

The Montague Reporter

Year 24 – No. 9

editor@montaguereporter.org

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\$2

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

Two Hundred Lakeshore Acres Conserved in Orange, New Salem



PHOTO COURTESY OF MOUNT GRACE
An area of land with frontage on Lake Rohunta, seen above in an October drone photo, has come under permanent protection. Hunting, fishing, hiking, and other recreational uses are expected to continue.

By RAY DIDONATO

ORANGE and NEW SALEM – Late December brought exciting news out of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust as the organization announced it had acquired 200 acres of land along the western shores of Lake Rohunta.

The acquisition is expected to help protect natural resources with cultural and ecological significance. The land was formerly

owned by W.D. Cowls, which used it as a working forest, and was transferred in the form of a gift with additional funds to manage it. Project participants included W.D. Cowls, the Lyme Timber Company, Mount Grace, Kestrel Land Trust, and the Trustees of Reservations, according to a press release.

A natural resource inventory of the Lake Rohunta area conducted in 2000 by University of Massachusetts researchers Matt

see **CONSERVED** page A6

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Insurance Hikes, Lost Tax Case, Staff Succession Bleeding Town

By KEITH WATERS

The Erving selectboard held a joint meeting Monday with the capital planning committee and the finance committee to review budget requests from all the departments in town. A special town meeting (STM) is coming up, possibly as soon as February 19, and the officials wanted to sort out aspects of the FY'27 budget plan before then as it will affect some of the spending voters will be asked to approve in the current year.

Employee health insurance costs have increased significantly. In FY'24 the town spent \$638,903 on health insurance, and in FY'25 that cost increased to \$1,485,744. For FY'26 the town has budgeted \$1,842,873, and for

see **ERVING** page A5

New Rental Unit Rights on Track In Montague

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – On Monday the Montague selectboard endorsed, with no protest or debate, a set of amendments to the town's zoning bylaws which would liberalize policies governing the approval of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to conform with state law. This was in contrast to some communities, including next-door Greenfield, which have resisted the statewide updates.

The state's new ADU policies were a small part of a broader bond bill, the Affordable Homes Act, initiated by Governor Maura Healey and passed by the legislature in August 2024 in an attempt "to counter rising housing costs caused by high demand and limited supply," according to a fact sheet released by the governor's office.

The legislation provides \$5.2 billion in funding over five years, with \$2.2 billion

see **UNIT** page A6

NOT GOING ANYWHERE



SUZETTE COBB PHOTO

The falls at the historic 1770s North Leverett Sawmill were frozen solid last week, likely due to the cold.

G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Two Superintendent Finalists Named

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – The names and resumes of two finalists for the position of regional school superintendent were presented to the Gill-Montague school committee Tuesday evening, and both candidates will visit the district in the coming days in advance of an anticipated February 24 hiring decision.

Turners Falls High School sophomore Olivia Wolbach, who served as chair of a screen-

ing committee for the position, reported that out of a pool of eight applicants, the committee interviewed four before unanimously recommending Dr. Marc Gosselin and Dr. Brian Ricca. Both men hold advanced degrees in education and have served as public school superintendents in multiple New England states.

Ricca will be available to meet the public and school community from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. this Friday, February 6 in the high school

see **FINALISTS** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Board Favors Trimming 2% Amid a Tight Budget Cycle

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard made significant progress Monday night on the town budget for the next year, which it will send to the annual town meeting on Saturday, May 2. The board favored 2% cuts from a "level-services" baseline for all departments under its control, while acknowledging that for some of them this may prove unrealistic, and would require transfers from reserves during the fiscal year.

The board also hired a new full-time police officer, a light equipment operator at the public works department, a part-time police custodian, and a library assistant. A September date was also set for a revived soap box derby in Turners Falls.

Town administrator Walter Ramsey reviewed the status of the next fiscal year's budget and requested "some direction." The board's preliminary budget recommendations are scheduled to be finalized February 17. He encouraged its members to decide whether they wanted a "level-services" budget, which would include only negotiated

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

New Building Could Triple Cost of FCTS For Wendell



IMAGE COURTESY FCTS

A rendering of a proposed new county tech school by Lavallee Brensinger Architects.

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard was joined at its January 28 meeting by Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) superintendent Richard Martin, business manager Elizabeth Bouchard, and Jeff Budine, Wendell's representative on the FCTS school committee, all advocating for the construction of a new tech school building.

Martin spoke about the inadequacies of the present building, alternatives to new construction, and then the projected costs of new construction. A district-wide vote to fund the new construction project is scheduled in October.

see **WENDELL** page A8

High School Sports Week: Winter Season Dribbling Out

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – The Turners Falls High School girls' varsity basketball team played their last home game of the regular season this week against the Pathfinder Pioneers. They led early on, but midway through the first period they couldn't buy a basket, and in the second quarter offensive fouls dampened their spirits, leading to an 18-point loss.

In boys' basketball Turners and Franklin Tech went head-to-head, with the Thunder taking the win off a strong third quarter.

None of the teams from either Turners or Franklin Tech will qualify for the MIAA playoffs this year, but they will compete in the postseason against other non-qualifying teams.

Boys' Basketball

TFHS 64 – FCTS 54

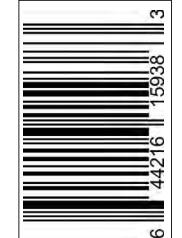
Last Friday, the visiting Turners Falls Thunder defeated the Franklin Tech Eagles

see **SPORTS** page A4

Autumn Thornton of Turners Falls High School looks to the hoop as she begins a layup shot on Monday. Thornton sank three 3-pointers in the contest against the visiting Pathfinder Tech Pioneers.

