

# The Montague Reporter

Year 24 – No. 10

editor@montaguereporter.org

FEBRUARY 12, 2026

\$2

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

## Officials Express Dismay At Tech School Price Tag

By JAMIE SIMPSON

**GREENFIELD** – Thirty to forty people braved Tuesday night’s “wintry mix” – which turned out to be a few flakes drifting down in the darkness – to hear a presentation at Greenfield Community College on the proposal to build a new Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) building.

A four-member panel laid out the options: make major repairs to bring the current facility up to code, entirely at the expense of the school’s 19 member towns; add to or renovate the existing structure; or build a new facility on school-owned land, with about half of the projected \$238 million cost reimbursed by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA).



SIMPSON PHOTO

Most audience members who spoke at Tuesday’s forum said they serve on boards or committees in the school district’s various member towns.

**G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**Seeking Cuts,**  
**Administrators**  
**Eyeing ‘Every**  
**Single Position’**

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – The working deficit in next year’s school district budget is still hovering around \$1.2 million, and administrators remained tight-lipped about targeted cuts during a February 5 presentation to the Montague and Gill finance committees and selectboards and a February 10 public hearing.

“We have a perfect storm here,” business manager Joanne Blier said during both presentations.

“We need student achievement to be the primary focus, so we’re asking our leaders to think about re-imagining school and doing things differently,” she said to the fin coms.

Gill selectboard chair Greg Snedeker said the state Chapter 70 funding formula was “designed to reward districts that are growing,” and as the district has seen a roughly 50% decline in student-age population since 1996, “your per-pupil cost is skyrocketing.”

Snedeker, who serves as vice chair of the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board (STRPB), made a case for regionalization. “We need to stop talking about it as if it’s this horrible boogeyman,” he said. “It’s not this cannibalism of ‘I want to grab your kids,’ because that’s what’s

see GMRSD page A8

**ERVING SELECTBOARD**  
**Special Ed,**  
**Transit Burden**  
**Shifting Up to**  
**Secondary Level**

By KATIE NOLAN

It was education night at Monday’s joint selectboard, finance committee, and capital planning committee meeting in Erving.

Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) superintendent Richard Martin made the case for constructing a new building, with an estimated cost of \$2.4 to \$2.5 million. He described a leaky roof and deteriorating electrical, plumbing, and fire sprinkler systems.

According to Martin, the estimate for bringing the current 50-year-old building up to code is \$103 million. However, the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) will not provide reimbursement for the repairs. For a new building, MSBA will reimburse the 19-town district for 66% of the cost.

Erving’s share of the 30-year construction bond is estimated at \$222,000 per year. “We’re hoping that number will go down a bit,” when project parameters are finalized, FCTS business manager Elizabeth Bouchard told the committees. Residents of the district towns will vote on the expenditure on October 6.

Martin also presented the school’s \$7.9 million estimated

see ERVING page A6

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

## Elementary School Costs Spur Talk of a ‘Breaking Point’

By GEORGE BRACE

In the discussion that followed, numerous attendees, many representing financial committees of the district’s communities, balked at the cost of new construction, asking if the district could make essential repairs as needed to soften the impact on cash-strapped municipalities.

Art Schwenger, a Heath resident who represents his town on the FCTS school committee, told the *Reporter* he had moved to the area in 1973, and recalled the tech school’s predecessor.

“I think it was called the Greenfield Vocational School,” Schwenger said. “It was the north wing of the Greenfield High School building. They built [the current building on Industrial Drive in Montague] and expanded

see TECH page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Library Special Election Scheduled for June 24



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

Last summer the library trustees determined the Carnegie Library was too small to meet Montague’s needs, and voted to build on a vacant lot at 38 Avenue A.

By JEFF SINGLETON

Leverett’s selectboard and finance committee called for cuts in the Leverett Elementary School’s draft FY’27 budget on Tuesday, warning that its growth was unsustainable and “hard choices” needed to be made. A hearing was also held for the transfer station budget, and residents heard both a complaint and an optimistic update about an ongoing legal dispute involving public access to conservation land.

School committee chair Marnie Genre presented an FY’27 operating budget of \$2,444,121 for Leverett Elementary School (LES), a 3.9% increase over the current year – and part of an overall elementary school budget of \$3,480,624 the town is facing when insurance, retirement, and transportation are added in, a 7.5% increase.

Along with a good education, Genre argued, LES provides “far-reaching” benefits to the town including projects and field trips that foster community connection and encourage “stewardship” of the land; volunteer activity; and resources created through grants received by the school, such as a new playground to be built in the next year.

Genre noted that LES does this with the largest enrollment and the smallest staff of the four schools in the Union 28 superintendency district, and defended pay raises for LES teachers by praising their award-winning work and saying that their compensation was necessary to attract and retain them.

Responding to questioning of principal Siby Medina’s \$118,000 salary, school committee member

see LEVERETT page A8

cient time to make their case.

In other actions, the board voted to add a second mechanic at the Clean Water Facility (CWF), made significant progress on the town budget for the next fiscal year, and delayed voting on a proposal to create a “Volunteer of the Month” award.

The discussion of a debt exclusion vote for a new library began with a request by library trustees chair Will Quale, accompanied by libraries director Caitlin Kelley, to

see MONTAGUE page A7

GILL SELECTBOARD

## Housing Rehab Funds Arrive

By JERRI HIGGINS

The Gill selectboard’s agenda Monday evening included approving new federal funding for housing rehabilitation, an update on the town’s search for a new principal assessor and assistant to the assessors, and a recent rate change from the town’s municipal electricity aggregator.

A \$900,000 federal community development block grant for a

housing rehabilitation program in the towns of Gill and New Salem has been awarded, with Gill as the lead community.

Brian McHugh, community development director at the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA), said that the role means Gill must submit an “explanation, or response, to the indirect

see GILL page A6

## High School Sports: No Consolation!



DAVID HOITT PHOTO  
*Smith Voc’s Josh Cole (left) and Nolan Ingram (right) try to block Cameron Johnson’s shot on Senior Night at Turners Falls High School last Friday.*

By MATT ROBINSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – This week, the Turners Falls boys’ basketball team lost a single-point heartbreaker on Senior Night in front of a very enthusiastic full house. The game wasn’t decided until the very last shot.

On Tuesday, the Turners Falls girls’ team defeated the Gateway Gators in Huntington in a non-qualifiers’ post-season game. Both teams will be back on the court this Thursday in a girls/boys double-header.

### Boys’ Basketball

Smith Voc 68 – TFHS 67

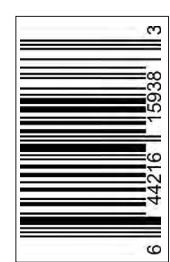
The Blue Thunder’s nail-biter of a loss came last Friday night against the Smith Vocational Vikings. One of the reasons the Norsemen eked out the one-point win is foul shots. While they plunked in 17 free throws, the Thunder only hit five.

Because it was Senior Night, extra bleachers were dropped down for the overflow crowd. It wasn’t enough, as spectators lined the wall behind the Turners bench. And everybody was into it. The band and the cheerleaders kept the crowd cheering, and folks were handing out kazoos to the hometown faithful.

see SPORTS page A4

### The Health Insurance Bone’s Connected to the Municipal Budget Bone ...

Kazoos to the Hometown Faithful.....	A1	The Sky Is Dark and Dinner is Unmade.....	B1
The Possibility of Loss or Injury.....	A2	False Teeth Found in the Furnace.....	B2
Factor In the Existential Threat.....	A3	Geo-Tagged and Data-Banked.....	B3
Loudly Echoed the Chants.....	A4	A Halo of Dark Matter, But No Stars.....	B4
To Have a Staff of Plumbers.....	A5	Turning Away From the Body Snatchers.....	B5
Release Rather Than Retirement.....	A6	Blood Bucket, Big Mess, Half Off Sale.....	B6
A Score of Young Vagabonds.....	A7	Gracious Calamity, Leftover Crack.....	B7
Tough to Be a Lot of Things Right Now.....	A8	The Tracks of the Thunderbird.....	B8



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"The Voice of the Villages"

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## Cliffs, Storms, Belts...

This week's *Montague Reporter* is practically a theme issue.

Town budgets, school budgets, health insurance costs, electricity prices, cost-of-living adjustments, the deterioration of our infrastructure, the cost of new construction, inflation, taxation, modified contracts, unfilled positions, declining enrollment, retiree benefits: all of these tentacles are connected with one another, which means they are of one beast, even if they are entering through different windows.

Last October, Moody's Analytics chief economist Mark Zandi announced that 22 states were either in recession or "at high risk" of it. Massachusetts was included.

That same month, Boston University lecturer Mark T. Williams

warned that given the state's relative dependence on education and medicine – "eds and meds" – the combination of H-1B visa restrictions discouraging skilled foreign workers, cuts in National Institutes of Health research funding, and tariffs were likely to put an end to the state's recession-proof streak.

And the Massachusetts Municipal Association released its *Perfect Storm* report, highlighting the long-term "degradation" caused by the sharp reduction in Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) from the state to towns and cities ever since the 2008 crash.

In other words, we're heading into new terrain. People here are already thrifty and supportive. Now we'll be putting those skills to work.

## Hard Choices Ahead

Your February 5 issue reported that the Montague selectboard is considering recommending 2% cuts from a level services budget for FY'27, "while acknowledging that... this may require... transfers from reserves during the fiscal year."

I hope that they reject any recommendations that assume subsequent transfers will be necessary. Transfers should be for unforeseen circumstances, not for failure to do due diligence during the budget-building process.

Montague has a problem: its expenses have gone up significantly, for a variety of reasons. It has a choice: reduce total expenses, or raise enough revenues to cover them. It's not an easy problem to solve, but there it is.

I think most of us would like fully staffed town departments, well-paid town employees, and low taxes. As the saying goes, "Pick two." In reality, the solution probably lies in balancing all three, and that's where the discussion should focus.

It's not entirely the selectboard's

problem to solve. The finance committee exists for times like this; its diverse membership and independence from any particular constituency within town government – other than Town Meeting – allow it to fully debate the various options and provide considered opinions on how much tax money to raise and where to spend it.

In the coming weeks, I hope that we hear more about those debates, so the public can better understand what the issues are and why decisions are made.

And it shouldn't be forgotten that the ultimate authority is town meeting. It can overrule the recommendations of both the selectboard and the finance committee that don't seem to meet the needs of the moment – and sometimes it has. Let's hope that's not necessary this year. If the selectboard and finance committee do their jobs, it shouldn't be, but difficult decisions will need to be made one way or another.

Michael Naughton  
 Millers Falls

## CORRECTIONS

In an article in our February 5 edition about 18th- and 19th-century belief in vampires (*With No Answers for a Feared Disease, Some in New England Blamed... Vampires*, Page B1), we wrote that "in Europe, a quarter of the population suffered from TB."

It is more accurate to say that around a quarter of deaths in Europe in the 19th century were attributed to tuberculosis. Also, some sources list the date of the exhumation of Rachel Harris in Manchester, Vermont as 1792, rather than 1793 as we wrote.

Thank you for reading this note of correction.

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## Controlled Dialogue Anti-Democratic

The February 5 Letter to Editor "Guided Dialogues Preferable" misrepresents the "Community Dialogue" resolution narrowly passed by pro-Israel City Councilors in Burlington, Vermont.

It is part of an anti-democratic strategy from a Council majority to keep the widely supported Apartheid-Free Community advisory question off the ballot. In contrast, officials in several other Vermont cities simply recognized the required voter petition signatures and let people decide the question. These Burlington Democrats have also opposed a ceasefire resolution to shield US support for Israel.

All struggles for justice and freedom face defenders of the status quo. Opponents of change attempt to reframe oppression and violence in terms of attitudes and feelings instead of institutional structures, like unequal power, legal discrimination, and government policies that systematically favor one group over another.

By design, this "dialogue" leads nowhere. Any genuinely open, democratic, and productive discussion about Israel and Palestine requires a framework that

stands for full equality.

Specifically for Palestine, this means rejecting the colonial eradication of Palestinians through ethnic cleansing. It means recognizing the system of apartheid – 65 discriminatory laws; 800 checkpoints; walls dividing Palestinian towns; vastly unequal access to land, healthcare, education, and water – Israel imposes across the entirety of historical Palestine.

Controlled dialogue instead of open debate is a strategy that supporters of Israel attempt to use to normalize apartheid and colonial eradication of Palestinians that form the basis of Israel. It aims to limit the discussion to personal views and attitudes only, while whitewashing the institutional oppression, daily violence, and systemic dehumanization faced by Palestinians – the things that led to the genocide in Gaza.

**Paul Fleckenstein**  
 Apartheid-Free Community Committee  
 Burlington, Vermont

## Letter Implied a Threat

The letter to the editor in last week's *Reporter*, "Morals Called Into Question," mentions "the risk that one takes" in not agreeing with the writer's position regarding the state of Israel.

The writer of the letter suggests that the risk is that of having one's morals and political stances being called into question. The tone of the letter is one of righteous condemnation and moral absolutism, and contains a likely unintentional implied threat regarding those who do not agree with the writer's position.

The writer's choice of the word "risk" is particularly notable; the Merriam Webster dictionary defines risk as "the possibility of loss or injury: peril."

According to the Anti-Defamation League the number of anti-semitic incidents involving assault, harassment, and/or vandalism has increased 344% over the past five years. Some of these incidents have occurred in local communities.

I am not certain what the actual aim of the Apartheid-Free Communities movement is, but it is unlikely to be that of increasing division and conflict in the communities which have aligned themselves with the movement. Unfortunately, the language, tone, and moral superiority of letters such as "Morals Called Into Question" do just that.

**Robert Shulman**  
 Montague

## Readers May Decide

*The relevant section of the letter in question read (emphasis added):*

*"Many of my Jewish family members have tied their identity to Israel, and to this system that explicitly privileges one group over another. They tell me they feel their morals and political stances are being called into question by local movements like this. That is the risk one takes when one has welded their identity to an ethnostate committing the world's first live-streamed genocide and ethnic cleansing campaigns. And it is not a valid reason to mute those calls. Their comfort does not take precedence over Palestinian liberation." – Eds.*

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## Letters to the Editors



# TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

## It's melting!

I was affected by that massive east coast Verizon outage last month, and I was troubled to watch many of our friends and neighbors in Greenfield fall victim this week to a multi-day **failure at GCET**, the city's publicly owned internet service.

Decentralized infrastructure, and decentralized administration of infrastructure, has many pros and many cons. No big conclusions here, just a sobering reality check about what it will take to really set up a different way of doing things.

And I have two more **Greenfield-related** items before we return to this vicinity:



JOE R. PARZYCH PHOTO

First, our Greenfield photo correspondent Joe R. Parzych spotted and documented this **American bald eagle** hanging out in a tree on Elm Street, and wanted to share it with our readers. Eagle!

And second, the city announced Tuesday that it is "launching a public engagement **process to refresh its brand identity**," the goal of which is to make "updates to the City's color palette, fonts, and logos," the goal of which in turn is to "spur economic development, deepen our communal sense of self, and increase trust in government," that last bit according to Mayor Desorgher.

