

The Montague Reporter

Year 24 – No. 12

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\$2

editor@montaguereporter.org

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

Outage Exposes Frayed Equipment, Relationships



MAGGIE SADOWAY PHOTO

An outage this month at Greenfield's city-owned internet provider, GCET, may highlight obstacles the utility faces in financing its operation.

By JONATHAN GERHARDSON

GREENFIELD – Earlier this month, after a power fluctuation caused a hardware failure that severed the connection between the city's municipally-owned internet service provider, Greenfield Community Energy and Technology (GCET), and the rest of the internet, customers took to social media to express their frustration.

"I'm sick of watching DVDs," one commented on Facebook. Others wondered how the outage, which would ultimately drag on for 76 hours, was affecting local businesses and remote workers.

For Greenfield mayor Virginia "Ginny" Desorgher, the outage was a matter of public safety. While city hall and the fire and police departments were able to switch over to redundant services, the lack of connectivity presented

a risk for some customers.

Desorgher said she had talked with one resident, a mother of an eight-day-old, prematurely born baby, whose critical health-monitoring instrumentation relied on an internet connection. Likewise for the CPAP machine used by one city official's spouse.

While no serious harm has been reported due to the outage, for Desorgher, a former emergency room nurse, this sort of disruption was unacceptable. She worried about the approximately 200 customers who used GCET's voice-over-IP (VoIP) telephone service, who might not be able to call 911 if they did not also own a cell phone.

The mayor shared these concerns with GCET general manager John Lunt in a meeting late in the evening on Friday, February 13, in the aftermath of the three-day

see **OUTAGE** page A6

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Board Votes To 'Adopt' Definition of Antisemitism

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard approved a resolution on Monday night to "adopt" a specific definition of antisemitism and "commit to inclusion." The board also approved retroactive pay for the assistant town treasurer and reviewed five "financial special article requests" for the spring town meeting warrant.

The board's vote on antisemitism came in response to a letter to town officials from the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts (JFWM), stressing a report by the state's recent Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism.

The letter said "a primary driver" of the increase in antisemitic incidents discussed in the Commission's report has been the movement promoting Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) and "apartheid-free" resolutions concerning Israel, such as the one approved by Montague town meeting in October.

The JFWM called on the board to approve the definition of antisemitism established by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), "to identify when anti-Israel rhetoric crosses into harassment;" to reject BDS resolutions, "recognizing that these actions isolate your Jewish constituents;"

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

District Decides to Restart Search for Superintendent

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – The regional school committee voted Tuesday night to declare a failed search for superintendent, after determining that the pool of finalists had been reduced to one before it had a chance to conduct interviews.

Interviews with two candidates, Brian Ricca and Marc Gosselin, had been planned for the evening, but chair Jane Oakes explained to the committee that they faced a "quandary."

Ricca, she explained, had ac-

cepted the superintendent position in Southern Berkshire Regional district, "pending contract negotiations," but was simultaneously asking to remain under consideration for the Gill-Montague job.

If only one "viable" candidate remained, Oakes said, "then it really means that your search committee has chosen your superintendent." This would not be permissible under Massachusetts's open meeting law, as the screening committee that narrowed the field of applicants had done its work in private.

see **GMRSD** page A5

State Vows to Replace Tiny Bridge to Leverett



WILL GUALE PHOTO

This bridge on North Leverett Road, restricted to light traffic for the last five years, is scheduled to be replaced in the next three.

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – The state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) held an online hearing Tuesday night on initial designs to replace a bridge over the Sawmill River on North Leverett Road that has been closed to two-way traffic since 2021. The hearing lasted only 45 minutes, but contained valuable information on the process for constructing a replacement, and included responses by state officials to concerns raised by several abutters.

The hearing did not include conversations about obtaining the so-called "rights of way" from property owners that will be needed to

rebuild the bridge. These will be negotiated by the town of Montague, although a MassDOT right-of-way expert, Zac Feury, participated in Tuesday's meeting.

The hearing began with an overview of the project by civil engineer Michael Rieger of GFT Infrastructure, the design consultant hired by MassDOT. Rieger said that the current bridge, constructed in 1939, was found to be in a dangerous condition and closed to two-way traffic in 2021. He noted "lots of erosion" on the bank of the Sawmill River around the bridge's abutment, which he attributed partly to a lack of catch basins for drainage.

see **BRIDGE** page A4

High School Sports: B-Ball Wrap-Up

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – Last Wednesday, February 18, the Franklin Tech boys' and girls' basketball teams swept a mixed double-header.

For the ladies, this game meant nothing for postseason rankings, but their opponents Old Colony needed to win or their season would be over, so the Eagles went into the game as potential spoilers.

The reverse was true for the Tech Boys: if they lost against Pathfinder, they would be eliminated from the Vocational tournament, but winning would earn them a trip to Boston.

Girls' Basketball

FCTS 35 – Old Colony 27

The opening game featured multiple fouls, great outside shooting, and a scoreless third quarter for the Eagles, forcing Tech to come from behind to spoil Old Colony's post-season aspirations.

As the girls warmed up, some of the regulars were casually observing the visitors. "It's nice that we're finally playing a team as short as we are," one mother joked.

see **SPORTS** page A4



DAVID HOYT PHOTO

Franklin Tech senior Lindsey Taylor drives to the hoop against Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical defender Abby Cabral in an end-of-season non-tournament home game last week, the Eagles' final game of the season.

Sliding Over Embankments Generally

A Team as Short as We Are.....	A1	Lots of Bobble-Capped Walkers.....	B1
An Unavoidable Fact of Life.....	A2	Hunt is Geared Toward Children.....	B2
Innocuous at First Glance.....	A3	The One-Arm Lady Upstairs.....	B3
Ping-Ponged Off Hands and Bodies.....	A4	Awakenings Among the Tubers.....	B4
After Considerable Technical Wonking.....	A5	Islands of Abandonment.....	B5
Uncomfortably Hot and Uncomfortably Cold.....	A6	Moviola, Durk Drone, Slug Dust.....	B6
Vexatious Failures of the Past.....	A7	Moimus, Zar Nuk, Ccleng, PUP.....	B7
Wasn't Greeted With Enthusiasm.....	A8	Oldsters Who Wake Up.....	B8



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TILT ALARM

In a bid, apparently, to finally drain the pinball that has been bonking back and forth off the town's flashing rails since October, two Montague selectboard members moved hastily Monday night to meet a request from the Jewish Federation of Western Mass to "commit to inclusion" – and to "adopt a definition."

Antisemitism is real, growing in our time, and a problem we should all be committing to solve, in our country and in our communities. Simultaneously, the state of Israel is a major geopolitical player and an exception in numerous ways. The redevelopment of the Gaza Strip is the first project for the Board of Peace, touted as a private-sector alternative to the United Nations, chaired by our current president for as long as he lives, and gathering pledges of tens of thousands of troops. This week the US ambassador to Israel, motivated by a religious zealotry entirely of his own, stated that it would be "fine" if Israel conquers all the territory between the Nile and Euphrates rivers. It is ridiculous to think people should not be focused on this, or upset and worried about it.

There are also urgent and nearby problems that could use a united front of action from local people, and we agree with the letter on this page calling it "rather depressing" to watch endless bonking about town meeting's vote last October to condemn the permanent rule over the stateless Palestinians through the lens of apartheid.

We also agree with the selectboard chair who cast the dissenting vote when he said: "I find it unlikely that taking these actions

today will end polarization due to the ongoing genocide in Gaza."

Others are responding, here and elsewhere, to the board's "adoption" of the IHRA's definition of antisemitism. But one important detail has so far been left out.

The packet sent by JFWM to towns around the region refers extensively to the Final Report published in December by the state's Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism. However, it *extensively misrepresents the Report*.

JFWM writes: "The 2025 Commission report identifies the BDS movement as a primary driver of a hostile climate for Massachusetts Jews." *It does no such thing.* The 73-page report does not mention BDS. It recommends refraining from "academic boycotts that target individuals or institutions based on race, religion, national origin, or ancestry," but does not identify these as a major cause of the current rise of antisemitic incidents, as JFWM states it does.

JFWM's third page, "Key Findings from the 2025 Special Commission Final Report," lists numerous assertions and even quotations (e.g., "roadmap," "normalization," "pipeline to violence") that *simply do not appear* in the Report.

And as for "Discriminatory Litmus Tests," the Report does not ever mention "Apartheid-Free pledges," but ironically it *does* warn that "definitions," such as IHRA's, "have also become a lightning rod and litmus test used by some to raise fears, engender animosity, and create division."

We urge readers to put the documents side by side. The extent of the misrepresentation is shocking.

'We Cannot Be So Monomaniacal'

It's rather depressing to read a newspaper, like the February 12 issue, where almost every story is about how schools all over the valley are facing huge cuts, but the opinion section cannot move past a non-binding resolution the Montague town meeting passed months ago.

While we should not ignore injustice on the other side of the globe, we cannot be so monomaniacal as to focus solely on it while our own institutions are left to rot. Cutbacks are made out to be an unavoidable fact of life, but this is

not true. It's a political decision to inadequately fund education, one that only happens because politicians assume that the public is resigned to it.

Did we not pass an extra tax to fund the schools a couple years ago? What happened to that money? Where are our State lawmakers on this? What local organizations are fighting for better school funding? How can we become more involved?

Marcus Graly
Northfield



Dierdre Garvin Pleasant is the assistant station manager at Montague Community TV. She has been with the station for a decade, scheduling equipment signouts, shoots, and programming; maintaining the website and social media; and filming events. It's fun in the summer, she says, when "people are bopping in and out" of the station, which is located on Second Street next to the Country Creemee restaurant and ice cream stand.

Letters to the Editors

Beautiful Tribute

Thank you to the *Reporter* for a beautiful (and beautifully written) tribute to Brian McCullough. I wish I had known this wonderful man who had such an interesting life. His final months are a great example of living fully and creating a family of friends.

To everyone who cared for Brian: well done.

Anne Jemas
Great Falls

Saddened

As a rabbi I was saddened to see members of the Montague selectboard vote to accept the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

While selectboard members argued to create an inclusive Montague, what they fail to recognize is that the IHRA definition is the opposite of inclusion.

Jewish and Palestinian voices who are fighting for Palestinian life are not only silenced, they are criminalized through the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, which claims that anti-zionism is a form of antisemitism.

Rabbi Esther Azar
Amherst

Decision Hasty, Undemocratic

I am a Jewish resident of Greenfield who deeply appreciates Montague's adoption of the Apartheid-Free Communities pledge. I understand that Jewish safety and Palestinian freedom are intertwined, and that accurately naming Israel's apartheid system is a critical first step towards advancing Palestinian human rights.

I am writing in disappointment and disbelief that the Montague selectboard chose to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism at the February 23 selectboard meeting. I am also deeply disappointed that the selectboard voted to reject the BDS movement – a call by Palestinian civil society to boycott Israeli products while Israel commits human rights violations.

It is very troubling that these decisions were made without input from the public. We saw broad support for Palestinian rights – including from many Jewish residents – at the town meeting last October where the vote to adopt the Apartheid-Free Communities pledge was taken.

The Jewish Federation of Western MA – who asked the selectboard to adopt the IHRA definition and to reject BDS – does not represent all or even most Jews in their blind support of Israel despite the country's grave abuses.

The IHRA definition of antisem-

itism is widely disputed and controversial. The claim by its proponents that the IHRA definition is the "consensus" definition of antisemitism is patently false. Even one of the main drafters of the IHRA definition, Professor Kenneth Stern, frequently speaks out against the way it is being used to silence legitimate debate, saying: "Rightwing Jews are weaponizing it."

The IHRA definition of antisemitism creates a slippery slope which will chill free speech and curtail movements for justice, particularly the movement for Palestinian human rights. As an anti-Zionist Jew, it puts me and my community at risk, and it stifles our ability to fight for a more just and peaceful world.

Antisemitism is a real threat, and it must be addressed through a lens of collective liberation, not a crackdown on those advocating for human rights in Palestine.

I urge the selectboard to reconsider this hasty and undemocratic decision. Please do not give in to the demands of the Jewish Federation of Western MA, which has been using its platform to bully and intimidate towns and institutions throughout the state.

Sincerely,

Molly Merrett
Greenfield

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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

Another snowstorm-and-a-third since last we checked in. We've really been getting walloped this year. Shout out to the kid downstairs for shoveling – first time in my life I've subcontracted that job.

Heard at the school committee meeting, did not fit it into the school committee meeting article:

Turners Falls High School students will compete this Saturday, February 28 at 7 p.m. against a team from Amherst Regional High School in *As Schools Match Wits*, an academic quiz show broadcast by New England Public Media.

Or do they compete earlier, and it's aired then? I've never thought to wonder whether the show is broadcast live. Best of luck to the hometown contestants, in any case, and their wits.

Looks like we're now up to four candidates with hats thrown in the ring for Natalie Blais's state rep seat this fall.

I mentioned a few weeks ago that Corinne Corryat of Deerfield, Blais's aide, had announced a candidacy. Next up was Greenfield resident Jonathan Creque, who formerly worked for Elizabeth Warren, and Whately town clerk Amy Lavallee.

The fourth is Lora Wondolowski, who lives in Greenfield and works as communications director at the Peace Development Fund and serves as Greenfield city council president.

I'm entirely grateful to my colleagues at the *Greenfield Recorder* for staying on top of all this. I don't imagine that will change, unless someone is looking to use our pages to launch a campaign...

I covered the eight-way race Blais won back in 2018 when Steve Kulik left office. That one was hectic! One candidate dropped out in July, and then Blais won a seven-way Democratic Party primary in September with 40.4% of the vote and skated through the general election unopposed.

Eight years ago feels like a very different time, though none of the "rural issues" the candidates debated back then have particularly been resolved. We'll see where it goes this year.

This is not at all a comment on that batch of candidates, or that House race at all, but I've been thinking more and more about sortition – the idea that public administrative and governance jobs could be filled by lottery, rather than by popularity contest. It would change everything about how we treat public office. It's been done before.

I wrote a few weeks back on another page that "[v]olunteering for the difficult work of administering austerity is no one's idea of a good time," and I've been surprised by the number of readers who've commented on it. That does seem to be the game, right? Certainly at the local level, and office-holding at the state level doesn't look that much more rewarding.

Anyway, this is all a little useless and thought-experimenty – if we ever get to do it all over, maybe we could set things up differently? – but this week I happened across the website of Sortition USA (www.sortitionusa.org), an organization promoting the concept, and I'm passing it along to you here. What would it look like at the town level? "Oh no, I'm on the board of assessors this year..." Would we let people trade?



Here's the Montague Center branch library sandwich board, coming through with some hard seasonal truths. Thanks to Will for the pic.

The Dar Williams song it's referencing talked about a February that lasted into March, I

think, i.e. exceeded and emotionally overspilled its original time-container, sort of a different scenario, but I like it better this way: until March. It gives a better sense of the time dilation we can sometimes experience, out here on the cold edge of the orbit, the door at the end of the hall continuously Alice in Wonderland-ing away from us even as we approach it...

It also reminds me of a different line, by a different late-1990s Northeastern coffeehouse-y singer-songwriter: "Life is short, but the days and nights are long." I had to look it up – it was Cheryl Wheeler? – but that's a hell of a line, given that I probably only heard it once on the radio and it has stuck in my head for decades now.

FirstLight Power gives out grants for "community-building and sustainability" projects – the deadline is April 3 – for more information, see firstlight.energy/purpose/firstlight-sustains/.

Here's an open call for a book reviewer: History Press – an imprint of Arcadia, which does all those slim local-history photo books among other ubiquitous lines of business – sent us a press release for *Herman Melville in the Berkshires*, out next month, by Pittsfield Historic Commission chair John S. Dickson.