Sixteen Solid Pages Of Super Bowl LX Pre-Game Analysis

Couldn't Buy a Basket.....	A1	Quietly Groaning Ice Shards.....	B1
Jolted Harshly Awake.....	A2	Either Liquid or Clotted Blood.....	B2
Efficiency Is Life.....	A3	By Where She Does Puzzles.....	B3
Ravages of the Long Polar Vortex.....	A4	One Cruel Prank After Another.....	B4
To Ensure a Level of Competency.....	A5	La Congelacion Preventiva.....	B5
Best Waterfowl Stomping Grounds.....	A6	Kidleidoscope, Cave Dweller, Curling Club....	B6
Fairly Rolling in Wealth.....	A7	Open Decks, Big Mess, Ghostface.....	B7
Just the Sign On the Door Changed.....	A8	Among the Meat and Vegetable.....	B8



The Montague Reporter

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 August 2002

Nomination

It's about the time of year nomination papers go out for local elected offices. In the coming weeks we'll find out which incumbents plan to stick around.

It's a hard sell. As we wrote in this space 10 years ago this week, "Recent years have seen a gradual

erosion of local, public volunteerism...." Nowadays we're hearing rumors of fruitless recruitment drives. Volunteering for the difficult work of administering austerity is no one's idea of a good time.

If you or someone you know is running this year, let us know!

Letters to Editors

Bidding Farewell

Writing *Travel with Max* for the *Montague Reporter* has been a steady and enjoyable part of my days, and I'm grateful to have had a place in these pages. I want to thank the editors for allowing me to share my travel stories with this community.

I'll be continuing the column in a new home, running monthly

in the *Greenfield Recorder*, and anyone who's enjoyed following along is welcome to find me there. Thanks again to the *Reporter* for the space and support, and to the readers who've taken the time to read my work.

Max Hartshorne
South Deerfield

Thank You MCFD!

Last Thursday night well past midnight, I was jolted harshly awake by my smoke alarms blaring and screeching "Danger! Danger! Evacuate! Evacuate!"

After checking the whole house and finding nothing, I grappled endlessly and unproductively with the wired alarms in the ceiling, trying to dismantle them, all the while breathing deeply to stay calm while my eardrums felt close to exploding.

After a futile web search for "How to turn off false smoke alarm" and phone calls to far-away family without luck, it finally occurred to me to call 911.

I was connected with the Montague Center Fire Department, and in less than 10 minutes they were at my door. Ten minutes after that, they'd ruled out smoke, fire, or carbon monoxide poisoning, identified a leaking burner on my gas stove, and had shut off the blaring alarms.

Chief Hartnett, having checked the alarms to determine their age, let me know they needed replacement, and when I expressed worry about how to do that, offered to come back himself to help me. Wow!

Some members of the fire department may hold different political views than I do. It's not unlikely

that the three firefighters who came to my assistance may have had a sense of my politics, given what they saw outside and inside my home. But here in Montague, that did not prevent them from also seeing me simply as a human being in need of help, and going out of their way in the middle of a dark frigid night to extend it to me.

Thank you Chief Luke Hartnett, and firefighters Joe Easton and Rick Sawin, for your ready and able service. You were there for me in a time of need and showed me respect and care. Thank you to all the department's volunteer firefighters, several of you my friends and neighbors, for your service to our community.

The webs of connection we all weave across difference strengthen our community and the institutions that help sustain it. Those institutions, when supported by the many, can help mitigate the us/them stance we're so prone to, even though there are those among us with good reason to fear those same institutions.

May we all cross lines of difference to care for each other. That's what makes us strong and resilient.

Sarah Bliss
Montague Center



Maggie Sadoway, an editorial assistant at this paper for almost four years, gained a love for proofreading at 12 years old when she "tidied up the typos" for her dad's book on dairy farming. Besides proofreading, she compiles our "Looking Back" column and contributes occasional photographs and articles. A super salesperson, Maggie has excelled at selling Reporter subscriptions and merch at local events. Her technique was honed during the 33 years she and her sister owned a natural foods store in Lenox.

Morals Called Into Question

In Mr. Solender's opinion ("Morals Absolutism in New England," January 15) we are allowed to criticize Israeli policies of apartheid in Palestine so long as they are neutral. I'm not sure what a neutral critique is if not tacit approval of the status quo, perhaps with suggestions.

The status quo in Palestine is something I object to. Morally and absolutely. I also reject his criticism, not for its lack of neutrality – after all, he works for an organization devoted to supporting Israel – but because it denies reality.

Solender implies that "apartheid" is an unfair, inflammatory descriptor. Israel controls the movement of all basic goods in the Occupied Territories. Since 2008, in Gaza they have limited the amount of food allowed in down to the number of calories. During the genocide that number was reduced to close to zero, drawing international condemnation for weaponizing starvation.

Palestinian homes are demolished daily. Their owners have no legal recourse. Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories are tried in Israeli military courts, while Israelis are tried in civil courts. Palestinians are required to carry color-coded IDs and license plates. They are forced to drive on separate roads.

Settlers have been burning Palestinian property with impunity. Palestinians navigate over 900

checkpoints to move through the West Bank. Just last week, on January 21, the Israeli Knesset passed a bill banning people with academic degrees from Palestinian Universities from teaching in Israeli schools.

The Israeli occupation of Palestine is nothing if not apartheid.

Many of my Jewish family members have tied their identity to Israel, and to this system that explicitly privileges one group over another. They tell me they feel their morals and political stances are being called into question by local movements like this.

That is the risk one takes when one has welded their identity to an ethnostate committing the world's first live-streamed genocide and ethnic cleansing campaigns. And it is not a valid reason to mute those calls. Their comfort does not take precedence over Palestinian liberation.