I will cop to having an immediate, deep, and abiding suspicion of all efforts at place-making in service of place-marketing –

marketing what, to whom? – but I was glad to see, at least, that the work is "being performed entirely by City staff at no additional cost to taxpayers beyond standard staff salaries," according to communications director Jonathon Weber, so at least there won't be any fly-by-night community-authenticity consultants in the mix. (*WestMass!*)

They're having a public meeting about it next Thursday at 5:30 p.m., at City Hall and over Zoom, in case you're interested. Oh, and they'll be sticking with dark green. *Greeeeeen*-field. Makes sense.

Meanwhile, in Turners Falls...

**Blind item!**: Rumors are swirling that a Patch couple is favored to once again win the annual award of the Rich Earth Institute (REI) in Brattleboro, which creates fertilizer for area farms using voluntarily captured and donated human urine.

"They have won it before," *Montague Reporter* pee correspondent and former features editor and current distribution manager Nina Rossi reports, "but this year, they exceeded their donations of 398 in 2024 by donating 486 gallons, a feat they accomplished by capturing their pee when they went away from home and upping their water consumption...."

Nina included this photo of the trophy certifying the duo as the Grand Champion of the institute's Piss-Off competition:



SUBMITTED PHOTO

"There is someone in Turners who helps them get the five-gallon containers of pee up to Brattleboro," our correspondent continues, adding that the award ceremony is next month.

Imagine having *two* of these trophies on your mantel? We extend our most sincere congratulations.

Looking for something to do this weekend locally? Do you like great music and want to support a great program? You are in luck, dear reader. This Friday night at 7 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., and Sunday at 2 p.m., Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School students will present *The Sound of Music*.

This 1959 musical about a singing family fleeing Nazis with a manic pixie dream nun features banger after banger, all of them written by Rodgers and Hammerstein at their absolute peak. Absolute. Peak.

"My Favorite Things"? It's from *The Sound of Music!* "Edelweiss"? It's from *The Sound of Music!* "Do-Re-Mi"? Did you think that was just some anonymously written folk song that has always been around to teach kids the major scale? No! It's from *The Sound of Music!* Did you think Christina Aguilera wrote "Climb Ev'ry Mountain" for her live 2000 concert DVD *My Reflection*? That's pretty weird. Turns out it's also from *The Sound of Music*!

Tickets are \$10, and \$5 for students. Show of the season. It's time you get yourself a seat in the Turners Falls High School auditorium and stop taking *The Sound of Music* for granted once and for all.

And before you watch it for the final time (don't forget flowers at that one), you can stop by St. Kaz at 1 p.m. Sunday to help Montague golden cane holder Lee Evers celebrate his 103rd birthday. Nice.

OK, time to send this one off to the printer! See you **next week**.

*Send your little bits of news to editor@montaguerreporter.org.*

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## OP ED

# O'Kane: 'Let's Drop the Inflammatory Language'

By KATE O'KANE

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – Of late, the first thing we look for when opening up our *Montague Reporter* is whether there is a new article about last October's Apartheid-Free Community resolution. Last week's issue did not disappoint!

I have been reticent to share my own thoughts about this issue, but I think it's finally time.

I have been upset for decades about the US government's refusal to put any pressure on Israel to stop the spread of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. In the past two years, I have lamented the US's unwillingness to pressure Israel to stop the killing of civilians in Gaza, and it has been heartbreaking to learn of Gazans starving because sufficient aid has not been allowed to enter Gaza. The US gives Israel tens of billions of dollars in military aid each year. Surely the US could insist some conditions be met before giving all that military aid?

On the other hand, I have been a long time

supporter of the state of Israel, appreciating their presence as one of the few democracies in the Middle East.

But is Israel an apartheid state? There are many in our community who answer with a definite yes. Yet I think the situation is more complicated than the way it's often portrayed.

Many people neglect to factor in the existential threat that the Arab nations surrounding Israel have posed to Israel. Those nations, together with Hamas, have repeatedly stated their intention to kill all Israelis, and Palestinian and other Arab groups have initiated war on Israel countless times.

People also tend to conflate the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where Palestinians have almost no rights and are regularly forced off their land, with the situation in Israel proper, where Palestinians do have rights and where numbers of them serve in the Knesset.

My conclusion is that it's a complex situation, and that calling Israel an apartheid state doesn't shed any light on the issue, given the fact that most of us object to Israel's policies

regarding the Palestinian people whether it's an apartheid state or not.

I understand people's desire to do something. It's appalling to feel morally compromised because of our tax dollars going to fund policies to which we object. However, I fail to see that declaring our town an "Apartheid-Free Community" will have any impact whatsoever. Why not gather folks together for town halls with our federal Representatives and Senators to discuss these issues and ask them to pressure Israel to stop the settlements, to stop killing Gazans and to allow sufficient aid into Gaza so that people are not starving? Wouldn't that be more constructive and less inflammatory?

In addition, I urge people to look at the divisions among us here in western Massachusetts. There is a stark division between the wealth and privilege of those living in Holyoke and further south and those living in Northampton, Amherst, and the surrounding communities.

A letter written by Francia Wisnewski in the January 1 issue of the *Reporter* titled

"Real School Equity" argues that "public education funding tied to local property taxes is deeply connected to the legacy of redlining. Redlining locked racial and economic inequality into land and housing. Property tax-based funding then turned that inequality into educational inequality."

This funding formula thus perpetuates the division between our mostly white communities and the black and brown communities closer to the Springfield area. I'm not suggesting it's apartheid, but we all participate in a system which maintains a huge racial wealth gap, and which has for generations disadvantaged children from poorer communities. Perhaps, in addition to asking our elected representatives to pressure Israel, we should look in our own backyard and work to change this manifestly unfair funding of our educational system.

Let's drop the inflammatory language and work together to change things, both here and abroad.

*Kate O'Kane lives in Montague Center.*

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Dollar For Dollar, An Investment That Pays

By CAITLIN KELLEY

**TURNERS FALLS** – As headlines from across the world offer new despairs daily, it can feel audacious to work on a project as hopeful as building a new library.

In a year of economic turbulence and political chaos, making investments in the community may seem risky. But libraries are uniquely positioned to support their communities in times of flux, and a new building would allow the Montague Public Libraries to better meet community needs and simultaneously drive economic activity in Montague.

In the last 30 years, as technology revolutionized the field and several periods of economic uncertainty rocked American stability, libraries have embraced change to support their communities. From adding free computer labs and technology classes and leaving behind the card catalog in the '90s, to offering job-seeker workshops and resumé counseling during the Great Recession, to providing curbside pickup and virtual storytime, book clubs, and fitness classes during the bleakest moments of the COVID pandemic, libraries have proven over and over their ability to pivot and transform to help people.

Now, more than ever, the Montague Public Libraries are meeting community members where they are and providing them with what they need. Yes, we still provide curated collections of books and movies, but we also lend out a power washer, a digital film scanner, and a metal detector. The libraries are helping residents cut their costs by purchasing expensive but useful items for our Library of Things Collection.

Just as our collections have gotten more varied, so have the programs and services that the

libraries provide.

At the Millers Falls Branch Library, patrons stop in for fresh produce, frozen meat, and canned goods from the Branch's food pantry to supplement their SNAP benefits, and enjoy pizza with their neighbors at the monthly movie night.

At the Montague Center Branch Library, the community comes together to listen to local authors read their books, to view their neighbors' artwork at gallery receptions, and to preserve history by recording the stories of Montague Center elders.

And at the Carnegie Library – despite its many limitations – families squeeze into the children's room to play with Legos and engage with other kids their age, patrons who don't have computers at home read their email, teens participate in epic D&D campaigns, and folks looking to escape extreme temperatures relax into armchairs and read the paper without having to buy anything.

We also offer social services counseling, technology assistance, bilingual early literacy programs, craft programs, and sensory-friendly hours.

These materials, services, and programs cost money, but they are an investment that repays richly. The Maine State Library developed a "Library Use Value Calculator" that allows public libraries to input their circulation, visitation, and program attendance statistics to calculate their return on investment to the public. Using this tool, we've found that for every \$1.00 taxpayers spend supporting the Montague Public Libraries, the libraries provide \$9.90 in value to the community.

Montague now has the opportunity to add even more value to their community. If residents invest in a 21st-century space, the libraries will repay that investment more than tenfold – by providing

value in the form of materials, programs, and services and by bolstering the local economy.

For example: the new library would feature three quiet study rooms where folks who usually work from home can host meetings, or work on project proposals. It's likely that they might stop by the Shady Glen or Upper Bend for a coffee before they get to the library, or pop by the Discovery Center when they need a break.

The new library would have a community room that seats 100 people, where residents can attend free concerts, history lectures, or community meetings in the evenings. It's likely that some of those attendees will stop by the Rendezvous, Harvey's, or Cocina Lupita for a bite afterward.

And on a hot day, if the new library holds Bilingual Music and Movement outdoors, on the roof terrace, there's a good chance that families will head over to the Country Creemee for ice cream afterwards, or stop by Unity Park to play.

A 2024 study by the Urban Libraries Council found that 31% of patrons who visited a central library went on to do another activity in the area after leaving the library. "Central libraries," the Council concluded, "are therefore better seen as anchor tenants for downtowns, supporting adjacent businesses and reinforcing the library as an attraction unto itself, a destination rather than a pass-through."

I don't know what the future will hold for the economy or for this country, but I do know that an investment in a new main library is a long-term investment in supporting local families, local seniors, local teens, local working adults, local organizations, and local businesses.

Caitlin Kelley is the director of the Montague Public Libraries.

## SPORTS from page A1

Turners had a solid first quarter. Although the Vikings had a height advantage, the Thunder used steals and long passes to keep Smith at bay. Cameron Johnson sank two free throws and hit a couple of long shots, Jackson Cogswell hit one from the post, Brody Girard hit two jump shots, Kainen Stevens landed a hook shot, and after one quarter, Turners was up 17 to 14.

The Thunder went on a tear to open the second period, accentuated by a Cogswell dunk, and three minutes into the second, Blue was on top by 10 points, 26-16. But by that time Turners had also committed their fifth foul of the period, and the Vikings were in the bonus. Blue maintained their double-digit lead until three seconds were left on the game clock and the visitors hit a two-pointer. Going into the half, Turners was ahead 37-29.

"It's a good day for Senior Night," one fan commented during the break. I have to admit it looked good for the home team, but there was still half the game to play.

In the third quarter Turners stretched the lead to 12 points, but Smith chipped away until the margin was reduced to seven. At the buzzer to end the period, with the score 50-43, a Smithie was fouled. He hit both freebees making it a five-point game heading into the fourth.

That's when the gym got loud. Applause – and kazoo – filled the arena, and shouts of "You can't do that!" rang out after every foul, turnover, and missed shot. Meanwhile, the Smith JVs and their supporters loudly echoed the chants, calling out their own trash talk.

Fifteen seconds into the fourth, a

foul was called on Turners. On the team's next possession, they lost the ball out of bounds, and after a Viking steal and another foul, the game was knotted at 50. Blue again lost the ball out of bounds and suddenly, they were down 52-50.

The score seesawed back and forth. With 1:11 left, Smith hit a

jumper to take a four-point lead, and with 51 ticks on the clock, they hit a foul shot to make it 66-61. Cogswell responded with a three-pointer.

Smith was called for a back court, giving possession back to Turners, and then Cogswell was fouled on his way to the basket. The shot was



DAVID HOMIT PHOTO

Turners Fall's Jackson Cogswell nails a reverse hook shot past Viking defender Kevin Matuszko during the fourth period against Smith Voc last Friday.

Cogswell scored 12 points in the Thunder's nail-biting 67-68 loss.

good, and he hit the one-pointer to give Blue a 67-66 lead with 21.7 seconds left in regulation.

On Smith's last possession of the night, another foul was called on the Thunder. The Smithie hit both free throws, and Turners got back the ball with 9.6 seconds left and down by a point. The gym grew eerily quiet as Turners charged down the court. Their shot hit the rim and bounced away, giving the Vikings a very hard-fought one-point victory.

Stevens and Freilyn Abarua scored 14 points each for Turners, followed by Johnson with 13, Cogswell with 12, Girard with 7, Brayden Sloan with 5, and Christopher Ulloa with 2.

The Boys in Blue host Saint Mary this Thursday at 7 p.m. in the second game of the mixed double-header.

## Girls' Basketball

TFHS 38 – Gateway 29

On Tuesday the Blue Ladies traveled to Huntington, where they bested the Gateway Regional Gators. It was the Thunder's first win of the season.

Blue dominated throughout the game, and were on top by 19 points going into the last stanza. While the Gators made some headway in the fourth, Turners still cruised to a nine-point victory.

Ivy Lopez led the Thunder in scoring with 17 points, followed by Jojo Hayman with 11, Autumn Thornton and Autumn DiMare with 3 each, and Eva Lareau and Bethany Whitney with 2 each.

The ladies host Westfield Technical Academy at 5:30 p.m. Thursday.



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## TECH from page A1

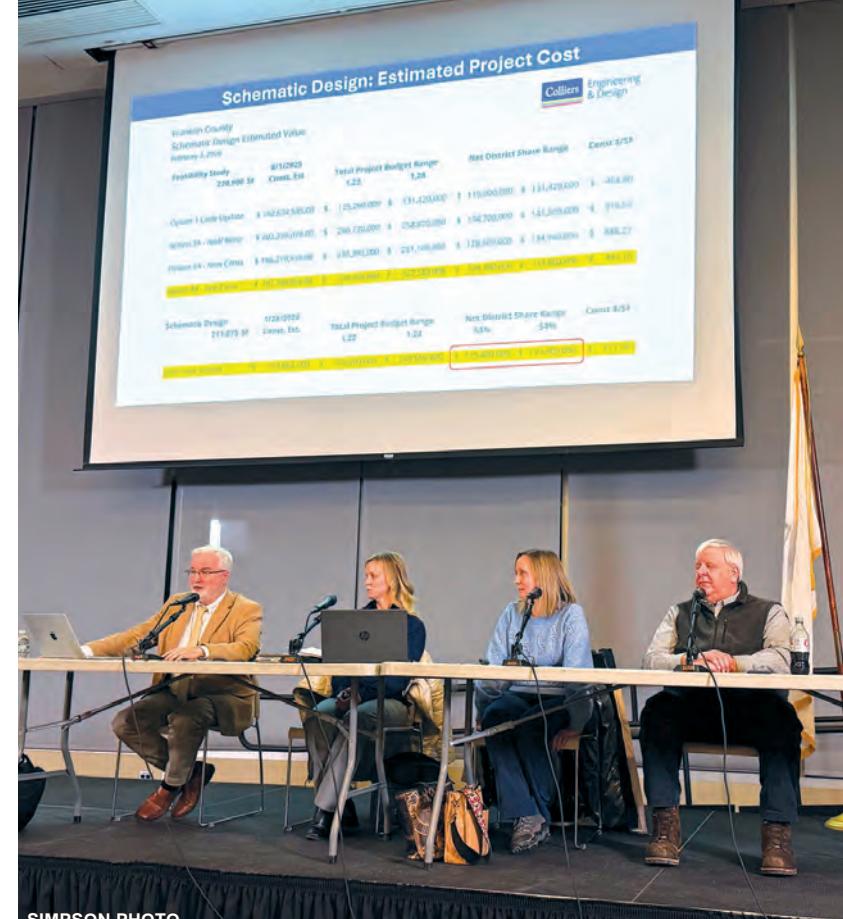
it so that the other towns in the area could send their kids there."