"Herman Melville first came here as a young boy but was so inspired by the surroundings that he returned to live here for thirteen years during one of the most productive writing periods of his life," the promo copy reads. "He finished his masterpiece, *Moby-Dick*, in his first year... he wandered on foot and horseback to all corners of the county, tapping into the Berkshires in his art. The places he explored are sprinkled through the pages in his stories..."

Granted, the Berkshires are the other Western Mass (though see story, Page B1), but if anyone is interested enough in this to want to write up a little review for the rest of the readers, I'll ask them for a copy. First come, first served...

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

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Another Letter to the Editors

'Deeply Disturbed' by Board's Decision

I am deeply disturbed to learn that the Montague selectboard, without any public notice or comment, decided to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-semitism. It is an extremely controversial definition that infringes upon free speech. Even its author has rejected it, and has written about how it is being used to silence criticism of Israel. I offer some personal examples below.

Although it may look innocuous at first glance, several of the examples that accompany the IHRA definition classify criticism of Israel as examples of antisemitism. As a historian of Jewish heritage who has toured holocaust sites in Germany, Poland, and Ukraine and has visited Israel and the West Bank, I wonder why is it antisemitic to "[d]raw comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis," if one believes there may be, in fact, some valid comparisons?

Watching 2.3 million Palestinians trapped in an area 25 miles long and 7.5 miles at its widest, from which they could not flee, being bombarded and denied sufficient food, water, and medical treatment,

does, in fact, remind me of the Nazi ghettos, dehumanization of their victims, and disregard for civilian life and suffering.

Another IHRA example states that claiming that the state of Israel is a "racist endeavor" is antisemitic. However, Israel was founded as a Jewish state, and Jews have greater rights than others within Israel. My Jewish ancestry gives me the right to move to Israel and obtain citizenship and all its benefits, just by virtue of my ethnic/religious heritage. In contrast, Palestinians who have lived in the region for centuries and who were expelled in 1948 or fled later wars are denied their right to return.

Treating people differently based on their ethnicity or religion would fit many definitions of racism.

Under the IHRA definition, I could also be labeled antisemitic for calling Israel an apartheid state. Indeed, the many human rights organizations which have documented in detail Israel's apartheid system could also be labeled antisemitic.

It is the IHRA examples which make it so dangerous, and these were never even read or debated at the selectboard meeting.

Moreover, many Jews reject the

IHRA definition. Indeed, it makes many of us feel less safe. The claim that the IHRA definition is the "consensus," or a "non-polarizing" definition, is false. There are other definitions, such as the Jerusalem Declaration. With such controversy surrounding the IHRA definition, the only reason to promote it is because it can be used to silence criticism of Israel – in other words, it is a political tool that threatens free speech, academic freedom, protest, and dissent.

Even more ironic is the fact that the many anti-Zionist Jews who do not support the actions of the state of Israel could be classified as antisemitic under the IHRA definition. Adopting this definition also creates a legal nightmare that can contribute to resentment against Jews, and can even increase antisemitism by singling Jews out. There are no legally binding definitions for any other form of ethnic, racial, or religious discrimination in Massachusetts antidiscrimination law.

Dozens of US Jewish organizations, including the Union for Reform Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and Women of Reform Judaism say the IHRA

definition should not be codified into law. More than 300 scholars of Holocaust and Jewish History have endorsed a rejection of the IHRA definition. The American Association of University Professors condemned it as a threat to academic freedom. The American Bar Association removed it from its definition of antisemitism. And more than 100 civil society groups, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the ACLU, and the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem urged the United Nations not to adopt it.

If the Montague selectboard had allowed public comment and debate, these concerns could have been raised. The IHRA definition of antisemitism is controversial within the Jewish community. The Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts does not speak for all Jews.

I rarely write to another town's newspaper, but the Jewish Federation sent the same packet to city councilors here in Easthampton. It has undertaken a regional campaign that impacts the free speech rights of all of us.

Mara Dodge
 Easthampton

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BRIDGE from page A1

The plan is to replace the bridge with an entirely new one with enhanced drainage and stabilize the river bank with riprap, large angular stones or concrete often used for banks and shorelines. Construction would take place in two staged “halves,” leaving enough space available to traffic so that the road would not need to be closed. The current stop signs would be replaced by temporary signals during the work.

Nine easements – two temporary and seven permanent – will need to be secured by the town, because the project is on a local, not a state, road. Property owners may donate the easements but are eligible for “just compensation” under state and federal law, said Feury.

The question-and-answer period was dominated by two abutters concerned about the impact of the construction project, and the location of the new bridge, on their driveways. Matt Howard, who owns property to the southwest of the bridge, said maps presented at the hearing seemed to show the new bridge would extend 12 feet further west, which would block his driveway.

Rieger said that the map showed the bridge’s guardrail “stops at the driveway.” A rather unconvinced Howard said he would not object if MassDOT paid for moving his driveway.

Howard also commented on the loss of riverbank next to his house since he bought the land in 1982.

Karen Schweitzer, who owns



WILL QUALE PHOTOS

the property to the northeast of the bridge, was concerned that the project would block her tenant’s driveway, in which case she might have to “adjust” the tenant’s rent downward, leading to a loss of income.

Feury said the construction could not “block access” under state law, and that “we need to look into that.”

Schweitzer also expressed concern that old-growth trees along North Leverett Road might be removed. Project manager Ryan Wilcox said MassDOT prefers to maintain old growth. “I’ll get back to you on that,” he said.

Larry Peters, assistant chief of the Montague Center fire department, asked whether the new bridge would accommodate heavy trucks. MassDOT civil engineer Shu Tan said it would be able to accommodate fire trucks that meet

federal regulations.

Peters also asked if the new bridge could be the site of a “dry hydrant,” where trucks could pump water from the river. When MassDOT officials expressed some uncertainty, Peters commented, “You’re in a rural community, not Boston.” This elicited friendly laughter from the state officials and consultants.

In response to a question from Montague Center resident Jeri Moran, Rieger said the project design will be completed over the next year, and that after a review period, a “notice to proceed” with construction could be issued in June 2027. He added that the “typical” construction time for a project of this type is two years, and predicted a completion date in June 2029.



Top left: Stop signs at either entrance to the bridge nudge drivers to take turns.

Top right: If a year is stamped in the concrete, it was obscured by snow this week.

Above: The Sawmill flows northward under a series of snow bridges – with lower carrying capacity – before reaching the North Leverett Road bridge, which is posted with an 18-ton, two-axle weight restriction.

SPORTS from page A1

One of the fathers, who was studying his phone, added, “They came a long way.”

“Yes,” another regular agreed. “Plymouth Colony is now Plymouth County, and Rochester is on the far southern end of the county.”

Although there was not a bevy of OC fans in attendance, they made their voices heard. Their ver-

sion of cheering was hooting and hollering. And later in the game, when one of their girls was injured, there was a brief back and forth between supporters.

There weren’t a lot of Franklin Tech students in the audience, either, probably because it was school vacation week, but the players’ families made up for it.

Tech attempted to establish dom-

inance in the opening period by throwing three-point bombs, but their first four shots clanged harmlessly against the rim. Two quick fouls by Lindsey Taylor gave the Cougars two points and possession, but after a steal, Brayleigh Burgh scored and was fouled on her way to the hoop, so Tech took a 3-2 lead.

It got a little sloppy from there as the ball ping-ponged off hands and bodies, and at 2:17, coach Joe Gamache sent in four new girls. Tech nudged ahead to 9-4. With 20 seconds left in the quarter Cayleigh Aldrich committed a foul, and the OC landed one shot to make it 9-5 after a quarter.

In the second period, Gamache instituted his famous full-court press, leading to an early foul. It would be the first of many in the stanza, committed by both teams. OC committed their fourth team foul midway through the period and their fifth just seconds later, putting Tech in the bonus.

The Cougars then instituted their own full-court press, and Gamache sent four new girls in. Though more shooting fouls were called, neither team had much luck at the line, but Burgh hit a couple of three-pointers, and with 1:15 remaining in the half sank two free throws to make it 20-7.

With 26.7 left, Tech was called for their fifth foul, putting the visitors in the bonus. Both shots landed, and at the midgame break the score was 20-9.

The third period featured several battles for the ball, and five new Eagles, but Tech went scoreless while the Black Cats chipped away at the lead. With 10 seconds left in the period, OC hit a three-pointer to narrow the gap to 20-17.

Tech had difficulty maintaining

possession early in the fourth, and Old Colony took full advantage. A minute 20 seconds into the period, they took the lead back, 21-20.

That’s when the visitors in the stands got loud. But Abigail Dobias hit a three, and Taylor sank a pair of foul shots to wrestle back a 25-21 lead. The OC scored again, but the game got even more physical. Having missed multiple foul shots in the early periods, Tech finally began hitting the freebees, and soon they were ahead 31-23.

After a Cougar one-pointer, one of the team’s players was injured, and as she was being tended to on the court a brief argument broke out among some of the mothers in the crowd. After play resumed, Taylor hit a field goal, and Burgh followed up with a foul shot to make it a 34-24 game. The last four points would all come off foul shots, with the Eagles holding on to take it 35-27.

Burgh led the Eagles with 16 points, followed by Dobias with 7, Taylor with 6, and Madison Ross and Samantha Duncan with 3 each. Although this was the last game for the 2025-26 Eagles, they went out on top with the come-from-behind victory.

Boys’ Basketball

FACTS 44 – Pathfinder 36

In the boys’ game, Franklin Tech needed to win or they would be eliminated from the Vocational tourney. The visiting Pathfinder Pioneers, who had lost to the Eagles by five points just six days earlier, were out to avenge that loss and end Franklin’s hopes for a seat in the playoffs.

Tech came out shooting. Mason Bassett and Hunter Donahue hit three-pointers, giving the Eagles an early 6-0 lead. The Pioneers nar-

rowed the gap to two, but Brody Hicks sank a pair of free throws and followed up with a two-pointer to make it 10-4. Then with the score 10-6, Donahue scored from underneath to make it 12-6. Pathfinder scored again and after one complete, Tech was leading 12-8.

The Eagles went on a tear in the second period off steals, long passes, fast breaks, and two three-pointers by Nolyn Stafford, and Franklin was on top 24-13 at the break.

Early in the third, Tech hit a foul shot to make it 25-13, but Pathfinder hit their own one-pointer and followed up with two threes and one inside the arc to make it 25-22 with 3:32 left in the period. Tech regained their footing, scoring the final nine points of the period to reestablish a 34-22 going into the fourth quarter.

In the fourth, both teams hit from the outside, and both committed shooting fouls. Interestingly, there was none of the usual distracting noise and foot-stomping when players took foul shots – the crowd simply let the players shoot in peace. But as time ticked away with Tech maintaining the lead, the Pathfinders were forced to intentionally foul.

With the score 44-36, Tech got the ball and raced down the court. They could easily have scored, but instead just dribbled it out for the last 15 seconds while the crowd cheered their sportsmanship.

Six players scored for Tech: Stafford (11), Donahue (10), Mason Bassett and Hicks (8 each), Landon Benz (5), and Cole Bassett (2).

The win qualified the Eagles for the Vocational playoffs. This Thursday they venture to Malcolm X Boulevard in Boston to take on Ruth Batson Academy.



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Tech’s Sarah Beckwith drives the ball past Old Colony defender Lilah White as the Eagles hosted the Cougars last week.

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GMRSD from page A1

For a half hour, the school committee debated whether Ricca should still be counted as viable.

“While I appreciate that he wants to still be considered here, that’s putting us in a bad spot,” said Montague member Wendy Thompson. “I don’t think we should wait around to find a superintendent until he settles his business with the other district.”

Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) field director Tracy Novick, who is administering the search process on behalf of the district, said that if it is suspended the district would have two options: immediately reposting for the position, which she predicted would be unlikely to draw new applicants, or securing the services of an interim superintendent for another six to 12 months and reposting it in the fall.

“To be honest with you, I haven’t run into this before,” Novick said.

Oakes said the district’s attorney had advised the committee it could not ask interim superintendent Tari Thomas, who was sitting next to her, if she would be available until the posting for the permanent position was no longer open.

The committee considered giving Ricca an ultimatum that he must decide by the weekend whether he was truly considering the job, but the tone gradually shifted. “If he’s literally got an engagement ring on his finger and he’s waiting for the wedding ring on the other, then he’s not legit,” said Montague member Steve Ellis.

“Right – you can’t have that many boyfriends,” added Oakes.

In the end, the vote was unanimous.

“None of this is intended to be a slight in any way to Dr. Gosselin, who may be a fabulous candidate,” Ellis noted. The committee agreed to discuss the next steps at its next meeting on March 10.

“Any clarity that might be provided relative to whether our current interim superintendent would have interest and availability,” Ellis

added, would be helpful.

Asked after the meeting if she has plans next year, Thomas laughed. “Not yet,” she said, adding that she is currently on leave from a part-time position coaching new school superintendents, “because this work is very consuming.”

Other Business

Business manager Joanne Blier, who is overseeing the reduction of a working deficit in the district’s FY’27 budget that stands at \$1.79 million, said the administrative team could not yet announce a list of cuts, but offered a breakdown: \$1.35 million in salaries, and roughly \$240,000 in benefits, \$136,000 in supplies, \$51,000 in contracted services, and \$9,000 in “other” costs.

“There is no way to hit our affordable assessment number, and hit the revenues that we have available to us... without reducing staff,” Blier said. “It’s impossible.”

“We’re really going to lean in to what matters most,” said Thomas, “and that is strengthening our pre-K through 12 multi-tiered support system... Student growth has to remain our top priority.”

Turners Falls High School principal Loren Messina presented changes to the high school program of studies planned for next year, including reordering the required social studies courses to teach world history before American history; new wording reflecting the requirement to take, but not pass, the standardized MCAS test; the combination of pre-calculus and AP calculus as year-long courses taught on alternating days; and electives on video game music, world religions, and “Etsy-style entrepreneurship and design.”

While students in the latter course “don’t publicly sell [their crafts], they do run a business model within the building,” Messina explained, “so everybody get your wallets ready.” The committee approved the changes. Ellis praised Messina’s organization and suggested “strongly” that the presentation be shared with town

meeting leaders. “It’s really important for them to see that there is a lot of proactive energy around showing what great opportunities there are here,” he said.

An annual vote on whether to cap enrollment in the Commonwealth Virtual Schools at 1% of the total Gill and Montague student population went differently than in past years, as the actual figure, 9 of 839 total students, stands at 1.07%. After considerable technical working the committee voted 5 to 4 to increase the cap to 1.25%.

Nomination papers for school committee will be available next week, and three seats are opening up. Ellis, who is filling the final year of a seat that became vacant last spring, announced that he does not plan to run. “I love the people, and I love the schools – it’s just that I need to realign my time with some other things that I have responsibility for,” he said.

Gill member Bill Tomb and Montague member Cliff Spatcher told the *Reporter* they intend to run again to hold their seats.



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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

New Tech Role May Be Salaried

By **KEITH WATERS**

The Erving selectboard met last Thursday, February 19.

Jacob Smith, the selectboard chair, is also the town’s part-time information technology (IT) coordinator, and recused himself for a discussion of the potential hire of a full-time IT person. The town is working on a version of a job description to present to the state for help with planning and hiring ideas.

Town administrator Bryan Smith said he had made the town aware that the state has a program to help in this process, as so many are dealing with it as the information landscape digitizes and seemingly ev-

erything is going “online.”

Selectboard members Jim Loynd and Bill Bembury seemed to like the idea of the position being salaried, as opposed to hourly, as it would make the position available at any time for assisting other town staff with their IT needs. If the town can find someone to sign a salary position contract, the board members seemed to think that would be more advantageous for the town than paying a worker hourly in a position that seems likely to involve significant overtime.

Another question related to the new position is where the IT office would be. Jacob Smith and Bryan Smith said they would think about this matter more and bring results back to the board.

