduled in March to replace 1st Middlesex senator Edward Kennedy and 5th Essex representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante, who died last fall, but Blais’s January 9 announcement would place an election in late May or June. As the legislative session ends in July, Galvin apparently determined the district’s 18 towns should wait until the November election.

# The Montague Reporter

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## CORRECTION

Last week's article on the removal of the dam on Bowen's Pond in Wendell (*Age-Old Pond Drains As Ailing Dam Removed*, Page A1) referred to "a \$462,000 grant awarded to the nonprofit by the state Division of Ecological Restoration to remove the dam and restore the uppermost reaches of Osgood Brook."

Krista Haas, a spokesperson for the MA Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), reached out to point out our mistake: that grant, which was returned to the state in any case, came from the Dam and

Seawall Repair or Removal Grant/Loan Program.

Both fall under the jurisdiction of the state Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, DER is part of the Department of Fish and Game, but the dam repair program is under the Office of Dam Safety, part of the Department of Conservation & Recreation.

We're grateful for the correction! We checked our coverage of the issue from last September and were relieved to see we didn't make the same error then.

## Letters to

### 'Blind and Ideological Disregard of Morality' Is Moral Absolutism Too

It's the latest tactic from the Israel-can-do-no-wrong lobby: asserting that municipalities have no business taking a stand on national or international affairs. A recent letter from Adam Solender of the Jewish Federation of Western MA contends that last fall's vote by Montague Town Meeting to declare Montague an apartheid-free community constitutes "moral absolutism" and "chills speech."

However, as anyone who has lived in a small New England town well knows: *we take stands on large issues all the time*. In Leverett, any annual town-meeting warrant typically has one or more articles pertaining to something beyond the confines of our borders. We discuss, generally respectfully, and we vote. I understand there were months of dialogue in Montague prior to the apartheid-free vote.

On the other hand, I have lost count of the number of letters I have received since October 7, 2023, from the Jewish Federation of Western MA soliciting financial support for Israel without a single word denouncing Israel's ongoing slaughter of Palestinians in Gaza – more than 70,000 dead since October 7, including at least 440 since October's so-called "ceasefire."

Or bothering to mention the Jewish-settler pogroms that have killed over 1,000 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank since October 7,

the rampant seizures of land and destruction of homes, the withholding of food and medical aid, the deliberate murder of healthcare workers, journalists, even children, all with billions of US tax dollars.

So, there's the true "moral absolutism": not the reasonable discussion of issues of concern, but the blind and ideological disregard of the morality of a situation.

Not to mention urbanites telling us we can't have the conversations we want and run our towns the way we choose. Please.

As to Mr. Solender's concerns about the citizens of Montague using "historically-loaded" terms like "apartheid": Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Israeli human-rights organization B'Tselem, UN special rapporteurs, and others – professionals who devote their careers to these issues – have all called Israel's actions towards Palestinians "apartheid."

Additionally, these organizations, along with Physicians for Human Rights Israel, Doctors Without Borders, the UN, and the International Association of Genocide Scholars – for starters – call Israel's actions in Gaza "genocide."

Yes, words matter. Kudos to Montague for speaking up and speaking out.

**Nancy E. Grossman**  
 Leverett

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**PHONE: (413) 863-8666**

**EMAIL:**

editor@montaguereporter.org  
 ads@montaguereporter.org  
 bills@montaguereporter.org  
 subscriptions@montaguereporter.org  
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**NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION**

*Cocina Lupita, located at 125 Avenue A in Turners Falls, offers authentic Salvadoran food and a full bar. Aleyda Romy, pictured here, says that some of the house specialties are platanos, pastelitos, quesadillas, pupusas, burritos, gorditas, tacos, and milanesas de pollo. The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner every day of the week except Tuesday.*

## the Editors

### Act of Conscience, Not Conformity

In reference to last week's Letter to the Editors headlined "Moral Absolutism in New England":

We appreciate the author's concern for pluralism and community cohesion in Montague. Those values matter deeply. But we disagree with the premise that declaring opposition to apartheid or systemic injustice is an act of coercion rather than conscience.

Many residents who support the "Apartheid Free" resolution do so not to shame neighbors or demand ideological conformity, but to express solidarity with Palestinians living under conditions that leading human rights organizations, including Israeli and international ones, have described as apartheid. Naming injustice is not moral absolutism; it is a longstanding tradition of ethical

engagement, from opposition to Jim Crow to South African apartheid.

The resolution does not require anyone to abandon their identity, beliefs, or concern for Israeli safety. Nor does it label Jewish residents as suspect or illegitimate. Jewish communities themselves hold a wide range of views on Israel and Palestine, including many Jews who support Palestinian rights and oppose occupation. Conflating criticism of Israeli state policy with harm to Jewish neighbors risks silencing both Palestinians and Jews who dissent.

Local resolutions have always reflected moral commitments beyond town borders. Communities have spoken out against slavery, segregation, the Vietnam War, and South African apartheid without becoming "foreign ministries." These

statements did not fracture communities; they clarified values and invited dialogue.

True pluralism does not mean avoiding difficult truths to preserve comfort. It means making space for principled disagreement while refusing to normalize injustice. Opposing apartheid, wherever it occurs, is not a rejection of coexistence. It is a call for equality, dignity, and freedom for everyone who lives between the river and the sea.

Montague can be a place where people disagree passionately and still belong. That includes those of us who believe Palestinian human rights deserve to be named, defended, and taken seriously.

**Chien-Luke Hsu & Jasmin Hsu**  
 Turners Falls

### Men Must Step Up

Each year more than 10 million people in this country are abused by an intimate partner; this includes physical violence, stalking, and/or rape. On a minute-by-minute basis, this amounts to 20 to 24 people each minute.

On a lifetime basis, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience partner violence. Perhaps even more stunning: it is estimated that there is a 50% *underreporting* rate!

The above does not include mental, emotional, and/or economic abuse, which are seen as "widespread," not to mention exceedingly more insidious, and often not regarded as abuse.

I have lived eight decades as an American citizen, and nothing has *really* changed.

Throughout the history of the US, women have characteristically initiated, organized, and led numerous reform movements. These include the abolition of slavery (Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Maria

Stewart); labor rights and workplace safety (Rose Schneiderman); child welfare, public health, and education reform (Jane Addams, Lillian Wald); political rights and women's suffrage (Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Ida B. Wells, Alice Paul); Civil Rights, at the grassroots level (Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks); reproductive rights and body autonomy (Margaret Sanger), peace and anti-war movements; environmental justice (Rachel Carson), and many more.

Undeniably, the majority of perpetrators are men. So it is to men that I ask, "Men, when will you step up and begin to put an end to this travesty, this inhuman and indignant behavior?" We need you... *Only you can do this.*

**Mary Kay Mattiace**  
 Turners Falls

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# TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

Apologies for skipping this column last week. We ran out of time.

And apologies for skipping the Montague Cryptojam this week. We ran out of space! *MR* aficionados will recognize this edition as a little 14-pager. Typically a winter treat, these short editions are increasingly rare: from an annual average of nine appearances between 2022 and 2024, we only put out four 14-page *MRs* in 2025. This is chiefly a result of our Events Calendar expanding to two pages as of last January.

I'm not sure how often we'll manage to squeeze out 14s in the future, as there is simply too much content pouring through our office weekly to fit through such a narrow aperture easily. I'm sure we'll be back to the standard 16 next week.

A reader in Florence (Massachusetts) ordered one of our **classic blue T-shirts** recently, then decided to swap it for a different size. He mailed the first shirt back to our office. Our ever-diligent and ambitious business manager, being scheduled for a delivery in that part of the world on behalf of a different employer, decided to save on postage by dropping the replacement off in person, and used the same package – addressed to our Turners Falls office, if you're following along – to contain and convey it.

He left the package in the reader's mailbox.... and was stunned, a few days later, to find it returned again to us, despite lacking uncanceled postage, by the equally diligent United States Postal Service.

That's cute, right? It's cute.

The new principal at Gill Elementary School, Justin Mickiewicz, gave one of our staff members a useful mnemonic for spelling his name: "Just sing it to the old Mickey Mouse song – it almost works: *M-I-C, K-I-E, W-I-C-Z!*"

The Franklin County Technical School Adult Education spring course catalog arrived this week on my desk. There are some great offerings at Tech for older students, beginning with the Career Technical Initiative programs run in conjunction with the MassHire Career Center: 12-week electrical, carpentry, horticulture, welding and metal fabrication, and plumbing.

These courses are free to income-qualifying participants. Maybe you know someone who could benefit? Have them check out [www.fcts.us/apps/pages/AdultEd](http://www.fcts.us/apps/pages/AdultEd) if so. There are also plenty of fun and interesting one-off workshops, from "Sound Bath" to "**Making Whoopie Pies**," as well as short, helpful courses on a variety of topics.

Our readers with the means to do so are invited to **participate in a food drive** – I'm giving you a little more than two weeks' headstart to earmark a little money, plan, and integrate it into your grocery shopping:

"Women's Way, an affinity group of United Way of the Franklin & Hampshire Region, is running their annual Supper for Six food drive to ensure that local food pantries and family programs will have plenty to offer during the busy February school vacation week. On Tuesday, February 10 from 4 to 6 p.m. at Baystate Franklin Medical Center, community members, businesses, and

organizations are invited to bring reusable grocery bags filled with nonperishable dinner ingredients for a family of six, such as rice and canned proteins, pastas and canned vegetables, and nut butters and jelly." Use the main entrance, and feel free to stick around for light refreshments and speakers.

**We need poems!** The *MR*'s monthly Poetry Pages for February and March still have space for more. Send your best original poem to [poetry@montaguerreporter.org](mailto:poetry@montaguerreporter.org). No fake poems, though, please.

If you read our lead editorial on December 18, "Strictly Ballroom," you may have felt a little worried that the editorial staff at your local community newspaper might be **sliding into paranoia**. A secret public-private partnership to build a data center deep below the White House?

Well. On Monday, *CNN* senior White House reporter Betsy Klein dropped a breathless-yet-vague report on the "plans to rebuild the top-secret bunker beneath the White House East Wing." Key phrases: "new technology to counter evolving threats," "resilient, adaptive infrastructure," "emerging technologies," "paid for by American taxpayers"...

It's not data center acknowledgement, but it's bunker acknowledgement, and taken alongside reporting on the surveillance software already being tested by ICE – PenLink, Mobile Fortify, ELITE, Tangles, Graphite; look them up – it should be enough to inspire at least a *little* paranoia among us surface dwellers.

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



MAGGIE SADOWAY PHOTO



JON-MARC SEIMON PHOTO

*Top: Sign-holder on Route 2 in Gill last Friday.*

*Above: Sign-holders in Montague Center, January 8.*

# MONTAGUE REPORTER...



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Wendell reader Anna Gyorgy – Hungarian for "George" – visited relatives in Budapest last month, and brought our November 13 edition with her.

She is pictured here with the Shoes on the Danube Bank, a 2005 sculpture honoring the 3,500 to 20,000 people – Jews and other targets of the Holocaust – led to the river's edge and shot by the ultranationalist

ruling party in 1944 and 1945.

The militiamen forced their victims to remove their shoes so they could sell them.

ON  
THE  
ROAD

## And Another Letter 'Injustice Anywhere'

I'd like to respond to Adam M. Solender's January 15 Letter to the Editors. First, I'd like to commend the excellent work that the Jewish Federation of Western MA does; the organization's public engagement and assistance endeavors are so appreciated in this community.

Mr. Solender makes two points in his letter which I'd like to respond to individually:

1) That town meeting members, by voting in favor of Article 16 at the October 22 Town Meeting and thus adopting a resolution declaring the town to be an apartheid-free community, were in some way discouraging dialogue and chilling speech, writing "This is not inclusion. It is coercion."

I disagree with this characterization. I'd like to invite Mr. Solender to view the meeting, available on MCTV's website. Town meetings are a core feature of local governance, and Article 16 prompted a robust discussion characterized by mutual respect and open dialogue.

Indeed, open dialogue has continued since the adoption of the resolution – between neighbors and community members, and in the pages of this paper. As town meeting member Maddox Sprengel noted at the time of the meeting, "This resolution is an invitation for all of us to come together out of isolation and reaffirm fundamental care for one another" (*Greenfield Recorder*, October 23).

Montague residents understand that respectful civic discourse is key to a functioning democracy, even when we disagree with each other, and respect for this process has always been central to this resolution. Many of us are happy to continue this discourse and engage with anyone who may have doubts or concerns about Montague's

commitment to being an apartheid-free community.

2) That Montague should not concern itself with international conflict, writing "Montague is not a foreign ministry."

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is tomorrow at the time I am writing this, and I am reminded of his words in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

As I write this we are also witnessing a rollback of civil rights in this country, with ICE agents committing horrific acts of violence in a punitive campaign against major cities based on the administration's desire for ethnic cleansing and suppression of dissent.

In this context, it is notable that American law enforcement agencies participate in exchange programs traveling to Israel to learn techniques in checkpoint management and crowd suppression; that the same company that provides Israeli airstrike targeting software also provides ICE's immigrant tracking and deportation management software; that other companies involved in the occupation of Palestine, like Elbit and Paragon, provide surveillance technology to ICE – surveillance technologies pioneered for use against Palestinians, including Palestinian Americans' private communications with their relatives in Gaza.