The panelists introduced themselves: FCTS superintendent Richard Martin and business manager Liz Bouchard; architect Julie Spence of Lavallee Brensinger; and FCTS school committee chair Rich Kuklewicz.

Kuklewicz traced the school's history. Area residents, who had grown "tired of sending kids to other districts to get some vocational education," had worked with elected officials to create an institution providing both academic and vocational instruction. Many grads find jobs in the area.

He credited the facility's appearance of good condition to the efforts of the students themselves – "nothing better than to have a staff of plumbers, and students learning to be plumbers, when you have an issue in the kitchen!" – but said it had become "pretty clear" to the committee that either a major renovation or a replacement was necessary, and that "disruption to the educational process" of a multi-year repair project "started to push toward a new building."

Martin said the current facility, built in 1975, has served its member towns well, but that the increasing costs needed to bring it up to code were becoming prohibitive. "About 10 years ago... we started having major leaks in our roof, to the point that it was actually coming down on some of our expensive equipment," he said.



SIMPSON PHOTO

Left to right: FCTS superintendent Richard Martin and business manager Liz Bouchard, architect Julie Spence, and FCTS school committee member Rich Kuklewicz made the case for building a new tech school facility.

The school secured an MSBA Windows Roof and Paving grant to fix this issue. The roof was re-coated twice, extending its useful life, but now must be replaced.

More major problems emerged, each with a high price tag: the building needs new plumbing, electrical system, sprinkler system, hazardous material abatement, and a carpentry dust collector. The total would run an estimated \$75 to \$103 million, Martin said, and would not be eligible for MSBA funding; furthermore, renovations may only be funded with bonds of up to 15 years, whereas the cost of new construction could be spread over 30 years.

Spence said that when MSBA inspectors saw the state of the current FCTS, they moved it to the top of the priority list as a "full renovation or new construction project." Based on a number of factors, she said, the district could be reimbursed up to 66.6% for many of the project costs.

When the district entered the program in 2024, Spence said the first task was to "talk to everyone – teachers and administrators, students, industry partners, community members, the school committee," to determine what would make the project successful: workforce training; energy-efficient, sustainable, durable, construction; and on a scale to accommodate projected enrollment.

The committee used that input to create a schematic design, and is now preparing to submit it to MSBA, with hopes of approval in April.

For comparison purposes, MSBA required a cost estimate of bringing the existing facility up to code, and two other options were reviewed: putting additions on the building, and creating a "campus" with additional buildings while renovating the core. Renovation, Spence said, brings its own expense "in order to move students from one side of the building to the other, renovate that piece, move them back... A lot of logistics go into it, and all of those logistics cost money."

"When we looked at the various options, cost was first and foremost on our agenda," Martin said. "And believe it or not, the renovation

600 students, in line with the district's demographic trends, making FCTS the only vocational school in the state planning a facility smaller than its current capacity. He said a 700-capacity school would cost \$100 million more to build.

Summarizing the panel's argument, Bouchard said that a full renovation "would require the district to absorb more than \$100 million locally, yet still leave the community with an aging facility, and ongoing limitations. By comparison... with the district responsible for about 53% of the cost, this plan will deliver a new, efficient, and durable school designed to serve students and the community for the next 50-plus years."

The district's member towns are scheduled to vote on the project on October 6. If approved, Spence said, this would be followed by "another 15 months of design, and lining up a general contractor," with construction targeted to begin in early 2028 and occupancy "somewhere in 2030."

Many in the audience expressed strong concerns about the build's price tag, saying their communities simply could not afford it, with budgets strained by rising healthcare and other costs.

Deerfield fin com member Margaret Nartowicz said her town "absolutely would not be able to absorb the annual cost for the debt service on our levy. We would have to seek a debt exclusion." Bouchard said the district agreement leaves how to pay up to each town.

Greenfield mayor Ginny Desorger said her city would also not be able to afford the levy without an exclusion vote.

Gill fin com member Claire Chang asked when the bond payments would start, and whether the building would be energy-efficient. Bouchard replied that payments would start small and ramp up in 2029 and 2030.

Spence said the project would meet the state's Stretch Code, and that the roof would be solar-ready, but that it is "really challenging for the vocational schools to generate enough energy to run their schools," and that the committee is seeking every possible energy-efficiency incentive, from utilities to MassSave and national programs.

The parking lot would include EV charging stations, and one attendee suggested that a solar canopy over the lot could provide abundant energy. Kuklewicz later cautioned that "we need to be careful that what we put in is sustainable," and said energy-efficiency options should be thoroughly reviewed. He recounted the example of Montague's new public safety complex, where a geothermal system stopped working properly, and the vendor who could replace its control system is now out of business.

"The price tag was a big surprise," said Buckland fin com member Paula Consolo. "I didn't feel like we were part of that decision-making... I just can't imagine that Buckland can afford this."

To a question about the new school's total area, Martin told her that new vocational school safety standards require considerably more square footage, which are reflected in the design, going from a current size of 160,000 to 220,000 square feet.

Consolo asked what Buckland's

## MONTAGUE ZBA NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, February 18th at 6:30 p.m.** VIA ZOOM AND IN PERSON at the Montague Town Hall upstairs conference room, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA at the request of **BRIAN FRANK** for a Special Permit to allow the renovation of an existing single-family dwelling into a two-family dwelling, under sections 9.2 and 5.2.2(b)(ii) of the Zoning Bylaws, located at **90 East Taylor Hill Road, Montague, MA (Map 48, Parcel 04)**, in the **AGRICULTURAL FORESTY 2 (AF2)** District. The filing is available for review at Town Hall.

In-person meeting details and remote meeting login information can be found at [www.montague-ma.gov/calendar](http://www.montague-ma.gov/calendar).

**Joshua Lively, Chairman**  
Montague Zoning Board of Appeals

## THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – HIGHWAY DIVISION NOTICE OF VIRTUAL DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING

**Project Description:** MONTAGUE – Bridge Replacement, M-28-034, North Leverett Road over Sawmill River  
**Project File No. 612164**

A Virtual Design Public Hearing will be hosted on the MassDOT website below to present the design for the proposed project in Montague, MA

**WHEN:** Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed project. All views and comments submitted in response to the hearing will be reviewed and considered to the maximum extent possible.

**PROPOSAL:** The proposed project consists of replacing the existing structurally deficient bridge carrying North Leverett Road over the Sawmill River. The project involves Bridge No. M-28-034. Proposed work includes full replacement of the bridge superstructure and substructure, reconstruction of roadway approaches, drainage improvements, and installation of safety features consistent with current MassDOT standards. Traffic will be maintained during construction through staged construction and temporary traffic control measures.

A secure right-of-way is necessary for this project. Acquisitions in fee and permanent or temporary easements may be required. The town is responsible for acquiring all needed rights in private or public lands. MassDOT's policy concerning land acquisitions will be presented in the hearing.

Project inquiries, written statements and other exhibits regarding the proposed undertaking may be submitted to Carrie E. Lavallee, P.E., Chief Engineer, via e-mail to [MassDOTProjectManagement@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:MassDOTProjectManagement@dot.state.ma.us) or via US Mail to Suite 7550, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attention: Project Management, Project File No. **612164**. Statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the hearing transcript must be emailed or posted no later than ten (10) business days (14 calendar days) after the hearing is hosted.

This hearing is accessible to people with disabilities. MassDOT provides reasonable accommodations and/or language assistance free of charge upon request (e.g. interpreters in American Sign Language and languages other than English, live captioning, videos, assistive listening devices, and alternate material formats), as available. For accommodation or language assistance, please contact MassDOT's Chief Diversity and Civil Rights Officer by phone (857-368-8580), TTD/TTY at (857) 266-0603, fax (857) 368-0602 or by email ([MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us)). Requests should be made as soon as possible and prior to the hearing, and for more difficult-to-arrange services including sign language, CART, or language translation or interpretation, requests should be made at least ten business days before the hearing.

This hearing will be hosted, or a cancellation announcement posted, on the internet at [www.mass.gov/orgs/highway-division/events](http://www.mass.gov/orgs/highway-division/events).

**JONATHAN GULLIVER, P.E.**  
HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR

**CARRIE E. LAVALLEE, P.E.**  
CHIEF ENGINEER

share would amount to annually. Bouchard gave a rough estimate, based on the town's 17 FCTS students, of around \$240,000.

"How do I explain to our townsfolk that it's going to cost them [that amount]?" Consolo asked.

Martin said state law gives all students the right to attend a vocational or agricultural school, with municipalities responsible for tuition and transportation. "You would actually be paying more if we didn't exist," he said, if the students were attending out-of-district schools.

Spence said the estimate is "in the middle of the pack" for comparable projects statewide.

Deerfield selectboard member Tim Hilchey asked what would happen if voters reject the proposal. Bouchard said that the district would be solely responsible for repairs to the current facility, and may not be allowed back into the MSBA program for several years.

Another attendee asked what would happen if a town votes "no." Bouchard said a simple majority vote of the entire district would move the project forward, and that the district agreement prohibits towns from dropping out.

"But how are you going to make

towns pay when they don't have the funds?" came the follow-up.

Bouchard said there would be "some clawback" of funds already paid for the window and door replacement project in 2015.

Martin reiterated the critical infrastructure issues FCTS has been "battling for about a decade," and pointed out that labor and materials costs are rising by about 4% each year.

"It almost sounds like the state is requiring these towns to either bankrupt themselves," Hilchey observed, "or raise their tax rates beyond what they would ever possibly consider."

"The trades are one of the only routes the kids can take where they do not get saddled with unreasonable amounts of student debt," said Carpenters Local 336 member Griffin Buell, one of only a few non-members of town government to speak. "I hope we can find a way to invest in our students and our kids, [and give them] the opportunity to learn a trade." His words drew scattered applause.

The next public forum on the project will be held at GCC on Wednesday, May 6. More information can be found at [www.fcts.us](http://www.fcts.us).



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## ERVING from page A1

FY'27 operating budget, a 3.7% increase over last year. Erving's share is estimated at \$406,720, a \$182,000 decrease from FY'26, thanks mostly to a decrease in the number of students from the town expected to enroll.

Bouchard explained that in FY'26, health insurance costs increased by 19% on July 1 and 20% on October 1, and that an additional 16% to 20% is expected for FY'27. "That's where the problem lies this year... a budget nightmare," she commented.

Martin called the insurance increases "a \$1.1 million unanticipated hit."

The final budget will be sent to district towns in March.

### Elementary, Secondary Budgets

Shannon White-Cleveland, superintendent of the Union 28 elementary school district, presented the preliminary \$3.9 million FY'27 budget for Erving Elementary School (EES), an increase of 1.54% over FY'26.

EES director of finance and operations Caitlin Anderson May told the committees that the cost increase includes a 3.5% cost-of-living raise for teaching staff, a \$6,000 audit, and increased cost of supplies, and that substitute costs and special education transportation saw decreases. She said EES will receive \$38,000 in school choice payments.

The town's draft secondary education budget of approximately \$1.4 million represents a 4.8% increase over the current year, driven by increased transportation costs and special education costs that are rising "dramatically," according to May.

Like the tech school, EES is requesting money for building and other capital projects, including \$1.5 million for repairs of the roof and HVAC system, \$160,000 for playground repairs, \$110,000 for sidewalk replacement, and \$60,000 for replacing the school's tractor. The roof and HVAC work has qualified for reimbursement under the MSBA accelerated repair program.

EES principal Beth Gannon explained how EES was added to the state program, "The morning of the visit by the MSBA coincided with rain the night before," she said. "There was over an inch and a half of water in one of the classrooms."

"It was perfect!" White-Cleveland commented.

Capital planning member Debra Smith told the administrators that the EES capital requests were submitted late, and without enough documentation. White-Cleveland, Gannon, and May agreed to attend this Thursday's capital planning committee meeting to provide additional documentation and answer questions about the requests.

### Special Town Meeting

The selectboard voted to adopt the warrant for the special town meeting on Monday, March 2.

Articles include transferring \$340,000 from free cash to pay for health insurance hikes; authorizing a

five-year contract for buying and maintaining police tasers; confirming last spring's town meeting vote of \$200,000 to repair the EES roof and heat pumps using legally required language; and authorizing the school committee to appoint representatives to the Gill-Montague school committee; transferring unspent project funds into the town's capital, wastewater capital, and water stabilization accounts; and paying bills from FY'25.

### Information Tech

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith recused himself and moved to the public side of the table to assume his role as part-time IT coordinator.

He recounted how technology use had increased over the 13 years he has been coordinating, with the town expanding from 15 computers to 85, moving from physical to cloud servers, changing from coaxial internet to fiber, and now using 70 software licenses. He said there are now more systems and programs to support town departments, and more boards and committees using devices.

Selectboard member James Loynd recommended hiring a full-time "jack-of-all trades" technology coordinator.

Jacob Smith replied that it would be hard to find a single person with all the required skills.

Selectboard member William Bembury asked town administrator Bryan Smith to update the IT coordinator job description and present it at the next meeting.

### Other Business

K-9 officer Laura Gordon retired from the Erving police department in October 2025. On January 27, police chief Robert Holst had asked the board to retire Gordon's bloodhound partner Ziva to Gordon's care, with the restriction that Ziva would not work for any other police department.

However, the rescue organization that provided Ziva to Erving, which has the right of first refusal, had asked that no restrictions be placed on her future activities.

The board decided to strike the restrictive clause, and to characterize Ziva's separation from the department as a "release" rather than "retirement." The board will approve the release of the hound to Gordon at its next meeting on February 19.

At the January 27 meeting, the highway department requested the board to declare a Ford F350 truck surplus. At Monday's meeting, highway superintendent Glenn McCrory reported that the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District (FCSWMD) was interested in the vehicle, and would come to check it out this week.

The board will decide how to dispose of the vehicle after reviewing the FCSWMD's offer.

The board authorized fire chief Philip Wonkka to apply for a \$10,200 firefighter safety equipment grant from the state for a vehicle stabilization kit for use at auto accidents and industrial emergencies.

McHugh told the board that as town administrator, Ray Purington was designated the environmental certified officer, and will have to sign off on all projects "even if the house is in New Salem." As the projects come through, the FCRHRA will perform an environmental review for each project. "We check floodplain maps, we make sure there aren't toxic waste sites in the area," McHugh explained. "Every single rehab project, even if it's a single-family house, has to go through that process."