Bryan Smith explained that it was an issue not only for IT. “We’ve got about four or five offices that are sharing space right now, or don’t have dedicated space,” he said. “Long term, this is not sustainable.”

Jacob Smith went through the proposed job description with the board, and brought up that the current draft has a heavy emphasis on security – to the point that Erving may not find candidates with the specified knowledge or certifications willing to work at the likely wages or salary – but does not specify the help desk role the officials have been discussing as part of the job.

He also mentioned that if the town wants help with printers, it should be explicitly written in, as they are a contentious item in the IT field.

Trash and Fuel

Spring is getting closer, and a date has been set for the “Almost Anything Goes” bulky waste pickup day: May 4. The guidelines will not be changed from past years.

Speaking of material removal, it has come time for Erving to think about its contract for curbside waste pickup. Casella has been the vendor for the last six years.

Bembury and Loynd, citing no complaints with the company, said they felt comfortable with renewing the company’s contract. Bryan

Smith and Bembury will take the lead in renegotiating with Casella.

The board voted to approve another three-year contract for heating oil to the same vendor it has used recently, Sprague Operating Resources of Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Other Business

The owner of about 33 acres of forest property, contiguous with the existing Erving State Forest and with frontage on Route 2, has been in touch with the state Department of Conservation and Recreation about having it folded into the state forest. State senator Jo Comerford and representative Susannah Whippies are aware of the offer.

Massachusetts requires the town to publicly announce such proposals, so other residents can ask questions or bring up issues if they have any. The contact is deputy commissioner of policy and public affairs Kendra Amaral, who can be emailed at Kendra.Amaral@mass.gov.

The selectboard agreed to release Ziva the police dog to her former handler, retired K9 officer Laura Gordon. The town had to check with the agency where Ziva came from, which had the first right of refusal in the case of the rehoming of the dog. The agency agreed to the town giving the dog to Gordon.

After the public topics, the board closed its meeting to the public to discuss five executive-session topics. Three concerned strategy in negotiations with town staff, unionized and non-unionized.

Also on the agenda were “the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual,” potentially including discipline or dismissal, and “the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto.”

The selectboard was scheduled to meet again on Monday, February 23, but this was postponed due to the snowstorm.

Mike Jackson contributed additional writing.

MONTAGUE REPORTER



Montague residents Naomi Brave and Clay Larsen are sand plain enthusiasts. They are seen above on a recent trip to Lake Wales Ridge State Forest in central Florida, along with our January 22 edition.

Going somewhere this spring? Take us with you! Send photos to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER’S COMP

WENDELL from page A1

properties, and the average annual residential tax bill in 2025 was about \$5,500, Hemingway said. Under the single tax rate proposal approved by the board Wednesday night, residents can expect their bills to increase by about \$30 to \$100 annually.

Hemingway works for the Regional Resource Group, a tax assessment firm contracted by the town. He said that the residential tax rate has been decreasing overall in recent years, and could eventually drop below \$20 per \$1,000 of property value.

Before meeting with the selectboard, chair Laurie DiDonato attended a meeting of the Orange selectboard and the Mahar Regional School District *ad hoc* committee. When asked if she wanted to update the board about it, DiDonato said there was “almost too much to discuss in this setting,” and alluded to a Mahar school committee meet-

ing on March 12, when “everything is going to go down.”

Wednesday night’s meeting included a cornucopia of other municipal matters.

Selectboard members unanimously approved the state Department of Conservation and Recreation’s acquisition of 13.3 acres of woodland on Old Farley Road. Wendell Free Library director Miriam Warner discussed the need to write up a formal contract in order to use grant funds to install new audio-visual equipment in the library. New Salem finally signed a road maintenance agreement with Wendell.

Up to \$440,000 in grant funding for the Farley Road bridge repair project will be made available through the Rural Development Fund, as long as those funds are used by June 30. The project is still awaiting the state Department of Transportation’s approval, DiDonato said, and Erving, which shares the bridge and its costs, has agreed

Wendell Special Town Meeting Warrant: Monday, March 9

ARTICLE 1: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from free cash \$159.00 to pay a Bill of Prior Year for Town Building Expense 001-190-5400, or take any action thereon.

ARTICLE 2: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from free cash \$3,331.00, for Regional Animal Control Services 001-292-5110, or take any action thereon.

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from free cash, \$2,491.00 to add to the Town Clerk’s salary 001-161-5100 for increased responsibility of monitoring and posting meetings on website, or take any action thereon.

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from free cash \$8,736.00 to add to the Town Coordinator’s salary line 001-123-5110, or take any action thereon.

ARTICLE 5: To see if the Town will vote to accept G.L. c.200A, §9A, as amended by section 65 of Chapter 188 of the Acts of 2010, which includes new notice requirements and provides an alternative procedure for the Town to follow for managing abandoned funds (unclaimed checks or “tailings”).

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from free cash \$269,854.00 to the General Stabilization Fund 821-919-5400, or take any action thereon.

to the repair plans. Treasurer Carolyn Manley confirmed the town had finally received a check from Erving for some of the shared work.

“Since money is coming from a few different places, we can use the June 30 money to pay first, get it spent, and use the other money to fill in later,” said selectboard member Paul Doud.

The board also discussed the

possibility of using grant funding through the state’s Green Communities program to make energy-efficiency upgrades at either the Swift River School or the town offices. Town administrator Kelly Tyler mentioned that the heating system in the town office building is faulty, causing the building to fluctuate between uncomfortably hot and uncomfortably cold temperatures.

Before the meeting adjourned, Tyler reminded the board of a meeting next Monday at 6:30 p.m. with all town committees to discuss next fiscal year’s budget.

A special town meeting with six routine financial articles on the warrant (*see above*) is also scheduled for the following Monday, March 9, at 7 p.m.

**OUTAGE** from page A1

outage, which had affected every customer of the municipally-owned ISP. Desorgher had asked for a list of the names and addresses of the VoIP customers, who might not have a means to communicate during the outage.

Lunt could not tell her the names and addresses of the VoIP customers – his hands were tied. “My understanding is that giving you this information is breaking the law,” said Lunt, according to draft minutes of the meeting reviewed by the *Montague Reporter* and *The Shoestring*.

“I would never ask someone to break the law,” Desorgher reportedly replied, “but I want to find a way to be able to protect the city as well.”

Although GCET is municipally owned, this doesn’t mean local officials – even the mayor – may access customer data. Federal privacy law forbids telecom providers from disclosing identifying information about telephone subscribers, and GCET could potentially be fined millions of dollars for doing so.

The privacy dispute was a symptom of a broader power struggle between GCET and the mayor’s office. Desorgher can call the public works director, for example, and have snow cleared from the sidewalks. But GCET is a separate entity from the city, and she cannot direct its staff to do anything.

GCET is a municipal light plant, a type of quasi-independent utility authorized under Massachusetts law. It was formed following a 2015 vote of Greenfield residents for municipal broadband, at a time when about 40% of residents weren’t served by any high-speed internet provider. The goal was to extend coverage to 90% of the city.

The early years were turbulent. Though owned by the city, GCET is funded by subscription revenue rather than tax dollars. The plan approved by voters in 2015 created a five-member board of commissioners to oversee the entity, but under Lunt’s predecessor, interim director Dan Kelly, GCET was expected to take orders from the mayor.

Kelly clashed with city officials over accounting practices, and was fired in September 2017 after refusing to turn over financial documents. That December, the state legislature approved GCET’s board of commissioners. Kelly sued under the state whistleblower statute, but the state Appeals Court sided with the city in 2022.

Lunt and other staff report to GCET’s board, rather than the mayor, but this independence has a limit: under state law, GCET cannot borrow money without a vote of the city council. And according to Lunt, the council has not approved a revenue bond for GCET in years, despite its repeated requests.

State financial filings show GCET’s enterprise fund has held less than \$42,000 in retained earnings at the end of each of the last three fiscal years. For comparison, the



The entire GCET network was brought down by the router failure, though many customers had service restored after a day.

piece of hardware that failed this month retails at between \$40,000 and \$100,000.

A Cascade of Issues

On Monday, February 9, at approximately 1:16 p.m., GCET staff noticed that one of the utility’s two edge routers – the gateway connecting the city’s network to the internet – had lost several critical interfaces, according to Lunt. Every customer on the network went dark.

Troubleshooting with Juniper Networks, Inc., the router’s manufacturer, led GCET “very quickly to believe it was a hardware fault,” Lunt said in a telephone interview this week. But though the terms of the service contract should have required Juniper to immediately overnight ship a replacement, the company insisted on performing its own extensive diagnostic tests. A return merchandise authorization was not approved until nearly 8 p.m., too late for the equipment to arrive the next day.

The replacement router arrived in Greenfield at around 10:30 a.m. Wednesday. By then, Lunt’s team had managed to restore service to roughly half of GCET’s customers by rerouting traffic through the network’s second router. But as technicians began installing the new hardware, Juniper stopped them: the new router’s firmware had to be upgraded first.

Lunt objected – GCET had been running the failed router on a specific firmware version, and he anticipated that moving to a different software version would cause a cascade of new technical issues downstream – but Juniper’s engineer insisted on a newer release. Hours of upgrades ensued. At 9 p.m. there were still bugs; GCET staff worked through the night to troubleshoot them.

At some point, according to the draft minutes of Lunt’s meeting with Desorgher, the utility’s customer service supervisor went home with his phone, but fell asleep before transferring the line to overnight service, and missed about 50 calls.

“It wasn’t until around 3:15 or 4 a.m. that we were able to fix all the bugs,” Lunt said in the telephone interview. “Networks are about balance, getting things tuned cor-

rectly. When systems go offline you have to confirm data is flowing from the correct IP address, and this takes some time...”

Finally, on Thursday afternoon, after roughly another 12 hours of configuration and troubleshooting, service was fully restored – for most customers, at least; some issues lingered related to users’ improper “unplug it and plug it back in” operations. Lunt said that 11 people canceled their service following the outage.

Lunt said GCET was prepared to deal with an outage, but had not expected the loss of an edge router: “Everything is about how you can mitigate risk, and how much it costs to mitigate it.”

As an example, regional ISPs such as GCET must rely on larger entities, known as Tier 1 providers, to connect with the rest of the internet, and GCET pays \$60,000 a year simply to keep a second Tier 1 provider available as a fallback. “That is something that does go down for minutes, to sometimes hours, at a time,” he said. “We always have a backup, because that’s a failure that we know is going to happen.”

And GCET had a plan for the router’s failure, but not for its replacement being delayed. “Ten years ago, the decision was made to take out the insurance instead of buying a spare router,” Lunt said. To his predecessor, this had seemed preferable to shelling out money up front – the suggested retail price in 2016 was \$47,500 – for a machine that would almost certainly sit unused for years.

Under the Umbrella

Still, some are questioning why the critical equipment was not replaced sooner. Erin Anhalt, the mayor’s chief of staff, pointed last week to the proposal GCET submitted in 2021 to use \$1.28 million of Greenfield’s federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to expand access to customers in the northern area of the city. The cost breakdown included \$150,000 for “core equipment and control software,” including an “upgrade” to the very router which failed this month.

In an interview, Anhalt said that GCET “clearly” knew in 2021 that the router was approaching its end of life, but did not replace it despite being awarded the funds for the project. “That’s one of the big problems,” she said. “It really shows some negligence.”

“‘Negligent’ is a really tough word,” added Desorgher, who said she would instead call it “concerning.”

“We’ve said consistently that the money has to be spent on the North Build,” Lunt said when asked for comment. “To say now that ‘you need to go back two years in time, and you should have replaced the routers then,’ shows a misunderstanding of the original ARPA proposal. It somehow became, in people’s minds, that the money was supposed to be spent on replacing the router – that’s not what we ever said or did.”

Instead, he said, GCET provided the in-

creased capacity required for the buildout by installing new networking cards in the existing core routers.

This is not the first time Desorgher and Lunt have butted heads over the ARPA funding. In 2024, her first year in office, the mayor tried to claw back about \$300,000 of the funding, citing GCET’s lack of progress on the expansion since 2021. A month later, the city council’s ways and means committee unanimously voted to restore the funding.

“My job is oversight,” Desorgher said in an interview with the *Greenfield Recorder* at the time. “I want [GCET] to succeed and I want this to happen, but if I gave somebody \$1 million to pave the street in ’21 and now it’s ’24 and the street wasn’t paved, I’d have to ask what happened to the million.”

A significant cause of the delay, according to GCET staff, has been difficulty in coordinating with the owners of utility poles on “make-ready work” necessary to install cables and transmission equipment – particularly with Verizon, a direct competitor in providing internet services to Greenfield customers. Lunt said the make-ready work has now been completed, and new customers will be added during the next six months.

The funding dispute extends beyond the ARPA-funded project. Though GCET is governed independently and receives no local tax money, it remains under the city’s financial umbrella; like the water and sewer departments, the utility’s money flows through a separate account that tracks its revenues and expenses. For GCET to borrow money for capital expenses, the city must issue bonds.

Lunt said GCET has submitted borrowing requests in five of the last six fiscal years, but none have been approved since 2021, including requests made under the city’s previous mayor, Roxanne Wedegartner. In light of this, he told the *Montague Reporter* and *The Shoestring* this week, GCET is exploring ways to restructure under Chapter 164 of state law that might give its board of commissioners fuller control of its finances by allowing borrowing, removing city council from the equation.

“The previous administration asked us to pursue grants instead [of borrowing],” Lunt said. “We were very successful, and got several million in grants. We will need capital – at some point we’ll say, ‘This has to go through,’ because we have things we need to upgrade or replace.”

As it turns out, this includes the replacement router the utility installed this month. The manufacturer’s end of service life for the pair of edge routers is March 2028. Lunt expects their replacement will cost nearly a quarter million dollars.

This article was written in collaboration between The Shoestring (www.theshoestring.org) and the Montague Reporter.



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MONTAGUE from page A1

and to ensure that town “equity and inclusion” policies “specifically include the Jewish experience and the unique nature of contemporary antisemitism.”

This was followed in the JFWM’s packet by a table which offered specific examples differentiating “legitimate political criticism” of Israeli policy from “Antisemitic BDS / Apartheid-Free Rhetoric.”

The packet did not include the IHRA’s “working definition” of antisemitism, which has gone through changes over the years and has at times been controversial, including within IHRA’s own membership. The core of the definition reads: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.” A source of controversy has been whether a list of 11 examples, seven of which refer to the state of Israel, are to be considered part of the definition.

“As you know, I was not pleased with the resolution at town meeting,” selectboard member Rich Kuklewicz said as the board’s discussion began. “Therefore, I’d like to make a motion that we act on the request from the Jewish Federation of Western Mass and adopt the IHRA definition, which I believe dates to 2016; reject BDS and divestment resolutions, as they’ve discussed; and commit to inclusion.”

Member Marina Goldman seconded the motion.

Kuklewicz explained that he thought the Federation’s requests were reasonable. “I would like to see us become a community that cares,” he said, “a community that is committed to inclusion for everyone, and to refocus our efforts on those things which our board should be focused on, which are local nuts-and-bolts items.”

“The divisiveness I’ve seen since some of these resolutions have been passed,” he added, “has been worse than if we had not acted at all.”

When selectboard chair Matt Lord asked him what divisiveness he had witnessed, Kuklewicz responded that he would “like to stop discussion” and take a vote on the motion.

Goldman said she agreed with Kuklewicz “in that we need to focus

on the safety and well-being of all Montague citizens, whether they’re immigrants, Jews, anything.... Let’s not fly the flag, let’s do the work.”

Lord said he found it odd that the JFWM’s request did not state the IHRA’s definition of antisemitism, but that he had reviewed the chart contrasting legitimate political criticism of Israel with racial attacks, and “[felt] really proud and commend the people who are part of the Apartheid-Free movement [for] how they have engaged in legitimate political criticism.”