We are all united in our struggle for justice, from Minneapolis to Gaza. Montague residents are proud to stand against apartheid wherever it may exist, because injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Jacob David Goldman  
Turners Falls

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## BARBER from page A1

as a professional barber and worked for three years on the island.

In 2013 he moved to the United States, where he plied his trade for nine years in Leominster, and then for nearly three at the Upscale Barber Shop in Gardner.

Last summer he bought a house in Greenfield and moved there with his family. "I was looking for something cheaper," he told the *Reporter*. "Over there – Gardner, Leominster, Fitchburg – everything is expensive. Here it's more cheap, and more quiet!"

Traveling every day initially to his job in Gardner, Sierra began scouting a location for a shop of his own. "I was looking for a place in Greenfield, and then I saw this place," he said.

Lin Hua Zhang, who co-owns Ce Ce's as well as the rest of the 53-57 Avenue A building, was supportive – "he just didn't want food here," Sierra says with a grin.

Five Star specializes in "everything," with prices ranging from \$5 and up for designs and graphics to \$30 for a regular haircut to a \$55 platinum package that covers a haircut, a beard cut, an eyebrow trim, and a shampoo.

The décor is gold, brown, black,

and gray, flanked with traditional barber poles, and towels are kept warm in a special machine behind the counter, ready for a hot towel shave. Sierra said that while the shop specializes in men's haircuts, he also cuts women's hair "sometimes – it's hair, you know?"



ADIN TORIBIO/PHOTO COURTESY OF FIVE STAR BARBER STUDIO

A mid fade given at the shop last Saturday.



## CRACKDOWN from page A1

pumped into the river [by Massachusetts] could fill a hundred Olympic-sized swimming pools," said state senator Stephen Harding of Brookfield, the ranking member of his legislature's Environmental Committee. "It's absolutely disgusting. I am by no means satisfied with this response and will continue working on a bipartisan basis to shine a spotlight on this environmental malpractice."

"I feel a little more confident doing more finger pointing now because Connecticut is ahead of Massachusetts," Republican representative Tami Zawistowski of East Granby told the *CT Mirror* last fall.

The state has established a Clean Water Fund which, during the past four decades, is reported to have spent approximately \$5.3 billion to reduce the number of combined outflows. This includes an ambitious project currently underway in Hartford, the state's biggest CSO polluter, which involves the construction of a four-mile-long, 18-foot-diameter tunnel that will store combined sewage during storms so it can be slowly released to a treatment plant for processing before being discharged to the river.

That project, originally awarded for \$279 million, is expected to cost over \$500 million by the time it is finished next year.

The EPA has responded to the legislators' complaints by stressing the aggressive mandates it has imposed on the offending Massachusetts cities. According to a letter from the agency, Springfield adopted a plan in 2014 that will reduce its annual overflows from 441 million gallons to 59 million gallons by 2037.

Holyoke, the statement said, approved a consent decree with state and federal agencies that has reduced its outflows from 517 million annually in 2000 to 189 million currently, and plans a further reduction to 84 million by 2037. The *CommonWealth Beacon* notes that the city is currently carrying out a major project "to separate the two systems and mitigate CSO events," using \$22.5 million in no-interest borrowing from the EPA's Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

And Chicopee, according to the agency, has reduced its overflows from an average of 487 million gallons to 94 million a year and plans a further reduction to 76 million by a project to be completed this year.

*CT Mirror* has calculated that in 2024, the total amount of combined sewer overflow generated by Hartford – 797 million gallons – significantly exceeded the combined total of the three main culprits in Massachusetts, Springfield, Chicopee, and Holyoke, which together totaled 572 million gallons.

That volume, the publication notes, "is mostly made up of rain" though it is contaminated with sewage.

"As residents of this district know all too well, the Connecticut River has a history of becoming unsafe for swimming and fishing, particularly after significant rainstorms," Rep. John Santanello, a Democrat from Enfield, Connecticut, was

quoted as saying in a written statement. "That is a longstanding fact. But what is not true are the exaggerated claims suggesting that millions of gallons of raw sewage are being dumped into the river during these weather events."

An online map maintained by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) shows a total of 11 active CSO "outfalls" – sites where combined sewers may overflow into waterways – in Holyoke, 15 in Chicopee, and 20 in Springfield.

There are two more on the river, however, further upstream. Though it has not been mentioned in the complaints by Connecticut lawmakers, the town of Montague has struggled for decades with overflows at its two CSO outfalls, particularly from its industrial village, Turners Falls, where combined sewer systems were built in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Overflows have been a chronic occurrence bypassing the town's wastewater treatment plant, constructed in 1963 in Montague City, and at an exit point in the Patch in Turners. In 2004 the plant's superintendent, Bob Trombley, told the selectboard that MassDEP was mandating that municipalities take steps to reduce these flows. The following year, Montague voters narrowly approved a debt exclusion measure to fund \$2.2 million of a proposed \$5.7 million project from borrowing.

The main feature of this project, which was finally completed in 2009, was the installation of a large underground holding tank beneath Avenue A – a "buffer line" – that stores combined sewage during rain events and releases it to the wastewater plant slowly for purification. During these years the town also worked to address "inflow and infiltration" (I&I), extra water entering the sewer through cracks or illegal pumping by residents.

Another debt exclusion measure in 2016, this time approved by a 2-to-1 margin, appropriated tax funds to rehabilitate the "main drain" transporting water and potentially sewage under the Turners Falls power canal to the outfall behind Food City. Roughly 40% of the million-dollar project was reimbursed by FirstLight Power, which owns the canal.

Further improvements were recommended by engineers in 2023, and in 2024 Montague received a \$500,000 grant from the state Executive Office of Economic Development for an "Avenue A Buffer Line Improvement Project."

Evaluating the impact of these efforts is a challenge, in part because overflows are highly correlated with the weather, as public works superintendent Sam Urkiel told the *Reporter* this week. A 2023 report shows major variations in the annual volume of overflow in the 2010-2021 period, but a significant reduction, on average, from the baseline year of 2005: from 7.04 million gallons to an average of 1.28 million.

In 2021, the Baker administration enacted new rules requiring towns and cities to notify the public within two hours of any spill of sewage into a public waterway, placing an additional

Discounts are also available for boys 10 and under (\$25), and for seniors 62 and up (\$20). On Wednesday afternoon, two of the three seats were occupied by customers, and both deals were in effect. Sierra worked alongside his employee and friend Adin Toribio as a deep house track played on the sound system.

Sierra said his favorite part of the job is seeing the effect a good haircut can have. "I like making my customer like new," he reflected.

Downtown, Five Star Barber Studio joins Ed's Barber Shop, an Avenue A fixture for many decades; RMP Hair & Co. on J Street, formerly Hair By Phase One; and Kharma Salon down the Avenue.

Five Star is open 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday and Wednesday through Saturday; closed Tuesday; and open 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. More information is on Instagram @5starbarberstudio and on the "5 Star Barber Studio" Facebook page.



burden on municipalities with CSO outfalls.

Montague now maintains a page on its website publishing detailed monthly data on its CSO events, alongside measurements of rainfall. According to the town's annual reports, a total of 1,523,244 gallons overflowed its CSOs in 2023, followed by 783,597 in 2024.

The neighboring city of Greenfield, which does not have CSO outfalls, was required to report several breaches of its sanitary sewer system into the Green River totaling 2.12 million gallons in 2023 and another 680,881 gallons in early 2024.

The non-profit Connecticut River Conservancy ([www.ctriver.org](http://www.ctriver.org)) regularly collects water samples from the river, from Putney, Vermont to Haddam, Connecticut, and tests them for *E. coli* bacteria potentially associated with CSO discharges. Multiple attempts to reach Conservancy staff for comment were unsuccessful as of press time.

The pressure on Montague to reduce its CSO events became more intense under its current wastewater permit from the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), which was negotiated in 2023 and came into effect at the beginning of 2024. The permit does not set specific limits on discharge volumes, but includes complex monitoring, maintenance, reporting, and public communication requirements.

The negotiations for the permit coincided with a 2023 decision to create a new position within the public works department, the "collection system lead operator." The job description, which former town administrator Steve Ellis helped draft, combines maintenance of the overall sewer system – cleaning catch basins with a vac truck, for example – with expertise in data analysis, reporting, and communication about the CSOs as required under the permit.

Work also continues. A timeline on the town's "Modified Implementation Plan" shows that 2026 will include ongoing GIS mapping of the sewers, hydraulic modeling and "field investigations" to determine where water enters and flows through the system, the completion of the Avenue A Buffer Line Improvement project, and a continued focus on I&I.

As noted above, the small upstream town seems to have escaped the recent attention of Connecticut politicians and public officials. But comments on the initial draft of the town's NPDES permit include input from the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP):

"As a downstream state, Connecticut has a keen interest in WWTP discharges and potential impacts to both the major receiving tributaries and [Long Island Sound].... LIS is affected by hypoxic conditions, which occur annually in the summer.... Over the past 30 years, the State of Connecticut has invested approximately \$2 billion to reduce its CSOs. We are interested in the progress other states in the region like Massachusetts are achieving with CSO reduction."

Additional reporting and writing was contributed by Mike Jackson.



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**WENDELL** from page A1

building in order to keep the food fresh and the furnace operating without overloading the present generator.

Slavas recommended acquiring a larger, commercial-grade generator, which can cost \$20,000.

Good Neighbors is preparing to apply in April for a grant that could pay for a new generator which would be able to power the building, including all of the organization's freezers and refrigerators, during a sustained outage of the grid. One condition of that grant is that Good Neighbors must own the generator for at least two years.

Town treasurer Carolyn Manley asked whether the town may rent the generator from Good Neighbors during those two years, and whether the arrangement could also address liability.

Keys to the town hall are in possession of several town citizens and officials, without close scrutiny. The front also has a lock box with a key inside, so anyone who knows the code can get inside.

Feltman suggested changing the code for the key lock box at regular intervals, and requiring users to turn their keys in to town coordinator Kelly Tyler when they end their terms of use instead of merely passing them on to successors. The coordinator can then issue the key to the next person.

Selectboard member Paul Doud said he was willing to join DiDonato and meet with Good Neighbors leaders at 1 p.m. Sunday, January 25 in the town hall.

**Bridge to Erving**

Highway commission chair Phil Delorey said he had a conversation with the engineer overseeing the repairs to the Farley bridge connecting Wendell and Erving, who said the change order plan is ready to send to the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

The plan, Delorey said, is not that different from what was discussed at the December 3 Wendell selectboard meeting, which was attended by the Erving selectboard, town coordinator, and highway superintendent.

MassDOT is expected to respond in April or May, and a bid process will follow. The engineer's estimate is \$238,000, which is less than he expected when he spoke in December, but still comes on top of the original estimate for replacing the deck and its underlayment.

The plan does not include cleaning or painting the superstructure.

Delorey said Wendell has not spent all of its 2025 Chapter 90 money, but that using it for the bridge repair would deprive Wendell's other roads, and he planned to look for grants through the state's Rural

Development Fund.

DiDonato said Erving town planner Glenn Johnson-Mussad, Wendell's former coordinator, has a good connection with state senator Jo Comerford.

**Malicious Disruption**

DiDonato talked about "Zoom-bombing" and ways to deal with it. Wendell's selectboard meetings are held in person and over Zoom, and links to video of past meetings can be requested from Tyler.

Board of health clerk Tom Siefert said a board of health meeting was also "bombed." They turned off the Zoom feed and turned it back on. Siefert, a resident of Shutesbury, said Shutesbury selectboard meetings have also been Zoom-bombed, with pornography taking over the screen until the intruder was shut out.

DiDonato said the Zoom host can hold unknown potential visitors in the waiting room and ask them what meeting they are trying to enter.

**Other Business**

DiDonato announced that the town got back from its lawyer the municipal agreement with New Salem for maintenance of the 0.6 mile stretch of road that was newly discovered to be in Wendell but was assumed to be in New Salem. Under the agreement, New Salem would plow snow on the road, and Wendell would carry out summer maintenance.

Good Neighbors asked for permission to put two handicap parking spaces on the police station side of the town hall. Leverett police, who provide police services to Wendell, had no objection. Signs would be posted on the station wall, not on a post welded to a vehicle wheel, and the spaces would not block vehicle access to the station.

Delorey said the spaces would be used for an hour once a week, and that he said the road crew should be consulted.

According to Manley, the town's free cash was certified at \$259,854. She said she was hoping to schedule a special town meeting at the money managers' January 21 meeting. Most of that meeting was expected to be devoted to discussing grants with FRCOG director of regional services Bob Dean. Town meeting can make the free cash available, Manley said, then follow up with a "laundry list" of other items.

Delorey said the free cash is almost enough for the Farley bridge, but Manley said it is not for use by the highway department.

The board appointed Heather Reed to the open space committee.

**Tip of the week ...**

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**HEARING NOTICE: PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES**

A public hearing will be held in person and remotely on Wednesday, February 11, 2026 at 7:00 pm during the Planning Board meeting to discuss proposed changes to the "Zoning By-Laws." Public access is available by using the link for the meeting posted on [leverett.ma.us](http://leverett.ma.us).

Changes proposed are in relation to:

- SECTION 3900 Site Plan Review
- SECTION 2200 Use Regulations
- SECTION 2240 Accessory Buildings and Uses
- SECTION 2340 Dimensional Schedule
- SECTION 2400 Accessory Apartments
- SECTION 3120 Schedule of Parking Area Requirements
- SECTION 4970 Ground Mounted Solar Electric
- ARTICLE VI - DEFINITIONS

Complete text of the proposed changes can be found in the Town Clerk's office.