The final approval was increasing the program budget from \$900,000 to \$966,021.42 by adding in the money in the revolving accounts from previous grants. McHugh said there was "about \$53,000 in Gill's account and about \$13,000 in New Salem's account that goes into the grant, and then we can do a few more projects."

### Principals Versus Assistants

"We're here after advertising and getting respondents for an assistant to the assessors," board of assessors chair Bill Tomb told the selectboard.

"At our last meeting, the board [of assessors] elected to advertise for two positions concurrently, both the assistant and the principal," he explained. "The parameter for that was 30 hours of work, and it was determined that 16 hours of that would go to a principal assessor position, and 14 would go to an assistant-to-the-assessors position."

Tomb reported that a single potential candidate for the principal position decided not to pursue the job, and that they had only gotten responses to the assistant posting.

After some back-and-forth with selectboard chair Charles Garbiel, board of assessors member Pam Lester said that after negotiations with a candidate for the principal position failed, their board wanted to figure out "what would be possible in 30 hours."

Member Rob Whittier said the assessors are hoping someone working part-time in another town might give Gill some hours as a principal assessor, which the town could then augment with an assistant, to "have somebody here when people need to see somebody."

Tomb said the town continues to have the help of the previous assistant to the assessors, Diane Sumrall. Lester added that Sumrall's help is especially important and appreciated, given that Gill's revaluations are required by the state Department of Revenue this year. These are typically done on a five-year cycle, but Tomb said Gill follows a 10-year cycle.

Tomb said the board will be relying on the town's consultants, Patriot Properties, Inc. "a bit more" through the revaluation process, and will discuss what configuration of a principal and assistant assessor would work best for the town and report back to the selectboard with wording of an advertisement.

### Electric Aggregation

Finance committee chair and energy commission member Claire Chang presented the selectboard with information about a rate change that amends the town's contract with its municipal energy aggregator, First Point Power, LLC, of Cranston, Rhode Island (FPP).

"Colonial Power called an emergency meeting two or three weeks ago explaining this new fee

that ISO-New England set up," Chang explained. "It was approved by [the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission]." Chang said that the fee, known as the Day-Ahead Ancillary Services Initiative (DASI), was applied as of March 1, 2025.

"We had this nice posting, spring, and summer, and fall," said Chang about those rates, "and then as soon as this winter hit, the prices just went through the roof. As of right now, the Franklin County aggregation is under by half a million dollars."

The original rate contracted through FPP was \$0.12952 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), and with a DASI adjustment the firm is requesting a rate of \$0.14112 as of January 29.

Chang told the selectboard that on January 26 and 27, "two years of expected cost [were] incurred over two days: \$293/MWh and \$471/MWh, respectively. It's hard to say what the effect is, because we have a two-year contract."

"For a customer who uses an approximate 600 kWh a month, it would be an increase of \$7," Chang said. "Most people use way more than 600 kWh a month, so they are probably looking at \$14 in increase. It is not negligible, but it's also something that we can't get away from, unfortunately."

The board voted 2-1 to authorize Purington to sign the amended contract. The no vote came from Garbiel. "I want it on record that once you make a contract, you keep it," he said.

### Other Business

Purington told the selectboard he believed Gill might be eligible for a state designation as a Housing Choice Community. With this designation, the town would be recognized for "demonstrat[ing] certain levels of housing production and adoption of pro-housing best practices," and would have increased access to development grants.

Purington said he would find out if there are "any 'gotchas' that we would be obligated to do that we wouldn't otherwise be obligated to do," and report back.

The board approved a letter to state senator Jo Comerford and representative Susannah Whipple in support of a bill Comerford has sponsored, S.314, "An Act to Provide a Sustainable Future for Rural Schools."

"Comerford's bill came up at the Gill-Montague school budget meeting last Thursday," said selectboard member Greg Snedeker. "We can support our senator even more, especially now that our school budgets are in deficit."

Snedeker cited increased insurance costs, declining enrollment, and "all the challenges that western Mass school districts face." "She needs our help more than ever right now," he said.

The Gill recreation committee is sponsoring a sledding event at the Flagg Farm, at 430 Main Road, this Sunday, February 15, at 2 p.m.

"My daughter and wife and I went last year," said Garbiel, "and we had an absolute blast. They had a nice little fire going, and hot cocoa, and we brought sleds and tubes – and you can really pick up some speed on that hill, so it's a fun time! I would encourage all to go."

Additional writing was contributed by Mike Jackson.



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**MONTAGUE** from page A1

schedule a special election on Tuesday, June 23, rather than combine it with the annual town election. A debt exclusion allows a town to temporarily exceed the limit for property taxation established by the state law Proposition 2½ while it pays back money borrowed for a specific project.

Funding for the town's share of the library construction – which has not yet been calculated – would also need to be endorsed by town meeting in May. The majority of the cost would be covered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC).

Quale told the board that holding the vote at the May election would not leave enough time for the trustees to explain the proposal to the public. The building committee, he said, was getting "closer and closer to having the full design costed out, [and] figuring out how much money the state is going to give us," with the MBLC expected to announce a funding decision March 5. The state would then require "local assurance of funding" by June 30, the end of the fiscal year.

"We would very much like to do this with as much of the four months as we can," Quale said, "to run a really good public information campaign, to get everyone to understand what this project costs and what the benefits are." Holding an election two months after the cost announcement, he argued, would be "a really big challenge."

Selectboard member Rich Kuklewicz asked town clerk Wendy Bogusz if this election would require "early voting."

Bogusz responded that it would be a "one-day election," but that voters will be allowed to request ballots in advance by mail. She added that she and assistant town clerk Tina Sulda plan to attend a training for the fall elections on June 3 and 4, which could leave their office unstaffed at the beginning of the period of 11 business days required for early voting. Town administrator Walter Ramsey said he would find a way to staff the clerk's office if necessary.

After a lengthy logistical discussion, Bogusz noted that June 23 was also the last day of school scheduled at Franklin County Technical School, where residents in four of the town's six precincts vote. Wednesday, June 24 was suggested as an alternative. Kelley said this would work for the libraries, and the board voted 3–0 to set the debt exclusion vote for that date.

The decision means at least five elections will be held in Montague this year: in addition to the local election in May, the library vote in June, the state primary in September, and the general election in November, a second debt exclusion vote is planned for October on borrowing for a new Franklin County Technical School building (see article, Page A1).

Montague, Gill, Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, and Warwick have also petitioned the state legislature to allow them to hold special elections on forming a new regional school district. Selectboard chair Matt Lord said he was "hopeful" this would coincide with the September primary.

**Mechanic Needed**

Clean Water Facility superintendent Chelsey Little reviewed her

budget request for the next fiscal year, including a proposal to add a second mechanic to her staff. She has argued this would result in savings by increasing the amount of repairs and maintenance done "in-house," and ensure training before the current mechanic retires.

Little stressed savings projected from reducing electricity and water usage at the plant, and the amount of sewage sent to the town of Erving from Millers Falls. She argued these could reduce the department's budget to 2.5% below "level services," the target requested by the selectboard this year.

Ramsey said that while training a second mechanic was a "sound plan" in terms of succession, the net impact of the new position would likely be higher than Little's calculations, as certain costs are shared by the CWF enterprise fund and the town's general fund. A \$3,500 increase in spending from the general fund, he pointed out, would mean increasing the "affordable" assessment the town offers to the Gill-Montague schools by nearly the same amount, for a total impact of about \$7,000.

Lord expressed skepticism about the long-term savings projected from the reduced flows from Millers Falls, which he said might depend on rainfall, but in the end he supported the staffing proposal.

Town meeting member Ariel Elan also spoke in favor of adding the position. "Chelsey's data is always the most impressive I ever see," she said, adding that at a recent presentation Little had estimated the savings from doing more work in-house at as much as "two or three times" the mechanic's salary and benefits.

The board voted unanimously to endorse the new position. The CWF budget was scheduled to be reviewed by the finance committee on Wednesday.

Little shared the results of a "local limits" study required under the town's federal permit to discharge treated wastewater into the Connecticut River. The three-year study, which compares the amount of waste the facility can adequately treat with how much it is treating, is being "formalized into a report" by the engineering firm Wright-Pierce, Little said, and will be ready in the next few months.

The board voted to promote laborer/operator Andrew Skiff to the position of wastewater technician at the plant.

**Debt Edging Up**

A large portion of Monday's meeting was dedicated to a "budget workshop," establishing a preliminary budget to be approved next week for presentation to the finance and capital improvements committees, which in turn advise town meeting.

"This is just a working, starting point for a preliminary budget," said Ramsey. "It is not a final budget, and there's still a whole number of meetings that we need to go through."

He reviewed the total budget that will eventually head to town meeting, including the operating budget; departments funded by enterprise funds, such as the CWF and airport; assessments for the two school districts; and special articles funding capital projects, which he said are at a low level this year.

Ramsey's proposal balances the

budget by the use of free cash, certified surpluses from the previous year, particularly to fund capital projects; lowering the normal allocations to various stabilization funds, which he said were in good condition; and dipping into the town's untaxed "excess capacity," though not as much as anticipated.

Once again Ramsey stressed that the budget remained a work in progress and that some expenses, including the cost of a new cruiser and IT administration at the police department, were still rough estimates. "We have until late March to approve this budget for town meeting," he said.

The board then reviewed estimates of the long-term impact on the town's debt-service costs if both debt exclusions – the new library and the new tech school building – are approved this year. He showed a graph projecting Montague's ratio of debt payments to operating expenses over a 25-year period.

The graph showed the ratio remaining well under the maximum level allowed by the town's financial policies, 15%, for the entire period, but rising above the recommended level of 4% to 6% during the period of FY'32 to FY'37, peaking just under 8%. Ramsey said this could create a "risk" that the town would find itself unable to address other major development needs.

**Other Business**

Selectboard member Mariana Goldman proposed creating a "Volunteer of the Month" award to honor this category of residents and encourage more volunteerism. Member Rich Kuklewicz said he was "not a big fan of popularity contests" and wanted to know "the criteria on which we [would] make the decision."

Lord agreed with Kuklewicz. "This is not where I tend to operate," he said. "This is not to belittle it, because I think it's important."

After considering alternatives to a monthly award, the board informally agreed to discuss the proposal again at a future meeting.

The board voted to release executive session minutes from its January 20 meeting and to endorse the idea of proposing a five-town school district to voters in case only Warwick does not choose to join a new six-town district.

The board also authorized Ramsey to explore the feasibility of townwide electrical aggregation. This would entail entering a contract under which the town "purchases electricity in bulk from a competitive supplier on behalf of the residences and businesses within the community," according to the state website.

Aggregation ideally lowers the cost of energy for residents, who would be automatically enrolled but may opt out in favor of another supplier, which could include Eversource.

Ramsey said Montague is one of a small minority of Massachusetts towns that do not provide municipal aggregation. He said that choosing a company would take about a year, and would need to be approved by town meeting. He also said that residents would be able to choose a "green energy" option.

The selectboard's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 17.

**LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK**

*Here's the way it was on February 11, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.*

**Leverett Budget Uproar**

Tempers ran hot at Tuesday's Leverett selectboard meeting. Police chief Gary Billings said he absolutely could not afford to cut any more money from his department's already bare-bones budget just as the board was grappling with astronomical rising costs for school-related expenses.

As much as \$60,000 in additional costs is estimated to cover an out-of-district placement for the elementary school.

Other additional costs include raises for unionized school employees and the possibility of a much higher assessment to the Amherst regional school system.

**Substantially Completed**

On Monday the Montague selectboard approved a request from developer Robert Obear, Jr., to issue a "certificate of substantial completion" for the three buildings a 30, 34, and 34R East Main Street in downtown Millers Falls.

This seemingly technical request is in fact an important milestone in the history of Millers Falls. The town has long struggled to develop the Powers Block and the adjoining blighted buildings under the town's urban homesteading program. Its provisions allow the town to sell buildings, generally acquired through tax default, for a nominal sum and then closely monitor their rehabilitation process through a land development agreement.

The developer has invested \$446,000 in the three buildings.

**20 YEARS AGO**

*Here's the way it was on February 9, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter archive.*

**Another Vulnerable Bridge**

Two years after sending a letter to the six households on the private road called Vassar Way, the Gill selectboard sent a follow-up letter this week telling them heavy firetrucks will not respond to any emergency there due to concerns about the carrying capacity of the privately owned Vassar Bridge. Only the small brush truck will be available until it is certified that the bridge can support heavier trucks.

A January 2004 inspection of the 20-foot one-lane span across

Dry Brook determined that vehicles over 25,000 pounds may cause the support beam to fail; vehicles over 39,500 pounds will cause the bridge to collapse.

**Roof Comes Tumbling Down**

Last week, following a routine inspection by the fire department, the town of Montague learned that after years of rain damage, a large section of the former Railroad Salvage building's roof has collapsed. "A big chunk, 50 feet by 70 feet, went through five floors and into the basement," said building inspector David Jensen.

The town has ordered the Power Street bridge and road closed.

**140 YEARS AGO**

*Here's the way it was on February 10, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.*

**Turners Falls and Vicinity**

The Avenue is in fearful shape now since they have begun work on the Third street sewer.

Louis Bitzer has invented an improved eye-glass frame, which can be used to hold glasses on the nose or as spectacles at the desire of the wearer.

C.T. Crocker has sold out his interest in the Montague City property held in company with Mr. Farren.

The Ladies of the Baptist Society will have a pink tea party and sale of fancy articles at the Baptist church Friday evening.

Congressmen Whiting and Collins are working hard at the treasury to get a reversal of the ruling made in Boston and New York that bars of mother-of-pearl should pay duty as manufactured

articles instead of coming in free, as the whole shells do. The John Russell cutlery company is especially interested, as it imports bars to make into knife handles.

John Hastings, while at work on repairs at the Montague mill, Sunday morning, had his leg broken by a large timber falling on it. Dr Coy was speedily summoned, and although the break is a very bad one, the unfortunate man is getting along well.

A young child of Frank Seiler's was badly scalded by the overturning of a kettle of boiling water, Saturday evening. Dr Best attended.

A score of young vagabonds stole 180,000 labels from a cellar in the basement of Schuler block yesterday, and scattered them from one end of the village to the other. Nothing is safe from the thieves except under lock and key and doubled barred at that. When the parents of the young thieves are made to pay for things they steal property will be more secure.



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## GMRSD from page A1

going on now.... Pioneer [Valley] is in talks with Erving, trying to get them to tuition in, which means those kids are going to leave our district – it's a zero-sum game."

"Regionalization, or not, is not going to fix the current \$1.2 million budget gap that we're looking at," said Montague selectboard chair Matt Lord.

Taxing Montague's residents up to the levy limit and giving the district the 48.5% share it would be accorded under the 2010 Compact for Funding Education, Lord pointed out, would only generate about \$450,000 more in revenue, leaving a nearly \$800,000 deficit. "Are we looking for a Prop 2½ override?" he asked Blier.

"Well, we're still working with our leaders to do a very precise analysis of all our staffing needs," she replied. "We are looking at every single position."