After the 2-1 vote to approve the motion, Lord asked town administrator Walter Ramsey to prepare an estimate of the cost of the staff training in the resolution. Ramsey said he would also review the town’s anti-bias policies to see if they need to be updated.

Ramsey noted that the town had received a “huge” public records request from an Amherst resident as to whether the town has engaged in any “policy development discussion” following the town meeting resolution. He told the board that over 15 hours of staff time had been devoted “so far” to responding.

Ramsey later told the *Reporter* he did not believe the request came from the JFWM.

Batteries and Bat Houses

On the topic of the FY’27 town budget, Ramsey said the town had received news from its insurer, the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust, that its insurance premiums are estimated to increase between 16% and 20% in the coming year. For the increase to be limited to the lower figure, he said, the town would have to adopt plan changes that would need to be accepted by its three staff unions.

“For now, we’re putting the projection of 20% back in the budget,” he said.

Ramsey reviewed five “special financial article requests” for the spring town meeting, which are not considered capital requests either because they are not for capital expenditures or because they would cost below \$25,000.

The first was for sending a student to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in Northampton for a program Franklin County Technical School, of which Montague is a member, does not offer. “We don’t know if it’s going to happen, but it’s good to budget for it just in case it does happen,”

Ramsey said.

He recommended that the cost of \$59,000 for the student’s tuition and transportation be paid from funds “repurposed” from previous unspent allocations.

The next two requests, for the resealing of Unity Skatepark and the creation of a small basketball court near the Montague Center ballfield, were presented by parks and recreation commissioner Jon Dobosz. Dobosz said the skate park must be resealed every two to three years. According to a bid in the meeting’s agenda packet, the cost would be \$4,900.

The basketball half-court and hoop would be located on School Street, next to where the public works department stores salt and sand. Dobosz said the department has agreed to “help” with the paving, which is a “huge expense.” The remaining cost would be funded partly by repurposed allocations from the Montague Center park project and partly by a new \$7,326 appropriation.

The next article was for repairs to the Carnegie Library roof, which is reportedly inhabited by bats and also causing rainwater runoff to enter the building’s basement. Though the board did not discuss a cost estimate, a document in the meeting materials estimated \$15,500, some of which could be covered by funds left over from a previous library project.

Kuklewicz said he thought “bats bring a lot of value to the ecosystem, so perhaps if we’re going to evict them from the library, which I understand we don’t want them there, we could somehow look at providing a different home for them.”

Ramsey said he would research the possibility of building bat houses on the property.

The final article bundled together three items for the police department – an evidence refrigerator, radio batteries, and a battery reconditioner – at a total cost of \$12,100. Ramsey noted that Kuklewicz had urged him to see if a surplus refrigerator at town hall could be used, but said he had not yet had time to investigate it. If the surplus unit can be used, he said, the appropriation could be reduced.

No vote was taken on the articles.

Other Business

Town treasurer Eileen Seymour requested that the selectboard allow her to retroactively pay assistant treasurer Charlene Langenback \$915.03 for step increases approved by the board in January. Seymour said this money was already in the current year’s budget, but asked that the board allow her to add \$25.79 due to a gap in the payroll schedule.

The board approved paying Langenback the amended amount.

At the end of the meeting, Ramsey announced that the public works department’s “snow and ice” budget had been totally depleted by the recent storms. He said he would work with town accountant Angelica Desroches to “pursue” a transfer from the reserve fund, which currently contains \$50,000.

He also noted that “towns are allowed to deficit spend,” and “it would just get tacked on to next year’s taxation.”

The selectboard’s next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 2.



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

Here’s the way it was on February 25, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Funding Fact-Finding

On Monday 45 Gill residents attended a special town meeting to vote on five articles. By far the most controversial was Article 4, proposing that Gill donate \$5,000 to Montague to aid in legal processes relating to the proposed Kinder Morgan gas pipeline.

When Fred Chase said he felt the pipeline would not affect Gill, selectboard chair Greg Snedeker responded. “This is most definitely for our own benefit,” he said, describing natural gas as a “dirty fuel.” Asked by fire chief Gene

Beaubien if the money would be used to “say no” to the pipeline, Snedeker replied that the money would be used to support Montague in its fact-finding, rather than take a position on the project.

The article passed on a voice vote.

Editorial: Say It Isn’t True!

Some very bad news: the Country Creemee is being evicted. Since 1993, the Creemee has been a community fixture, one of the crown jewels of Turners Falls, the place where you can chase a hot dog with a towering cone of soft-serve, while watching the comings and goings on the airport runway from a deck chair in the shade. Summer won’t be quite the same this year.

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on February 23, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Gill Assessments Challenged

Bill Bonnette, a resident of Riverview Drive, and his sister Geri Johnson came before the Gill selectboard to renew complaints of excessive and inconsistent property valuations in the recently-designated Riverview District.

Bonnette, who said his tax bill has doubled in the last two years, said the quarter-acre lot his modest wood-frame house is built on is now valued at \$141,000, up from \$30,000 two years ago. Two doors down, he said, another

quarter-acre plot on the river remains valued at \$30,000.

The Riverview District, which features sharply higher property values for some 30 landowners from Munns Ferry Road to the point where Riverview Drive rounds the bend at Bartons Cove, was established after the board of assessors deduced a rise in values for homes overlooking the river, following a handful of high-ticket property transfers.

The board said they would be asking town meeting for \$65,000 for updated assessing software and the services of an outside agency to assist the town in completing a townwide revaluation this year.

140 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on February 24, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

Town meeting day promises to be something after the fashion of an old fashioned circus.

Town Clerk Dana finds that there were 181 births in town last year, 95 deaths and 49 marriages.

A charter has been granted for the institution of an Odd Fellows’ lodge in the village, and is to be known as Eureka lodge. It starts off with 20 charter members, and 30 more have signified their intention of joining as soon as the lodge gets well organized.

A machine has been invented, by which bicyclists can train for races in their own room. It is stationary.

The meeting of the Turners Falls Fire District, called last Thursday evening, was the largest ever seen since the district was organized, and the engine house hall proved too small for the immense gathering, and it was found necessary to adjourn to the skating rink. The sense of the district was clearly and unmistakably opposed to granting the franchise to furnish water to the Turners Falls Company. The voters were practically unanimous and never was there such a harmonious meeting of voters in town, the property owners combining to a man to forever settle the question of water supply so as to remedy all the vexatious failures of the past.

At the Riverside kindling wood mill, Wednesday afternoon, Mary March had part of one finger amputated by one of the presses, and Thursday morning Frank Chapin had his finger ends pinched off.

Brakeman Whitcomb of Fitchburg fell between some freight cars near Erving, Monday night, and was killed.

The Reporter is rushed to press at a 2.40 rate this week. It has this merit about it. As we haven’t time to say anything, nobody will feel aggrieved, and we shall expect no man with a club to “take it out of the editor.”



Montague Community Television News

Make Your Way

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – If you are reading this, then you are already an appreciator of Montague’s homegrown politics and entertainment. If you haven’t yet checked out what MCTV brings on this front, make your way over to a computer or a cable TV to find us on *MontagueTV.org* or Channel 9.

We upload and air new videos constantly. This week we have recordings of the Montague finance committee and selectboard, the GMRSD school committee, and performances at the Shea Theater by the acts 2 Car Garage and Jato-

ba, as well as a beautiful snapshot clip of a protest by Gill Stand Out titled “Lead in Love.”

And if you’ve never been by the station, please stop by. It is not only a welcoming and friendly place, but also a community resource available to anyone interested in learning how to record and produce videos. Come check it out!

We are located at 34 Second Street in Turners Falls, open Mondays through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can email us at infomontaguetyv@gmail.com or even call us up at (413) 863-9200.

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

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NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

'Here We Are Again': Leverett Gagging On Growing Secondary School Costs

By GEORGE BRACE

A lengthy Leverett selectboard meeting Tuesday night included an update on the Amherst-Pelham regional school district budget, presentations on a housing rehabilitation program and the Mill Yard Road bridge project, and a budget hearing for town facilities, among other business.

Leverett's representative to the Amherst-Pelham Regional School Committee (RSC), Tim Shores, reported that the group is planning to vote on a final FY'27 budget for the district, which also includes the towns of Leverett and Shutesbury, on March 24. The current proposal of \$39 million represents a 4.77% increase from the current year and falls short of a level-services budget, which would require an increase of 7.9%, or \$1.14 million.

If approved, Shores said, Leverett's share would increase by \$77,849, or 4.18%, to \$1.4 million.

Shores said the process "comes down to" Amherst, the largest town in the district, picking a number for its own assessment, which increases by 4.11% under the proposal, and the other towns' shares being calculated based on that figure.

Selectboard member Jed Proujansky commented that three of the four towns must agree to the budget, and while he was not suggesting it, the only way to promote an alternative is for two towns to reject the proposal. He added that everyone agrees they want what is best, but that the real question is, "What can we afford?"

Finance committee member Steve Weiss said he had spoken with the chair of the Pelham fin com earlier in the process and gotten the impression that although Pelham is facing serious challenges and discussing closing its elementary school – a move he said "wasn't greeted with enthusiasm" by residents – it might be inclined to go along with its proposed 7.77% increase.

In addition to the operating budget growth, Weiss added, the RSC is proposing increasing Leverett's capital debt assessment from about \$42,000 this year to \$86,000, and

that this is projected to rise to \$275,000 by 2033. He recommended that Leverett should reiterate its support for quality education, but that "the most important message" to give the RSC is that "the increases we've been looking at, for various reasons, are not sustainable."

"We say that every year," board chair Patricia Duffy responded, "and here we are again."

Shores said a four-town meeting is scheduled for Saturday, February 28. While no public comment will be allowed, he encouraged Leverett residents and officials to attend to "find solidarity with the other hill-towns," and to ask for more clarity on the district's capital plan.

Housing Rehab

Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA) community development director Brian McHugh gave a presentation outlining aspects of the housing rehabilitation program administered by FCRHRA and funded by federal community development block grants.

McHugh explained that the program provides low- and moderate-income homeowners with zero-interest loans for safety and energy-efficiency improvements, which are forgiven after 15 years, with some conditions.

Income eligibility requirements for Leverett residents range from \$67,000 maximum for single households to \$126,300 for households with eight members, McHugh said, and the available loan amounts are "generally no greater than \$60,000 per unit" but can rise to \$70,000 in certain cases. The funding is "intended to make improvements to existing conditions," he said, and FCRHRA assists with applications and hiring contractors.

Though no loans are currently available and 15 applicants from Leverett are on a waitlist, McHugh encouraged interested residents to learn more about the program on the town website and pre-apply if they qualify. Pre-applications, he said, will bolster FCRHRA's chances of receiving new CDBG funding for the program this year.

Bridge Material

Tighe & Bond senior project manager Andrea Lacasse provided three options for the selectboard to consider for the state-funded Mill Yard Road bridge replacement project: building the new bridge out of steel, concrete, or timber. She added that her firm recommended concrete.

Lacasse said factors to consider in choosing bridge materials included upfront costs, maintenance and preservation costs, service life, and aesthetics. A steel or concrete bridge would last over 100 years, she said, and a timber bridge over 60.

Life cycle costs beyond initial construction, she continued, would be highest for a timber bridge at \$2.37 million, and lowest for a concrete bridge at \$400,000. She said that there are ways to modify each of the main options – for aesthetics, for example – and that the town's preference would be a factor in the state's funding decision.

The board members said they would study the options and give an answer at their next meeting.

Other Business

Facilities manager Will Stratford presented a \$25,078 non-payroll budget for the maintenance of town buildings, meeting the board's guidance of a maximum 2.5% increase.

Stratford also requested a small stipend to account for the use of his personal pickup truck for town business, and an increase from 10 to 12 hours of paid work. He said he usually works 12 to 16 hours each week, and would like to be compensated for some of the extra time.

The board did not vote on the request.

Proujansky reported that the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust was "looking at" a 13% increase in premiums for providing health insurance to town employees in FY'27, along with a reduction in benefits. He said he would have information about a possible alternative insurer at a future meeting.

The selectboard signed an agreement authorizing overtime pay for election work performed by town clerk Lisa Stratford.

Peter Sylvan was appointed to the conservation commission.

Tip of the week ...

Regular home maintenance is vital for longevity and safety.

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TOWN OF LEVERETT HEARING NOTICE – PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES

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

Changes proposed are in relation to:

- SECTION 3900 Site Plan Review
- SECTION 2200 Use Regulations
- SECTION 2240 Accessory Buildings and Uses
- SECTION 2340 Dimensional Schedule
- SECTION 2400 Accessory Apartments
- SECTION 3120 Schedule of Parking Area Requirements
- SECTION 4400 Flood Hazard District
- SECTION 4500 Stream and Lake Protection District
- SECTION 4970 Ground Mounted Solar Electric
- ARTICLE VI - DEFINITIONS

Complete text of the proposed changes can be found in the Town Clerk's office or at www.tinyurl.com/levzone.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Leverett Dems to Caucus

Leverett's Town Democratic Committee will hold a caucus on Wednesday, March 18 at 7 p.m. at the Leverett town hall to send three delegates and an alternate to the 2026 Massachusetts Democratic State Convention. All registered Democrats in Leverett are eligible to participate.

This year's state nominating convention will be held on Friday, May 29 and Saturday, May 30 at the DCU Center in the city of Worcester.

Any candidate who is not elected

as a delegate by the caucus and is a person that identifies with one or more of the following constituencies: Disability; Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Groups (UREG); LGBTQ; Veteran; or Youth may apply to be an add-on delegate at the caucus or at www.massdems.org.

The Leverett town hall is located at 9 Montague Road, Leverett.

For more information on the caucus or on the Leverett Town Democratic Committee, contact Barbara Tiner, Chair, at BJTiner@icloud.com or (413) 441-3708.

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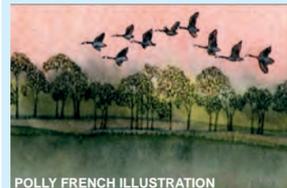


MIKE HENRY PHOTO

features@montaguereporter.org

OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

FEBRUARY 26, 2026



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

ANY DAY NOW

POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

By DAVID BRULE

*It was evening all afternoon
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.*

from Wallace Stevens,
“Thirteen Ways of Looking
at a Blackbird”

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – “Winter’s back breaks,” or so declares the *Old Farmer’s Almanac*.

That was supposed to happen on February 16, but no one seems to have clued in Old Man Winter.

We are quickly approaching March 1, and winter seems to just be getting started!

This morning we are just in between snowstorms, with a nor’easter on the way.

Ever the optimist, I’m looking for signs that this remnant of the annual return of the Ice Age will soon withdraw to its Arctic kingdom, and give us some hope for spring.

I do say that just the other morning, a few days after a month of fierce 10-below-zero mornings finally broke, I was joined for coffee by a robin. Time was when the robin was a sign of spring, but for decades now, robins have spent the winters up here in the north, so I had no idea whether I should put this guy down as a harbinger of the coming season, or if he had been around all along.

Robins and their cousins, the bluebirds, have spent the long winters here with us, feeding on holly berries, bittersweet berries, and yummy mealworms.

This household and Judy-Across-the-Street down here on the Flat have discovered we like having the bluebirds around, and that bluebirds love meal worms, so we keep a steady supply handy for them. But we also have to deal with the scourge of starlings, who are voracious and devour everything in sight. They squeal and squabble, push and shove each other until every feeder is picked clean.

Until a hawk comes through and makes a meal, and a lesson, of one of them!

But back to my robin.

He dropped down from the highest maple and bobbed along on the top of the picnic table that has held life-sustaining seeds and foods for the crowds of juncos and jays all winter long.