Solander's appeal for neutrality – *not here, not now, not all together, not so loud* – flies in the face of every liberation movement. I am proud to be a part of a community that aspires to be "Apartheid-Free." It's a small, admittedly symbolic gesture, but it's clearly moving the needle.

Ethan Markham
Northampton

Guided Dialogues Preferable

The recent decision by the Burlington (Vermont) City Council to reject a polarizing "Apartheid-Free" pledge in favor of a "Community Dialogue" resolution offers a masterclass in local governance that Massachusetts communities, from Greenfield to Springfield, should study closely.

Activists in Burlington pushed for a measure that used high-octane labels like "settler colonialism" and "apartheid." While these terms carry weight in international law debates, their importation into a local Town Meeting context in Vermont proved more toxic than transformative.

As our neighbors discovered, when a municipality adopts the language of one side of a global conflict, it doesn't solve a crisis abroad; it creates a new one at home by alienating neighbors and, as many Burlington residents feared, fueling local antisemitism.

Massachusetts towns currently grappling with

similar petitions can learn from Burlington's pivot. Instead of a non-binding declaration that offers little more than symbolic division, Burlington chose Councilor Allie Schachter's proposal for "guided group sessions." This acknowledges a fundamental truth: a City Council's primary duty is to the safety and cohesion of its own residents.

By prioritizing dialogue over inflammatory pledges, Burlington signaled that while we cannot control the geopolitics of the Middle East, we can control how we treat the person across the street. We should follow their lead in choosing restorative conversation over the divisive comfort of a manifesto.

Adam M. Solender
Springfield
Chief Philanthropy Officer,
Director of the Jewish Endowment Foundation,
Jewish Federation of Western MA

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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

The cold snap continues in this vicinity. The thermometer bobbed above 32° F for a single day since the big storm, which was just enough to leave little patches of slick ice around for us, and today's high is forecast at 31°, wet in the sun. By Sunday night it's looking negative again.

If you've been wanting to weigh in on the proposal to **allow hunting on Sundays** in Massachusetts, act fast – the cutoff for public input is 5 p.m. this Friday. Murmur "hunt sunday" near any Internet-connected device with an always-active microphone to find the online input form, or navigate yourself to *mass.gov* and put "hunt input" in the search bar.

Eleven US states still have rules about Sunday hunting, but only Massachusetts and Maine have full statewide bans.

This is the rare controversy I feel pretty dead-center centrist about. I don't hunt or keep Sabbath, and while I do hike in the woods and appreciate their default quietness, the main benefit of this prohibition I personally enjoy is occasionally realizing I don't need to be wearing a stupid bright orange hat.

The other big statewide outdoors announcement I noticed recently and am passing along to you here is that February 18, two Wednesdays from now, is the first day Department of Conservation and Recreation **campsites can be booked** for the April-to-October season.

Around here that includes 59 sites at the Mohawk Trail State Forest, "dozens" at the DAR in Goshen, 27 at Laurel Lake in Warwick, and 15 at the Federated Women's Club State Forest in Petersham. In Baldwinville, just a little further than that, there are 50 sites at the Lake Dennison Recreation Area and 80, including four yurts, at Otter River.

Mark your calendar! Early bird gets the yurt.

We don't print anonymous letters – I'm sorry, we just can't; think about it – but to whomever printed and submitted creepily in our mail-

box a well-worded and well-reasoned **complaint about the flashing sign** in front of a certain Seventh Street house of worship and signed it "cranky pedestrian," thank you. I'll meet you halfway.

"There is a bylaw that states illuminated signs cannot change more than every 60 seconds, and this clearly violates that," the ped cranked namelessly. "Where is the Town to enforce these regulations?"

This appears to be... correct. The 2019 version of Montague's zoning bylaws, section 7.1.5, specifies that "No sign shall, flash, or revolve, or consist of pennants, ribbons, spinners, strings of light bulbs, revolving beacons, searchlights."

And section 7.1.2 defines a "flash" as "any change in lighting intensity or messaging by an illuminated device that is less than one minute (60 seconds). This shall further include any change in illumination that leaves the illusion of motion, including scrolling."

Seems pretty cut and dried to me. Where, exactly, are the planning department's jackbooted stormtroopers when you need 'em?

Here's a long public service announcement that didn't fit anywhere else in the edition, but includes an imminent deadline:

"The **Wendell Meetinghouse is seeking proposals from local or regional artists**, performers, facilitators or workshop leaders who seek to present arts or cultural events including elements of community engagement or discussion at the Wendell Meetinghouse in 2026. Information and application links are available at www.wendellmeetinghouse.org/communityartsconversations.

"Application deadline is February 13, 2026; work is expected to take place between March and early October 2026.

"Thanks to a grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts and its Community Enrichment grant program, the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse (FWM) will offer customized packages of stipends, space, lighting and sound capacities, event promotion and/or other

support for exhibitions, performances and workshops/classes selected to be part of this series.

"Community Arts & Conversations works are intended to broaden perspectives or understanding, build community connections and engagement, celebrate and support local performers/artists, and introduce new community members to the Wendell Meetinghouse, while providing both performers/artists and the Wendell Meetinghouse with potential new resources. This series is also expected to showcase newly installed theatrical lights and sound capacities, and to promote creative use of the Meetinghouse space across diverse genres for community benefit.

"For more information, contact wendellmeetinghouse@gmail.com."

Hell these days is reading Facebook commentary on the news from users who are clearly relying on an *entirely* different set of reports about what's going on than you are. Other parts of the Internet are also bad, as are letters sections of certain newspapers. Facebook comments responding to headlines from local newspapers? The ultimate combo meal. I'm glad the *MR* scaled back our footprint there....