Tuesday's hearing drew only a few clarifying questions from staff union leaders and a comment from Danielle Seltzer, a Turners Falls resident, parent of a mem-

ber of the Class of 2044 "if everything goes according to plan," and Amherst regional school employee. Seltzer suggested that a strategy to receive additional funding from the towns may be to restore funding for specific at-risk positions via special town meeting articles.

Interim superintendent Tari Thomas called the impasse "heartwrenching," and Montague member Wendy Thompson vowed the committee would "make teachers and support staff the very last people who are cut."

The committee plans to interview the two final candidates for superintendent, Brian Ricca and Marc Gosselin at its next meeting on February 24. On Monday, according to the *Berkshire Eagle*, Dr. Ricca was offered the superintendent position in Southern Berkshire district.

The committee must vote a final budget March 10.

The STRPB was scheduled to meet Wednesday, but the meeting was postponed until next week in the hope that the final text of the proposed regional agreement will be ready for review.

MQ

## LEVERETT from page A1

Elizabeth Johnson said that of the four principals in the district, Medina is third in salary and runs the tightest budget.

Others commended her work, saying the school now had a "good team" following a period of disruption after the loss of its principal and superintendent in 2024.

Finance committee chair Phil Carter said the town of Pelham was considering closing its elementary school at some point due to financial difficulties, and "while that may not happen, every department in Pelham is facing a level-funded budget – not a level-services budget, but a level-funded budget," including the school.

Warning that Leverett could be in the same situation in a year or two "if we don't get control of spending increases," Carter asked for a \$9,000 cut, saying he picked a number he thought he could get, a 0.5% reduction.

Selectboard chair Patricia Duffy pointed out that health insurance premiums rose 38% this year, with another increase expected for FY'27, and that the town is "talking about getting close to an override" of Proposition 2½, with the board asking for cuts from every department, not just the school. Unlike some other towns, she added, Leverett has little revenue from businesses and must rely on residential real estate taxes.

Board member Jed Proujansky joined the gloomy chorus, saying that the percentage of the town budget that goes to LES has been increasing every year and is reaching a "breaking point." "If we can't start making some hard choices now," he said, "pretty soon the

choice is going to be disastrous.... It's a delicate situation."

Fin com member Nancy Grossman said that if property taxes continue to rise as they have been, only high-earning or dual-income households will be able to afford to live in Leverett.

Steve Weiss, a member of the fin com member and president of the Leverett Education Foundation, had a similar observation: "If property taxes continue to rise at the present rate, people will be driven from the town, and Leverett will become a bedroom community of Amherst.... The only way to avoid this is to rein in costs."

Summing up sentiments expressed by a number of the officials at Tuesday's meeting, Proujansky said salaries at the school are "linked to what the town could afford, not what teachers are worth."

## Dumps and Bumps

Transfer station coordinator Annette Herda presented a \$77,962 budget, which she said was "on track as per usual," hitting the selectboard's 2.5% increase guidance.

The bulk of the rise was due to a bump in fees to the Franklin County Solid Waste District, which she said was struggling with health insurance costs and needed to buy a new used pickup truck.

Energy committee member Richard Nathorst reported that as the result of a "regulatory event," Leverett's rate for aggregated electricity purchasers will rise by \$0.01160 per kilowatt-hour as of this month's meter reading.

Eversource's basic service rates are fixed until July 31, he said, so its customers will not see increases

until August, but their jump in rates will be larger as the new costs will be spread over a shorter period.

Nathorst said the rate increase will affect all electricity suppliers in Massachusetts, and was requested by ISO New England (ISO-NE), the non-profit operator of the region's grid, and approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to correct underestimation of the cost of a program which began last March.

This program, the "Day-Ahead Ancillary Services Initiative," funds the provision of "standby" power, which is "crucial for maintaining grid reliability amid the integration of renewable energy sources," Nathorst said. While ISO-NE had estimated the cost at \$1 to \$1.25 per megawatt-hour (MWh) last year, actual costs came in at \$17/MWh in December and \$48/MWh in January.

"It's kind of tough to be an energy committee person right now," he lamented.

"It's tough to be a lot of things right now," Duffy replied.

## Hedging Bets

Resident Silas Ball challenged the selectboard on its handling of the Marlowe-Evans family's lawsuit against the town concerning its claim of a public right-of-way across their land to the conservation land known as the Gordon King Life Estate.

Referencing the board's recent request for a Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant to create a "driveable trail" on town-owned land elsewhere to resolve the dispute, Ball said the town appeared to be going "backwards" by seeking additional discovery materials in the court case at the same time it is pursuing the alternative.

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He also questioned the board's motives in leaving an adverse possession counterclaim in the suit.

Board members replied that attorneys for both sides, and all parties to the suit, were in agreement that the driveable trail was a good solution, and were doing "minimal work" on the court case, but that because it was ongoing, the town's attorney felt she would need the information if it started up again.

Both attorneys had sought a stay in the case, according to town ad-

ministrator Marjorie McGinniss, but were only granted a continuance until after the annual town meeting in May, when residents are expected to vote on the CPA grant.

Selectboard member Tom Hankinson said he believed it was likely the judge granted the continuance in the belief that the vote will resolve the issue, and that he himself was confident the town will pass the article, providing a final resolution to the dispute.

MB

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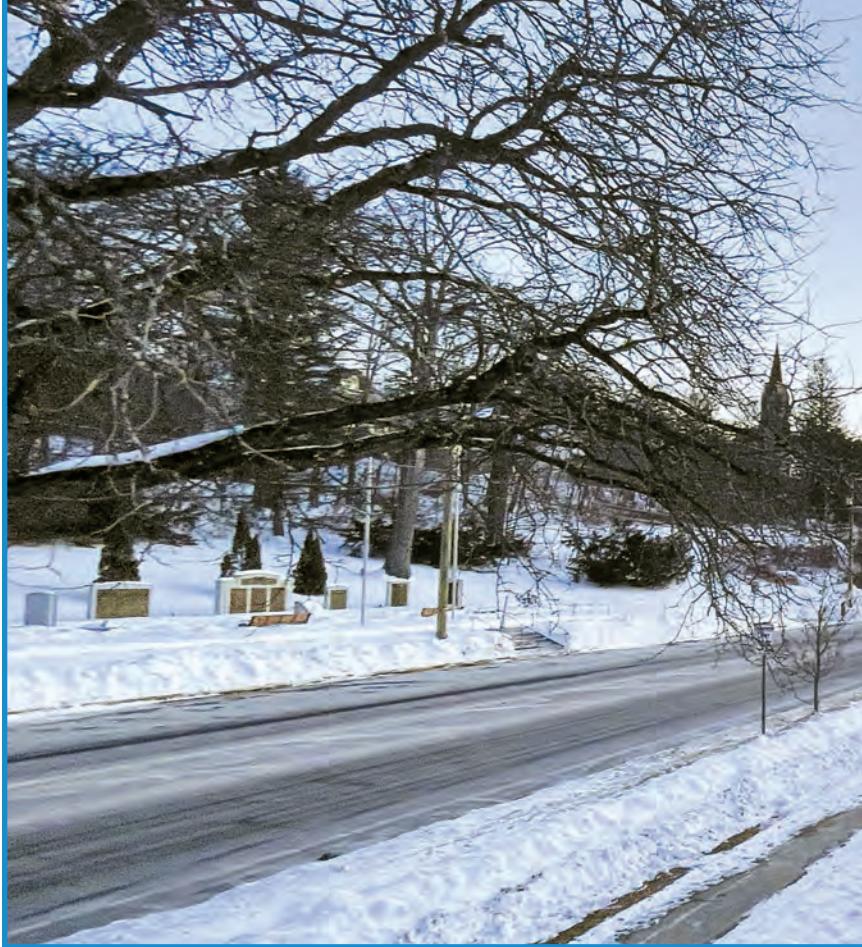
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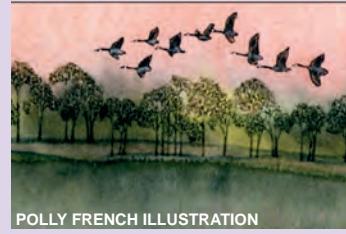
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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

FEBRUARY 12, 2026



## WEST ALONG THE RIVER INDIAN NAMES IN THE MEMORYSCAPE, PART II

By DAVID BRULE

**PESKEOMPSKUT** – *The Pocumtuck, the Agawam, the Nonotuck, the Norwottock, the Woronoco are not gone. Their voices are still here in the air we breathe.*

Indeed, these vanished tribes are remembered and honored by their modern-day Nipmuck and Abenaki descendants.

For more than 10,000 years these early tribes were integrated into this landscape in which we now live. They knew the names of all who inhabited this space by their first and true names.

The trees, the flowers, the furred beings and the feathered beings, the stones, mountains, hills, and the rocky outcroppings all had names.

All these features, animate or inanimate, knew their original names, names either given to them by the First People or taken by themselves and made known to the first human beings.

If you were to stand in one of the five rivers that join here in this sacred landscape, you should say the true name of the moving waters. Say *pukommegon* instead of Green River, say *wanaskatok* instead of Fall River, say *pocumtakuke* instead of Deerfield River, say *paguag* instead of Millers River, say *quonektakut* instead of Connecticut.

Those rivers will recognize their true names and be pleased to hear them again, after being given temporary names by English settlers during the last 400 years.

Stand in those waters and you will feel the current against your

legs which is the force of all the agreements made between the waters, the salmon people, the bear people, the bird nations, the river stones, the first human beings, and all other beings who are still connected through timeless interrelationships.

Some of us are trying to recover these true names of the beings and places that people the world we live in.

But it isn't easy.

Most of us find ourselves trapped inside the limitations, both cultural and linguistic, of the English language.

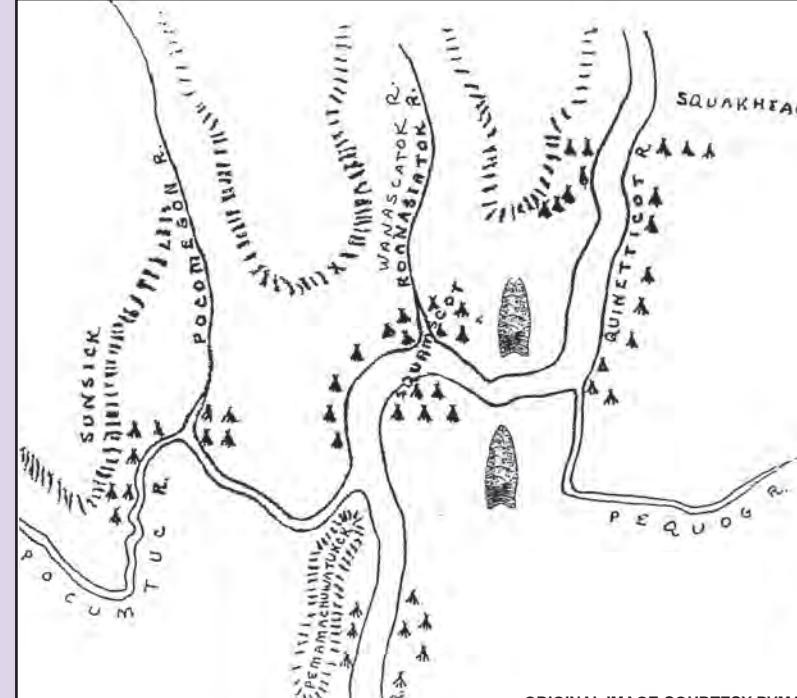
Some of us can inquire among our Indigenous allies to find the original names, or to translate original names, but some are not even known to those modern-day Indigenous sources.

Oftentimes the best we can do is to go to the old deeds which were registered during those times of first contact between Natives and early settlers. But those settlers often had poor knowledge of both the Algonkian languages and of standardized English written language, so the task is very challenging.

Some place names have not been lost and are known to us to this day by their original names.

For example, the *Ashuelot* River is still familiar to us by the name given by Natives. The translated name refers to "the land in between."

*Wachusett* refers to the great mountain sacred to the Nipmuck. It is made up of the syllable *wachu*, meaning hill or mountain, see **WEST ALONG** page B8



A 2023 revision, by the author and local historian Ed Gregory, of a map drawn circa 1870 by George Sheldon for the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association.

# Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

## 'SOPHIE'

Meet Sophie, a three-month-old female domestic shorthair who loves being loved by you. Sophie enjoys being petted all over, tummy excluded, and will let you pick her up when she's in the mood. She is accustomed to living indoors with adults, teens, cats, and a dog. She enjoyed romping with her feline friends, but avoided the dog.

Sophie is very sweet and talkative when you feed her. She plays gently and likes a variety of toys, especially

wand toys. If there was an Olympic category for cuteness, she'd definitely be gold-medal material.

Sophie's adoption fee is \$299. If you're ready to adopt now and want to learn more about, meet, or adopt Sophie, you can start the process by coming to the Dakin Humane Society in Springfield during our open adoption hours, Tuesdays through Saturdays from 12:30 to 3 p.m., or calling us at (413) 781-4000, or visiting [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org).

## Senior Center Activities

### FEBRUARY 16 THROUGH 20

#### 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 2/16

Closed

#### Tuesday 2/17

9 a.m. Stretch & Balance

10 a.m. Line Dancing

11 a.m. Social Stringer

#### Wednesday 2/18

9 a.m. Interval Training

10 a.m. Chair Aerobics

11:30 a.m. Bingo

#### Thursday 2/19

9 a.m. Barre Fusion

10 a.m. Pilates Flow

11 a.m. Senior Center Closes for Friends Holiday Lunch

#### Friday 2/20

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 2/16

10:15 a.m. Aerobics

11 a.m. Chair Exercise

1 p.m. Kitchen Club

3 p.m. Beginner Yoga

6 p.m. Cemetery Commission

#### Tuesday 2/17

9 a.m. Chair Yoga

11 a.m. Money Matters

12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday

3 p.m. Tai Chi

4 p.m. Spanish Class

#### Wednesday 2/18

9 a.m. Veterans' Agent

10:15 a.m. Aerobics

11 a.m. Chair Exercise

11:45 a.m. Friends' Meeting

12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo

1 p.m. Mobile Food Bank

4 p.m. Mat Yoga

#### Thursday 2/19

1 p.m. Pitch

#### Friday 2/20

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), or check the town newsletter or the Leverett Connects listerv.

#### WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is March 4. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

#### ALIAS from page B1

Beginning in November 1849, national and international newspapers carried all the gruesome details of the crime as well as coverage of the legal proceedings against the accused murderer.

Parkman was a prominent physician, businessman, landowner, and moneylender, a Boston Brahmin from one of the city's most elite and wealthy families, whose fortune in 1846 was estimated at \$500,000 – roughly \$21 million today. He disappeared on November 23, and six days later, dismembered body parts and a set of false teeth were found in the furnace, cellar, and privy of a chemical laboratory at Harvard University's Medical College. The false teeth were verified as belonging to Parkman by his dentist.

Dr. John Webster, Professor of Chemistry at Harvard, was quickly named as a suspect. The two men had met on the day of the murder, and Webster owed Parkman a good deal of money.