I built that table to serve in the old kitchen for family meals. We used it for years until we had enough money to buy a real table. Now it spends time outdoors, serving as a dining surface for the winter birds and a garden work bench in the summer.

Our morning robin headed for the pan of fresh water I had just set out on the table, and he drank and drank. With the snow and ice keeping all water in its frozen state
see **WEST ALONG** page B4

Above: A car is winched back up onto South Prospect Street after sliding over the embankment last Friday. Thanks to reader Mike Henry for the photo.

TRAVEL / THEATER

The Road to Ten 10-Minute Plays

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

PITTSFIELD – This is the sixteenth year that Barrington Stage in Pittsfield has brightened winter with its 10X10 New Play Festival. It’s called 10X10 because each performance includes 10 consecutive plays, each 10 minutes long. Audiences watch five before the intermission, and five after.

“Seems a lot,” we thought, when we first went several years ago. But it’s fun – not least because the 10-minute rule lends itself to comedy, and to the dramatization of oddball ideas that could be tedious spun over a traditional two- or three-act play.

The other thing that makes these plays fun for Franklin County residents is that you have to drive to get to the theater, and while you wouldn’t want to do that in harsh weather, on one of those brilliant sky-blue days that make winter beautiful and bearable the trip is a real joy.

Using Routes 91 and 9, you can reach Pittsfield in roughly 80 to 90 minutes, depending on where you live. It takes about 10 minutes longer on the Mass Pike, and up to two

hours via Routes 2 and 8. All these roads have lovely landscapes and engaging spots to dally in.

Blue Skies and Chocolate

We opted for the shortest: down 91 to exit 26. A right turn at the gray Alera Group building took us to the Look Park rotary a couple of miles further on, where we picked up Route 9 through Williamsburg and Dalton to Pittsfield.

Snow masked the lawns of Look

Park, but there were lots of bobble-capped walkers plus an array of little kids and excited dogs larking in the sunshine. We glimpsed Massachusetts’s industrial past in Florence’s Silk Mill and Haydenville’s Brassworks, now office and business spaces rather than silk or brass makers, and then arrived at our pre-Pittsfield goal, Tangle.

It’s in what its owner calls an “industrial-chic building,” tucked see **PLAYS** page B8



ROMAN IWASIWKA PHOTO / BARRINGTON STAGE COMPANY

Left to right: Avery Whitted, Raya Malcolm, Maya Jackson, Robert Zukerman, and Peggy Pharr Wilson in one of the festival’s 10 short plays.



Prices For Gadgets Will Rise... Buy That Thing You Need Soon!

By RYNE HAGER

TURNERS FALLS – Normally in this infrequently-published column, I recommend *against* buying things. There’s a whole world of smart appliances, AI-powered gadgets, and smart-home goods that make poor purchases unless you’re willing to commit to spending more money frequently to fix their built-in failings.

I stand by that advice, but as a result of recent events, I do have to make one big exception.

With AI investments at every company mandating increased capacity at data centers, there’s an increasingly unignorable knock-on effect that drives me to a simple conclusion: If you’re already set on buying a gadget in the next couple of years, like a new smartphone or laptop, I’d urge you to buy it *really* soon.

The true pros and cons of AI are (and have been) a subject for another column, but the marketing associated with the idea has penetrated essentially every business category in the world, driving investments to combat the fear of being outcompeted by AI-equipped alternatives.

You’ve probably heard a lot recently about the growth of data centers, and the impact it’s going to have on power prices. That’s another consequence we’ll have to anticipate if we aren’t able to bring significantly more power online in the coming years.

But this investment in data centers also means more hardware to power them. “Data centers” are really just a fancy term used to mean “a ton of servers in a single location,” and servers are just a specific type of computer better optimized for the storage and distribution of data.

see **DEVICE** page B2



LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES ILLUSTRATION

Agelaius phoeniceus, the red-winged blackbird.

Pet of the Week



'CHICO'

Meet Chico, a friendly, loving, and cuddly purebred Chihuahua, the little guy of his litter. He is 15 months old, good with children and other dogs, and housetrained to use pads or go outside. For a little guy he has a big bark.

Chico needs some help in the itch department. He has had ongoing skin allergy problems, resulting in many vet visits, but no solutions. Rather than surrendering their beloved Chico, his humans hope to

find a loving home with owners in a better financial position to solve a veterinary mystery.

Chico now lives in Springfield. There is no adoption fee, but he will need to be neutered within thirty days of adoption. To apply, find "Available Community Animals" under the "Adopt" menu at www.dakinhumane.org. A potential adopter must submit an application, interview and meet the pet, and sign an adoption contract.

DEVICE from page B1

These are the places where the files that constitute your Netflix and YouTube videos live, where your emails and documents hang out, and where most of the websites you visit reside. It's part of that "cloud" you used to hear marketed around a decade ago, and it's the computational resources that big and small tech companies alike use to host, process, and distribute their services globally, with features that make them really useful, such as the ability to scale usage up and down based on need or budget.

Unfortunately, the rise of AI means two things. For one, these data centers need new hardware optimized for AI-related workloads, because AI essentially uses a different type of math than most other computer operations to function optimally.

On top of that, AI's tendrils have now woven into nearly every aspect of data processing, so customers across pretty much every industry also need to scale up their use. This is driving investment in new AI-optimized data centers, as well as upgrades in older ones, with lots of hardware being replaced.

Like I said, these servers are just advanced types of computers, and computers really need just a few things to function: a way to take in information; a way to output information; a way to queue operations to transform that information; a way to perform computations that modify that information; and – critically – a way to store information.

Your phone and your home computer use two different types of storage for both long- and short-term operations – you've probably heard terms like "RAM" and "hard drive," even if you aren't a computer expert; these are two types of storage mediums used for different operations – but for the sake of convenience, let's just conflate all these types of storage and call them "memory."

Only a few companies produce different memory formats today, following years of consolidation in the industry, and many build products across different memory formats on the same kinds of assembly lines. This means we really only have a certain amount of capacity to produce memory. Right now, the data centers and big technology companies are placing such large orders that essentially all of that capacity for the next few years has been fully purchased.

And while memory producers are trying to scale up capacity to meet this demand – at the end of the day,

they exist to make money, and they will make more money by selling more products – it will take many years for their investments to pay off in production.

Like any market with a limited supply, that means prices are rising, and those customers spending the most money are given the highest priority. And as big as you might think most gadget producers are, they're often small potatoes next to the giant B2B industries that exist behind them, almost invisibly, supporting the operations that undergird our civilization.

Finding themselves out-spent, the consumer electronics brands really just have three options: charging customers more so they can afford the memory they need to make their gadgets; cutting features to hit the gadgets' necessary price; or stopping making the gadgets in question entirely until market conditions improve.

Analysts think we'll see companies exercising all three of these strategies. Possibilities range from longer windows between product releases to cut-down versions replacing known products at the same price point, and for product categories that need static or increased performance, rising prices. The effect on you is simple: more expensive gadgets, older devices marketed for a longer time as the latest model, and new versions that suck.

In the face of all that, if you were planning on picking up some gadget like a phone, laptop, or tablet that is likely to be impacted by these rising costs, I'd recommend you do it sooner rather than later. And, in the case of certain product categories which are more niche, like audio production gear, photography hardware, or other small-market devices, there's a real danger that these costs could force some of the companies whose products you enjoy out of business *entirely*.

If cash is tight right now, as it is for many of us given the economy, consider yourself warned. You might have to hold on to your current devices for a little longer than you might expect, as long as AI continues to drive these increased prices.

Of course, all this logic is based on the expectation that AI will continue to have the impact that it's had so far – and if it doesn't, we may have bigger issues to deal with.

For more questions about consumer technology, how gadgets work, or which doodad to buy if you need X, Y, and Z, shoot Ryne an email at deviceadvice@montaguereporter.org.



Senior Center Activities

MARCH 2 THROUGH 6

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Monday 3/2

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

Tuesday 3/3

8:15 a.m. Nail Clinic
8:30 a.m. Nurse
9 a.m. Stretch & Balance
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer

Wednesday 3/4

9 a.m. Interval Training
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bingo
1 p.m. Veterans' Services
1 p.m. Cage Fighting

Thursday 3/5

9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow
12 p.m. Brown Bag Lunch
12:30 p.m. Tech Help
Friday 3/6
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 3/2

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Kitchen Club
3 p.m. Beginner Yoga

Tuesday 3/3

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

Wednesday 3/4

9 a.m. Veterans' Agent
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 3/5

10:30 a.m. Brown Bag Lunch
1 p.m. Pitch
3:30 p.m. Montague Neighbors Board Meeting

Friday 3/6

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
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 March 17. Luncheons are the fourth Friday at town hall. For more information, contact (413) 548-1022 or coa@leverett.ma.us, or check the town newsletter or the Leverett-Connects listserv.

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.



OUT OF THE PARK

FEBRUARY 2026



By JON DOBOSZ

UNITY PARK – Hello everyone! Well, it certainly has been a while since our last article. We plan on resurrecting this monthly feature that provides us with an additional avenue to inform the community of everything Montague Parks & Rec.

We hope you have all been well and getting through these last few weeks of winter. It's that time of year in which we're preparing for the spring and planning for the summer, so the warmer weather is most definitely on its way. Nevertheless, let's dive into it...

Typically, the first event of the spring is our **Annual Peter Cottontail's EGGstravaganza**. This year's event will be held on Saturday, April 4, rain or shine, at Unity Park. Peter Cottontail and his friends will be placing 5,000 candy- and toy-filled eggs throughout the park.

It usually doesn't take very long for the kids to gobble up all the eggs, so be sure to get to the park a few minutes before 1 p.m. when the horn sounds. The hunt is geared toward children ages 4 to 12, due to the small candy and toys, and we would like to thank the Montague Elks and Greenfield Savings Bank for co-sponsoring it!

We will also be offering our very

popular **Tee Ball** program for children ages 4 to 6. Tee Ball is held on Saturday mornings and starts April 25, and is a great opportunity to introduce sports to your little one.



MPRD also hopes to bring back the **Adult Co-ed Softball** League to Montague. This league has been dormant for the last couple of years, so we're trying to reinvigorate interest amongst players in the area.

The Montague league operates from May through August with games held Monday and Thursday evenings at Unity Park. We plan on having a meeting to gauge interest on Wednesday, March 11 at 6 p.m. at the Unity Park Fieldhouse, so if you wish to put a team together, please attend.

While we are preparing for the spring, please note that we still have a few sessions of **Open Swim**

remaining at the Turners Falls High School Pool. Open Swim is held Tuesday and Friday evenings from now until March 13. Family Swim is held from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., with Adult Lap Swim from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Additionally, we have a few spots remaining in our **Babysitting Course** scheduled for Monday, March 2 and Tuesday, March 3. This is a fun and interactive course that teaches students First Aid and safety skills, as well as helpful tips on how to prevent and respond to emergencies. The course is open to youths ages 11 to 15, and the fee is \$40 for Montague residents and \$45 for non-residents. Please note that this course spans the two evenings noted.

That's about it from here. If you want to stay on top of our programs and services, be sure to log onto montagueparksrec.com or view our Facebook page. You can also pick up copies of our spring brochure at the Unity Park Fieldhouse, the Montague Libraries, and at Montague Town Hall.

Other than that, stay warm, stay active, and enjoy the remainder of your winter!

Jon Dobosz, CPRP, CPO, is director of parks and recreation for the town of Montague.

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HONORS

Gabriel Addison, Elias Augusto, Ava Barber, Avery Barton, Amelia Bauer, Ryder Berg, Noah Blanchard, Max Briere, Jacob Brodeur, William Brown, Zachary Brown, Annabella Brown-Stratton, Ethan Burgh, Moziach Calypso, Matthew Carey, Dakota Chapin, Hudson Clark, Mason Clark, Sienna Costa, Sage Davis, Elissa Delisle, Lina Diedhiou, Ava Eddy, Jennessa Fuentes, Brody Gagnon, Nathan Gheorghita, Brody Gilbert, Riley Graves, Matthew Guilbault, Theresa Hamel, Alexander Howe, Corbin Hubbard, Lilyana Jette, Autumn Johnson, Colton Kingsbury, Lincoln LaFleur, Chloe Lane, Hunter Lane, Luke Levangie, Seth Lively, Wylie Lynch, Dominic Martino, Josiah Muniz, Savannah Page, Dominic Pazmino, Jake Picard, Wade Purington, Lee Richards, Axel Richardson, Ava Rivera, Corrina Rock, Gretchen Schmalenberg, Trayce Sevene, Brady Shearer, Nikolay Shlegel, Alexander Smith, Faythe Sobieski, Lucas Spofford, McKenzie Stafford, Bristol Stevens, Jacob Taylor, Robert Teaca, Alyssa Therieau, Isabella Towne, Ryleigh Westort, James Whitehouse, Vivian Wright

– Grade 10 –

HIGH HONORS

Benjamin Baker, Cole Bassett, Mason Bassett, Joseph Bobala, Elish Cavanaugh, Gabriel Cessatis, David Chagnon, Kairi Chubb, Nicholas Constantine, Zachary Contantine, Azariah Cosme, Isabel Cottrell-Bouchard, Oliver Cranston, Joseph DiSciullo, James Edson, Everett Eichorn, Samuel Eichorn, Laura Fuess, Zoe Gledhill, Maxwell Kenfield, Kylie Krupinski, Cecelia Laflamme, Carter Leete, Joshua Leonovich, Tyler Lively, Sofia Melnik, Jedidiah Niquette, Amayah Ortiz, Madysin Pelletier, Madison Pettengill, Cody Preisch, Mylena Prunier, Julia Reynolds, Everia Rivera, Sienna Robidoux, Luke Sheridan, Kendra Steiner, Aiden Taylor, Brooke Taylor, Christopher Taylor, Jeanna Taylor, Jacob Thomas, Isabel Thompson, Keith Warger, Landon Warger, Holden Wolfe, Zia Zaykoski, Mercury Ziff

HONORS

Kenzie Alicea, Maliea Ames, Eric Antunes, Harley Archambault, Ariana Bachand, Brayden Bailey, Colten Bailey, Lilyann Baldwin, Bennett Bardwell, Wayde Bardwell, Landon Bass, Sarah Beckwith, Landon Benz, Chloe Bigelow, Owen Bliss, Brayden Brisson, Aurora Brown, Sawyer Cadran, Izzabella Clark, Allan Cordero Lopez, Makalya Craig, Cole Culver, Shaundy Culver, Grady Deery, Abigail Dobias, Logan Dow, Ethan Facey, Quinn Ferris, Cadance Fisher, Aubrie Fitzgerald, Brady Gancarz, Blake Gaudet, Paul Giard, Faith Gilbert, Jordyn Gilmore, Matthew Goguen, Alison Haskins, Ayron Hemingway, Jonathan Holmes, Hannah Holst, Levi Inman, Jeremiah Jones, Olivia Kaleta, Logan Kingsley, Abbygail Lenois, Isabella Liebenow, Cruz Lopez, Max Luippold, Trevor Magnan, Keigan Martinez, James May, Johnathan McIntyre, Abigail Otto, Yolemi Ovalle Mejia, Hunter Parker, Adam Phillips, Makalya Pierce, Nicholas Prasol, Travis Rathburn, Dustin Reade, Willow Reynolds, Madison Richards, Coleton Sabolevski, Oliver Schwenger-Sartz, Ryan Sevrens, Makenzie Shaw, Landon Smead, La'Naija Smith, Nicholas Spencer, Ava Taylor, Brandon Thomasson, Rhys Urkiel, Carly Walsh, Nathan Warger, Haiden Willard, Cody Yetter