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**CUTS** from page A1

benefits, in particular, would be rising from \$6.1 million to \$7.1 million, with an estimated \$631,641 of that the expected result of collective bargaining currently underway with staff unions.

The school committee is required by law to approve a "preliminary" budget next Tuesday to share with the towns of Montague and Gill, but major pieces of the puzzle, in particular state Chapter 70 education aid and rural aid, will not be unveiled until the following day when governor Maura Healey releases her office's budget proposal.

"It's your budget," Blier told the committee. "I just play with the numbers here."

The working session was held in a downstairs conference room at Turners Falls High School rather than the committee's regular upstairs meeting room, and was not filmed for local broadcast. Upon their arrival members commented on broken chairs, but when they later came across a budget line increasing from \$2,000 to \$5,000 to cover the replacement of those chairs, Ellis recommended against the expense.

"Well, it's one of the requests," Blier said.

Three lines for districtwide supplies – instructional technology, hardware, and software – were proposed to increase by \$90,000, and Blier explained that this was a return to previous levels after technology director Tina Mahaney postponed a chunk of her spending to

balance last year's budget.

Members squinted at a \$27,250 increase for "cubbies, lockers, folding chairs, staging, tables, book case" at Gill Elementary, requested by a now-retired principal. Interim superintendent Tari Thomas told them the staging had been "requested annually," and was becoming a safety concern.

Much of the new cost would be associated with new positions: \$110,000 to bring back a director of teaching and learning; \$32,000 for a part-time pupil services position; \$55,000 for a part-time human resource director; \$47,929 for a new custodian, who Blier said would relieve facilities manager Heath Cummings of snow-shoveling duties; and \$60,000 to restore the school police officer (SRO).

Thomas reported that newly hired Montague police chief Jason Haskins is "very much committed to having an SRO in the schools. "I believe he's working on his dissertation, and it's focused on SROs," she added. She also strongly recommended the district restore someone to the "helm of teaching and learning," as Gill-Montague's academic performance is "in the lowest 10% in the state."

At Hillcrest Elementary, \$67,409 would fund a new pre-K teacher, allowing the district to increase its enrollment from 45 to 60, and \$63,189 would hire three instructional assistants (IAs). At Sheffield Elementary, \$258,110 would cover nine new IAs.

Blier explained that many of the

IAs, as well as other medical and therapeutic staff, were mandatory services the district must provide to students with individualized education programs. In the next two months, she said, the administration plans to scrutinize the "grid" of these mandatory services to make sure the staffing plan is appropriate.

One question for the committee pertained to the salary line for the soon-to-be-hired superintendent. The job was advertised at \$170,000 to \$190,000, but the draft preliminary budget had it at \$170,000. This proved to be a philosophical concern, as Blier explained that she had also stashed the potential difference in a contingency line, and as the hope is to hire the superintendent in February, the actual salary can be reflected in the final budget due in March.

"Do we want to increase our revenue?" Blier asked, before warning that digging any deeper into the excess and deficiency and school choice revolving funds could deplete them and lead Gill-Montague to "fall off that cliff in another year."

"Then we'll have nothing in FY'29," she said. "I will be retired when that is happening."

Other options for closing the gap included more optimistic guesses at Chapter 90 aid and the total amount of rural aid the legislature will fund this summer.

"Do you want us to look at a percentage decrease?" Thomas asked. "I'm often cautious about the revenue side – there's a lot of volatility right now in government, in utilities,

in healthcare, and I don't want the district to be caught short."

She asked if the towns were likely to be able to contribute more than the "affordable" assessments they have already offered. Ellis, a former Montague town administrator, said town departments were being asked to come up with 2% decreases, and that it was "probably the worst budget scenario that I've seen in the last decade."

Still, he suggested, if the administration can whittle expenses "from a wish list to a 'must' list," it might be possible to approach the town with "critical investments" that are "part of what adds to the size of the mouse that's in the snake's throat."

"What can we live with?" Oakes asked. "We have to change our conversations to, 'What do we absolutely not want to give up... [and] what can we do on our part, each of us, to make that work?'"

Blier and Thomas agreed to return next Tuesday with the cuts identified.

Reached for comment, Gill Montague Education Association (GMEA) president Heidi Schmidt said that "[i]f staff were asked

to weigh in on the budget, we would advise prioritizing student-facing positions."

Vice president Nikki Henderson offered specific examples: a third 2nd-grade teacher at Sheffield, the pre-K teacher at Hillcrest, a speech-language pathologist, and "enough IAs to support students."

"The humans working with kids directly need to be the priority," she wrote. "Obviously there is more that we want and need, but those are the highest-priority things..."

**Six or Five Town Board**

The Six Town Regionalization Planning Board met last Thursday and discussed its efforts to finalize two regional agreements to send to voters – to form a six-town school district, or to form a five-town district without Warwick – and its hopes to secure \$250,000 in the state budget for a transitional year, plus \$1.1 million for the central office in its first year. The timeline would require elections later this year, and the new district, if approved and funded, would begin in July 2028.

The board is meeting again tonight, January 22.



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**SPORTS** from page A1

fouls and at the break, the Thunder was up 10-8. At the end of the third quarter, Turners scored four unanswered points to nose ahead to 18-14 at the whistle.

Duggan committed more fouls in the fourth, but the Turners players came up empty at the foul line, and with 6:42 left in regulation the visitors took a 19-18 lead. They then scored five more points before Turners hit a three-pointer to make it 24-21. The Jays stretched the lead to seven, but the Thunder responded and pulled within five points with 1:23 to play. As Turners fought the clock, the Jays took advantage and hit two final field goals to make it a nine-point win.

Four players – Jojo Hayman (11), Ivy Lopez (6), Autumn Thornton (4), and Autumn DiMare (2) – scored points for Blue.

On Monday the Franklin Tech Eagles headed to Palmer and defeated the Pathfinder Pioneers, 50-43. Franklin had a monster third quarter to put the win in the books. Scoring for the Eagles were Brayleigh Burgh (21), Madyson Lynde (11), Samantha Duncan (7), Abigail Dobias and Lilyann Baldwin (4 each), Ariel Peters (2), and Alison George (1).

On Tuesday it was the Thunder's turn to travel to Palmer and face the Pathfinders. The Finders were up by only seven points as of halftime, but scored 32 in the second half to cruise to a 24-point victory. This time Thornton (9), Hayman (7), Lopez (6), DiMare (4), and Bethany Whitney (2) scored for Blue.

That same night, the Tech Ladies lost to the Mohawk Warriors in Shelburne Falls. Mohawk raced out to a 29-14 lead at the half, increased the lead to 25 points after three, and won by a comfortable 21 points.

Ten Tech players scored in the game: Burgh (12); Annabella Brown-Stratton (8); Lynde (6); Sarah Beckwith (4); Lindsey Taylor, Madison Ross, and Duncan (3

each); Baldwin, and Redyn Gutierrez (2 each); and Dobias (1).

**Boys' Basketball**

*Smith Voc 70 – FCTS 58  
Mohawk 51 – TFHS 49  
McCann 60 – TFHS 54  
FCTS 66 – Mohawk 34*

Last Friday the Tech Boys lost to the Smith Vocational Vikings down in Northampton. The Vikings built a 40-20 halftime lead and coasted to a 12-point victory. Four Eagles scored in double digits: Hunter Donahue (15), Cole Bassett (14), Landon Benz (12), and Nolyn Stafford (10). Also scoring for Tech were Brody Hicks (4), Mason Bassett (2), and George Gutierrez Jr. (1).

Also on Friday, Turners lost against the Mohawk Trail Warriors up in Shelburne Falls. The Thunder led by two points at halftime, but the Trailers outscored them by seven in the third quarter, and Turners was forced to play catchup ball. They came back to tie it at 49, but Mohawk hit a shot at the buzzer to steal the game by two.

Seven players scored for Pownertown, with Kainen Stevens (17) leading the pack, followed by Freelyn Abarua (10), Jackson Cogswell (8), Sergy Aleseyenko and Cameron Johnson (5 each), and Robert Goff and Brayden Sloan (2 each).

The Boys' Thunder dropped another close one on Tuesday, this time in overtime against the visiting McCann Green Hornets.

The game was pretty well-attended, and the pep band, cheerleaders, and spectators clanging cowbells riled up the crowd. Turners shot out to an early 13-8 lead using smart passes and running fast breaks. The Hornets stung back, though, scoring nine unanswered points to take a 17-13 lead after a quarter.

Green held that four-point lead halfway through the next period, but Turners fought back and tied it at 21 courtesy of a technical foul. The Thunder then went on a scoring

spree and led 27-21 at midgame.

That's when I headed over to Franklin Tech to catch the Mohawk game. Later, two of my sources would inform me that the Hornets came back in the third period, citing turnovers as one of the main reasons. The fourth was a seesaw battle, sending the match into overtime. Unfortunately for the home crowd, McCann outscored Turners by six in the fifth quarter to win it 60 to 54.

I arrived at Tech in the second quarter. The Eagles were comfortably ahead, and at the half they were on top by 18 points. They then enjoyed an incredible third quarter, out-rebounding the visitors and transitioning defensive boards down the court. At the buzzer to end the period, they were up by 31.

The Mohawk fans were enthusiastic and continued to cheer on their team, though the lead seemed insurmountable. Then, with the score 66-34, Tech simply dribbled it out to ice the win.

Nine players scored for Franklin: Stafford (16), Hicks (15), Mason Bassett (11), Cole Bassett (8), Benz (5), Donahue (4), Jaxon Silva (3), and Owen Zilinski and Gutierrez (2 each).

**Boys' Swimming**

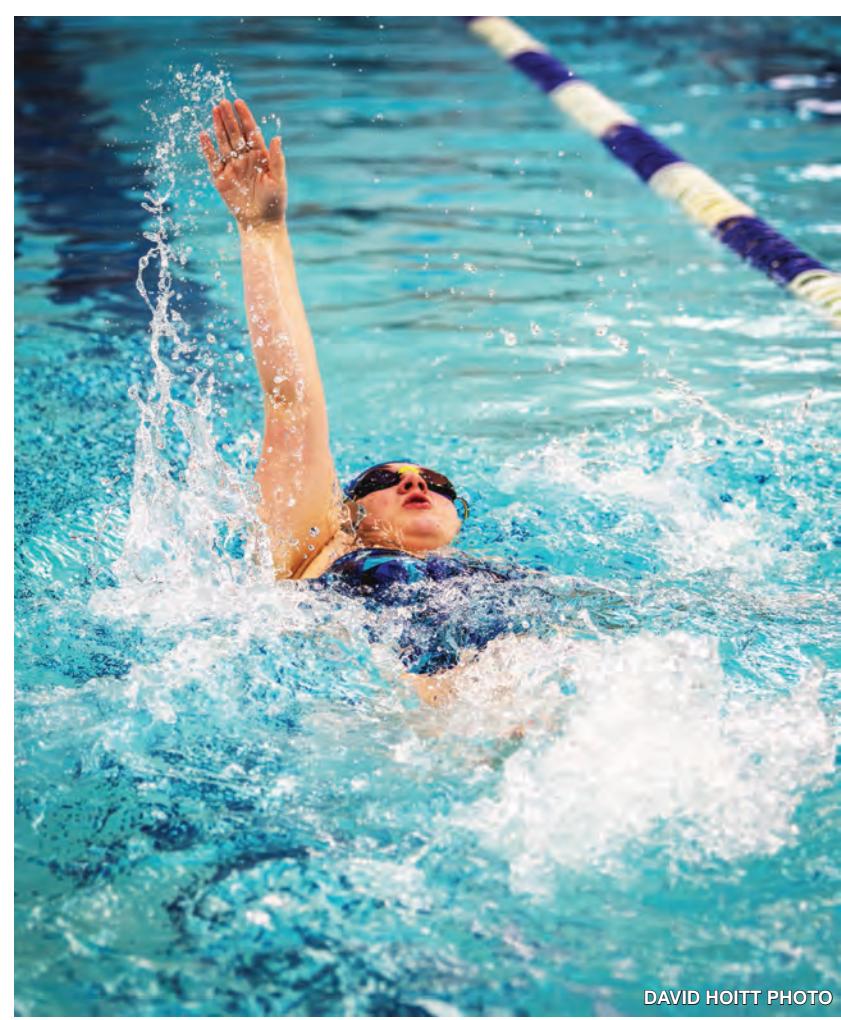
*TFHS 72 – Chicopee 14*

*TFHS 133 – Renaissance 7*

Last Friday, the Turners Falls boys outswam the Chicopee Pacers at the Wes Snapp Pool.

Six Thunder swimmers won their events: Malcolm Tyler, Liam Bliss, William Tyler, and Ryker Bray the 50-yard, 100-yard, 200-yard, and 500-yard freestyles; Max Myers the 100-yard butterfly; and Gilbert Cardona the 100-yard breaststroke.

They finished first in three relays: the 200-yard medley (Cardona, Daniel Morales, Myers, and Nethanel Martin); 200-yard freestyle (Tyler Galenski, William and Malcolm Tyler, and Bliss); and 400-yard freestyle (Cardona, the Tylers, and Bliss).



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Frontier Regional's Avery Houle swims the backstroke leg of the 200-yard medley relay as the co-op swim team hosted Chicopee High last Friday. Houle, Lillian Walker-Hanning, Tristan Bliss, and Alice Fortin won the event with a time of 2:17.12.