On January 26, 1850, Webster was indicted, and court proceedings began two months later. Over 60,000 people received tickets and were rotated through to witness parts of the trial.

On April 1, Webster was found guilty and sentenced to death. He maintained his innocence until June when he wrote a letter of confession, arguing that the murder was an unpremeditated act of "passion," hoping probably for a commutation of his sentence. This was, however, to no avail. Webster was executed by hanging at Boston's Leverett Street Jail on August 30, 1850, nine months after the murder.

#### Bound for Texas

Meanwhile, two weeks prior to Parkman's disappearance, a resident of Wendell, Benjamin F. Cannon, went missing. Speculation about what became of Cannon occurred against the backdrop of the lurid story of what became of Parkman and the two stories quickly converged.

We'll get to that, but first, who was Benjamin Cannon?

He was born in 1802 to Cornelius Cannon and his wife, Molly Weeks, in the town of Greenwich, Massachusetts, which would also disappear – under the waters of the Quabbin – almost a century later. Benjamin and his wife, Calista Briggs, are listed on the 1830 census living in New Salem. In 1831, their daughter Angie was born, followed seven years later by a second child, Mary Elizabeth.

At that time, Benjamin Cannon was Postmaster for North New Salem, but by 1840 he and his family were living in Wendell with 13 other people; of these, one was blind, one was insane, and many were elderly, which suggests that they may have been "struck off at vendue" to Cannon. (Before Wendell's Poor Farm was established in 1842, care for needy people was provided by the lowest bidder at a public auction.)

In the mid-'40s, Cannon served Wendell for several terms as Constable and Collector of Taxes; he also represented Wendell at a railroad convention in Athol. Real estate deeds show that Cannon bought and sold a dozen or so properties in both New Salem and Wendell. By trade, he was a blacksmith.

In 1847, Cannon put up for sale his 60-acre farm with "first-rate buildings upon it," 1.5 miles

B. F. CANNON, whose mysterious disappearance we chronicled last week, is still absent, and his absence causes the deepest feelings of anxiety by his family and friends. When he disappeared, he had on a dark blue pilot sack coat, red lining, dark figures, with velvet collar; a light blue overcoat, and a new black wool Mexican hat. The rest of the clothing he had on were those he was in the habit of wearing every day, and rather the worse for wear. He was of middling height, and rather thick set. A hat that he borrowed to wear into Greenfield, was found on the 19th, in the Freight Depot, in this town, where it was left the night previous, by some one. Any information concerning him, will be thankfully received by his friends.

*The Greenfield Gazette and Courier reported on Cannon's disappearance.*

west of Wendell center. His ads in the Greenfield *Gazette and Courier* noted that it was one of two properties he owned and because he couldn't carry both of them, he was "anxious to sell one of them."

However, the farm doesn't seem to have sold until much later.

After Cannon vanished in November 1849, his family searched for him without success. Then, in early December, a Franklin County man reported having talked with Cannon in New York City, and a merchant there notified authorities that a man fitting Cannon's description, but calling himself "John Weeks," had paid cash for goods which he took with him aboard the brig *Empire* bound for Galveston, Texas.

Subsequently, newspaper articles carried letters to the editor from people who had run into John Weeks in Texas. One described him as "rather a thick set and robust man about five feet eight or ten inches high, and perhaps forty-eight or fifty years of age [who] had been a member of the Massachusetts Legislature, and one of the selectmen in the village in which he'd resided."

Other letters noted that Weeks was a blacksmith, that his wife was dead, that he had an only child – a daughter – and that he had come to Texas to invest in land and establish a cotton manufactory. He was reported to have two brothers, both ministers; one, named Frederick E., preached in Windsor County, Vermont.

**Subsequently, newspaper articles carried letters to the editor from people who had run into John Weeks in Texas.**

Yet another writer described Weeks as "a live Yankee, a talking, blustering fellow" whose nervousness aroused enough suspicion that his autograph at various hotels was being compared to that of the "Oronoka" letter. (More on that below.)

Finally, according to passengers aboard a brig sailing from Galveston to New Orleans in early February 1850, a "Mr. John Weeks from Greenwich, Massachusetts" had fallen ill on the first morning of the trip and died late that afternoon. A dozen of those passengers signed a certificate relating the circumstances of his demise, including his claim that he had recently been exposed to cholera.

Before dying, he asked that his trunk containing personal effects and \$136 be delivered to his daughter, Mrs. Allen, in Barre, Massa-

chusetts. Weeks's body was sewn up in a blanket and, with a small ceremony, heaved overboard. A Mr. and Mrs. Vance, *en route* to Vermont, pledged to deliver the trunk to his daughter.

#### Put to Rest

But how did John Weeks become associated with Benjamin F. Cannon, the Parkman murder, and the Oronoka letter? That letter, written from Washington, Texas to the New Orleans *Delta* on December 28, 1849 – a month before Webster's indictment – said:

*Dear Sir: It is with difficulty that I can get paper to write to you, but I am induced to do so for the safety of Mr. Webster. He is not guilty of the crime. I myself perpetrated that Deed that he is charged with. I am off for California. Yours, Oronoka [P.S.] the 23 of November was a bad day for me.*

The editors of the *Delta* added the following comment to their publication of the Oronoka letter:

*We remember seeing in some of the Boston papers that members of Dr. Parkman's family had received anonymous letters, coarsely written, stating that the writer had murdered Dr. Parkman and gone off to Texas in a schooner.*

Reading this commentary, anyone following the disappearances of both Cannon and Parkman – and there were many! – could have concluded that "Oronoka" was an alias for John Weeks, a name which the public already believed was an alias for Benjamin F. Cannon.

Nothing else was ever discovered about the Oronoka letter, thereby relegating it to the category of 19th-century clickbait.

Research proves that many of the claims Weeks made about himself applied in fact to Cannon. Cannon was born in Greenwich, Massachusetts and became a blacksmith; his mother's maiden name was Weeks; he had two brothers who were ministers, one was named Frederick E. and preached in both Cavendish and Ludlow, Vermont; and he had a daughter, Mary, who by marriage became Mrs. Allen of Barre.

Significant, also, is that Mary recognized her father's shirt and pocketbook in John Weeks's trunk after Mr. and Mrs. Vance delivered it to her; and when a daguerreotype of Cannon was shown to Mr. and Mrs. Vance, they both thought Cannon looked much like John Weeks.

Not all of Weeks's claims about

see ALIAS next page

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**ALIAS** from previous page

himself were true of Cannon – for example, Cannon's wife was not dead – but there were enough parallels in the story to leave little doubt that Weeks and Cannon were one and the same person.

Within a few months of his disappearance, the law also came to this conclusion, and Benjamin F. Cannon was officially declared dead. Although his name does not appear in Wendell's death records, the 1850 federal census lists Cannon as one of 10 Wendell residents who died that year. The only information given is that he was a 48-year-old blacksmith, born in Massachusetts, who died of unknown causes in February.

Probate records show that two years after Cannon's disappearance, his three lots in Wendell, including the one his wife lived on, were put up for bid at public auction. These and the Cannon family's church pew #1 at the Meetinghouse in North New Salem were purchased by William Putnam of Wendell.

**But... Why?**

All that's left to tell is what happened after Cannon died. Calista, his wife, went to live with her eldest daughter Angie in New Salem, where she died of stomach cancer in

1860 at age 54. Angie herself died four years later of "inflammation of the bowels," at age 26.

Mary, the couple's second daughter, was widowed in 1859, remarried, and died in East Boston in 1884. Neither Angie nor Mary had children of their own, so with their deaths, Benjamin F. Cannon's line and his story come to an end.

There remain, however, many questions. Why did Cannon decide to leave his home in Wendell? Did he plan on going to New York and then Texas, or were these impromptu decisions? Why did he divulge so much information about his real life when he was operating under an assumed name? Did he write the Oronoka letter in a burst of sympathy for Dr. John Webster?

In the *Greenfield Gazette and Courier* of August 5, 1905, one A. E. Brooks wrote some reminiscences about growing up in Wendell. In his essay, he talks about the beautiful drive to "Locke's Pond" (Lake Wyola), and going past "the houses of Benjamin Cannon who so mysteriously disappeared just prior to this time."

Brooks's memories show that Cannon's disappearance was as much of a mystery in 1905 as it was in 1850 – and so it remains today.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

### Spam Concern; Uber Aid; Mattress Gift; Guy in Truck; Repo; Ditch Winch; Smoldering Chimney; Pill Bag

**Monday, 2/2**

7:57 a.m. 911 call; female stated it was a misdiagnosis and that her mother pushed the 911 button by accident; advises address is in Winchester, New Hampshire but they are at church right now. Called Winchester PD; they will check residence.

1:22 p.m. Trespass notice received for male at Turners Falls High School; served in hand by the Sheriff's Office civil process division.

9:25 p.m. Caller would like to speak to an officer about spam calls he is receiving, about 20 per day. Advised caller not to give out personal information and to monitor credit cards and bank statements for fraud. Caller has not given out any information; was just concerned about volume of calls he is getting.

**Tuesday, 2/3**

5:45 a.m. 911 call; passerby advises he could see a

grey passenger car off the roadway on Old Northfield Road closer to the Lake Pleasant side of the village.

Caller advises he passed an Uber driver who may be picking up the operator of the vehicle, but he is unsure. Officer advises two vehicles on scene; only one individual on scene.

7:55 a.m. School resource officer advising of a minor motor vehicle accident that occurred on Franklin County Technical School property near the field hockey field. Report taken.

12:47 p.m. Postal worker reports hearing a loud bang and then a long black wire came down from a pole on Prospect Street. Shelburne Control toning out FD; PD responding.

3:29 p.m. Caller from Greenfield Road just got home and someone dumped old mattresses and box springs at the end of his driveway. Wants on record; states he is calling

the DPW.

3:43 p.m. Caller reports that two houses on Millers Falls Road did not shovel their sidewalk, creating a safety hazard when she is walking her dog. Would like residents fined. Referred to an officer.

4:12 p.m. Caller states that on October 27, 2025, she was assaulted by a female party; she states that she came to the department, spoke to an officer, and was told "not to worry about it." Caller cannot recall who she spoke to. Advised caller we have nothing on record. Officers advised.

7:29 p.m. 911 caller from East Main Street reports that a male party in his apartment is acting erratic; he would like the party removed. States he's a friend, but isn't sure of his name. Not as reported. Situation mediated.

8:21 p.m. Warrant service on Millers Falls Road. Negative contact. Involved male calling in stating he's home; his mother was not comfortable answering the door but is wondering what was going on. Officers advised.

8:56 p.m. A 55-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a straight warrant.

**Wednesday, 2/4**

7:22 a.m. Caller from Goddard Avenue states that a green Tacoma pickup truck is parked in front of his house and the same was there yesterday as well. Vehicle was not in area upon officers' arrival.

Officer spoke with caller, who stated that they spoke to the guy in the truck and he said he was there watching his son.

3:35 p.m. Greenfield PD requesting officers attempt to locate vehicle on Fifth Street that was involved in a hit-and-run yesterday.

If vehicle is there, GPD will respond. Address and surrounding area checked; negative findings.

**Thursday, 2/5**

2:41 a.m. Vehicle repossession on Central Street.

10:03 a.m. Checking on vehicle on Avenue A. Male either passed out or sleeping. Contact made; male taking a nap. Currently living out of vehicle. Dog was running around outside. Advised party dog needs to be on a leash.

10:18 a.m. Officer checking condemned building on Eleventh Street. Lock has been cut. BOH contacted.

12:21 p.m. Warrant service on Avenue A. Two locations checked; negative contact.

3:20 p.m. Caller wants to talk to the officer that did an accident report as it's wrong and he wants it changed.

5:06 p.m. Caller from West Street wants possibly intoxicated party removed.

Involved party's father giving her a ride home.

**Friday, 2/6**

2:50 p.m. Walk-in looking to report a computer scam. Already filed report with FBI. Officer speaking with party.

3:41 p.m. Caller, upset, states he is attempting to get his father's phone from FRTA. His father is not with him; he doesn't know the passcode to get into the phone; and FRTA won't give it to him. Caller would like an officer to make the company give him the phone. Officers advised and responding.

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8:56 p.m. A 55-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a straight warrant.

5:04 p.m. 911 abandoned call from Bernardo Drive. On callback, caller states his chimney was smoldering, but he thinks it's fine now. Offered to transfer to FD; states no need. Shelburne Control advised.

7:11 p.m. GPD requesting officers check L Street; they received a report that the vehicle involved in a hit and run earlier this week is parked there. Would like officers to take pictures. Negative contact with vehicle or driver. GPD updated.

**Saturday, 2/7**

12:25 a.m. Officer out with vehicle at Turners Falls High School. Parties moved along; were parked with no lights on.

2:41 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road concerned about a large amount of snow that a resident has thrown into the road, creating a traffic hazard. Vehicles are crossing into the other lane to avoid the snow, which could lead to an accident. Amount of snow in road does not appear to be a hazard at this time. No one home at residence.

10:06 p.m. Caller states that a male party left pills in a bag on the table at Subway and they don't want to throw them away. Officer going to retrieve pills and try to locate male party. Items returned to party.

**Sunday, 2/8**

3:25 a.m. 911 caller from Coolidge Avenue reports her CO detector is sounding. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

## Wordly Matters

By CHARLOTTE MURTISHAW

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – About once a year I remember what at the time felt like the best day of my life, though in retrospect was just the most exciting day at a dull job. Coming off break at a major grocery retailer, I was pulled aside by a manager who sternly thrust upon me three sacred relics: a battered cardboard wheel, a black-and-white striped jersey, and most importantly, a white binder of taboo phrases and acceptable alternatives I had five minutes to memorize.

From a temporary perch between Beauty and Wellness, I was to flag straggling customers down from the stampede with a cheery inquest: "Are you watching the *big game*?" or perhaps "Sir, are you supporting the *team from Philadelphia* tonight?"

"Super Bowl" was *verboten*, as was "game day," "NFL" and variants, and any official team names. To win a jar of free salsa, shoppers would have to not only spin the rickety wheel but also solve my crossword jargon.

Freed from produce codes to live out my destiny as a Rumpelstiltskin in ref's clothes, I was ecstatic to be indoctrinated into the esoteric riddles of sports marketing. Never before had I considered the promotional genius of forbidding a cashier from speaking the name of a prominent team competing in one of the nation's most popular sports.

(My research indicates that it's not necessarily illegal to use the words "Super Bowl" in an ad, just a guarantee of such an expensive headache that it's best to not bother. The litigious avarice of the NFL is so grasping that they once also tried to copyright "the Big Game," but Stanford and UC Berkeley intervened – their own Big Game predated the Super Bowl by decades.)

Though I'd love to linger over that which seemed so jarringly stupid and outlandish to me in 2019, football IP is not the Wordly Matter of concern today.

Over the past few years, the ways in which the interests of techno-feudal capitalists are constricting language have grown more tangible. Initial signs were small – Gen-Zers unironically using "unalive," originally invented as a work-around to video content moderation – but right-wing influence on language is flourishing, even in such maddeningly illogical ways as calling any acknowledgment of race "critical race theory."