– Grade 11 –

HIGH HONORS

Evan Alden, Cayleigh Aldrich, Kyle Bjorlin, Owen Blanchard, Lila Boyden, Samara Buchanan, Sebastian Carlo, Olivia Cody, Seamus Collins, Nora Cutting, Jillian Deady, Wyatt Dejnak, Julianna Gledhill, Ramon Gutierrez, Dean Hall, Layla Hammond, Sandra Johnson, Alexandria McGuire, Emmalyn Nash, Alexander Purington, Amelia Rider, Brenton Russell, Wyatt Sisum, Braeden Talbot, Taylor Underwood, Lily Williams, Matrim Zale

HONORS

Caleb Begos, Tatiana Bell, Aiden Bouchard, Brayleigh Burgh, Ava Clark, Landon Clark, Levi Clark, Corbin Conway, Dimitri Conway, Douglas Cousley, Vincent Craig, James Cusimano, Hunter Donahue, Isabella Douglas, Kaia Drake, Gabriella Duda, Zophia Duda, Dylaan Duval, Brody Eastman, Jillyn Eastman, Cole Gamache, Brandon Gent, Jonathan Gheorghita, Ren Gradoia, George Gutierrez, Nicholas Hayes, Cameron Herzig, Mackenzie Hurd, Jarrod Isles, Cameron Jacques, Trevor Jarvis, Jadis Jenks, Chloe Kendrick Redner, Aidan King, Ian Kohlstrom, Amber Kowal, Justin Lent, Truman Long, Lauryn Lovett, Kaylynn Lupien, Katelyn MacNeil, Samuel Maiewski, Matthew McIntyre, Kaelyn Mclean, Eli Messer, Jack Newman, Joseph O'Donnell, Aiden Pasic, Jacoby Peirce, Emma Petersen, Kaiden Price, Landon Purington, Chelsey Rockwood, Johnathan Scribner, Emma Sibley, Lauren Sibley, Jaxon Silva, Hannah Unaitis, Isabella Utley, Madalyn Vescovi, Savannah Vonschmidt, Ava Worden, Lucja Yagodzinski, Taylor Youmell

– Grade 12 –

HIGH HONORS

Natalya Aubrey, Shawn Beckwith, Liam Bliss, Tristan Bliss, Samuel Bodenstein, Teagan Boliski, Camden Bonnett, Maxon Brunette, Christopher Chabott, Dani Chagnon, Carsten Couture, Jared Currier, Ian Doyle, Samantha Duncan, Adam Felle, Jaylice Gary, Dylan Gilbert, Elias Gradoia, Gavin Graton, Jaeden Graves, Beck Gritzner, Molly Howe, Jack Jette, Lily Josephs, Kasey Kellogg, Breanna Kempf, Jacqueline LeBlanc, Emma Little, Kaitlyn Lively, Madyson Lynde, Greyson Mazarrelli, Talia Pederzini-Curtis, Ariel Peters, Anson Prunier, Emily Sadlowski, Gabriel Schutt, Shelby Senn, Becca-Anne Skelton, Alexis Smith, Kailey Steiner, William Thomas, Meadow Thompson, Payton Tierney, Clara Troisi, Kaden VanValkenburgh, Ella Vassar, Benjamin Waring, Elsa Waring, Zachary Zaykoski

HONORS

Ashlynn Andrews, Maria Arce, Erin Banister Potter, Miguel Bartolon, Madelynn Bowers, Lance Brodeur, Logan Brodeur, Dylan Brunault, Logan Caron, Ashlyn Chapin, Emmett Chranowski, Allysia Corbin, Zak Cortright, Hailey Doolittle, Jayden Dufresne, Ray Dyer, Noah Ferris, Logan Fournier, Trey Gallo, Ava Garappolo, Alison George, Summer Goewey, Alexander Hannum, Corey Herold, Trevor Hudson, Tanner Jenks, Ezra Kurinsky, Zoey Kus, Lillian LaBelle, Dillon Laffond, Owen Lenois, Anya Livingstone, Sorin Marin, Lyla Mickiewicz, Rylie Mitchell, Jackson Morey, Quinn Morrow, Elijah Oberempot, Ricki Perez, Alyssa Peters, Jenna Petrowicz, Ethan Rivers, Tristen Robidoux, Nolan Ruiz, Nathan Sabolevski, Mercedes Selivanoff, Makayla Sevene, Maisy St.Hilaire, Lindsey Taylor, Ethan Thrower, Lillian Vandal, Bradley Welcome, Brenton Wheelock, Faith Wilder

– Pre-Employment –

HONORS

Alec Beland, Dakota Britt, Hailey Chagnon, Dustin Clarke, Braden Couture, Jameson Gaffey, Alexandria Otto, Kady Rice, Taylor-Marie Scanlon, Dylan Snow, John Stratton, Joseph Valvo

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Nurse Threatened; Teens Use Slurs; Ice Dam Falls; Car Slides Over Embankment; Knife, Dog Poop Thrown

Sunday, 2/15

7:47 a.m. Report of a man sleeping behind the wheel of a grey Jeep at J and Seventh streets. Moved along. 9:35 a.m. Caller reports her dog is having a seizure under the kitchen table. Advised to call emergency vet service.

1:26 p.m. Report of a grey Mustang causing a traffic hazard near the Montague Center library. No hazard found; car legally parked.

4:33 p.m. Multiple calls about a motorcycle versus pedestrian accident on Millers Falls Road. Turns out a Ford Ranger hit a motorcycle and sped off. Motorcyclist has expired/suspended license. BOLO put out. Motorcycle towed.

Monday, 2/16

6:14 a.m. Motor vehicle stop on Federal Street. Stop sign violation; verbal warning issued.

8:46 a.m. Unsafe motor vehicle operation reported on Millers Falls Road. Caller says the SUV in front of her has repeatedly braked and blocked her from passing. Officer advised.

11:18 a.m. Suspicious person reported at Scalpers' Lodge in Lake Pleasant. Officer found male sitting on the porch, saying he is looking for a place to charge his phone. No issues at this time.

2:37 p.m. Alarms going off at Turners Falls High School. Contact made with the maintenance supervisor to get personnel on the scene to turn it off.

7:58 p.m. 911 call from Dry Hill Road. Caller states his girlfriend came home inebriated, ripped his jacket, and locked herself in the apartment, refusing to let him inside. Officers made contact with the female; she let him come in for some belongings, and he is leaving for the night.

Tuesday, 2/17

1:05 p.m. Report of a truck with no plates going up and down Ferry Road. Officers advised.

4:40 p.m. Motor vehicle stop on Montague City Road. Citation issued.

8:25 p.m. Motor vehicle stop on Montague City Road. Citation issued.

9:28 p.m. Caller states "the one-arm lady upstairs won't shut up" and is moving things around. Caller went to her door but she wouldn't answer. Officers checked on the apartment; residents said they would keep it down for the night.

Wednesday, 2/18

9:59 a.m. A visiting nurse called in stating she was threatened by the neighbor of a client about where she parked her car in the street. She has multiple clients in the area and doesn't feel safe, and wants to talk with an officer. The involved neighbor was advised of the complaint.

1:21 p.m. Threatening and harassing text messages on East Main Street. Officer advised.

3:26 p.m. Walk-in to the station reporting a bank fraud incident. After lengthy discussion, turned out it was not fraud, but confusion due to a language barrier.

6:39 p.m. Teenagers in the Millers Falls laundromat being loud and disrespectful, using racial slurs, and being rough with the machines. An officer spoke with the caller. Later one of the teens came back to apologize.

Thursday, 2/19

12:01 a.m. Report that the railroad crossing arms on Lake Pleasant Road are continuously going up and down and the lights are flashing. Pan Am dispatch notified.

3:43 p.m. Caller from Third Street believes someone tried to break into her home while she was out of town because the locks are loose and jammed. Not as reported.

6:49 p.m. Caller states an ice dam fell in the Fourth Street alley and blew a

door off, is concerned that the building owner doesn't know about it. Officer found out the ice dam was scheduled for removal by the building manager, and the building owner and son were on the scene trying to figure it out. Damaged door to be secured.

8:44 p.m. Fire alarm on Fifth Street. Burning food.

11:24 p.m. Caller concerned about flashing lights and sounds coming from the old Strathmore building. Fire department at Canal Road checking an alarm, may be related to what she saw. Officer advised.

Friday, 2/20

9:19 a.m. Walk-in to the station was concerned about a suspicious car he saw near Unity Park last night, though he saw nothing suspicious going on. Officer advised, set him at ease.

1:36 p.m. 911 caller reporting he crashed his car before the bridge on South Prospect Street in Millers Falls. The car went down the embankment towards the railroad tracks. Caller may have injuries, but walked to the Whistle Stop Cafe to call. Rau's managing the tow, DPW to put barrels at gap in the guardrail.

2:04 p.m. Motorist reporting a tractor trailer is stuck near the top of the hill on Unity Street. DPW on the scene, officers closing roads until the truck is cleared.

3:01 p.m. Two-car accident at Montague City and Turnpike roads, no injuries. Citation issued.

Saturday, 2/21

2:12 a.m. Call about animals abandoned in an upstairs apartment making noise and tearing things up. Owner has been gone for three days. Caller states this is an ongoing issue. ACO also out of town, believes they have dealt with this situation previously. Officer went to the location, heard barking, and saw through the upstairs

window the dog chewing something up. Other animals are inside the apartment, including at least one cat. ACO called the owner, who said she was stuck in snow but had just returned to the apartment.

8:10 a.m. General alarm at Heat Fab in the Industrial Park. Keyholders alerted by the alarm company, no response needed.

8:53 a.m. Officer delivered a notice about an unshoveled sidewalk to a Millers Falls Road resident. Male called in stating not enough time had gone by for him to get a violation notice, and that it is the job of the DPW to clear sidewalks after the plow pushes snow over them. Officer spoke with him.

4:34 p.m. Female on South Prospect Street picked up on a straight warrant.

4:51 p.m. Caller from Old Greenfield Road requesting to speak to an officer about his mother's behavior. She threw a kitchen knife above his head and has been having other outbursts. Longstanding issue between the two parties, and they have been advised of court options multiple times. Officer advised the caller again to look into other housing options.

10:30 p.m. Report of an animal in distress on L Street. Officer found no evidence of neglect.

Sunday, 2/22

3:57 p.m. Motor vehicle stop at Turnpike Road and Park Villa. Citation issued.

4:56 p.m. Rod Shop Road caller states male has been harassing him and threw dog feces at his building. Officer spoke to reporting party, advised to post the property. Needs three documented incidences to get orders. Dog feces on lawn.

8:28 p.m. Caller states two suspicious men are taking tires off of cars in the Fourth Street parking lot and replacing them with donuts. Says they have been doing this for several nights and no one is doing anything about it. Officer advised the female caller, who has made false reports before. Officer found two vehicles in the lot with donuts on them. One of the owners called in asking why the police were looking at her car; it is unregistered, and she is selling it soon. Her child's father put the donut on and took away the bad tire. Nothing suspicious found.

8:55 p.m. Caller states a car has been parked in front of her house with the lights on for 40 minutes. Officer found vehicle owners living in their car, looking for a place to sleep. Moved along.

11:59 p.m. Report of a car off the road on Millers Falls Road. Rau's winched it out.

Artist Profile: Susie Secco

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I have found a number of interesting artists to write about at the Greenfield Farmers Market. I can now add Susie Secco to that list. She makes block-printed fabrics, which I saw at the market. Some are quite nice-looking.

"I have been doing the farmers market for four years," she told me. She prints on dish towels and napkins, and said, "Those are my two biggest sellers."

Secco is a self-taught artist, and said she "played around with it a lot." She has been making prints since 2018. She took a couple of classes, including one online. I rather like

her images of a cat on one, and of a rabbit on another. I saw some of her other items on Facebook, and she does a nice print of plants.

"The images on the fabric are taken from nature," she said. "They are primarily birds, plants, and some of abstract designs.... I would say from the time I design the block and print it and put on the fabric, it takes five hours. I can use that block over and over again."

She mentioned that Greenfield isn't the only farmers market she does. "I do a farmers market in Northfield," she said, which is where she lives. Besides farmers markets, her art has appeared at craft fairs, such as the Hadley Asparagus Fair; the Northfield Gallery;



A 2022 rabbit print on a napkin sold by Nuthatch & Bluet Studio.

and the Garlic and Arts Festival.

Secco said people seem to like her art. "I think it's pretty well received," she told me. She said she gets the most business at local farm-

ers markets and craft fairs. If you want to see her art for yourself, you can find her there, or look on Facebook for "Nuthatch & Bluet Studio," or see www.nuthatchbluet.com.

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WEST ALONG from page B1 state, this pan must have seemed an oasis for the robin.

When he had slaked his thirst, up he went to the wild cherry tree, where he was joined by five companions. They moved about the branches, looking for leftover dried fruit and talking to themselves. No spring song from them this cold and frosty morning.

Regardless, and say what you will, I'm declaring our robin fellow as a hint of spring.

We all need some sign of hope in this winter of discontent.

These mid-February days usually mark the arrival of the red-

winged blackbirds, and I've been waiting for the first one to show up. The robin was a clue that something is going on out here, and that any day now, our first red-wing should make an appearance.

February 22, and there he was! I heard him 15 minutes before he lilted into the yard. Far somewhere beyond the line of sight came a simple call sounding something like *chek-chek*. Not the springtime song, but more of a single dry call letting us know he's back.

He stayed out of sight, and in fact there were no other birds in sight either. That marauding sharp-shinned hawk has kept everyone

on edge with his unpredictable raiding.

But after the false alarm and the first chickadee whistled the all-clear, it rained blue jays down on the picnic table where the repast was spread after the storm.

Then the redwing dropped down onto the table, too, exactly on this February 22, as in years past, almost to the day. How can it be that their arrival is so predictable? Year after year, since the 1950s when I first began noticing the birds and their seasons going by, the redwings have been arriving right around this date. Some years they arrive earlier, maybe on February

15, but rarely have they shown up much later than today.

This morning's gent winged in from across the marsh, where he'll begin claiming nesting territory, over on the Montague side of our river.

The males always come back weeks before the females to set up their marshy domain, reserving the choicest places to be ready to convince and seduce a mate.

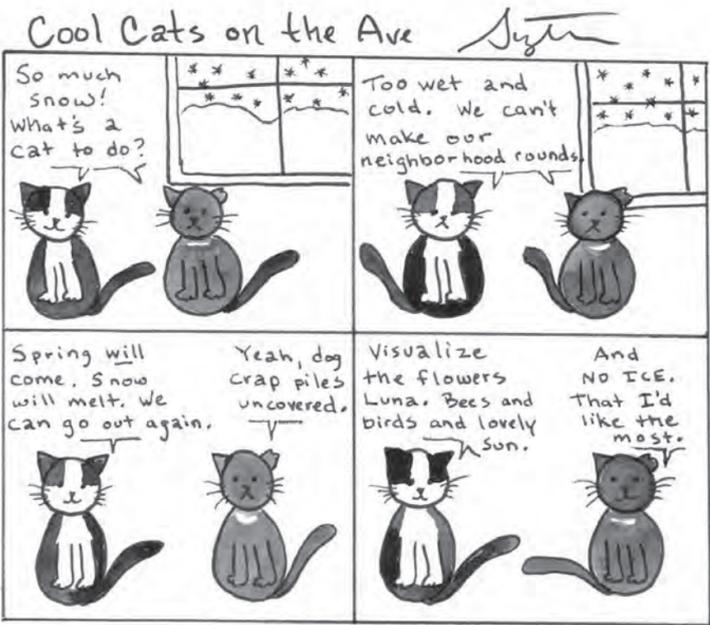
So, in spite of the storm a few days ago and the nor'easter promised for this week, the year has begun to turn.

Any day now the spring stirrings will begin in the yard, in the skies, in the west-flowing river.

Deep underground, beneath two feet of snow, beneath the layer of ice, in the warm earth, there are the first faint awakenings among the tubers and roots, signals in the winter quarters of the slumbering chipmunks and dormant garter snakes. But how do they know?