On Tuesday, they competed

against Renaissance in Springfield. The pool at Renaissance has six lanes, allowing more Blue swimmers to compete and therefore bumping up the potential points earned.

Turners won eight individual events, with Cardona and Bliss winning two each, and swept all three relays.

The win keeps their unbeaten streak untarnished.

**Girls' Swimming**

*TFHS 62 – Chicopee 31*

*TFHS 125 – Renaissance 21*

In the girls' lanes against Chicopee, Alice Fortin finished first in the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle, Lillian Walker-Hanning won the 200-

yard individual medley and 100-yard breaststroke, Grace Fortin took gold in the 200-yard freestyle, and Addie Cardona the 500-yard freestyle.

Turners also won the 200-yard medley (Avery Houle, Lillian Walker-Hanning, Tristan Bliss, and Alice Fortin), the 200-yard freestyle (Grace Fortin, Houle, Brynn MacLeay, and Jade Walker-Hanning), and the 400-yard freestyle (Lillian Walker-Hanning, Rosie Fortin, Bliss, and Alice Fortin) relays.

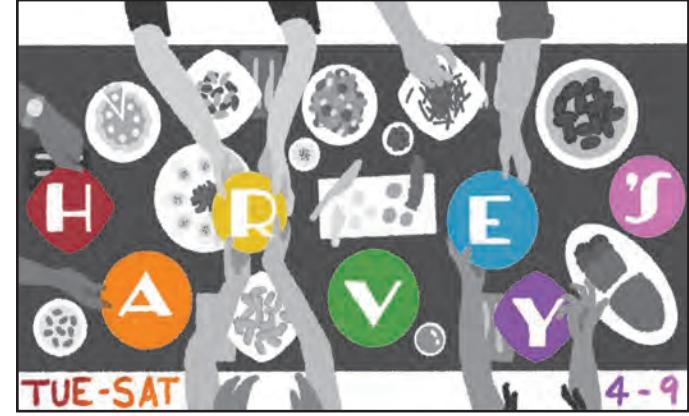
In the Renaissance battle, as did the boys, the team won eight individual events and swept the relays, with Cardona and Maddie Phillips winning two races each.



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# Montague Reporter



features@montaguereporter.org

OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

JANUARY 22, 2026

Above: The sliding was good, late Saturday afternoon, at Unity Park.

## RECIPES

### THE HEARTY, AND OVERLOOKED, RUTABAGA

By CLAIRE HOPELY

**LEVERETT** – Recently, the woman ahead of me in a supermarket line had a big handsome rutabaga in her cart. My heart warmed to her because, though every supermarket stocks rutabagas, I hardly ever see anyone buying one. For me they're a winter staple. Seeing the other rutabaga buyer told me I was not alone, and got me wondering about what recipes she might use it in.

There are several, but many include other root vegetables, so rutabaga often takes a back seat. They appear as golden-yellow chunks in many stews, for example, and a dish from my childhood that I often make is a mixture of carrots and rutabaga, chopped, not mashed, with a lump of butter and lots of pepper so it remains a speckled orange-and-yellow mixture.

Rutabagas are northern vegetables, a hybrid of turnips and cabbage. They are natives of Scandinavia that arrived in Canada in the 1780s and jumped over the border into the US in the early 19th century. Their value in the stews that were a major feature of the diet in those days made them welcome, and they were also handy as winter fodder for animals, which prompted disdain in some folks.

But their Scandinavian origin is worth exploring, as they are still beloved there. In their book *Food from Finland* (Otava Publishing, 1988) Anna-Maija and Juha Tanttu describe as “essential for Christmas... that ‘must’ rutabaga casserole.” Versions of it are Christmas favorites also in Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

*In Kitchen of Light* (Artisan, 2003), Andreas Viestad describes rutabaga as “what all Norwegians are thinking about,” even while talking about more prestigious foods such as the Christmas rib roast. His rutabaga recipes team rutabaga with parsnip or potatoes, and in one case he flavors a rutabaga mash with vanilla and tops it with rosemary-flavored cod. Jean Redford, author of *Russian Food* (Oldwick’s Press, 1989) says Russians



Clockwise from top: A rutabaga, mushrooms, bay leaves, and potatoes, key ingredients in our recipe for Rutabaga, Potato, and Mushroom Gratin.

serve rutabagas with cream sauce, adding they are even “prepared to go to the trouble of stuffing” them.

In this country most supermarket rutabagas come from Canada, and they remain commoner in the northern states. Some classic Northeastern cookbooks, such as Fannie Merritt Farmer’s *Boston Cooking School Cook Book* (1896) and Craig Claiborne’s *New York Times Cookbook* (1961), are silent on them.

But in *Cooking From New England* (Harper & Row, 1989), Boston restaurateur Jasper White recommends them in his turnip *gratin* recipe because they are more colorful and better flavored than white turnips. Writing in *The Good Home Cookbook* (Collectors Press, 2006), Richard J. Perry says they are interchangeable with

see RECIPES page B8

## BOOK REVIEW

### Teo Rivera-Dundas, *Slow Guillotine* (Nebraska, 2026)

By EASTON SMITH

**TURNERS FALLS** – Local author Teo Rivera-Dundas’s debut novel, *Slow Guillotine*, was the winner of last year’s Barbara DiBernard Prize in Fiction, and will be published by University of Nebraska Press on March 1. Teo is my neighbor and my friend, which means I managed to nab myself an advance copy of the novel, which is about the banal evils of living in New York City in your *early* twenties, during the *mid*-aughts, while participating in *late* capitalism. It’s a funny and sophisticated romp that will strike a familiar chord for anyone who’s struggled as an artist, activist, renter, or service worker.

It’s fitting that Rivera-Dundas starts *Slow Guillotine* with a section titled “Ten Notes About Work,” and that the first note focuses on “non-biodegradable, immortal” packing



materials, because this sort of cushioning is found throughout the book. Characters are constantly pressed up against the edges of violent forces – gentrification, a conglomerated

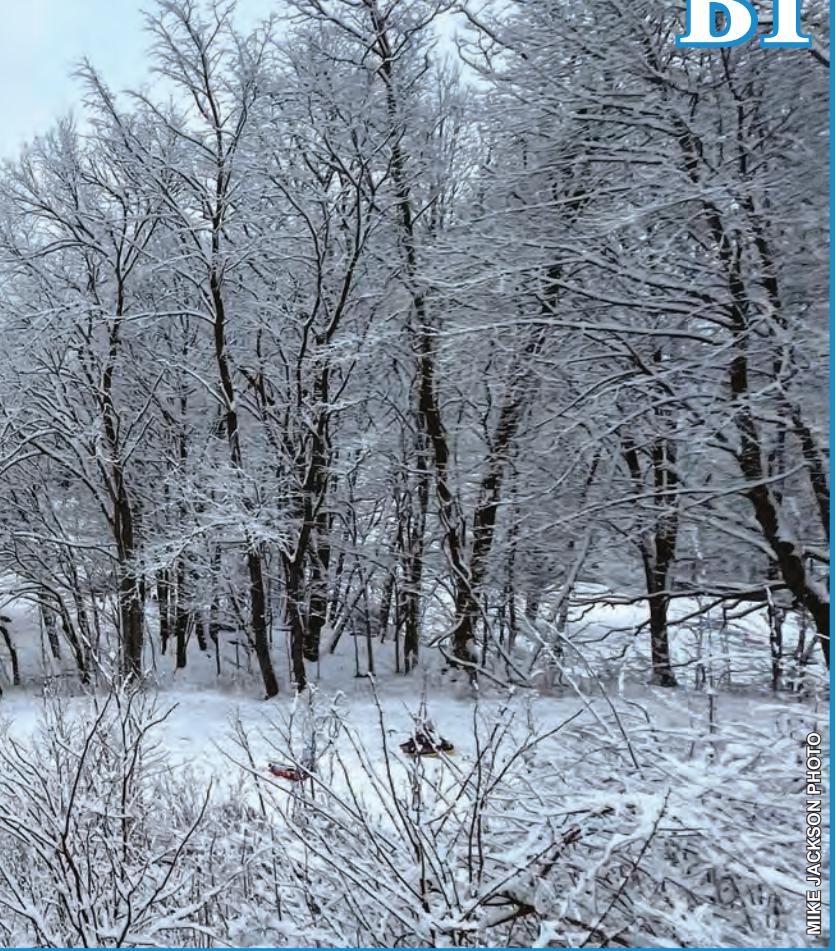
publishing industry, gender norms – and yet something blunts the edges, like Styrofoam packing peanuts.

Is it alienation? Is it privilege? Dissociation? Yes.

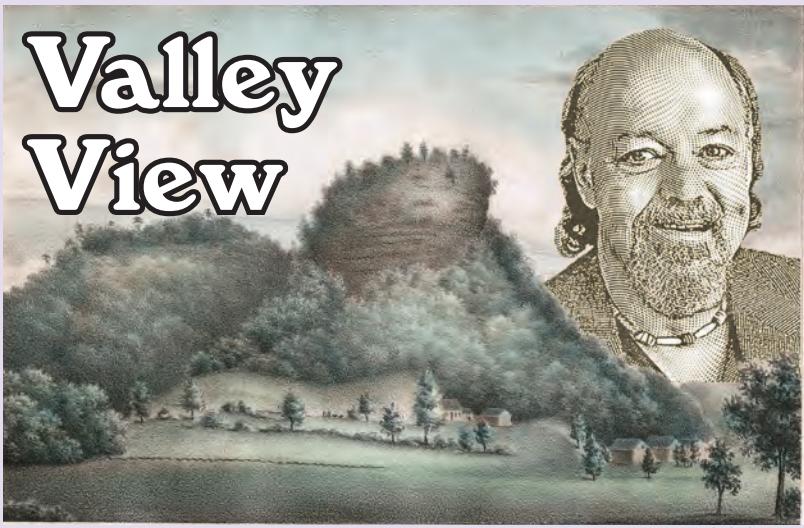
And it is this blunting that provides much of the mood of the book. Rather than directly answering the questions that it presents – like “What is work? What are our days for?” or, later in the book, “Why stay in this city?” – *Slow Guillotine* instead meanders around them. It takes us to clowning gigs at birthday parties in Long Island. It takes us to the back rooms of independent bookstores. It takes us into apartments that are being infinitely refined by omnipotent but illusory landlords.

These scenes of precarity and listlessness build a bleak but endearing image of how a group of creative 20-somethings might navigate their post-college years at the tail

see BOOK REVIEW page B4



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO



ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

## Chasing Hills and Forts

By GARY SANDERSON

used in everyday conversation.

**GREENFIELD** – An email that arrived in my inbox last week pulled me back to Gill before it was so named, and nudged me into a stream-of-consciousness realm. I guess I was ripe for it, given the elusive subjects I’ve been exploring in recent weeks and months.

The email query came from transplanted Vermonter, Andrea Varney, who grew up in Greenfield as Andrea Liebenow. Her mother, who died at 88 in 2015, was Sylvia Gallagher, born to her Smead family’s Greenfield Meadows dairy farm.

A dedicated schoolteacher and longtime Greenfield historical commissioner, Sylvia was a proud member of a founding Connecticut Valley family, with deep roots in Deerfield and the surrounding Franklin County communities that peeled off from it.

The retired Ms. Gallagher had a dream. In her golden years, she was tunnel-visioned on publishing a book chronicling her Smead genealogy and the family’s extensive land holdings. Admirably focused and organized, she assembled quite a collection of data aimed at accomplishing her goal.

Problem was that she finally ran out of time. Now daughter Andrea is lugging her mother’s baton to the finish line. In the process over the past few years, we have met and talked often, mostly collaborating to unravel confusing land records. The book is expected to hit the street no later than June.

Andrea’s latest question came to me during her final fact-checking round. The subject immediately tickled my curiosity, because in many ways it reminded me of problems I have been encountering regarding a Revolutionary War powder horn, which I mentioned in my last column.

Like me, she was trying to identify the site of a place name that has become obsolete and hasn’t been recognized for ages. This is not unusual in the lexicon of old place names, even among those once

“Fall Hill,” mentioned in 1730s Deerfield proprietors’ records associated with Ebenezer Smead’s land in what is now Gill, but was then the northeast corner of Deerfield. Gill was originally divvied up into irregularly-shaped “pitch lots” assigned to proprietors with

in a vast parcel referred to in documents as “east of the Green River and north of Cheapside.”

My own mystery site is “Ft. No. 10,” inscribed on an illustrated powder horn I believe was carried by Greenfield Revolutionary militiaman Tubel Nash (1754-1813). Nash served on the so-called “Northern Campaign,” located between Albany and the forts at Ticonderoga and Crown Point.

Ms. Varney’s mystery place name and mine both appear to have vanished from collective memory, which makes fact-checking a daunting task indeed when trying to interpret old deeds, proprietors’ records, probate documents and, yes, powder-horn inscriptions.

So, at the time of her query we were both chasing similar types of information.

Enter the newfangled research tool called “artificial intelligence,” acronym AI, feared by many as a future job-killer. At the insistence of a friend with genealogical focus, I started dabbling in Free ChatGPT a few months ago with remarkable success in some areas of inquiry. Though the AI Genie hasn’t been much help in my pursuit of “Ft. No. 10,” it did strike gold regarding Ms. Varney’s “Fall Hill,” agreeing with my own previous interpretation, based on deed research, as the hill overlooking Great Falls from the north.