A transcript is making the rounds from a District of Minnesota hearing (*Segundo, A.P.G. vs. Bondi*) in which a judge trying to follow up on **96 court orders that Immigration and Customs Enforcement has allegedly violated** there was met with a harried, overworked, inexperienced, under-resourced, and refreshingly honest young Homeland Security attorney.

"The volume of cases and matters is not a justification for diluting constitutional rights," he tells her.

It's a window into a juridico-administrative system at the breaking point, and it's worth reading. Search it up. If you have an iPhone, thanks to Apple's acquisition this week of Q.AI, you'll soon be able to find it just by thinking about it while allowing the camera to view your involuntary facial skin micromovements.

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MONTAGUE ZBA NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, February 18th at 6:30 p.m.**

VIA ZOOM and IN PERSON at the Montague Town Hall upstairs conference room, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA at the request of **BRIAN FRANK** for a Special Permit to allow the renovation of an existing single-family dwelling into a two-family dwelling, under sections 9.2 and 5.2.2(b)(ii) of the Zoning Bylaws, located at **90 East Taylor Hill Road, Montague, MA (Map 48, Parcel 04)**, in the **AGRICULTURAL FORESTY 2 (AF2) District**. The filing is available for review at Town Hall.

In-person meeting details and remote meeting login information can be found at www.montague-ma.gov/calendar.

Joshua Lively, Chairman
Montague Zoning Board of Appeals

MONTAGUE REPORTER...



Our November 6 edition was all over Asia this winter! Thay Sivapornchai of Turners Falls brought it with him on a visit to family in Koh Larn, Chonburi, Thailand (above) earlier this month. "My wife could not come with me on this trip, so I took the paper where she is featured on the front page doing an interview for the community garden," he explains.



Our tech columnist Ryne Hager had the same edition with him on a work trip to Shenzhen, China a month earlier. Here's the iconic "Time is money, efficiency is life" sign, spotted on his way to the airport in Hong Kong.

*Going somewhere? Take us with you!
Send your photos to editor@montaguerreporter.org.*

**...ON
THE ROAD**

And Another Letter 'No Time To Waste'



And Another Letter

'No Time To Waste'

In 2025, we saw first-hand accounts of documented citizens of Massachusetts detained without warrants; residents beaten during unlawful apprehensions; children violently detained; detainees transferred across state lines to avoid court orders.

On January 14, 24 SUVs were delivered to the ICE facility in Burlington, clearly prefacing a new enforcement surge in Massachusetts.

On January 28, Northwestern District Attorney David Sullivan unequivocally declared on his website that "any violations of state law committed against the people of the Northwestern District will be thoroughly and impartially investigated, and, if warranted by the evidence, prosecuted in a court of law."

On February 2, state senator Jo Comerford posted: "At this moment, it is essential that the state protect residents against federal actions that unlawfully detain and harm people in our communities."

These are the kind of commitments we need now to ensure that ICE will act wholly within the law in our state. Assault, kidnapping, and civil rights violations are crimes in Massachusetts no matter who commits them: federal agents – ICE, FBI, ATF, DEA, *et al* – do not have immunity when they act outside the law, in spite of what VP Vance and Stephen Miller insist.

We urge everyone with concerns about this matter to join us in contacting the state attorney general, Andrea Campbell, at (617) 727-2200 – implore her to follow the examples of DA Sullivan and Senator Comerford, and make perfectly clear what the state will do to keep ICE agents in line with the law. There really is no time to waste.

For Montague Indivisible,

Karen Latuchie
Montague Center

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OP ED

The Significance of Bowen's Pond

By EDWARD J. HINES

WENDELL – The recent decision to remove the dam at Bowen's Pond has placed an entire community into a new era. While we witness the daily dismantling of a structure that had been in place for over 250 years, everyone now waits to see what actions will be taken regarding the future of this significant part of Wendell's history.

The dam and resulting pond reflected the technology of a time when natural resources were used to create equipment and machinery. Early New England settlers built wood mills on stone foundations primarily near rivers, brooks, or streams – wherever water was available – to help construct homes and run farms. There were grist mills, cider mills, fulling mills and sawmills.

With timber an abundant resource in this area, sawmills became important in local trade and commerce. Early Wendell settlers such as Jonathan Crosby (1746-1807) and Josiah Ballard (1762-1837) produced lumber, shingles, staves, and firewood from local sawmills.

The Millers River was the ideal location for all kinds of mills. With its shallow and rapid currents, the Millers turned water-wheels that

powered mills from Ashburnham to Montague and contributed to the development of industry, economic growth, housing, and municipalities.

Clark Stone (1757-1828) operated a sawmill in what is now Wendell Depot in the late 18th century. In the 1830s, William Putnam operated a saw and grist mill that was powered by a dam built on the Millers River around 1835.

Aaron Osgood was the first settler in the northern part of Wendell in 1754. The dam at Bowen's Pond is said to have been built by his son Luke Osgood in 1768 to power a sawmill and gristmill. For generations, the dam and pond were passed down to relatives of the Osgoods, including the Bowen and the Hartjens families.

In 1936 Edith Bowen Hartjens and her husband Joseph repaired the earth and stone buttress of the dam, a task that was covered by the local press. By this time, the dam was no longer providing a head of water to drive a mill, but it was preserved to maintain the beauty of Bowen's Pond.

All that remains of this legacy today is acres of ice where the pond once stood and a single millstone, now part of a memorial on the town common.

It will probably take a decade to understand the real impact of the decision to remove the dam and drain Bowen's Pond; the hard work has only just begun.

It will take time to understand the real effect of suddenly exposing the existing wildlife and environment to the ravages of the long polar vortex of early 2026. It will take time to see if life in Osgood Brook returns to its native conditions. It will take time to evaluate the effectiveness of controlling glossy buckthorn, knotweed, barberry, and multiflora rose, invasive plants that for years have

wreaked havoc in our area.