Just as the dog and I spent restless hours anticipating the first snow, we are now more than ready to move on.

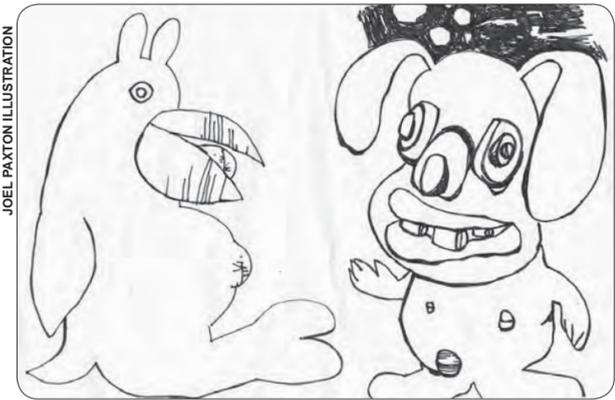
It's hard to believe the Full Worm Moon is a week away. We can hardly wait to welcome in the spring, but this year I think it may take us a little time.



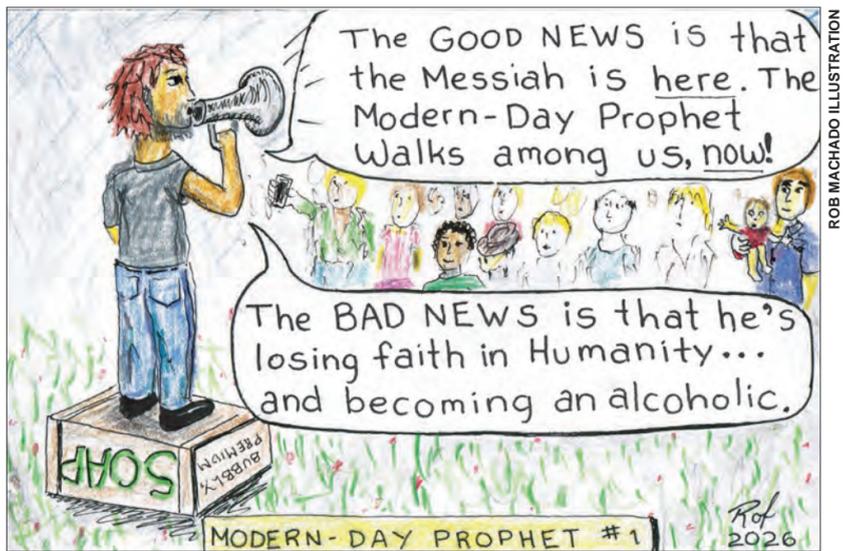
SUZETTE SNOW-COBB ILLUSTRATION



Carolyn Clark



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The Science Page

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Above: Robert Smithson's 1970 sculpture *Spiral Jetty*, on the shore of the Great Salt Lake.

If you have questions, comments, or news tips for our Science Page Editor, please send them to science@montaguereporter.org.



The Science Page is powered by Greenfield Solar.

Gyre Check: Still Widening

By JOSH WATSON

TURNERS FALLS – Almost sixty years ago, in late September 1967, the artist Robert Smithson boarded a bus from New York City to Passaic, New Jersey and took a series of black-and-white photos with his Instamatic camera of the crumbling infrastructure – iron bridges, brick chimneys, disused factory debris littering the Passaic river – from Passaic’s industrial mill-town past, which he published along with an essay he called “The Monuments of Passaic” in *ARTFORUM* magazine. His subtitle: “Has Passaic replaced Rome as the eternal city?”

“Passaic seems full of ‘holes’ compared to New York City, which seems tightly packed and solid,” Smithson wrote, “and those holes in a sense are the monumental vacancies that define, without trying, the memory-traces of an abandoned set of futures.”

Smithson’s dispatch from Passaic reads as ironic, but Smithson, who had grown up in the city, found beauty in its industrial decay and mirrored it in his vast art installations. The most famous of these may be *Spiral Jetty*, a paean to entropy in the form of basalt boulders that jut out from shore in a counter-clockwise spiral for a quarter mile into Utah’s Great Salt Lake.

Three decades later, the artist and critic Luc (now Lucy) Sante recalled Smithson’s piece for a follow-up in *ARTFORUM*. “I would tour the most forgotten and decaying portions of New York City,” Sante wrote, “... to gaze at crumbling wharves and shuttered factories and sealed warehouses, possessed by their mystery and the sense that they represented entropy in action, a material prophecy of the future.”

Spiral Jetty, she wrote, “show[s] us the permeability of time, the beauty of decay, the collapse of the future, and the pitiless inconsequentiality of things.”

The decay, of course, is nature reasserting itself over the spaces humanity discards – the beauty, perhaps, is in the relief of watching that happen.

In 2009, searching for a place to build a home for his family, the writer and lawyer Christopher Brown bought an abandoned industrial lot in Austin, Texas littered with broken concrete slabs, rebar, and abandoned cars, sited over a disused petroleum pipeline.

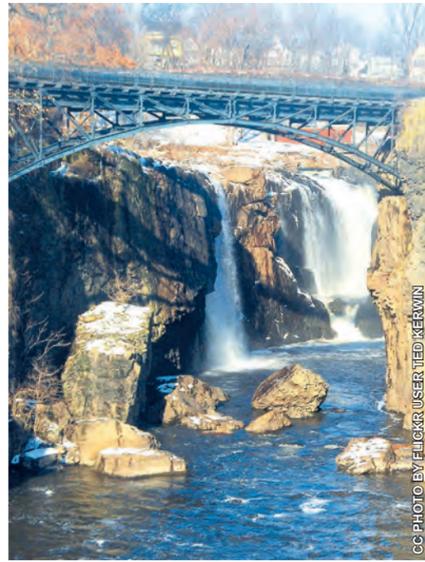
Brown’s 2024 book, *A Natural History of Empty Lots*, is a series of connected essays which track the unexpected joys of thriving in a peri-urban space. His lot, not far from the Colorado River and abutting a “pocket of urban woods,” is overgrown with gnarled mesquite trees, home to fox runs and flocks of wild parakeets.

Brown raises his son there, and he and his partner find themselves with a new daughter.

“The wild qualities that made it feel more alive,” he writes, “were also things that posed danger to her. The little spiders in the corners, the snakes on the patio, the coyotes just outside the fence, the people who sometimes breached the fence.”

In the end, it’s the project’s own success that undoes it. “The house’s photogenic qualities and unusual narrative got more pickup than we expected,” Brown writes, and “the publicity drew attention to this neglected corner of the city.” Developers and speculators begin to buy land surrounding the house; deals are cut with the city; stakeholders are iced out.

“It’s a strange process,” Brown reflects, “whereby you ruin a place by moving to it. It’s colonization. By making a place ‘fit’ for human habitation, you pave the way for others to follow.”



The Great Falls of the Passaic River.

Forty years ago this April the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl caught fire and burned, releasing 400 times as much nuclear fallout over the city of Pripyat than the explosion at Hiroshima. The following day, the entire city was evacuated. To this day 1,600 square miles, known as the “Zone of Alienation,” are officially unfit for human habitation.

Although some 1,000 or so residents returned illegally and now remain – as of 2012 Ukraine announced it would no longer restrict access from the occupants, who are mostly elderly and now receive some state-sponsored medical support – it’s estimated the Zone of Alienation will not be fit to reoccupy for another 270 or so years.

In the immediate aftermath of a nuclear release, writes Cal Flynn in *Islands of Abandonment: Nature Rebounding in the Post-Human Landscape*, the deadliest compo-

nent is iodine-131, which is absorbed by the thyroid and is either immediately destroyed or survives long enough to become cancerous. In the ensuing decades, cesium-137 and strontium-90, with half-lives of about 30 years, are absorbed by plants, which introduce the radionuclides into the food chain.

Among the “strange or gruesome ways” life was affected in the days after the fire, Flynn writes, “pregnant animals miscarried, their embryos dissolving. Horses four miles from the plant were killed as their thyroids disintegrated. Freshwater lake worms switched from asexual to sexual reproduction.”

Since then, animal numbers have doubled. “Animals reappeared,” writes Flynn, “lynx, boar, deer, elk, beavers, eagle owls. By 2010 wolves had increased sevenfold. In 2014, brown bears were spotted in Chernobyl for the first time in a century.”

The environmentalist James Lovelock has suggested that “aversion methods – the more frightening and insidious the better – could be the most effective method of keeping people out of nature reserves.”

In 1953, under a truce between North and South Korea which divided the countries, a demilitarized zone was created in a swath 2½ miles wide along the 38th line of latitude, stretching 151 miles from the east to west coasts. “Since the armistice,” Alan Weisman writes in *The World Without Us*, “other than brief military patrols or desperate, fleeing North Koreans, humans have barely set foot here.”

Now, along with lynx, deer, and mountain goats, the critically endangered Amur leopard has been seen in the DMZ. Perhaps fewer than 150 of these leopards are left in the wild. Red-crowned cranes, nearly five feet tall, winter in the zone. The cranes are “revered in Asia as sacred portents of luck and peace,” Weisman writes; “only around 1,500 of these birds still exist, and each new birth is momentous.” Without the DMZ, the cranes would likely die out.

The premise of Weisman’s book, a best-seller when it was released in 2007, is to explore, should every person on earth simply disappear, how long nature will take to reclaim the land below our creations, and what form it will take.

Despite Smithson’s sense that New York City is “tightly packed and solid,” the city is porous at its core. Manhattan in particular, built as a grid – intuitive for development, but arbitrary as to the landscape – was laid atop razed schist and landfill with no natural place for rainfall to drain. Early on, sewer lines were built to drain the flow; these pre-date the subway system, which was built underneath them.

Underground rivers therefore rise and fill these subway tunnels with water unless it is

pumped out, 13 million gallons of it every day, even when it isn’t raining. Weisman estimates that within a couple of days after the pumps stop, the water rushing through these tunnels will pull soil away from the pavement above, and streets and avenues will start to buckle and themselves turn into rivers.

After a few years, buildings will topple. Reclamation happens quickly, drastically.

Flynn relates a story, gathered from contemporary accounts, of an impromptu lunch shared by George Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette, and Alexander Hamilton in July 1778. Returning to camp after the Battle of Monmouth, they happened upon an enormous waterfall crashing down into a clear calm pool by which they sat and ate, drinking glasses of rum and spring water.

Hamilton was impressed by the volume and power of the flow, and set out in 1792 to capture that power for a “national manufactory” that would transform the region into an industrial center. This was the Great Falls of the Passaic River, and the factories and mills built to harness that power would be the source of much of the debris that so fascinated Smithson.

Throughout the 19th century, the slaughterhouses and dye shops and every other Paterson concern simply released their waste and sewage into the Passaic River on the assumption, Flynn writes, that “it might empty into the sea and be gone.”

A “sewerage commission” reported in 1897 that approximately one-third of the Passaic’s flow below the falls was sewage. “Manufacturing companies found the water so befouled that they couldn’t even use it in their boilers,” Flynn writes. “Fish had disappeared from the river; a hundred riverfront properties in Harrison had been abandoned due to the stench.”

In June 1918, not much more than a century after Hamilton mixed its waters to drink with his rum, the Passaic, its surface covered with a congealed mixture of acid, creosote, and oil, caught fire and burned for hours until the tide pulled the blaze out to sea.

Industry declined sharply in Paterson in the decades following, and in 1945 the site, owned by a consortium of manufacturers, was sold back to Paterson. As the years passed, the falls largely recovered from the pollution, and in early 1967, only months before Smithson traveled to his hometown to bestow the Monuments of Passaic, the Great Falls were named a National Natural Landmark.

Three years later, Smithson completed the *Spiral Jetty*. Three years after that, in a flyover inspection of a new installation, the small plane Smithson was riding in failed to maintain sufficient speed. The airplane crashed, and Smithson died at 35 years old.

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EVENTS

Shelburne Falls Theater
POTHOLE PICTURES
February 27 and 28 at 7:30 p.m.
THE KILLING
Stanley Kubrick's 1956 classic about a daring racetrack robbery.
Music 7 p.m. Friday, *The Chester Vale Trio*; Saturday, *Whisperholler*
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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

St. Kaz, Turners Falls: *Patch Burger Popup*. 5 to 8 p.m. No cover.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Comedy Project Workshop*. 6 p.m. By donation.

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

Artspace, Greenfield: *Multigenerational Singing Group*. 6:15 p.m. Free.

THCC, Easthampton: *Bastian Void, Belltonesuicide, The World Wide Web, Caldon Glover*. 7 p.m. \$.

Northampton Center for the Arts, Northampton: *Angelica Sanchez*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

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

Prescott Tavern, Hampshire College, Amherst: *Letters of Marque, Laika, In Plain Sight, Film & Gender, Time Held Me Green and Dying*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Eliza Niemi, Stoner Will & The Narks, Crimson Blue*. 9 p.m. By donation.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour: When Will It Be Spring?*. Ages 3 to 6. Story, activities, and crafts. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Uncertain Times: The US Supreme Court Today*, presented by constitutional law expert Rory K. Little. Discussion follows. 3 p.m. Free.

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

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Multimedia Night*. Poetry, presentations, refreshments. 6 p.m. By donation.

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Midnight Floyd*. 6 p.m. No cover.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Postcards From the Promised Land*, featuring poet and storyteller Marlon Carey. 7 p.m. \$.

Pink Edwards, Greenfield: *Asher Isak, Toni Hall, Care O'Leary*. 7 p.m. \$.

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *Briezyjane and the Hurricane*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Corey Harris*. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Alouette Batteau, Brook Batteau, Rocksteady*. 8 p.m. \$.

Shelburne Falls Theater, Shelburne Falls: Pothole Pictures presents *The Killing* (1956). Music at 7 p.m.: *The Chester Vale Trio*; movie at 7:30 p.m. \$.

Northampton Center for the Arts, Northampton: *Marta Sanchez*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *The Giant's Harp*. In the Shea's Lounge. 8 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Murder(Sword), Neon Fauna, Durk Drone*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Teen Driver, Folly of Three, Spikenard*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Local history talk, *Getting Across: Connecticut River Ferries*. 2 p.m. Free.

Music Connection, Turners Falls: Listening party for Morrissey's *Makeup Is a Lie*. 2 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Reading and discussion, *Frederick Douglass's "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"* With Marlon Carey, Nina Gross, and Nate Woodard. 2 p.m. Free.

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Down the Alley*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Four Phantoms Brewing, Greenfield: *Vimana*. 6:30 p.m. No cover.

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

JJ's Tavern, Florence: *Booshido, Caedus, Cliffrose, Ghost, Sleep Destroyer, Six2Twelve*. Benefit for LUCE. 7 p.m. \$.



Saturday at the LAVA Center: Read and discuss Frederick Douglass's ever-pertinent 1852 speech on the Fugitive Slave Act, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Gutter Sinatra*. 7 p.m. \$.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Solas*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Nova Arts, Keene: *Jonee Earthquake Band, Phrogs, Coffin Flop*. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Hauzu, The Divergents, Slug Dust, Puke and Cry, Rhubarb Duo*. 7 p.m. \$.

Stage 33, Bellows Falls: *Sunburned Hand of the Man*. 7 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Ladies' Dance Party*. 7:30 p.m. No cover.

Agricultural Engineering Building, UMass Amherst: *Baby's Breath, Remedies, Creedbratton, Summers in Autumn*. 7:30 p.m. By donation.

EXHIBITS

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

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 at 2 p.m.

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

Montague Center Library: *Art of the Book*, art made from or about books, through March 30.

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

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

Artspace, Greenfield: *52nd Annual Franklin County Teen Art Show*. March 6 through April 24, with a reception on March 6 at 5 p.m.