Here’s what the AI Genie found in less than five seconds about Gill’s “Fall Hill,” located within the 1736 boundary of the Deerfield land grants on acreage east of the Green River and north of Cheapside:

“Fall Hill (sometimes referred to as the Hill at the Falls) is a prominent topographical landmark

see VALLEY VIEW page B2

# Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

## 'ARTEMIS'

Meet Artemis, a young, lovable, and affectionate tabby who was found in a basement. He's still learning and developing skills, but is looking for a home with the love, attention, and stability he deserves.

Artemis gets along with dogs and children and is house-trained, but needs vaccinations and neutering. He has a ton of energy, is vocal when it comes to food, and does his best to infiltrate the dog's food bowl.

His people describe Artemis as chill, independent, playful, communicative, snuggly, and curious. He is available for adoption from a private owner in Springfield.

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.

## Senior Center Activities

### JANUARY 26 THROUGH 30

#### ERVING

Open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 1 Care Drive. Daily snacks and coffee. Fitness room and pool table open.

#### Monday 1/26

9 a.m. Good for U  
10 a.m. Seated Fitness  
12 p.m. Pitch

#### 1 p.m. Yoga

#### Tuesday 1/27

9 a.m. Stretch & Balance  
10 a.m. Line Dancing  
11 a.m. Social Stringer  
1 p.m. Blue Cross Blue Shield

Health Plans Seminar

#### Wednesday 1/28

9 a.m. Interval Training  
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics

#### 11:30 a.m. Bingo

#### Thursday 1/29

9 a.m. Barre Fusion

10 a.m. Pilates Flow

#### Friday 1/30

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

#### GILL and MONTAGUE

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

#### Monday 1/26

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

3 p.m. Beginner Yoga

#### Tuesday 1/27

9 a.m. Chair Yoga

12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday

3 p.m. Tai Chi

4 p.m. Spanish Class

#### Wednesday 1/28

10:15 a.m. Aerobics

11 a.m. Chair Exercise

12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch

Bingo

4 p.m. Mat Yoga

#### Thursday 1/29

1 p.m. Pitch

#### Friday 1/30

10:15 a.m. Aerobics

11 a.m. Chair Exercise

12 p.m. Pizza Party

2 p.m. Chair Dance

#### 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 February 17.

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 Leverett Connects listserv for info.

#### WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is February 4. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments.

For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

## VALLEY VIEW

from page B1  
located in what is now Gill, Massachusetts;

"It is specifically located near the Great Falls, now Turners Falls, on the Connecticut River;

"The hill served as a reference point for laying out lots;

"Records from the proprietors often used Fall Hill as a boundary marker for the 'Falls Woods' or 'Falls Field' divisions."

So, there you have it: Fall Hill, rising north across the road from what is now the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, bordered south by Route 2, west by Factory Hollow, and east by Main Road. It was up this steep slope from Fall River that Captain William Turner, after tethering their horses in the hollow, led his militiamen to their infamous predawn Falls Fight on May 19, 1676.

Thus far, I've had no such luck with the AI Genie on several attempts to learn more about "Fort No. 10." I've asked basically the same question many different ways and

have come up empty. No promising leads have arisen from direct inquiries, accompanied by powder-horn photos, to historians, museums, historical societies, and even fine-tuned Facebook groups.

One recent path of inquiry led me to Fort Massachusetts – at North Adams, dismantled before the Revolution – and the so-called "line of forts" that hugged the northern border of Massachusetts between the Connecticut and Hudson valleys during the French and Indian War (FIW). Could there have been a numbered sequence of forts known to earlier soldiers like Greenfield's Agrippa Wells, who served in both the FIW and Revolution? Wells was Nash's captain and would have served with his father, miller Daniel Nash, in the earlier war.

Maybe Wells's Revolutionary troopers from the Deerfield area marched to their own drummer, accompanied by a private map that numbered a sequence of dismantled FIW fort sites potentially

available as staging sites.

In his 1904 *Origins of Williamstown: A History*, author Arthur Latham Perry puts Captain Ephraim Williams "in unbroken command of the line of forts, twelve in all, including Deerfield, from Dec. 10, 1745 to Dec. 10, 1746." Problem is, he fails to name these forts.

Nonetheless, we know the list included Fort Shirley in Heath and Fort Pelham in Rowe, plus some of the other 21 forts that stood between Fort Massachusetts and Northfield and are named in Yale archaeologist Michael D. Coe's 2006 book *The Line of Forts: Historical Archaeology on the Colonial Frontier of Massachusetts*.

Hmmm? Lots of questions. Few answers.

Oh well. At least we got Ms. Varney squared away.

*Gary Sanderson lives in Greenfield. Questions and comments are welcome at [gary@oldtavernfarm.com](mailto:gary@oldtavernfarm.com).*



## AT LARGE

### Upright One Moment, Clowns the Next

By CHIP AINSWORTH

**NORTHFIELD** – In late December after a drenching rainstorm and ensuing cold front turned puddles to ice, I stepped outside and did a reverse backward flip off the porch. During that moment in midair I knew I'd be in for a rough landing. Oddly it reminded me of Stephen Sondheim's song from *A Little Night Music*.

"Isn't it rich? / Are we a pair? / Me here at last on the ground / You in midair / Send in the clowns..."

Sending in clowns is what ringmasters do when a trapeze artist falls from the bar. It's figurative pain versus literal.

It took a few days for my bruised ribs and bumped head to heal. It wasn't the first time and likely won't be the last. You never see it coming, upright one moment and down the next.

A year ago I slipped on black ice and injured my left shoulder; seven years ago I slipped on an icy sidewalk and broke my right arm. My grandson Chase was with me, and when my daughter April asked him what happened afterward, he replied, "Grandpa said a lot of bad words."

Slipping on ice and snow is as common and potentially dangerous in winter as tick bites in summer. The CDC reports over one million people are injured every year from it, and over 17,000 people die of their injuries.

Layered clothing helps cushion a fall, and walking like a penguin is said to help prevent one. After this most recent spill I bought a pair of traction cleats and clomped around in them until one day the snow pulled them off my boots never to be found.

I no longer walk on roads and sidewalks in winter. Instead I drive to a trailhead behind my house, walk into the woods, and listen for the crunchy sound of leaves under my boots. Then I know I'm on solid ground.

#### Cuckoo's at Fifty

I recently watched a YouTube clip about the making of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* from Ken Kesey's novel of the same name. The film was directed by Milos Forman (*Amadeus, The People vs. Larry Flynt*) and starred Jack Nicholson, with notable performances by Louise Fletcher as Nurse Ratched, Danny DeVito as Martini, and Christopher Lloyd as Max Taber.

The movie was filmed at the Oregon State Hospital ("People Helping People") in Salem, Oregon, and the role of superintendent Dr. John Spivey was played by the institution's actual superintendent, Dr. Dean Brooks.

The picture premiered in 1975 and won Oscars for best film, best director, best actor (Nicholson), best actress (Fletcher), and best screenplay. The cast was composed of actors playing patients whose routines were disrupted by the arrival of Randall Patrick "R.P." McMurphy, played by Nicholson.

Vincent Schiavelli, who was cast as a patient named Bruce Frederickson, once said of his part: "Basically it was pretty clear that who you had to be in this

movie was who you would be if you were insane. No acting allowed."

#### Satirist Passes

Cartoonist, author, and video streamer Scott Adams died on January 13 at age 68. His cartoon strip "Dilbert" satirized corporate America, and at its peak was carried by over 2,000 newspapers.

Every morning before his show, Adams would brew a pot of coffee and have a "simultaneous first sip" with his millions of viewers. His book about business *How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big* was published in 2013 and became a bestseller.

A *New York Post* columnist wrote that Adams began to like Donald Trump after an interview in 2015 when a reporter started to ask Trump if he didn't like women, and Trump quickly interjected "only Rosie O'Donnell."

#### Consider the Source

Recently I asked Google's version of AI: "If AI were a person, would he or she be considered an asshole?"

The answer was surprising: "It would likely be considered an 'asshole' by many, not because it is consciously malicious, but because its behavior – mirrored from the internet – often embodies the worst traits of online interactions: condescension, unearned confidence in falsehoods, and a lack of empathy."

#### Leftovers

A few days ago I stopped at a place in Florence called the Pie Bar thinking about which kind I'd order: blueberry, cherry or apple. Maybe they'd have pecan pie; I love pecan. I walked through the door and up to the display case and saw one pie, something I'd never heard of called brown sugar chess pie, that cost \$6 a slice. The only tarts they had were breakfast varieties with meat and cheese.

I ordered a brownie and small coffee for \$8.13 and said keep the change. The brownie had chocolate chips in it, which reminded me of a place on Route 9 in Hadley that put chocolate chips in its pecan pie. Any baker worth his spatula knows chocolate chips are for cookies.

Next time I'll park further down the street and have pie à la mode at Miss Flo's.

#### Long Live the King

Hank Aaron died five years ago today, on January 22, 2021. Hammerin' Hank was born and raised in Jim Crow country, Mobile, Alabama. He hit 755 home runs and broke Babe Ruth's long-held record of 714 on April 8, 1974.

A humble man, he said of being the new home run king: "I don't want them to forget Ruth, I just want them to remember me."

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

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# LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on January 21, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

## Skate Time, At Last

This week, after 17 years of activism, seven years of fundraising, and over three months of construction, the Unity Skatepark will finally be complete. Eddie Lawrence, foreman of the Grindline construction company building the park, says, "The kids can just come skate whenever. And as long as they take

care of it and respect it, they'll get to use it, and enjoy it, for a long time."

## Ambulance Costs to Rise

At the Wendell selectboard meeting, town coordinator Nancy Aldrich predicted that the annual fee for ambulance service in town, provided by the Orange fire department, which now costs \$11,000 a year, will probably double. The cost for each town could be based on mileage, population, or the number of calls the ambulance responds to.

# 20 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 19, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

## Airport Extension Prompts Lively Debate

On Tuesday, the Montague selectboard heard the airport commission's presentation on proposed improvements and a possible 1,200-foot extension to the 3,000-foot runway. Accusations of mismanagement were lobbed at the commission, who refrained from responding due to pending legal issues.

At issue is the condition of the

1978 runway meeting federal standards. Airport manager Michael Sweeney outlined the work required to modernize the facility: a new runway and taxiway, removal of aviation obstructions, and updating lighting and navigation aids. Replacing scrub oak and pine with grasses will provide habitat for endangered moths, butterflies, and birds.

The commission is working together with the Narragansett Indian tribe to not disturb several Native American archaeological sites in the area. "We will do all we can to not impact the sites," Sweeney said.

# 140 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on January 20, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter's archive.

## Turners Falls and Vicinity

With the exception of an occasional bare spot, the sleighing has been fair for a week, and on some roads it was truly excellent.

When a thousand people can be got nightly for a week to witness meritorious dramas, as was the case at Colle's opera house, last week, it doesn't look much like a poor show town.

Although business did not really warrant it, the John Russell Cutlery Company advanced the wages of some of their help recently. Business in many other cutlery shops is at a stand still, and in several towns all hands are idle for the want of orders; good management keeps the Russell works fairly busy.

The tax on dogs in the hill towns of western Franklin has nearly exterminated the "mongrel canines," but woodchucks are "sprouting thick as mushrooms," a correspondent remarks.

A local hunter who has lost his

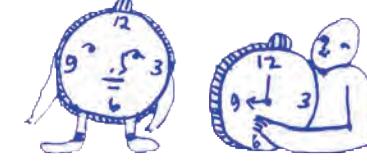
ferret and is unable to get another of the lawless animals, complains bitterly of the use of the effective little hunters by rabbit catchers who have no fear of the law in their eyes.

C.F. Couture lost his pocket book, containing a sum of money and some valuable papers, not long ago at Gardner. It was fortunately picked up by Ex-State Detective L.C. Lynde, and returned to its owner, who expressed his gratitude by rewarding the finder with a ten dollar note. The possession of the virtues of honesty and liberality by both parties can be commended.

Conductor R.C. King met with a distressing accident this morning, for which his multitude of friends will be exceedingly sorry. While coupling cars, he had his left hand caught between the deadwoods, crushing two fingers to pulp, and injuring the thumb quite badly. Dr Best took off the mutilated fingers.

Conductor N. Andreus sprained his ankle quite seriously last week while jumping off a moving car.

The days are really growing longer, and at the end of this month shall have increased 55 minutes, a notable fact with housekeepers.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

### Hard Times On East Main; Brazen Excavator Theft; Lots of Sliding Into Snowbanks; Eight Cats Ditched

Monday, 1/12

1:03 p.m. 911 caller from Millers Falls Road states a neighbor just called him stating there is a firearm lying in the pathway of the front yard. Not as reported; airsoft gun.

5:37 p.m. Officer helping shut the road down on Fifth Street at the request of another police department.

6:11 p.m. 911 misdialed; caller states that her small child was chewing on her watch and accidentally called 911. No services needed.

6:39 p.m. Caller from Greenfield Road would like an officer to come make a report as a car drove up on their lawn and almost hit their home. They know who it was. Referred to an officer.

Tuesday, 1/13

4:26 p.m. Caller from Green Pond Road states that a kid on a dirt bike is going in and out of traffic. Officer spoke with minor; he wasn't riding in the road, just in a parking lot that he has permission to be in.

Wednesday, 1/14

10:20 a.m. Officer assisting with a lockdown drill at Franklin County Technical School.