If through hard work and persistence the brook is miraculously restored and the pond is replaced with wildflowers and pollinating plants, then history will be the judge.

On the other hand, if the area is overrun with invasive plants and fish do not return – or, worse, if the 18th-century technology of the Osgoods is replaced with 21st-century development – then history will also be the judge.

Edward J. Hines is the president of the Wendell Historical Society.



SARAH ROBERTSON PHOTO

An excavator undammed the privately-owned pond on January 13.

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SPORTS from page A1

off a strong third quarter and by hitting foul shots in the fourth.

By game time the temperature had climbed to zero, but with the wind, the "real-feel" temp was minus 8. That didn't stop the Tech students from dressing up. Batman, Lady Liberty, a cave woman, and many others sat in the far bleachers and loudly cheered their Eagles on.

The refs took control almost immediately, which didn't please the fans of either school. Seconds into the game, Tech's Mason Bassett was fouled on his way to the hoop. This was the first of many infractions called throughout the game.

Ironically, even "non-calls" displeased fans. "Call 'em both ways" was frequently voiced to the referees.

A pretty scary moment came halfway through the first quarter when Franklin's Nolyn Stafford landed on the floor face-first. When he returned, he played with cotton stuffed in his nose.

Many of the points in the first period came off foul shots and 3-pointers. With Franklin leading 15-10, they were charged with a technical. Jackson Cogswell sank all three freebies to make it 15-13. Cogswell then tied it up with 24 seconds remaining, and each team hit a foul shot to make it 16-all at the first intermission.

Players continued getting into foul trouble in the second quarter, which forced the coaches to make some early substitutions. Tech edged out in front by 5 points, but the Thunder came storming back, and at the midgame break the Eagles were on top 31 to 30.

Halfway through the third, however, Tech would see that single-point margin dissolve into a 10-point deficit. Leading by a point with 4:26 left in the quarter, Turners called a timeout, and Freilyn Abarua hit a jump shot to make the margin 40-37.

Then the play got sloppy for both teams. The ball was batted back and forth, up and down the court, until Cogswell came up with it and hit a 2-pointer. The Thunder wrestled back possession and Cogswell was fouled. He hit both free throws to make it 44-37.

The Eagles missed their next shot, and Sergy Aleseyenko raced down the court. He received the pass underneath the basket and scored to make it 46-37. With two seconds left on the clock, Abarua was fouled. He hit one of his shots, and Turners went into the fourth on top 47-37.

In the final period, Tech instituted a full-court press. This worked as they narrowed the gap to 54-49 with

three minutes left to play. But Turners maintained that lead, and with time running short, Tech was forced to intentionally foul.

Turners scored their final six points on free throws and took the game 64-54. Abarua and Cogswell each scored 25 points for the Thunder, with Aleseyenko (11), Cameron Johnson (2) and Robert Goff (1) also contributing.

Stafford led the Eagles with 18, followed by Mason Bassett (15), Hunter Donahue (10), Brody Hicks (5), Cole Bassett (4), and Jaxon Silva (2).

The Thunder wrap up their regular season this Friday at home against the Smith Vocational Vi-

kings, and the Eagles finish theirs at home next Monday against Baystate Academy.

Girls' Basketball

Pathfinder 48 – TFHS 30

On Monday, the Pioneers of Pathfinder came to town to play the Thunder. It should have been senior night, but Turners has no seniors on their team. The atmosphere in the gym was electric as the pep band played upbeat football ditties at every break.

The Thunder Ladies played very aggressively in this one. They fought for rebounds and loose balls, and consistently slapped away Pathfinder passes. But on the other end, they had difficulty hitting the hoop.

Midway through the first period, Autumn Thornton scored on a fast break and Ivy Lopez hit a 2-pointer to give Turners an early 7-6 lead. But they came up dry for the rest of the quarter, and after one complete they were down 12-7.

In the second quarter Turners was called for two offensive fouls, negating points, surrendering possession, and placing players in foul trouble. This seemed to deflate the Thunder, and going into the half, they were down 23-12.

Turners made a run late in the game. With five minutes left, they narrowed the margin to seven points, 34-27. But the 'Finders went on a run of their own, outscoring the Thunder 14 to 3 in the final minutes and taking the game 48-30.

Thornton led the Thunder in scoring with 11 points, followed by Lopez (7), Jojo Hayman (6), Autumn DiMare (4), and Melyn Martin-Ramirez (2).

This Friday the Turners girls travel to the South End Community Center in Springfield to play Baystate Academy, while the Franklin Tech girls host the Smith Academy Purple Falcons.



Turners Falls's Jojo Hayman goes up for a shot between Pathfinder Tech's Megan Clark (left) and Addison Doktor (right) as the Thunder hosted the Pioneers on Monday.

DAVID HOIT PHOTO

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ERVING from page A1

FY'27, treasurer Jennifer Watroba is recommending \$2,603,008.

Erving has also lost a case before the state appellate tax board (ATB), to the tune of three-quarters of a million dollars including interest. Jacquie Boyden, who has served as the town's principal assessor, is scheduled to retire shortly but was at Monday's meeting. There were some misunderstandings among the selectboard and committees, which Boyden tried to clarify.

Debra Smith, chair of the finance committee and a member of the capital planning committee, brought up some in-progress negotiations with the ATB: "I know this is in the works, that part of that negotiation would include these cases, and so there may not be judgments regarding those..."

Boyden cut her off at that point. "That's in litigation," she said, "and we shouldn't be discussing it in open session."

The town had previously moved about \$300,000 into the assessors' overlay account to help cover the potential loss. A large portion of the new payment the town must make is interest, as the appeal has been in process for years.