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

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Positively Deerfield Street*, photographs by Geoff Bluh spanning decades of change in the Deerfield Street neighborhood, through February. *Find Your Voice, Speak Your Mind*, work by student artists at the Academy at Charlemont, March 7 through 30 with a reception Saturday, March 7 at noon. *Trees*, informational exhibit celebrating tree projects in Greenfield, through April 30.

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

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

Rhodes Art Center, Northfield Mount Hermon, Gill: *Shop Rats*, prints, paintings, sculpture, and photography by six faculty members, through March 6.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *Sixth Annual Photography Exhibit* by New England artists featuring black-and-white, color, phone, and camera prints, through March 29.

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.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Winter Garden*, member exhibit, through February. *Romanum*, Ron Maggio's mixed-media works inspired by Roman frescoes, March 5 through 28, with a reception Friday, March 6 at 5 p.m.

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: *Longing for Green*, member exhibit in a wide range of media, through March.

CALL FOR ART

The **New England Visionary Art Museum** in Northampton is looking for experimental and invented-instrument compositions for performances next fall in the Charles Miller Experimental Performance Arena: "You or somebody you know organizes sound and silence in such a way to create forms, harmony, melody, and rhythm. We are seeking artists who create unique instrumentation to these ends." Find out more at (413) 588-4337.

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CALENDAR



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SATURDAY, MARCH 14

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Local history talk, *The Grand Trunk Hotel*. 2 p.m. Free.

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

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

Montague Center Library, Montague Center: Documentary screening, *Free For All: The Public Library* (2025), exploring the history of public libraries and the role they play in our communities. 5:30 p.m. Free.

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Wolf Girlz, Match, Piss Sipper Lvl 6, Goblin Hunter*. 8 p.m. Free.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Zach Rowden, LXV, Blood Drops In Both, Blood Of A Poet*. 7 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, MARCH 29

Quarters, Hadley: *Western Mass Electronics*, with featured artist *The Third Entity*. Bring your own synth, drum machine, sampler, etc. 7 p.m. No cover.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31

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

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Sarika, Alouette Batteau, Olivia Nied*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, APRIL 17

Nova Arts, Keene: *Rong, Kendra, BL_ank*. 7 p.m. \$.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Olivia Block, Lea Bertucci & Norbert Rodenkirchen*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MAY 2

The Drake, Amherst: *HIRS Collective, Commitment, ABBATIA, Deathless Forever, Film and Gender*. 8 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, MAY 4

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Secret Chiefs 3, One Leg One Eye*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MAY 8

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Bill Callahan, Noveller*. 7 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, JUNE 22

Palladium, Worcester: *PUP, Babe Haven, Cheap Perfume*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Bayou X, SambaGanza*. Mardi Gras night. 7:30 p.m. Free.

Shelburne Falls Theater, Shelburne Falls: Pothole Pictures presents *The Killing* (1956). Music at 7 p.m.: *Whisperholler*; movie at 7:30 p.m. \$.

Northampton Center for the Arts, Northampton: *Wayne Horvitz*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Pinc Louds, The Freeps, Content Clown, Moimus*. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *A Band of Brothers*. 8 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Keb'Mo*. 8 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Jeopardy, Ravager, Defcon: Dead*. 8 p.m. \$.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Cochemea*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *BASSTOV3N*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, MARCH 1

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *First Sunday Word*. Open mic with featured writers *Karen Sharpe* and *Nina Gross*. 1 p.m. By donation.

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

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Shenanigans with Friends*. 2 p.m. No cover.

Rhodes Arts Center, Northfield Mount Hermon, Gill: *NMH Orchestra, Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble*. Benefit for LifePath. 3 p.m. By donation.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

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

THURSDAY, MARCH 5

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

Olver Transit Center, Greenfield: Attorney and radio host *Bill Newman* discusses "The State of Civil Liberties in the Commonwealth." Register at www.tinyurl.com/SymposiaLiberties. 2 p.m. \$.

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

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Rainey/Rawlings/Tonne Trio, Aaron Russell*. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

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

Artspace, Greenfield: Reception for *52nd Annual Franklin County Teen Art Show*. 5 p.m. Free.

Gallery A3, Amherst: Reception for *Romanum*, mixed-media work by *Ron Maggio* inspired by Roman frescoes. 5 p.m. Free.



Myrtle Street Klezmer "works in the tradition of the old-world klezmer musicians, singing in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Ladino, and teaching audiences about the background and meaning of the music and culture." Catch them next Saturday, March 7 at the Wendell Full Moon Coffeehouse.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Drew Paton*. 6:30 p.m. No cover.

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

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Next Stop Comedy*. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *DBB, Karate Steve, Gearteeth*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *The Wooden Nickels, Liam Grant, Sam Boston*. 7 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Sepsiss, Awaiting Abigail, Under The Horizon, Pulsifier*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Space Bar*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Conway Inn, Conway: *babybaby_explores, Jane Rabbit, barbie.ai, Shane Bray Kerr*. 8 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Jonathan Richman*. 8 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

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

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Reception for *Find Your Voice, Speak Your Mind*, work by student artists at the Academy at Charlemont. 12 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Four Rivers Drama Club* presents *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. Gershwin musical. 2 p.m. \$.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Reception for *Maps of River History*, exhibit by geologist and cartographer *Joe Kopera* that reveals hidden topography of rivers and floodplains. 2 p.m. Free.

Element Brewing, Millers Falls: *Ben Falkoff*. 3 p.m. No cover.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

Montague Center Library, Montague Center: Documentary screening, *The Librarians* (2025), following librarians in Texas, Florida, and other states as they combat book banning. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Deer Tick, LuxDeluxe*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

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

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Deer Tick, LuxDeluxe*. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour: Salamanders*. 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.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Goodness Shakes*, community dance. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Great Craic Blackguard*. 7:30 p.m. No cover.

Shelburne Falls Theater, Shelburne Falls: Pothole Pictures presents *Waiting for Guffman* (1996). Music at 7 p.m.: *Dan Lederer*; movie at 7:30 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Zoe & Cloyd*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Max Creek*. 8 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Ganesh and Wolfe, Kryssi & Wednesday, Ben Richter, DJ MentalDrift*. 8 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Spring Heeled Jack, Ghost Tones, Skarmy of Darkness, Skamagotchi*. 8 p.m. \$.

Canal Lanes, Southampton: *Mal Devisa, Cclcng, LUCY*. 9 p.m. \$.

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PLAYS from page B1

by the 1967 Cichy Gas Station on the right side of the road.

Tangle's sign advertises chocolate and coffee, but though their coffee is great, it's the chocolate that's really special. It's made on-site, starting with the beans, and is fine chocolate for eating and drinking. Even dieters can enjoy it: Tangle's chocolate wafers have just nine melt-on-the-tongue calories each. You get one with your hot chocolate or coffee, and it can easily tempt you to buy an elegant gray take-home boxful of them.

There's lots of other chocolatey things, too: croissants, tarts, cupcakes, and more. Tangle also has a photo booth and a schedule of event nights with music or singalongs, game nights, and most importantly, chocolate-making classes. It's a fun serious destination: closed on Wednesdays but open other days from 9 a.m. until 4.30 p.m., with Friday late hours until 9 p.m.



Some of Tangle's offerings.

While it's hard to leave Tangle, the Williamsburg Market next door has fruit and snacks for your ride on to Pittsfield, plus regular groceries. It also has its own Thursday newspaper, the *Burgy Bee*, which features upcoming events in Williamsburg and neighboring Hill Towns. Free copies can be picked up at both the store and at Tangle.

Opposite, Route 9 takes a decided left turn to march uphill and on to Pittsfield. On the way you'll pass general stores, maple farms, and the purveyors of Goshen's famous granite and schist stone. If you didn't stop at Tangle, you can get coffee and other goodies at the Old Creamery Grocery in Cummington, located in a former creamery topped by giant rooftop black-and-white cows.

The road then drops down into Dalton, where the Crane Paper Mill, founded in 1801, still steams away literally making money. It makes the paper, using 25% linen and 75% cotton, that is printed into dollar bills – a task it's been doing since 1879.

From here the road leads into Pittsfield's main square and the right turn onto North Street that takes you to the well-signposted theaters of the Barrington Stage Company. The Boyd-Quinson Mainstage is on Union Street, but the theater showing the 10X10 plays is the St. Germain Stage on neighboring Linden Street.

Chameleons and Daquiris

The plays are worth the journey. Six actors perform all the parts, most of them appearing in seven or eight plays so you see them in varied roles – in itself a theatrical pleasure. Maya Jackson is especially exciting because she inhabits every character so thoroughly that she is absolutely different every time. She's spectacular as Medea in *Waking Greek* by Jessica Provenz.

While Jackson is an acting chameleon, Peggy Pharr Wilson, though equally good at inhabiting her character, has such stage presence that she is always the star. She's performed in 10X10 plays for 15 years, and this year does a marvelously threatening job as Bev, a state senator suggesting vasectomies for all males over the age of 12 in David McGregor's *Modest Proposal II*.

Fellow senator Larry is played by Matt Neely, a Williamstown selectman with a long list of stage credits, including 13 years in the 10X10 plays. Along with Maya Jackson as Carol, he helps make this play one of the funniest this year.

Larry is keen to prevent abortion and limit Planned Parenthood. Carol eagerly agrees. "Just stop the pregnancies before they start," she says, with fingers mimicking scissors. "Snippety-snip. Problem solved." In the hands of Wilson and Neely, Larry's horror at the proposal and Bev's

kindly approval of it are hilarious.

Cynthia Faith Arsenault's *Do You Hear An Echo?* is another laugh-out-loud comedy, with Neely playing husband Grant to Maya Jackson's Grace and Peggy Pharr Wilson as the voice of Alexa, who has been listening in to Grant's affair and is ready to spill the beans to Grace – unless she gets what she wants.

No reader of this paper, with its reports of cash-strapped town committees in Leverett, Gill, Montague, Greenfield, and other local towns, will fail to thrill at *Top Shelf Tolstoy* by Maximillian Gill. A young woman, played by Raya Malcolm, walks into a library and asks for a borrower's card so she can take out a Tolstoy novel. The librarian, cleverly played by Avery Whitted, is clearly uncomfortable with this and invites her to have a drink, swiftly turning his book cart round to reveal a well-stocked bar. He offers a "Hold Shelf Sour, an Overdue Punch, or the ever-popular Dewey Decimal Daiquiri."

Now there's a solution to budget problems, especially when the head librarian, played by Peggy Pharr Wilson, is on hand to enforce it.

Inevitably, perhaps, some plays are weaker than others. Though well-played by Wilson, Whitted, and Robert Zukerman – another 10X10 veteran – *Cricket* by Erin Osgood is slight.

James McLindon's *Tannenbaum* ably showcases the skills of Zukerman and Whitted as stern sellers of Christmas trees and Malcolm as a young woman keen to spare her father the embarrassment of not being able to afford one, but the play sentimentalizes its story, and its effort at heart-warming falls rather flat.

The tenth and final play, Jessica Provenz's *Waking Greek*, features all the actors, with Zukerman and Wilson playing oldsters who wake up and realize that they're in a play. They spot a tree nearby – could they be in *Waiting for Godot*?

It takes them a while to suss out the truth, which makes for a terrific ending to this year's 10X10 plays.

Performances continue, so there's still time for readers to enjoy 10X10, though tickets are limited. Dates are February 26 through March 15: Thursdays through Saturdays at 7 p.m., plus Fridays through Sundays at 2 p.m. You can book online at barringtonstageco.org, or call the box office at (413) 242-6411.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Roads Lacking Friction

Thursday, 1/1
6:56 p.m. Medical emergency reported on Boyle Road.
Friday, 1/2
8:51 a.m. Asked to locate owner of a vehicle involved in a hit-and-run in Greenfield. Canceled shortly after.
Sunday, 1/4
9:16 a.m. Sedan vs. pole, Main Road near Lyons Hill Road. Ever-source notified.
2:04 p.m. Caller reported a suspicious vehicle at the French King Bridge. Two vehicles parked; tracks leading into the woods. Owners identified as hikers.
Monday, 1/5
8:30 a.m. Main Road resident reported damage to a sign from the January 4 crash.
11:37 a.m. Medical emergency reported on Riverview Drive.
7:24 p.m. Caller reported someone attempting to open a door, Ben Hale Road. Area checked, no footprints or tire tracks found.
Tuesday, 1/6
2:43 a.m. Vehicle slid off Main Road due to black ice. No injuries. Passerby helped winch vehicle out.
Wednesday, 1/7
8:22 a.m. Bags of trash found, French King Highway. Mail ID'ed Turners Falls residents. MassDOT disposed; dumping under investigation.
4:53 p.m. Two cars collided, airbag deployment, Gill Center Road. One towed; second remained drivable.
Friday, 1/9
4:15 p.m. Reports of protesters at the lights slowing traffic. No issues observed.
Saturday, 1/10
7:04 a.m. Icy conditions, Main Road. Highway dep't notified.
12:58 p.m. Assisted

Erving PD. Vehicle struck another car and fled but was stopped; operator arrested after refusing sobriety tests. Dog secured by ACO; vehicle towed.
Sunday, 1/11
1:35 p.m. Driver slumped over the wheel of a van, Main Road. Individual was resting.
Monday, 1/12
2:55 p.m. License plate located, Lamplighter Way. Owner notified.
6:02 p.m. Van backed into a pole, Lamplighter Way. Minor damage.
9:19 p.m. Delivery driver stuck, Setback Lane. Driver able to free vehicle.
Tuesday, 1/13
5:51 a.m. Vehicle reported flipping after hitting black ice, Main Road. Airbags deployed; no injuries.
9:53 a.m. Medical emergency, Main Road.
7:01 p.m. Individual out of gas, French King Highway. Courtesy transport provided.
Friday, 1/16
11:21 a.m. Past gas spill reported, Main Road. MassDEP notified.
1:41 p.m. Medical emergency reported on South Cross Road.
Saturday, 1/17
12:14 p.m. Delivery vehicle behind guardrail, French King Highway.
1:27 p.m. Driver went off the road and struck a sign, Lamplighter Way. Tow arranged.
2:17 p.m. Slippery conditions reported, Mountain Road. Highway crews dispatched.
5:59 p.m. Disabled vehicle partially blocking a lane, Barton Cove Road. Winched out.
Tuesday, 1/20
11:07 a.m. Medical emergency reported on Memorial Grove Road.
4:10 p.m. Owner reported a former guest, Peterson Way. Ad-

vised of residency laws, civil procedures.
Wednesday, 1/21
8:15 a.m. Manager asked for subject to be removed, French King Highway parking lot.
6:53 p.m. Assisted Montague PD with missing person search. Located safe.
Monday, 1/26
7:26 p.m. Cows escaped onto roadway, Main Road. Owners moved animals back to farm.
Tuesday, 1/27
10:35 a.m. Meeting regarding school safety plans, Boyle Road.
1:52 p.m. Assisted another agency, Riverview Drive. Utility truck backed into fence.
2:15 p.m. Assisted Northfield PD with a low-speed train derailment, Mount Hermon Station Road. No injuries or spills. Passengers evacuated by bus.
6:36 p.m. Welfare check requested: party failed to show up for a meeting. Individual located; having car issues.
Wednesday, 1/28
5:46 p.m. Past accident reported on private property. Civil matter.
Thursday, 1/29
9:15 a.m. Snowbanks blocking visibility at the elementary school entrance. Cleared.
2:22 p.m. Porcupine reported near Bascom Road. Unable to locate.
Friday, 1/30
3:25 p.m. Caller concerned about a chained dog. ACO checked, found no violations.
5:40 p.m. Minor collision involving two trucks, Main Road.
6:21 p.m. Vehicle damaged by debris falling from a truck, French King Highway.
Saturday, 1/31
10:51 p.m. Vehicle vs. deer, French King Highway. Minimal damage.

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