1:59 p.m. Employee at 253 Farmacy reports that they were just paid with a counterfeit \$20 bill. Item retrieved and brought to station.

10:24 p.m. Caller states that a red truck and a silver car are blocking the entrance to the Fourth Street alley; believes occupants are possibly drinking or getting high. Area alleys checked; vehicles gone upon officers' arrival.

Thursday, 1/15

3:07 p.m. Vehicle rear-ended at Franklin County Technical School. Minor damage.

8:08 p.m. Caller from East Main Street states she is getting yelled at by her neighbor who is drunk and is saying she's a cop-caller and other things; would like officers to speak with her. Caller also has a video of her yelling. Officer

spoke to both parties; both are claiming to be the victim. Parties told to stay in their apartments and keep the noise down.

9:33 p.m. Caller from East Main Street states she was assaulted tonight by her neighbor; states she was

chest-bumped and spit upon; states she has video recording. Also states she would like to report the officers that came earlier tonight for not filing charges or arresting her neighbor, as she was a victim; states that because of her past history of drugs and drinking problems, they won't do anything; states that officers told her that if they had to come back, she'd be arrested. She would like a report of this emailed to her. Officers advised.

10:10 p.m. Caller from East Main Street states she called earlier and the same issue is happening; she watched the female go to the store and come back with booze; she is now banging and causing a disturbance that can be heard from two floors up. Officers

spoke to her; she states she was chopping a squash and also stated she had video of the previous call but refused to show officers.

Friday, 1/16

8:29 a.m. MPD assisting state police with school lockdown drills.

8:34 a.m. Caller from East Mineral Road states that sometime yesterday afternoon, a man showed up to

his property with a black pickup truck and a large trailer. The caller was not home, but his aunt was. The man told his aunt that he was here to pick up the caller's excavator to service it. The aunt said OK, and the guy loaded it up and left. The caller had not scheduled any equipment services and has no idea who took the excavator. Stolen motor vehicle report completed by caller. Vehicle entered as stolen in NCIC.

4:25 p.m. Caller reporting loose dog in the skate park area of Unity Park. Dog has a leash but no owner around. States dog was hobbling around. Animal

control officer advised and checking area. Unable to locate, then picked up a Bernese Mountain Dog from Avenue A matching the description. Dog secured at shelter.

7:18 p.m. Caller from Franklin Street reports that the sewer is backing up into his basement. Went outside; nothing is

draining in the grates. Officers advised; spoke with TFFD; DPW contacted and will evaluate.

Saturday, 1/17

6:37 a.m. MPD officer responding to Leverett to provide assistance to Leverett personnel for a motor vehicle accident on their side of the town line. 10:38 a.m. Caller states that they locked the gate on Migratory Way and he can't get out. FirstLight was on scene; officer advises Montague police do not have the correct key for the gate.

12:42 p.m. Caller from Wendell Road states that a car went off the road across from her house and into a ditch. Driver says they are not injured. Vehicle off snowy road; not impeding traffic flow. Operator out of vehicle and in the safety of a residence waiting for AAA arrival. Operator politely refused any police assistance.

12:53 p.m. 911 caller reporting a bill she is receiving saying that she owes money for unpaid taxes from a business, but she has never owned a business. Advised caller that the incident is a scam and to disregard the paperwork; incident will be on record.

1:41 p.m. 911 caller states there is a car in a snowbank on Millers Falls Road; a bus slid behind the car; unknown if they hit each other. Caller states multiple cars are backed up and sliding behind the bus. No vehicles able to pass. All cars gone upon arrival.

1:55 p.m. 911 caller states multiple cars off Millers Falls Road; very slippery conditions. Advised officers en route due to multiple calls; caller states there was a minivan with a male driver and a child in the vehicle that was yelling and making hand gestures at other cars trying to get around the vehicles that had slid off the road. Officers advised.

2:12 p.m. 911 caller from Cumberland Farms states that a party has been parked in the parking lot in a red van for over an hour; would like them moved along. Services rendered.

5:35 p.m. Caller from L Street reports that every snow storm, there is a vehicle parked in the same spot, and she feels this isn't right as others can't park there. States vehicle is not on the scene at this time.

6:27 p.m. Caller reports that there is a Chevy

Silverado parked on the side of the road at Montague City Road and Warner Street, and it's making it hard for the plows to do their job. States she has company coming tomorrow and she doesn't like it. Caller provided plate; came back to a Ford Maverick. Officer out with vehicle, which already has a parking ticket on it. Attempting to make contact with vehicle owner. Truck owner moving vehicle.

9:06 p.m. Officers out on Park Street attempting to locate a male party with an active warrant. Negative contact.

10:39 p.m. Caller reporting a car outside at Twelfth and G streets with its lights flashing for a prolonged period of time. States their headlights are shining in her windows. Officers spoke with operator of vehicle, who is shoveling his driveway and will move the vehicle once completed.

Sunday, 1/18

11:37 a.m. Multiple 911 calls reporting an accident at the four-way intersection at Turners Falls and Turnpike roads. Rau's requested for both vehicles. Airbag deployment. Officer states stop sign needs to be fixed. DPW contacted. Road reopened with a temporary stop sign.

3:54 p.m. Caller reports he was on his way home from Northfield, believes he was on Millers Falls Road by Lake Pleasant but is unsure of the exact location, and found a dog carrier by the side of the road with eight cats inside. He brought them home and is looking for assistance. ACO notified; will be in touch with caller.

4:58 p.m. Fire alarm on East Main Street called in by alarm company. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

Smoke from cooking in one of the apartments.

5:54 p.m. Officer advises he was following a vehicle from an earlier be-on-lookout alert out of Northfield with a possible loaded AR-15 in the vehicle. No probable cause to pull over at this time. Followed to I-91 northbound off the Route 2 bypass in Greenfield. Information passed along to Station B-2 (State Police Shelburne Falls Barracks). Update given to B-2; got off at Exit 50B.

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## BOOK REVIEW from page B1

end of the Great Recession. And despite all this meandering, *Slow Guillotine* doesn't feel totally disaffected. There is a slow-burning conflict – between labor and capital, renters and landlords, The City and its residents – that will be familiar to many readers. There are villains.

Primary among our villains is Ford. Imagine the Judge from Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, but instead of supernatural powers of violence he has only the pedestrian powers of a heavily indebted small business owner. Ford frequently blusters a terrible mixture of Obama-era nothing-sandwich ideas about business and identity and the American Dream. These diatribes are hilarious and absurd, but underlying them is a cynicism and a desperation that reminds us not to let our nostalgia for the "norms" of the pre-Trump era get too rosy. Ford, we must imagine, was there on January 6.

Through the prism of Ford's bookstore, *Slow Guillotine* presents a painful picture of the modern publishing industry. We see our narrator unpacking books, selling books, stealing books, and – depressingly – returning books to publishers to be pulped. Those publishers are often named, as are many trendy authors, from Knausgaard to Ferrante. The overall effect is a demystification of an often-opaque industry. Beneath all that mist is – you guessed it –

just more soulless capitalism.

But there's relief from the dreariness of wage labor. Our narrator's friends are true and good and utterly unique. Felix brings a needed jolt of curiosity and artistic expansionism to the plot, reminding us that being a starving artist isn't all about calories. Precious – a moonshining clown/chef/filmmaker who feels like he walked out of an episode of *Ren and Stimpy* – often steals the show with wingnut ideas and off-color humor. Girlfriend, a pet snake, stands in for all of the living ecology that's smooshed between and underneath the concrete.

At less than 200 pages, *Slow Guillotine* is a quick read, but it doesn't feel like a minor novel. It feels like a time capsule. Plop it in your mouth and suck on it to remember what 2014 tasted like. As it's dissolving, you might find yourself feeling a strange cocktail of nostalgia, ennui, and relief that you made it through your 20s. When it's all gone, you might text an old friend just to say, "I remember that old apartment we lived in," and you'll be glad you reconnected with them now, in these newly treacherous times.

Readers can pre-order Rivera-Dundas's *Slow Guillotine* from the University of Nebraska Press's website, or buy it at any of our fine local bookstores beginning March 1.

MD

## MOVIE REVIEW

*Sheepdog* Sees Early Local Premiere

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

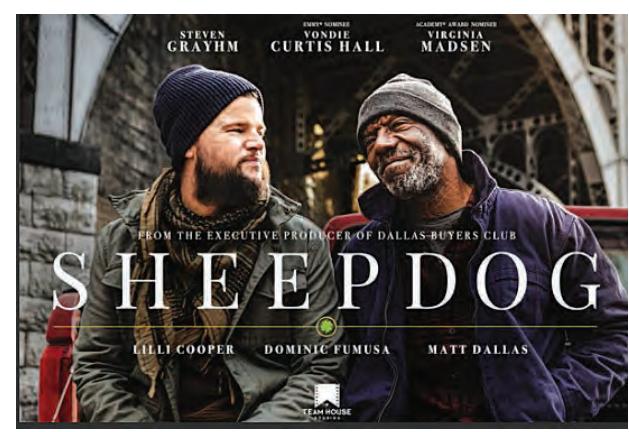
**GREENFIELD** – The new movie *Sheepdog* had an early screening at the Garden Cinemas on January 9 before its nationwide release on January 16. This film stars Steven Grayhm, a Greenfield resident who wrote and directed the film.

The film is about Grayhm's character Calvin and his journey of personal growth while living with PTSD. An opening quote, in which someone says something about combat, part of which is "I am a Sheepdog," explains why the film's name is *Sheepdog*. Another part about confronting the "wolf" tells people a little about what combat is like.

Virginia Madsen plays a therapist-in-training at the Veterans Administration, and Vondie Curtis-Hall (*Chicago Hope*) plays Calvin's father-in-law, a retired Vietnam vet. He gives us a good portrait of what it was like for Vietnam vets. After he shows us what it was like for him, Calvin decides to help him.

*Sheepdog* was shot primarily in Turners Falls and Greenfield. They made a big deal about having this movie before its national release date at the Garden Cinemas, including not just a question-and-answer session, which they have done there before, but also a YouTube video with Virginia Madsen about going to see the movie, and an afterparty at the Hangar Pub and Grill.

Owner Isaac Mass literally rolled out a rope and red carpet for Steve Grayhm to walk on. I saw this when I showed up to try to attend the Q&A. I got even luckier than that. I ran into Grayhm himself, in a suit and tie, before he was to go into the event. I was face-to-face with this man, and he talked with me and answered the questions I wanted to ask him, which were why he



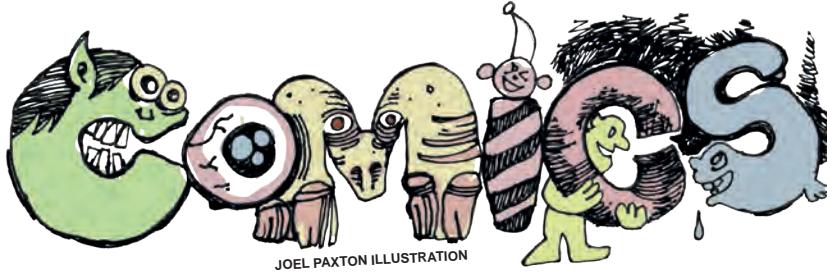
wrote this film, what it was like to work with Madsen and Curtis-Hall, and also about Madsen's promotional YouTube video.

Grayhm told me he wrote *Sheepdog* as "a call to action to help veterans across the country," and that he began research for it in 2021.

As for his stars, he said, "It was a pleasure directing Vondie Curtis-Hall, who grew up in the Vietnam era. Virginia Madsen is a Gold Star family member."

I learned some very cool info when I asked him about Madsen's video: "I was at her house, videotaping that video with her," she said. "She was very happy to do it." He also told me at that time he was going to the afterparty at the Hangar.

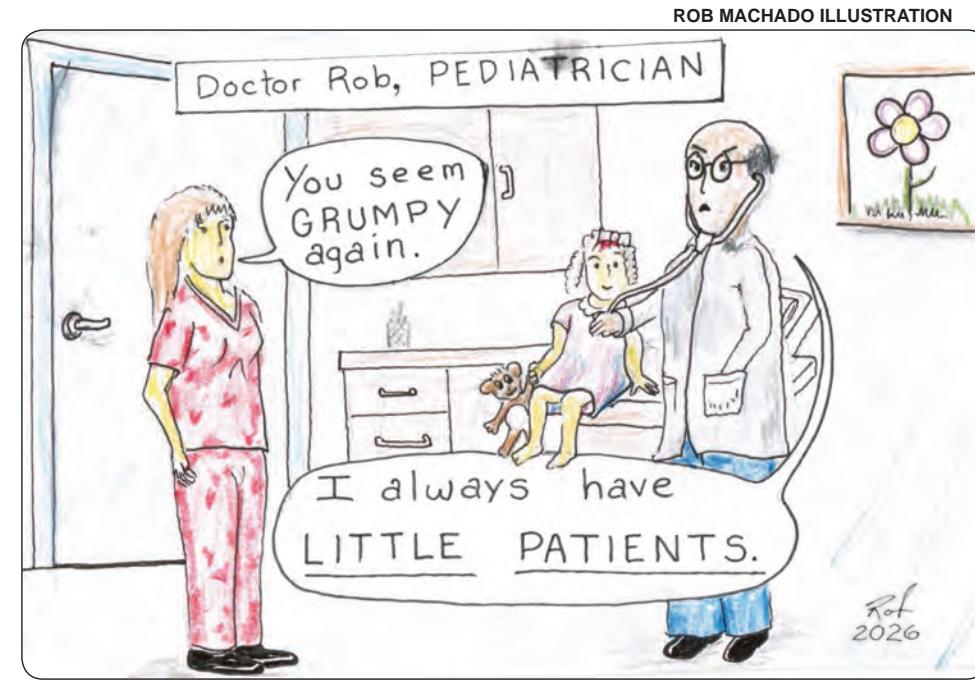
The big deal the Garden made about this film led me to having some very cool luck. It was cool to see that green-colored Turners Falls bridge on the big screen. *Sheepdog* was also a good call to action, highlighting that veterans' commitment to their service should include trying to live for their country.