"The problem here is that we moved \$300,000 of levy into the overlay that is now locked up in the overlay, and we are not supposed to pay the interest from overlay," selectboard chair Jacob Smith said. "[T]hose decisions were made by this group based on the facts we had from the board of assessors at that time, which was that that would cover that."

Boyden and town administrator Bryan Smith clarified that the town could, in fact, use money from the overlay account to pay the interest,

and that the problem was actually that doing so would leave nothing in the account, which is not a prudent position given that the town still has three other cases pending before the ATB.

"In the previous [overlay account]," Boyden went on, "they had us put in \$13 million in our pending cases for FY'25.... This year, because the other cases had been decided, we took out the \$13 million and put in \$3 [million]."

Bryan Smith, pushing to finalize the warrant for the STM, proposed a solution to the assessor-related costs. Instead of moving some money to the overlay account, his plan is to move the entire amount needed to the "assessor's expenditures" line.

According to Boyden, the state Department of Revenue has told the town there are two possible ways to handle the accounting related to the issue, but that the state only likes one of the ways. The proposal from Bryan Smith is reportedly in line with the state's preferred method.

At the suggestion of Debra Smith, the group considered whether to ask the town to appropriate the needed money from Erving's free cash account or from its general stabilization account. All agreed to try to use stabilization, as well as the state's preferred accounting method.

Bryan Smith also suggested March 2 as a later date for the STM.

Expensive Cameras

Recusing himself as chair, Jacob Smith stepped around to the other side of the table to present the IT department's budget request as Erving's IT coordinator.

Similar to healthcare costs, the town's IT costs have quadrupled in the last few years, though they remain an order of magnitude small-

er: from \$66,751 of actual spending in FY'24 to a requested FY'26 budget of \$217,288.

The budget request for FY'27 is actually a bit lower, at \$182,288, but Smith also presented a capital budget request to install \$350,000 worth of new security cameras and access systems on a town building. The current plan is for this to be done at the town hall.

The new systems, he added, would be linked to a subscription service that the town would have to pay for them to be functional. The subscription is projected to start at \$10,000 per year.

The board decided to put the hiring of a full-time IT staff person on hold for another night. Bryan Smith told the board that the state is offering to help towns to figure out and plan their IT needs, and he and the board agreed it would be good to look into what the state is offering.

Paper Mill

Bryan Smith and town planner Glenn Johnson-Mussad have been working with consultants hired by the state to try to figure out what to do with the town-owned buildings in Ervingside that were formerly the International Paper mill. They presented those consultants' findings at Monday's meeting.

The short of it is that the consultants think there may be some buildings of historical value on the site, and suggest the town may want to consider a partial instead of total demolition of the complex.

As Smith and Johnson-Mussad presented it, this would require going back to engineers Tighe & Bond for some more consulting on plans for a partial demo. The selectboard and other committees decided to approve this approach.

FINALISTS from page A1

cafeteria, and Gosselin at the same time and place next Monday, February 9, according to Tracy Novick, the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) field director who has overseen the search process on behalf of Gill-Montague.

Novick also alerted the school committee to the fact that Ricca, who serves as interim superintendent in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District, is also one of two finalists for the permanent position in that district. "There is some possibility that they will be making a decision on Thursday," she warned.

"As we have two finalists, and we may only have one finalist," Montague school committee member Steve Ellis asked her, "was there another member of the candidate pool who the committee would feel comfortable bringing forward as a finalist, or would we be working with whom we have?"

"You'd be working with whom you have," Novick responded.

Novick praised the screening committee, and Wolbach for her work as its chair.

"I just think it's great that you gave her that vote of confidence, and I want to thank her for stepping up," Ellis added.

"You had noted that student voice is something that was valued by the district," Novick replied, "and there really is no better way of demonstrating that than having those who are interviewing for superintendent come in and be greeted by a student who's chairing the school committee."

The search for a new superintendent began last May when Brian Beck, who served in the role for five years, announced his resignation. Beck had received generally positive evaluations from the school committee, but the previous winter the Gill Montague Education Association, the union representing district staff, announced its members had voted 166 to 9 that they had "no confidence" in his leadership.

With the assistance of MASC, the district

interviewed three candidates for interim superintendent in June and hired former Maher super Tari Thomas for the one-year role.

A number of other Massachusetts districts have been in the market on the same timeline, including the Greenfield Public Schools, which offered the job to a candidate on Monday, and the Holyoke Public Schools, where three finalists are interviewing this week, according to the *Reminder* newspaper.

Curricula Vitae

According to his publicly shared CV, Brian Ricca received a doctorate in education from Loyola University Chicago in 2011 and spent the next 11 years as superintendent of schools in two Vermont districts, Montpelier-Roxbury and St. Johnsbury. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics indicate that these districts have current enrollments of 1,190 and 1,030 students respectively.

From 2022 to 2025, Ricca was superintendent of the 2,490-student East Greenwich, Rhode Island district. Last February, however, that district's union announced a vote of no confidence in his work, citing a lack of communication, and he signed a mid-contract separation agreement in March.

In August, after he was hired as interim superintendent at Southern Berkshire Regional – enrollment 607 – Ricca told the *Berkshire Eagle* he had been surprised by the no-confidence vote, but that the Rhode Island district had been too large to be good fit.

Last week he was selected as a superintendent finalist in his current district, which covers the towns of Sheffield, Egremont, New Marlborough, Monterey, and Alford.

"Throughout my fifteen years as a superintendent, my leadership has been grounded in listening, collaboration, and the steady work of building trust," he wrote in his cover letter to the school committee, adding that he prioritizes "creating structures that elevate educator voice" and "views families as co-educators".