The investment of venture capital, Silicon Valley, and private equity in media platforms ranging from radio to TV to print has created a skewed ecosystem dominated by the mega-wealthy.

Obvious cases include Oracle centibillionaire Larry Ellison's acquisition of TikTok, sparking fears that the platform's algorithm will suppress criticism of ICE. Ellison's son, David, is the head of Paramount Skydance, parent of CBS, which has gone full bootlicker almost overnight. Elsewhere, note Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter, and Jeff Bezos's *Washington Post*, which abruptly terminated hundreds of journalists last week.

And so on. For another, more domestic, intervention, take Google's *nouveau-fasc* version of Clippy: the Gemini assistant.

Beyond the 5,000 more important reasons I could give to avoid AI like the devil, the ChatGPT-ification of everyday communication is tragic because it's so reductive. Large language models are built on pattern recognition, with a prerogative of imitating only bland, dutiful sentences. ChatGPT-voice is not only eerie, dumb, and sycophantic – it also leans on a small handful of dorky rhetorical structures.

One might imagine that these products will one day refuse to restate certain sentiments, even in their cornball prose.

Gemini feels like the malicious twin of the '90s mailer daemon, that bit of code which politely and quietly performed background functions, like catching bounces. Gemini, by comparison, is indolent, jobless, and seeks the spotlight.

And, like a birthday-party magician, Gemini contains the capacity for misdirection. When we see a pen spontaneously writing, it's easy to focus on what's there and to forget what's not. The *no's* are many; the *nos* have it; they've got your nose; your face is theirs, geo-tagged and data-banked. Erasure, brain fog, atrophy, ignorance. Palantir, the Nine Eyes of Google Street View, the one Ring. Controlled demolition, controlled opposition, controlled generation.

"Once they go unnamed they go to some degree unseen," Robert Macfarlane reminds us in *Landmarks*. "Language deficit leads to attention deficit." Macfarlane was focused on landscapes, but it's true in other realms: the ability to accurately name something is powerful. Diagnosis is the first step toward a cure. (Or toward banishment – see: Rumpelstiltskin.)

In the meantime, we are atrophying. Literacy is in decline, and only about half of polled American adults say they have read a book in the past year. Billionaires and other grifters want us to forget how to read and write and think, and to depend on their platforms.

Humans are not the world's smartest or kindest animals, but we have developed technologies for storing and transmitting knowledge beyond death and distance, and it would be a shame to take them for granted. Language, like a river or a horse, shouldn't be subjugated to petty and cruel actors or hoarded by the few.

After the retail shift of my dreams was over, the restrictive poetry of Super Bowl madness stuck with me. Despite my repeated requests to gaze upon the binder just one more time, no one could ever seem to find it. If this were an X-File, there might be men in sunglasses and formal windbreakers hustling it out of the building once the final buzzer sounded, and a new copy carefully and securely mailed the next year.

*Write in to wordly@montaguereporter.org with questions... or corrections!*

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**ALIAS** from previous page

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**FRIDAY, 2/6**

2:50 p.m. Walk-in looking to report a computer scam. Already filed report with FBI. Officer speaking with party.

3:41 p.m. Caller, upset, states he is attempting to get his father's phone from FRTA. His father is not with him; he doesn't know the passcode to get into the phone. Officers advised and responding.

4:12 p.m. Caller states that on October 27, 2025, she was assaulted by a female party; she states that she came to the department, spoke to an officer, and was told "not to worry about it." Caller cannot recall who she spoke to. Advised caller we have nothing on record. Officers advised.

4:21 p.m. Caller from Swamp Road requesting assistance with a vehicle in a ditch; states it is on a blind corner and needs lights and assistance while winching out. Second caller reports tow truck is blocking the whole road; vehicle is entirely in ditch. States he's nervous that an accident is going to occur. Officer *en route*. Vehicle out of ditch and able to drive away. Requesting that DPW plow snow dragged out by car back down the embankment.

5:04 p.m. 911 abandoned call from Bernardo Drive. On callback, caller states his chimney was smoldering, but he thinks it's fine now. Offered to transfer to FD; states no need. Shelburne Control advised.

5:11 p.m. GPD requesting officers check L Street; they received a report that the vehicle involved in a hit and run earlier this week is parked there. Would like officers to take pictures. Negative contact with vehicle or driver. GPD updated.

**SATURDAY, 2/7**

12:25

## BOOK REVIEW from page B1

the company's name, not its own. Even though the firm is the company's sole owner, even though its executives are the ones who decided to take out the loans, it is not legally responsible for paying the money back."

A leveraged buyout, according to the Private Equity Stakeholder Project ([pestakeholder.org](http://pestakeholder.org)), "saddles private equity-owned companies with substantial debt, often draining resources that could otherwise be invested in innovation, workforce development, or adapting to market changes. Instead, firms under private equity ownership must channel much of their revenue toward servicing this debt, leaving them vulnerable to financial distress and bankruptcy."

These bankruptcies of private equity-owned businesses, according to the Project, "in 2024 directly resulted in at least 65,850 layoffs across the country."

For Greenwell, private equity's destruction is personal. The first sentence in the introduction to her book states: "Until it cost me my dream job, I had never given private equity much thought."

Greenwell was the editor-in-chief of Deadspin, a digital sports magazine that had once boasted a readership of more than 20 million. In 2019, it was purchased by the Boston-based private equity firm, Great Hill Partners. After three months of bizarre business decisions and inept management, Greenwell quit. Two months later, the rest of the staff did the same.

"In less than five years, Great Hill's executives had turned one of the most popular sports sites on the internet into one that draws slightly less traffic than a Pennsylvania dog breeder," she wrote.

The beauty of this book – and this is true amongst many other non-fiction books written by journalists – is that Greenwell explains a series of complicated subjects in a way that is accessible to most people who can read a newspaper.

No disrespect to academics – we need them! – but their writing can sometimes be impenetrable to the general population. They are speaking to their

own audience.

Good reporters, however, can take that academic writing and work it into an article or a book that weaves in tales relevant to their readers' lives.

This is what Greenwell has done.

*Bad Company* follows the stories of Liz, a skilled and beloved Toys "R" Us worker; Roger, a small-town family doctor; Natalia, a young journalist; and Loren, a community organizer who moves her family from public housing to a spacious apartment.

The book is structured in three parts: "Before" each subject encounters private equity in their work or home life, "During," and "After."

Greenwell's writing about Liz, Roger, Natalia, and Loren provides enough details about their lives, values, and personalities to inspire engagement and empathy. All the while, she sprinkles in definitions, history, and statistics to explain why and how private equity is harming Liz, Roger, and Natalia's jobs, Loren's home, and all of their communities, families, and lives.

What is notable about the "After" section is that each subject was able to overcome the harms of private equity through collaboration. Acts of solidarity between frustrated or laid-off coworkers. Joining or starting a workers' – or tenants' – union. Forming a local group to raise money to build a community-owned hospital.

While much of *Bad Company* is discouraging, Greenwell's lesson here is that cooperation and care are what will save us. At this point, private equity managers have millions or billions of dollars. That's temporary.

We have each other. Nobody can take that away.

*Bad Company: Private Equity and the Death of the American Dream* is available at the Turners Falls branch of the Montague Public Libraries as a print book and an eAudiobook. According to the library website, [montague.cwmars.org](http://montague.cwmars.org), an Audiobook CD of *Bad Company* is on order. The book is available for purchase on the HarperCollins website, [harpercollins.com](http://harpercollins.com).

## TV REVIEW

## 9-1-1 Nashville (ABC)

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – I reviewed the Fox TV show *9-1-1* back in 2022, at the start of Season 5, and I pointed out the show's creative writing – it's not very realistic; it couldn't happen in real life. A spin-off based in Texas, called *9-1-1: Lone Star*, ran for several seasons, and was like I described the first show in its stories.

Now they are trying again with *9-1-1: Nashville*, which premiered on October 9 on ABC with a three-part premiere. This one has a bunch of actors and actresses I am familiar with: Chris O'Donnell, Jessica Capshaw, LeAnn Rimes, and Kimberly Williams-Paisley.

I know Rimes and Williams-Paisley a bit better through country music. Rimes is one of my favorite country music stars. I have seen Williams-Paisley in some things, but I know she is married to Brad Paisley, another country star who is a favorite of mine. In this spin-off, she plays the 911 operator that has always been part of the idea behind this show.

*Nashville* is the birthplace of country music, so it makes sense that the first episode features a problem at a Kane Brown concert. The same goes for seeing O'Donnell's character, a fire chief, competing at a rodeo. Capshaw plays his wife, and



he also has a son who works with him in the department. The first major event in this show appears to be that back-to-back tornadoes may be coming, which could really happen in that area.

They have apparently decided to make this family a bit more than they appear. That revelation is shown in the first episode. So, that is one way the show is creative in its writing. Another, which is kind of ironic, is that Rimes is literally a country star of some kind. Rimes is okay as an actress, from what I have seen of her, and so far what I have seen of the other actors has been good too.

We certainly get a nice insight into O'Donnell's character as a man who never lies to his son and tries to help people with his department as a tornado is literally coming at them. I am not sure what other stories we will see in this newest *9-1-1* spin-off. Maybe they will include origin stories of the characters, like the first show did, or maybe some even crazier stuff will happen on the job for these people.



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It is difficult  
to get the news from poems  
yet men die miserably every day  
for lack  
of what is found there.

- William Carlos Williams

edited by Janel Nockleby  
Readers are invited to send poems to  
the *Montague Reporter* by email at:  
[poetry@montaguereporter.org](mailto:poetry@montaguereporter.org)  
(Please note we are no longer  
accepting mailed submissions.)

## 2 candles

It's just me and my mom,  
Like candles in a loud, windy room  
Trying to stay lit,  
While the air around us spins  
With shouts and running feet.

The boys are like firecrackers –  
Always exploding, never thinking twice.  
They fill the house with sound,  
With sneakers slamming stairs  
And video games buzzing late.

But we hold our flame,  
Quiet but strong,  
Like we were made  
For this kind of storm.

She's the steady one,  
The match that never goes out.  
I'm learning from her  
How to be soft but never small.

And in the middle of the madness,  
She sees me –  
Like I'm not just another thing  
To take care of,  
But someone she's proud of  
Just for being here.

It's just me and my mom,  
2 candles glowing side by side,  
Making the whole room warmer  
Just by being together.

Sometimes it feels like our little light  
Is enough to keep the whole world  
From falling apart –  
Like even the dark leans in to listen  
When we laugh.

Cause in the middle of it all,  
Everything softens.  
The walls, the air,  
Even the ache in my chest.

And even when the noise feels loud  
And the boys take up too much space,  
I still see her –  
Calm in the middle of it all,  
Her eyes soft, her light steady.

And somehow,  
Even in the mess and chaos,  
I know I'm in the right place.

Just 2 candles burning strong,  
Just me and my mom.

- Drea Cronin  
Turners Falls

## Contributors' Notes:

Drea Cronin is a 16-year-old junior at Turners Falls High School. She lives with her family in Turners Falls and loves writing poetry. She is also on the softball team.

Simon Eaton lives in Greenfield, farms in Gill, and writes poems in both.

Joannah L. Whitney is a poet living in western Massachusetts, looking for housing in the Greenfield area. She was the 2024 winner of the Greenfield Public Library's Poet's Seat contest, and has published in *Silkworm*, the annual review of the Florence Poets Society, and in local newspapers. She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2017.

ILLUSTRATION: PINES IN SNOW, ARTIST UNKNOWN, C. 1890S

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# Our February Poetry Page

Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Ice in the streets  
Deadly and terrible  
Armed for battle  
Against the soft bodies  
With brown skin  
Or black skin  
Or speak with the melody of  
English and their mother tongue  
Making peace in the everyday  
Words they use to bridge  
Their life to this hard place  
Everyone is afraid  
Everyone is brave, we must  
Somedays the bullets pierce  
Brown skin, targets  
Somedays they are fired  
Point blank at the head of  
Witnesses, once the bullets were  
Rubber, called nonlethal,  
Or pepper spray direct  
In the eyes of a pastor praying  
Now, the bullets are designed to kill  
Minneapolis and Fallujah  
Hold the same urban warfare  
For the cosplay warriors  
Today's trophy: an unarmed mother  
Trying to leave, turning away  
From the body snatchers  
When caring for her neighbors  
Became an act of war  
Watched by crowds, blowing whistles  
Safety has fled  
There is blood in the streets

- Joannah L. Whitney  
Western Massachusetts

- Joannah L. Whitney  
Western Massachusetts

- Joannah L. Whitney  
Western Massachusetts

Friday, January 9, 2026

Ugly walks the roads and alleys  
Heavy posturing always necessary  
To keep the hard turn right  
Obscured by cold power  
Smoke and exhaustion  
Hang in the photographs  
Show me your lies  
Frame dangerous stories  
On small screens, I tell you  
What we all saw, we all heard  
The denial when help was offered  
The weight of millions of eyes  
Testify "There was no danger"

- Joannah L. Whitney  
Western Massachusetts

- Joannah L. Whitney  
Western Massachusetts



# EVENTS

submissions:  
events@montaguereporter.org

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

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

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Teen Resource Room*. Free pizza, snacks, homework help, life skills sessions, more. 3 to 4:30 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *A Night of Palestinian Poetry* with George Abraham and Hannah Moushabeck. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: Local author talk, *David Detmold*. 6 p.m. Free.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Library Trivia Night*. 6 p.m. Free.

Artspace, Greenfield: *Multigenerational Singing Group*. "Share the joy of singing and make it accessible to both individuals and families." Contact [laurajosephs@protonmail.com](mailto:laurajosephs@protonmail.com) to sign up. 6:15 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Flurut*, traditional Swedish music concert and dance. 7 p.m. \$.

Asbestos Farm, Hadley: *Carinae, Balaclava, Firstsex, Shane "Bray" Kerr*. 9 p.m. \$.

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13

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

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Village Neighbors Meetup*. Snacks provided. 4 p.m. Free.

33 Hawley, Northampton: *Samuel Boat, beetsblog*; reception for Care Center photo exhibit. 5 p.m. Free.

Northfield Mount Hermon School, Gill: Reception for *Shop Rats*, faculty exhibit with prints, paintings, sculpture, and photography. At the Rhodes Art Center. 6 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Square Dance with Ruth Rappaport, guitar, Ben Wetherbee, fiddle, Joel Wennerstrom, banjo, and Gian Criscitiello, bass; Sarah Gibson calling*. Jammers welcome. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Environmental talk, *Deforestation, climate, and the future of the Amazon*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Theater of the Oppressed* workshop with Ash Goverman. 7 p.m. By donation.

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

Kern Cafe, Hampshire College, Amherst: *Bird Dance Band, Margot Bloomgarden, Cursed Image, Skeeter and the Charlie Horse Horseshoe Shoestring String Band Boys*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Charley's Tropical Bar & Board Game Palace*, an "immersive experience" involving tabletop games and live performances. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Open Mic*, with featured performers *Two Uncles and an Aunt*. 6:15 p.m. By donation.