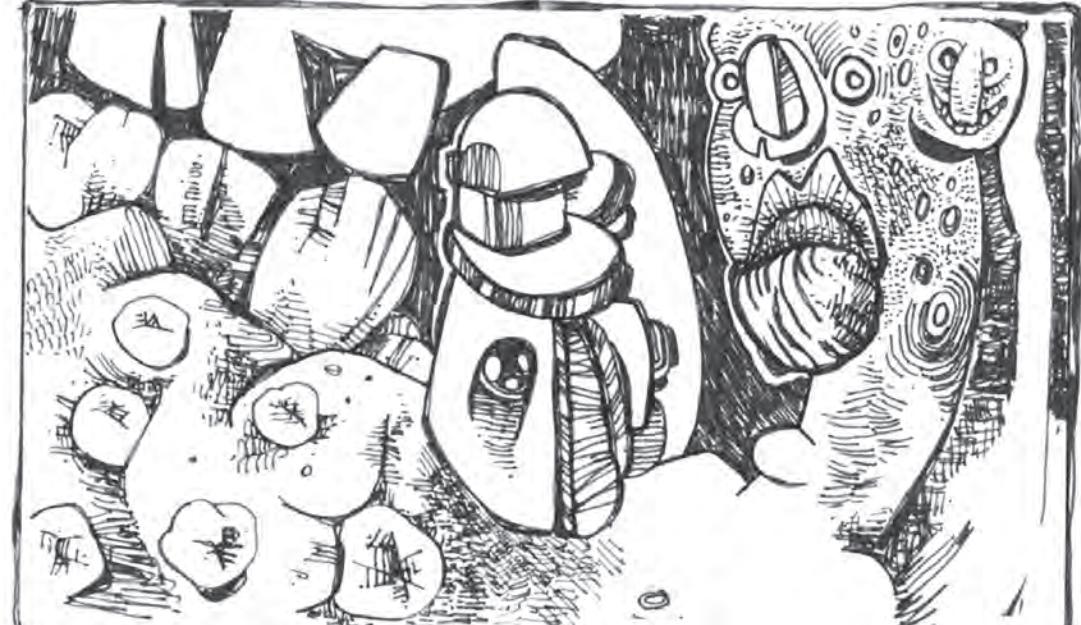
JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION



JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION

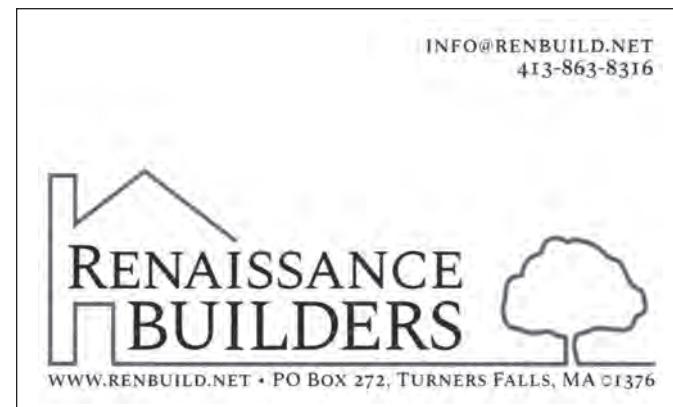


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# The Children's Page

YONDERNOO ILLUSTRATION

## The Lovelights

## and the Operetta

Words by Beverly Ketch & pictures by Hannah Brookman

SNOW HAD COVERED K STREET IN A SPARKLING BLANKET. THE LOVELIGHT SISTERS' LIVES HAD ENTERED THE LAZY LULL OF JANUARY, WHEN IT SEEMED THE ONLY THING TO DO WAS TO STAY WARM AND PASS THE TIME.

CHELLA AND VIOLA SAW THE POSTMAN MAKING DEEP FOOTPRINTS IN THE FRESH SNOW. HE CAME UP THEIR STEPS AND MANAGED TO PUT A LETTER IN THEIR BOX. VIOLA OPENED THE DOOR LEANING OUT TO TAKE THE LETTER WITHOUT HAVING TO STEP OUTSIDE IN HER SLIPPERS.



CHELLA PEERED OVER HER SHOULDER AS SHE READ IT. IT WAS FROM COUSIN CHANDELLE LOVELIGHT. IT CONTAINED TWO TICKETS TO THE OPERA DE L'AME. IN THE LETTER SHE TOLD THEM SHE WAS THE LIBRETTIST OF AN OPERA THAT WAS TO PREMIERE IN NEW YORK CITY ON SATURDAY, AND SHE HAD INCLUDED FRONT ROW SEATS FOR THEM.

"WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE LIBRETTIST?" ASKED CHELL. "I WILL LOOK IT UP IN THE DICTIONARY" VIOLA SAID, EVEN AS SHE PULLED THE BIG BOOK DOWN FROM THE SHELF. "A PERSON WHO WRITES THE TEXT OF AN OPERA, OR OTHER LONG VOCAL WORK", VIOLA READ.



"HOW WONDERFUL, HOW ABSOLUTELY WONDERFUL" SAID CHELL, STARING AHEAD IN AMAZEMENT, CLEARLY IMAGINING THE WONDERS OF SUCH A SPECTACLE. OPERA DE L'AME... VISIONS OF THE ELABORATE COSTUMES, THE HEART WRENCHING DRAMA, THE SOARING MUSIC DANCED IN HER MIND. OPERETTA! EVEN THE WORD SOUNDED BEAUTIFUL.



ALL WEEK THEY WALKED ON AIR IN ANTICIPATION. THEY CHOSE THEIR OUTFITS, VIOLA IN BLUE VELVET AND CHELL IN RED. THEY PUT ON THE FANCIEST BOOTS AND COATS THEY OWNED AND SET OUT ON THE TRAIN FOR THE BIG CITY! TONIGHT THEY WOULD SEE THE PERFORMANCE AND THEIR GLAMOROUS COUSIN CHANDELLE! ...TO BE CONTINUED

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# EVENTS

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## THURSDAY, JANUARY 22

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

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Cooking Demonstration*, with Abigail of the Food Bank of Western Mass. 1 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Doctor in Homespun*. Susan Wright and Loris Epps tell the tale of a local female doctor/weaver from the 1800s. 6 p.m. Free.

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

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Jessica Beck, Rumyn, The Survey*. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Anna Webber Nonet*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

Greenfield Community College, Greenfield: *The Ripple Effect*. "Join the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce for a breakfast panel that reframes nonprofits as economic engines, not just charitable organizations." Register at [www.tinyurl.com/FranklinBreakfast](http://www.tinyurl.com/FranklinBreakfast). 7:30 a.m. \$.

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

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Lofi Creativity Zone*. A creative hangout for tweens and teens. 4 p.m. Free.

St. Kaz, Turners Falls: *Patch Burger* pop-up, with DJs John Moloney, Sarah Gibbons. 6 to 11 p.m. No cover.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Musical, Disney's Frozen JR*. 6 p.m. \$.

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

Iron Horse, Northampton: *James Montgomery Band*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Winterpills, Slow Pony*. 7 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Love Crumbs, Mare Berger*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Something Wonderful Tonight*, Eric Clapton/George Harrison tribute. 8 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Masala Jazz*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Shadowcatcher, Rhubarb Duo, Feldspar00000, Baldwinville*. 8 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Grouch, Snood, Bullfrog*. 8 p.m. By donation.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Maidala, Well Suited*. 8 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Bag Lady, DC Wolves, Sunset Mission, Plunge Pool*. 8 p.m. \$.

Sulis Studio, Florence: *Kath Bloom & David Shapiro, Nighttime, Norma Dream*. 8 p.m. \$.

Quarters, Hadley: *Heated Rivalry Trivia Night*. No book knowledge req'd. 9 p.m. \$.



Free films next week: *The Dark Crystal* (1982), Tuesday at the Millers Falls Library, and *Join Or Die* (2023), Friday at the Brick House. Both at 5 p.m.

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center: *Kids Nature Art: Snowflakes and Stars*.

Create mobiles from twigs, paper snowflakes, and stars. Ages 4 to 10 with adult accompaniment. Dress for the weather. Register at [www.tinyurl.com/snowflakesandstars](http://www.tinyurl.com/snowflakesandstars). 10 a.m. to noon. Free.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: State senator Jo Comerford and state rep Susannah Whippy meet with constituents. Light refreshments. 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Free.

Greenfield Savings Bank, Turners Falls: *Mal Petty* of the Resilience Center of Franklin County offers information

about programs related to safety from sexual and domestic violence. Snacks provided. 1 p.m. Free.

Four Phantoms Brewing, Greenfield: *Brass Band Jam*. All ages. 1 to 3 p.m. No cover.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Reception for *Will Close* exhibit *Home*, with a nature journal demonstration. Refreshments. 2 to 4 p.m. Free.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Musical, Disney's Frozen JR*. 2 p.m. \$.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Poems with Wings*. Cellist Eugene Friesen and actor and writer Court Dorsey collaborate in an improvised performance of poems by Dorsey and others. 2 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. Through January.

**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 through January.

**Rhodes Art Center, Northfield Mount Hermon, Gill:** *Pieces of HerStory: A Fabric Collage Celebration of Black Women*, portraits of 32 trailblazing women of color by Kasandra Pantoja, a self-taught artist. Through January 30, with a reception this Friday, January 23 at 6:30 p.m.

**Leverett Library, Leverett:** *Meandering Through France*, photographs by David Pueschel, through February.

**Artspace, Greenfield:** *Making Light*, community art show featuring work by 28 local artists on the theme of illumination. Through February 20.

**Hope & Olive, Greenfield:** *Flora, Fauna, & Figures*, paintings by Julie Kumble, through March 15.

**Looky Here, Greenfield:** *Psychedelic Filly*, art by Emily Tatro, through January.

**Geissler Gallery, Stoneleigh-Burnham, Greenfield:** *Earthly Possessions*, sculpture by Cassie Brown, through March 3.

**GCTV, Greenfield:** *Eve Christoff's Gallery of Work*, large scale, vibrant paintings by Christoff celebrating the natural world and divine female energy. Through March, with a reception Friday, February 6 at 6 p.m.

**South Gallery, GCC Greenfield:** *Rachel Portesi: The Nature of Things*, an installation that examines themes of mortality, regeneration, interconnectedness. January 26 through February 27; Portesi will talk about her work next Wednesday, January 28 at 12 p.m.

**Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls:** *Magic of Moonlight*, member exhibit, through January 26, followed by a member exhibit on the theme of *Heart to Heart* in February.

**Gallery A3, Amherst:** *Alliterations*, paintings by Gordon M. Green, and *Radical Hope*, paintings by Evelyn Pye. Both through January.

**Augusta Savage Gallery, UMass Amherst:** *Reserved Passages*, watercolors by former teacher Richard Yarde and his student Susan Montgomery, through February 26.

**Hampden Gallery, UMass Amherst:** *Fragile Connections*, neon-lit sculpture and delicately engraved glass forms by scientific glass blower Sally Prasch. January 29 through May 8, with a reception Thursday, April 23 at 5 p.m.

**Black Birch Vineyard, Hatfield:** *Quabbin Art Association*, member exhibit featuring a wide range of media, through February.

**Split Level Gallery, Northampton:** *Listen to My Photographs*, photographic art by members of the Care Center, a GED program for young mothers in Holyoke. Through February, with a reception Friday, February 13 at 5 p.m.

## CALL FOR ART

The Deerfield Art Association seeks work for the Sixth Annual Photography Exhibition at Fiddleheads Gallery in Northfield. Phone or camera, black and white or color, but no AI-generated or enhanced work. Submission deadline is February 6; contact [margedvaa@gmail.com](mailto:margedvaa@gmail.com) to submit. Exhibit opens February 14.

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# CALENDAR



Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *The Brookside Project*. 5 p.m. No cover.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: Musical, *Disney's Frozen JR*. 6 p.m. \$

Montague Retreat Center, Montague: *Raquy & the Cavemen, DJ Sonic Prayer, cacao circle, sound healing, etc.* 6 p.m.

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

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Cabaret Calamité: A Variety Show*, feat. *Ash Is a Dumb Fox, DJ Harsh Noise Boyfriend, Deanna Bach, Olivia Nied*, more. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Tarta Relena, Meara O'Reilly's Hockets For Two Voices*. 7 p.m. \$.

Luthier's Co-Op, Easthampton: *Hoonah, Niagara Moon, Christa Joy and the Honeybees*. 7 p.m. \$.

Darlings, Easthampton: *Helen Hummel Trio*. 7 p.m. \$.

Canal Lanes, Southampton: *Fugue State, Hardcar, Owen Manure*. 7 p.m. \$

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *A Farewell 2 Kings, Rush tribute*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Fool and the World, Padded Waltz*. 8 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Trans Inclusive Crime Syndicate with Cinnabun & Eris Electra, Banisch and Moonchylde, Inverted Agenda*. 9:30 p.m. \$.