"Gill-Montague is a district with tremendous promise," he told them.

Marc Gosselin's CV includes a broader range of early experience, including two elementary school principal jobs in Pennsylvania followed by three years as a curriculum supervisor and special education administrator.

After receiving a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Pennsylvania in 2021, Gosselin served as superintendent of schools in Lenox for 16 months before resigning, in what the *Berkshire Eagle* called a "stunning setback" to the now 771-student district, in favor of a leadership role in western Connecticut's similarly-sized Region 12 district.

According to *CT Insider*, Gosselin resigned from that district, citing "personal reasons," just under a year later in December 2023.

The following August Gosselin was hired as interim superintendent in the Winchendon Public Schools, telling the *Gardner News* he viewed the one-year contract as a "year-long interview" for a permanent position. He was offered the permanent role in December, according to the paper, but declined it, and in June took a \$60,231 buyout of the final three months of his contract.

Gosselin was hired in July as executive director at Sizer School, a 282-student public charter school in Fitchburg. Weekly newsletters posted on the school's website list him in the role only through November 7, and the school is not included on the CV submitted to Gill-Montague.

"In each role, I led districts through periods of transition while strengthening trust, collaboration, and steady execution, particularly in rural and small-district contexts," Gosselin wrote in his cover letter, and he also included a personal statement describing his leadership philosophy: "Especially in small districts, trust is built through consistency and follow-through, and I take seriously the responsibility to be a steady, reliable leader."

Leverett Assessors Services REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

The Town of Leverett seeks proposals for firms to supply assessing office services for the town beginning on July 1, 2026 for three years. Services to be provided include general clerking and office hours as well as assessing duties. The office is overseen by an elected three-member Board of Assessors (BOA). Copies of the Request for Proposals are available from Marjorie McGinnis, Administrator, 413-548-9699 or townadministrator@leverett.ma.us. All proposals must be received by **March 2, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.** The contract will be awarded to the proposer offering the most advantageous proposal, taking into consideration minimum required criteria, comparative evaluation criteria as set forth in the RFP, and price. Contract will be awarded by the Selectboard based on the BOA's recommendation. The Town of Leverett reserves the right to reject any and all proposals in whole or in part, and to waive irregularities and informalities, when at its sole discretion it is deemed to be in the best interest of the Town and to the extent permitted by law.

Treasurer Resignation

Jacob Smith brought up the fact that Watroba is planning on retiring as treasurer, and that the town has talked in the past about making it an appointed, as opposed to elected, position in order to ensure a level of competency for the position. Such a change would need to be approved by the people at either an STM or the annual town meeting.

Due to state laws on posting meetings, if this issue is to be added to the upcoming STM, it would need to be decided within the next week. The finance committee wanted time to discuss this at their own meeting on Tuesday, and agreed to email the selectboard with their input on the matter after that meeting.

On Thursday morning Bryan Smith confirmed to the *Reporter* that the fin com had voted to recommend an STM warrant article to "transition" the treasurer to an appointed position, and that the STM has been rescheduled for Monday, March 2.

VALENTINE'S COOKIE WALK

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Other Business

After receiving word of the two finalists from Wolbach, the Gill-Montague committee began a review of the questions its members will ask them on February 24, and to discuss member visits to the candidates' current districts.

Novick said she expected Ricca would be able to host a delegation onsite at Southern Berkshire, and that as Gosselin "is not actually currently in a district," he has offered to facilitate video meetings with "people who have worked with him in the past."

Complicating the matter of scheduling, she said, Gosselin has recently had a death in his family, and Ricca plans to attend the School Superintendents Association's National Conference on Education next week in Tennessee.

The school committee voted unanimously to transfer \$54,000, which business director Joanne Blier said was made available by staff positions remaining unfilled, to cover costs associated with the superintendent search.

The only other item of business on Tuesday's brief agenda was a vote to engage Discrimination and Harassment Solutions, LLC (DHS), a Boston-based law firm led by employment law specialist Regina Ryan, to conduct an independent investigation of a complaint lodged by a district employee.

School committee chair Jane Oakes said DHS had been recommended by the district's counsel, KP Law, PC.

"I've actually worked with her," Montague member Carol Jacobs volunteered. "She's one of the finest attorneys in this field."

The committee voted unanimously to sign the engagement letter.

"It's lamentable as an expense, but the necessity is appreciated," said Ellis.

The committee's next meeting on February 10 will include a public hearing on the FY'27 district budget, as well as a vote to finalize the questions the finalists will be asked on February 24.



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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Turners Falls Fire District Nomination Papers Available

MONTAGUE — Nomination papers for the annual Turners Falls Fire District election are now available to all district residents from the District Office, located at 226 Millers Falls Road, until Monday, March 9.

Papers must be returned no later than Wednesday, March 11.

The District Office is open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

All potential candidates need to obtain 30 signatures from registered voters of the Turners Falls Fire District.

Open offices are as follows:

- Prudential Committee, for a three-year term — currently held by Dave Zamojski;
- Water Commissioner, for a three-year term — currently held by Bruce Merriam;
- District Moderator, for a three-year term — currently vacant;
- District Treasurer, for a three-year term — currently held by Eileen Seymour;
- District Clerk, for a three-year term — currently held by Deb Bourbeau.

The annual election will be held on Tuesday, April 28 at the District Office from noon to 7 p.m.

Montague Community Television News

Still Taping It All

By HANNAH BLORKIEWICZ

TURNERS FALLS — Even in winter's icy depths, MCTV is dutifully making officials' constant meetings available. Last Monday Montague's selectboard talked school mergers, and Gill's set a tax rate. On Tuesday Montague's planning board talked ADUs and wayfinding and the school committee hacked away at a multi-million-dollar deficit. Wednesday the Montague fire com met with the police and librarians.