Equipped with a hefty songbook, crooner E. Horace Winston (above) vows to heighten both the joy and the romance from 7 to 9 p.m. this Valentine's Day evening at the Voo.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Valentine's Day Dance Party With Lady Pop*. 7:30 p.m. No cover.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Melty Kiss, Big Mess, No One and the Somebodies, Rong*. 7:30 p.m. By donation.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Owsley's Owls, Grateful Dead tribute*. 8 p.m. \$.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Blood Bucket, mourning dove, GRLFOE, Ulan, Kyle Zegel, Daniel Lev*. 8:30 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Samuel Boat, beetsblog*. 9 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Sophisticated Lady*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

## SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Roundabout Books, Greenfield: *Annual Half Off Sale*. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. \$.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Open Mic*, with featured performers *Two Uncles and an Aunt*. 6:15 p.m. By donation.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: E. Horace Winston III plays "songs of blazing love and daring romance." Dedicate a song from a list of 50 great love songs, and Mr. Winston's own compositions, while you dine. 7 p.m. No cover.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Charley's Tropical Bar & Board Game Palace*, an "immersive experience" involving tabletop games and live performances. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Norma Dream, Eli Catlin*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Melt, Mimi Fang*. 8 p.m. \$.

Visions Video, Northampton: *Movie, Psychos In Love* (1987), with director Gorman Bechard on hand. 8 p.m. \$.

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

## SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15

Roundabout Books, Greenfield: *Annual Half Off Sale*. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. \$.

Greenfield Records, Greenfield: *Samuel Boat, beetsblog*. 12 p.m. Free.

Wendell Library, Wendell: *Wendell Words*. Share current work and receive feedback, or simply attend. 1 to 3 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Documentary, How Deep Is Your Love?* (2025). Scientists explore the mysterious deep sea to collect and name undiscovered species. 2 p.m. Free.

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## EXHIBITS

**Waterway Arts, Turners Falls:** Jesse Connor: *New Works*, oil paintings that echo the joy, humor, and mystery of the artist's experience.

**Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls:** *Maps of River History*, artistic maps by geologist and cartographer Joe Kopera that reveal hidden topography of rivers and floodplains. Through March 28, with a reception Saturday, March 7.

**Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center:** *2026 Small Works Show*, featuring works under ten inches contributed by local artists, through February.

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

**Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett:** *Annual LES Art Exhibit*, artwork by students and staff at Leverett Elementary, through this Sunday, February 15.

**Rhodes Art Center, Northfield Mount Hermon, Gill:** *Shop Rats*, prints, paintings, sculpture, and photography, by six faculty members. Through March 6, with a reception this Friday, February 13 at 6 p.m.

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

**GCTV, Greenfield:** *Eve Christoff's Gallery of Work*, vibrant large-scale paintings by Christoff celebrating the natural world and divine female energy, through March.

**Greenfield Library, Greenfield:** *If I Can Paint, You Can Too*, oil paintings by Fran Corriveau, through February.

**LAVA Center, Greenfield:** *Trees*, informational exhibit celebrating tree projects in Greenfield, and *Positively Deerfield Street*, photographs by Geoff Bluh spanning decades of change in the Deerfield Street neighborhood, both through February.

**Greenfield Community College, Greenfield:** *Rachel Portesi: The Nature of Things*, installation examining themes of mortality, regeneration, and interconnectedness, in the South Gallery through February 27.

**Hampden Gallery, UMass Amherst:** *Fragile Connections*, neon-lit sculpture and delicately engraved glass forms by scientific glass blower Sally Prasch. Through May 8, with a reception April 23.

**Hampshire College Art Gallery, Amherst:** *Dæmonomania*. Anthony DiScenza uses a diverse range of materials to illuminate our relationship to technology through occult metaphors. Through March 21.

**Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls:** *Heart to Heart*, member exhibit in a wide range of media, through February.

## CALLS FOR ART

**ArtCulture Westfield** is looking for new, emerging, experienced, and professional artists for its annual community art and cultural experience at the Amelia Park Arena on May 8 and 9. Cash prizes awarded in painting, drawing, mixed media, photography, printmaking, and sculpture. They will also accept artisan-quality glass, wood, clay, and metalwork. No entry fee; see [artworkswestfield.com/events/articulture](http://artworkswestfield.com/events/articulture) for more information. Deadline is April 11.

**Looky Here Kids' Art Show:** Kids up to age 12 are invited to display their art at Looky Here in Greenfield during March. Bring framed, ready-to-hang work to the gallery by 5 p.m. on February 15 labeled with name, age, phone number of parent or guardian, and price/NFS. An opening reception will be held March 6.

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# CALENDAR



Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Documentary, *Roadmap to Apartheid* (2012), a detailed look at the "apartheid" analogy commonly used to describe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, narrated by Alice Walker. Discussion follows. Presented by Apartheid-Free Western Mass. 3:30 p.m. Free.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Jeremy Kizina, Back Pain, Ali Carter.* 5 p.m. By donation.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Gracious Calamity, Monterey Mountain, Parashi.* 8 p.m. By donation.

#### MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Roundabout Books, Greenfield: *Annual Half Off Sale.* 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. \$.

Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center: *Snowshoeing for Beginners of All Ages.* Pre-registration required. 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. Free.

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

#### TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Animals of the Rainforest,* with live animals. 2 p.m. Free.

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

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Drop-in Scrabble.* 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Knitting, Crafts & Game Night.* 7 p.m. Free.

#### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Coil Clay Pots* workshop. For ages 6 to 12. Registration req'd. 1 p.m. Free.

Olver Transit Center, Greenfield: Author *Elyse Moore* shares local culinary history with "Jolly Good Times In the Kitchen." Register at [www.tinyurl.com/JollyCulinary](http://www.tinyurl.com/JollyCulinary). 2 p.m. \$.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Matinee movie, *J'ai Été au Bal* (1989). 4 p.m. Free.

Bookends, Florence: *Loose Ends Fiber Club,* skillshare. Masks req'd. 4 to 7 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Dungeons & Dragons.* Single-night campaign for ages 16 and up, all XP welcome. Register at [northfieldrec.com](http://northfieldrec.com). 5 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Writers' Workshop.* 6 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wes Brown.* 8 p.m. No cover.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Wishbone Zoe, Saliba, Matthew Thornton Trio.* 8 p.m. \$.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Ben Wetherbee and Ruth Rappaport of the Ruth & Ben String Band play this Friday's square dance at the Montague Common Hall, along with Joel Wennerstrom (banjo), Gian Criscitello (bass), and Sarah Gibson calling.

#### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19

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

Brick House Community

Resource Center, Turners

Falls: *Family Game*

Event. Snacks provided.

RSVP to [slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org](mailto:slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org). 2 to 4 p.m. Free.

St. Kaz, Turners Falls:

*Patch Burger Popup.*

5 to 8 p.m. No cover.

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

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *A Century of Research in Our Local Forests.* 6 p.m. Free.

Artspace, Greenfield:

*Multigenerational*

*Singing Group.* Contact [laurajosephs@protonmail.com](mailto:laurajosephs@protonmail.com) to sign up. 6:15 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield:

*Open Stage.* Similar to

an open mic, artists share theater, dance, music, spoken word, magic, puppetry, circus, comedy, and more, in any stage of development. Five minutes per act. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

Parlor Room, Northampton:

*Hoonah, Hazel Basil,*

*Stadia.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

Cold Spring Hollow,

Belchertown: *TydePod,*

*Veticles Skal, Mon.Ark*

*Ammo, Mummies and*

*Wolves, Brujo.* 8 p.m. \$.

#### FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kiddleidoscope Story Hour: Rabbits.*

Ages 3 to 6. Story, activities, and crafts. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Ukulele Players.* Bring your ukulele and music stand. 1 to 2:30 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Slab Mug Clay* workshop for teens. Roll, imprint, cut, assemble clay to create a mug. Registration req'd. 4 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: *All Feels, Lost Film, Two Wrong Turns.* 8 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Dar Williams, Peter Mulvey.* 8 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Bag Lady, The Agonizers, HardCar.* 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Jeff Unfortunately, Intac.* 9:30 p.m. No cover.

#### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Watershed Mosaics.* Materials provided. Ages 6 and up. 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Savings Bank, Turners Falls: Local author *Fred Warren* discusses his new book, *Deadline Dallas.* Snacks provided. 1 p.m. Free.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: Poetry reading, *Aristilde Kirby, Katerina Zadé, Napoleon Touafek, Robin Arble.* 6:30 p.m. By donation.

Mount Toby Friends Meeting, Leverett: *The Secret Chord, Leonard Cohen* tribute. 7 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Coffin Flop, Not It, Flyeater.* 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Cinemastorm* double feature: *Waiting for Guffman* (1996), *Beetlejuice* (1988). 7:30 p.m. Free.

Shelburne Falls Theater, Shelburne Falls: *Pothole Pictures* presents *Monsoon Wedding* (2001). Music at 7 p.m.: *Eveline & John;* movie at 7:30 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Freeps, Rick Rude, babe wait.* 9:30 p.m. No cover.

#### SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Iron Horse, Northampton: *K-Pop Demon Ravers* Kids' Rave. 12 p.m. \$.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Writers Workshop* with Paul Richmond. 1 p.m. Free.

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

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Frank Hurricane, beetsblog.* 4 p.m. By donation.

Great Falls Harvest, Turners Falls: *Elliott Smith Cover Show,* housing mutual aid fundraiser featuring *Norma Dream, Jim Bliss,* more. 7 p.m. \$.

Quarters, Hadley: *Western Mass Electronics.* Bring your own synth, drum machine, sampler, etc. 8 p.m. No cover.

**looking forward...**

#### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Matinee movie, *Lost in Translation* (2003). 4 p.m. Free.

#### THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Moviola, Wet Tuna, Animal Piss It's Everywhere.* 8 p.m. \$.

#### SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

De La Luz Soundstage, Holyoke: *Mtali Banda, Shafaah.* 7 p.m. \$.

#### FRIDAY, MARCH 6

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Four Rivers Drama Club* presents *Nice Work If You Can Get It.* 7 p.m. \$.

#### SATURDAY, MARCH 14

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Leftover Crack, Pilfers.* 8 p.m. \$.

#### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

Olver Transit Center, Greenfield: *Josh Shanley* discusses "The Lasting Impact of the 1936 Connecticut River Flood." Register at [www.tinyurl.com/1936flood](http://www.tinyurl.com/1936flood). 2 p.m. \$.

#### TUESDAY, MARCH 31

Student Union Ballroom, UMass Amherst: Lecture, *N.K. Jemison.* Reservation required. 4:30 p.m. Free.

#### FRIDAY, APRIL 3

The Drake, Amherst: *The Greys, Hot Dirt.* 8 p.m. \$.

#### FRIDAY, APRIL 24

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *The Toasters, Turkey Blaster Omega, Pink Slip.* 7 p.m. \$.

#### SATURDAY, MAY 9

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Son Rompe Pera.* 7 p.m. \$.

#### FRIDAY, MAY 15

Nova Arts, Keene: *Yasmin Williams, Delicate Steve, Emily A. Sprague, Big Blood, Dinger, and Jack in the Green.* 4 p.m. \$.

#### TUESDAY, JUNE 23

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *String Cheese Incident.* 6 p.m. \$.

#### TUESDAY, AUGUST 18

Tanglewood, Lenox: *Laurie Anderson.* 7 p.m. \$\$.

#### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

Pines Theater, Northampton: *Sierra Ferrell.* 7 p.m. \$\$.

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**WEST ALONG** from page B1

and -sett, which is found in many Indigenous place names and refers to "the place of." Hence *wachusett*: the big mountain place.

The -sett suffix can be found today with many spelling variations, depending on the Indigenous dialect and how it sounded to the English ear. Other spellings can include -skut, -ut, -uck, -ash, and -tuck. Good examples of these variations are Massachusetts and Connecticut.

The following is a short list of Native words that have remained somewhat familiar to us. There are also hundreds of original names that researchers have found that are no longer familiar to us, the places having been given new names by the English settlers and their descendants.

*Mattawa*: a resting place; a place of difficult travel.

*Konkwachu* (Mount Toby): a dry hill.

*Pisgah*: an Anglicized version of the Nipmuck *poussough*, wild cat.

*Sawwatapchewas* (Sawmill River): con-

tinuously runs over sloping ledges.

*Pocumtuck*: an English rendition of *pocumpatuk*, shallow winding river.

*Sunsicke*: rocky, stony place; the foot of the so-called Mohawk Trail.

*Wequomps* (Mount Sugarloaf): the end of the rocks; where the rocks end. From *wequa-*, the end of, and *omps*, stones or rocks.

*Kanada* (Canada Hill): the Algonkian word for a village, or group of hearth fires.

*Towwat* (Sunderland): a good place to ford or cross the river.

We know that *Mantehelas*, *Corroheagon*, *Allinnacooke* were names for islands in the Connecticut River, near Montague City and upstream from there.

Local historian Ed Gregory informs us that three islands now to be seen in the river are named as follows, north to south: Smead Island, the one at Rock Dam; Corse's Island, opposite Cabot Station; and Ames Island, the one seen looking north from the General Pierce.

It is likely that the Pocumtuck name *Cor-*

*roheagon* refers to either Corse's Island or Ames Island. Montague historian Edward Pressey tells us in his 1910 *History of Montague* that the island at Montague City was called *Corroheagon*. It is unclear whether that refers to modern-day Corse's or Ames Island. He also mentions an island named *Mantehelas* at the mouth of the Deerfield River – perhaps that one is Ames Island?

*Mattampash* was the Pocumtuck name for an island at the mouth of the Sawmill River, which may now have disappeared. Pressey records this island as the home of Wattawolinskin, the son of Mashalisk, the hereditary woman sachem who had stewardship of the lands from Sunderland/Deerfield up to the falls at Peskeompskut.

*Peskeompskut*, the falls between Montague and Gill, means the "thunder rocks place" or the "split rocks place." Local historian Joe Graveline believes the name likely refers to thunder, given the Indigenous interpretation of the dinosaur tracks found in this vicinity. These were considered to be the tracks of the thun-

derbird, important in Indigenous belief system. *Ussowach wusquiaawag* or *Wissatinnewag*, the Indigenous name for the ridge-line at Canada Hill, may have come from *wissa* "slippery, shiny" and *-noag*, "little hill." There is also *-awag*, "to meet or come together," or *-anaug*, "fishing place."

The ridge from Sugarloaf to Wissatinnewag, reputed to be the legendary great beaver's tail, was *Pemamachuwatukck*. In the Pocumtuck language this means "twisted or winding ridge of mountains," or "village in the twisted mountain range."

I hope these two columns have served as an introduction to the local tribal names for many places familiar to us all.

The challenges in decoding and translating these place names are evident in the examples above, and in my January 29 column. Bit by bit, though, we are locating and reviving the names of places that have been in use for thousands of years, and only recently erased and temporarily forgotten. We are bringing them back, one by one.



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