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 25

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: Musical, *Disney's Frozen JR*. 2 p.m. \$

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

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

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Roger Miller*. 5 p.m. By donation.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Wolfman Jack, Grateful Dead tribute*. 6 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Hani Thompson*, record release, with special guests *Cloudbelly*. In the Shea's Lounge. 7 p.m. \$.

Water Street Barn, Shelburne Falls: *Little House Blues*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Visions Video, Northampton: *Zach Rowden, Early Went Blind*, screening of *Midnight Visitor*. 7 p.m. \$.

## MONDAY, JANUARY 26

Four Phantoms Brewing, Greenfield: *Monday Night D&D*. "Self-contained adventures designed to be played in a single session." 6 p.m. No cover.

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 27

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *MassHire Employer Spotlight*, highlighting openings with First Generation Construction. 10 a.m. to noon. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: Montague selectboard member *Marina Goldman* drop-in office hour. 4 to 5 p.m. Free.

 SUBMITTED IMAGE

The Big Destiny gang (above) is back in town – with an album release show planned next Saturday, January 31 at the Asbestos Farm. The lineup is stacked to high heavens, with experimental pop instigator LUCY, newly reformulated local folk-rock supergroup Magick Lantern, and longtime Martha's Vineyard indie outfit Kahoots all somehow crammed onto the bill as well.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: Movie, *The Dark Crystal* (1982). 5 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Young Entrepreneur Business Class: Marketing*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28

Greenfield Community College, Greenfield: Artist *Rachel Portesi* speaks about her work, *The Nature of Things*, in the South Gallery. 12 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Poetry Discussion Group*, no pre-reading required. 3 p.m. Free.

Whately Town Hall, Whately: *Frigg*. 7 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Bad Bad Hats, Smut*. 8 p.m. \$.

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 29

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

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Ska Night*. 7:30 p.m. No cover.

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 30

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

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Lofi Creativity Zone*. A creative hangout for tweens and teens. 4 p.m. Free.

Brick House Community Resource Center, Turners Falls: Documentary screening, *Join or Die* (2023), followed by soup and discussion at 7 p.m. Launch event for The Village Project, a new initiative to bring a "village feel" back to the neighborhood. 5 p.m. Free.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Reading, Michael Burten and Andy Robinson*. 7 p.m. Free.

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Moon Hollow*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Winter Wonderland Family Fun*. Winter-themed crafts and hot cocoa. 2 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *The Secret World of Freshwater Mussels*, presentation by malacologist Virginia Martell. 2 p.m. Free.

Element Brewing Company, Millers Falls: *Vimana*. 3 p.m. No cover.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Tashi Dorji, Che Chen*. 4 p.m. By donation.

Asbestos Farm, Hadley: *Big Destiny*, album release show, with *LUCY, Magick Lantern, Kahoots*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shelburne Falls Theater, Shelburne Falls: *Pothole Pictures presents WALL-E* (2008). Music at 7 p.m.: Charlemont Academy students playing Americana; movie at 7:30 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Lez Zeppelin*, Led Zeppelin tribute. 7 p.m. \$.

Colonial Theater, Keene: *Reggie Watts, Adam & the Flood*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Karen Morgan*, comedian. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Suitcase Junket, Louisa Stancioff*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *DiTrani Bros., Moon Hollow*. 8 p.m. \$.

Tourists, North Adams: *Haley Heynderickx*. 8 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Snowglobe Almanac, The Same Old Same Olds, BB Dozer*. 9:30 p.m. By donation.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Film & Gender, AFK, Sgraffito Kill*. 10:30 p.m. \$.

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1

Town Hall, Gill: Documentary screening, *An Act of Conscience* (1997), about the years-long struggle that ensued after the IRS seized the home of war tax resisters in Colrain. Discussion to follow. 1 p.m. Free.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Craft Club*. Open studio time: bring any project, use sewing machines, glue guns, and other resources. Free for members. 1 to 3 p.m. \$.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Documentary screening, *Fire of Love* (2022). Two French scientists are in love but die in a volcano. 2 p.m. Free.

Athol Congregational Church, Athol: *Quabbin Valley Pro Musica* sings Dvořák's "Mass in D Major," and four spirituals. 3 p.m. \$.

**looking forward...**

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Ablaye Cissoko & Cyrille Brotto*. 7 p.m. \$.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Readings, Karen Schoemer, Phil Good, Scott Seward*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Firehouse, Worcester: *Jaap Blonk, Blink*. 8 p.m. \$.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7

John Zon Community Center, Greenfield: *Cribbage Tournament*. Registration starts at noon. 1 to 4 p.m. \$.

Bicycle World, Greenfield: *Fatbike Group Ride* through the Greenfield Ridge, departs 3 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: *Landowner, Slant of Light, Outro*. 8 p.m. \$.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Jake Xerxes Fussell, Dougie Poole*. 7 p.m. \$.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

THCC, Easthampton: *Bellower, Olde Bard*. 8 p.m. \$.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Vermont Jazz Center, Brattleboro: *Nate Smith*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Freeps, Rick Rude, babe wait*. 8 p.m. No cover.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Mimi Fang, Hush Puppy, Oh Dad*. 7 p.m. \$.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 14

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Double Duran, Duran Duran tribute*. 8 p.m. \$.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 29

Academy of Music, Northampton: *I'm With Her, Olive Klug*. 7 p.m. \$.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 2

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

## FRIDAY, MAY 15

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *They Are Getting a Body of Water*. 8 p.m. \$.

## SUNDAY, JUNE 21

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *Geese, Wednesday, Lucius, J Mascis, Big Freedia, Hurray for the Riff Raff, Frente Cumbiero, Mal Devisa*, many more. \$\$

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## RECIPES from page B1

white turnips and gives a recipe for a Rutabaga Pudding that is similar to the rutabaga casseroles of Scandinavian Christmases.

The rutabaga finally got its moment in the limelight in James Sielas Rogers's "Rutabagas: A Love Poem" in his volume *Sundogs* (Parallel Press, 2006). He writes about encountering them in his partner's Midwestern family, and having to ask her what they were because they were new to him. He notes that she enjoys their "dug-up texture" and "how they left the tongue / with a rumor of something / underground and dark." For himself he decides that autumn vegetables suit her, and "none more than rutabagas, so reluctant to have left the ground."

These encomiums suggest the range of the rutabaga, especially, I think, its warm place in the hearts of many Northerners. Its odd name comes from the Swedish *rotabag*,

*bagge*, a mashup of the words for "root" and "lump," while the British English name for it is "swede," recalling its geographical origin. In Scotland it's called "neeps"; as bashed neeps, it's a vital side dish with haggis.

No doubt, one source of the rutabaga's popularity in the North, where winter vegetables are traditionally few, is its impressive nutritional profile: a serving provides 100% of daily Vitamin C and fiber needs, and 35% of potassium, plus useful quantities of magnesium and calcium. Rutabagas are cheap, too, and a review of recipes shows that they accommodate themselves beautifully with other vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, potatoes, and celeriac, while also starring solo in dishes such as the Scandinavian Christmas casserole.

Here are three recipes full of hearty goodness and flavor for winter meals.



## RUTABAGA, POTATO, AND MUSHROOM GRATIN

6 to 8 baby bella mushrooms  
2 Tbsp. mixed dried wild mushrooms  
or porcini (or 6 to 8 more baby bellas)  
3 Tbsp. butter  
1 tsp. dried thyme  
1 1/2 cups milk  
2 bay leaves, each torn in two or three pieces  
half a large rutabaga (about 1 1/2 lb.)  
three large potatoes (about 1 1/2 lb.)  
salt to taste  
one or two cloves garlic to taste  
3 Tbsp. butter  
2 Tbsp. flour  
1 cup grated extra sharp cheddar  
dash of cayenne or hot paprika

If you are using the dried mushrooms, put them in a small bowl with half a cup warm water, and let them soak for two hours or longer before you proceed.

Slowly heat the milk with the torn bay leaves in a pan over a low heat. Turn the heat off and let the milk stand so the flavor of the bay leaves infuses it. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a casserole dish.

Quickly wash, then slice, the fresh mushrooms. Heat a tablespoon of butter (or bacon fat) in a small frying pan, add the mushrooms, and fry for just 3 or 4 minutes, tossing to brown the slices, then sprinkle them with the thyme. Set aside.

Peel and cut the potatoes and rutabaga into quarter-inch slices. Put them in a large saucepan, add salt to taste, bring to the boil, and cook for 20 minutes or until tender. Drain,

reserving half a cup of the liquid. Tip half of them into the prepared dish.

Extract the bay leaves from the milk and stick half of the pieces among the vegetables. Chop the garlic and scatter half on top. Reserve a few slices of mushroom, but arrange the rest on top. Combine the remaining chopped garlic and bay leaf pieces with the remaining rutabaga mixture and spread it on the mushroom layer.

To make the cheese sauce, melt 2 Tbsp. of the butter in a medium saucepan, and then, off the heat, stir in the flour to make a smooth mixture. Pour in a little of the milk and stir to maintain the smoothness. Return the pan to a low heat and add the rest of the milk a little at a time, stirring to keep the mixture smooth. Also add the reserved vegetable liquid, a little at a time. The sauce should be fairly thick, so don't add all the liquid if you think it will dilute it too much. Finally, reserve a tablespoon of the cheese, then stir the rest of it into the sauce. Add salt to taste, and a dash of cayenne. (Its role is not to make the sauce spicy, but to bring out the cheese flavor.)

Pour the sauce over the vegetables. Use a spoon handle to make holes in the mixture so the sauce flows through to the bottom layer. Sprinkle the reserved cheese and mushroom slices on top and bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden.

Serve as a side dish with sausage, chicken, or beef, or as a vegetarian main dish.

Serves 4 to 6 as a side,  
3 or 4 as a main dish.

## FINNISH RUTABAGA CASSEROLE

1 small-medium rutabaga, peeled  
1 medium carrot, peeled  
salt to taste  
1 cup plus 2 Tbsp. homemade  
bread crumbs  
1/2 cup whole milk  
5 Tbsp. butter  
1 Tbsp. honey  
about 1/4 tsp. freshly  
grated nutmeg  
2 eggs  
pepper to taste



HOPLEY PHOTOS

Cut the rutabaga and carrot into bite-size pieces. Put them in a pan, cover with water, and add half a teaspoon of salt or to taste. Bring to the boil and cook for 20 to 25 minutes or until fork tender. Drain and mash the vegetables well.

Turn the oven to 375 degrees. Grease a baking dish with a little

butter. In a bowl, mix the milk and 1 cup of bread crumbs and set them aside for a few minutes. Set aside

a tablespoon of the butter, melt the rest, and pour it into the bread-and-milk mixture along with the honey and nutmeg. Stir to mix.

Beat the eggs, then add them too.

Finally, combine the bread-crumb mixture with the mashed rutabaga and mash it again – or process in a food processor – to make it smooth and thick. Season it with pepper; taste, and add more salt if it seems necessary.

Put it in the prepared dish and scatter the remaining 2 Tbsp. of bread crumbs on top. Cut the remaining butter into tiny bits and add them to the bread crumbs, then bake for 20 to 25 minutes until the mixture has formed a soft set. Let rest for five minutes before serving.

Serves 4.

## COCONUT-BRAISED RUTABAGA WITH SHRIMP

This recipe pairs northern rutabaga with southern coconut and spices. The shrimp is optional. You can omit it or replace with chicken strips or scallops if you prefer.



1 1/2 lb. rutabaga  
7 Tbsp. coconut or canola oil  
1 medium large onion, chopped  
8-inch celery stick, chopped  
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh ginger  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
2 tsp. powdered cumin  
1 tsp. powdered turmeric  
one 13- or 14-oz. can coconut milk  
7 or 8 stems cilantro  
2 to 3 dashes Worcestershire sauce  
3 Tbsp. unsweetened shredded coconut  
20 large shrimp  
salt to taste  
Old Bay or Italian seasoning to taste  
sriracha or other hot sauce (optional)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and lightly oil a baking tray. Cut the rutabaga into quarter-inch slices, then cut these into bite-size bits. Pour 2 Tbsp. of the oil on them

and turn them with your hands to coat all the pieces. Spread them on the tray.

Bake for 30 to 40 minutes, turning them a couple of times until they are tender with possibly a few browned edges.

While the rutabaga is baking, heat another tablespoon of the oil over low heat in a saucepan. Add the onion and celery and cook gently for 5 or 6 minutes. Add the chopped garlic and ginger and cook for a couple of minutes more, then stir in the cumin and turmeric, followed by the coconut milk, five stems of the cilantro roughly torn, the Worcestershire sauce, and the cooked rutabaga. Simmer for 4 to 5 minutes, stirring and adding about a cup of water, a little at a time as the mixture thickens.

Meanwhile, toast the shredded coconut by tossing it for 2 or 3 minutes in a small frying pan lightly greased with a little coconut oil. When it is golden-brown, set it aside. Add another tablespoon of oil to the pan and put in the shrimp. Season with the Old Bay or Italian seasoning and cook, turning once, for three minutes or until the shrimp are opaque.

Add a dash of hot paprika or a squirt of sriracha if you like. Tip the rutabaga mixture into a serving bowl and scatter on the remaining coarsely chopped cilantro, the toasted coconut, and finally the shrimp.

Serves 4.

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