Find these videos and more at

MontagueTV.org and on our Vimeo page, which you can find by clicking the "Videos" tab on the website.

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

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

UNIT from page A1

earmarked for rehabilitating and expanding public housing, \$1.4 billion for a variety of affordable and mixed-income housing programs, and increases in a variety of tax incentives and credits.

Massachusetts, which has long regulated ADUs, defines an ADU as a "small residential living space located on the same lot as another home." One may be built "inside an existing home, like converting a basement into an apartment, attached to a primary residence as an addition, or completely detached, like a cottage or converted garage in the backyard."

The Affordable Homes Act sought to increase the number of ADUs by establishing a so-called "protected ADU" category. Property owners may now construct an ADU "by right" — i.e., without having to obtain a special permit from a local zoning board of appeals or planning board — as long as the unit is under 900 square feet in size, and under half the size of the property's principal living unit. There is no requirement that the building be owner-occupied.

On Monday, town planner Maureen Pollock reviewed Montague's existing ADU policies and the state-mandated changes. While Montague bylaw has seen several revisions over the past decade, she said, it still requires that either the ADU (called an "accessory apartment") or the main unit needs to be owner-occupied, a requirement that is now illegal.

Under the new law, a municipality may not require more than one parking space be provided for a protected ADU located over one-half mile from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal, or bus stop, or any parking space for a protected ADU located within that radius.

Pollock explained to the selectboard that besides conforming with the state law, the new regulations approved unanimously last week by the planning board would allow "another option," called a "local ADU." This would allow an accessory unit up to 1,200 square feet, though it would require a special permit.

"It's particularly helpful to have that sort of flexibility in size," she explained, "because for one demographic, it's helpful for persons with disabilities that maneuver around their house, and in the world, in a wheelchair." Pollock added that the local ADU would

still be required to come with a parking space, even if it is near a transit stop.

The selectboard unanimously endorsed the bylaw amendments, sending them back to the planning board for a public hearing and another vote. If passed, they will then return to the selectboard to potentially be placed on the May 2 annual town meeting warrant for final approval.

Across the River

The process thus far in Montague contrasts sharply with neighboring Greenfield, where at a contentious December meeting the Greenfield city council narrowly voted to reject a second round of amendments advanced by that city's planning board to comply with the new state regulation.

Two citizen petitions to place a variety of new restrictions on ADUs in response to the Massachusetts law were rejected last year by the council, which approved an initial set of updates, but balked when presented with a second round confirming that protected ADUs are eligible on multi-family lots.

One councilor who opposed this change, apparently thinking it was about to pass, said he was going to vote no because he did not "agree with the state kind of shoving their version of whatever they want to push for their agenda of housing, or whatever it is, down onto small municipalities."

"Disobedience is great," argued city council vice president John Garrett, who supported the amendments, "but the moral thing is to give people housing." The measure, which required seven of the council's 13 votes to pass, failed 6 to 5, with two councilors absent.

"The libertarian idea that we shouldn't listen to what the big old state says is exactly how we got in this housing crisis," Garrett told the *Greenfield Recorder* after the December 17 meeting. "It was a million tiny decisions... that got us here. That's why they're taking away local control in the first place."

Garrett told the *Reporter* this week that the council may revisit the issue in the coming months. Three of the five councilors who voted against the December 17 motion are no longer on the council.

Mike Jackson provided additional writing.



CONSERVED from page A1

Hickler and Karen Searcy, along with Dave Small of the Athol Bird and Nature Club — now Director of Conservation at Mount Grace — revealed a diversity of reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, and other invertebrates, including but not limited to spotted salamanders, wood frogs, spring peepers, Jefferson salamanders, hognose snakes, and spotted turtles, along with an exhaustive list of flora in and around the lake.

As the study notes, the lake was created in the 1800s by damming part of the Millers River. After the loss of two smaller dams in the 1938 hurricane, a new dam was constructed. The resulting body of water was named Lake Rohunta, a portmanteau of the Rodney Hunt Company, which owned the dam and some of the land surrounding it.

The study characterized four different types of wetlands around Lake Rohunta: pondshore fens, shallow marshes and shrub swamps; streamside marshes; kettle hole bogs; and swamp forests.

"The Eagleville Barrens and Lake Rohunta are also well-known regional birding hotspots, with exceptional diversity of birds, butterflies, and dragonflies," Small said in the land trust's announcement last month.

Reached for further comment on the project, Small explained that the land is at an interface with the lake, and its well-drained soils support the underlying aquifer. He said that most of the region was cleared in the late 1800s and eventually grew into forest, but key indicator species of a pine barren exist today.

According to the Massachusetts Air National Guard Environmental and Readiness Center, pine barrens in the northeastern United States contain pitch pine and scrub oak and "occur on deep, coarse, well-drained sands derived from glacial outwash, in the coastal plain, the Connecticut River Valley, and other scattered areas throughout the northeast."

Pine barren soils are typically poor and glacial, consistent with the fact that Lake Rohunta sits in what once was the basin of

Glacial Lake Orange, a large lake that formed 12,000 to 14,000 years ago when glacial sediment blocked the Millers River, according to the UMass inventory.

Inland pine barrens are partially shaped through natural fire events. Because of modern fire suppression, natural processes such as brush and forest fire that would have preserved the pine barrens have likely been long absent.

The announcement stated that future management plans for the area may include some tree cutting and eventual controlled burns to help restore the pine barrens, which are important in the Northeast for many species of butterflies, including the frosted elfin and eastern pine elfin, the latter found during the UMass inventory; the barrens buck moth; and birds, according to Small, such as the whip-poor-will, the Eastern towhee, the brown thrasher, and prairie, pine, and chestnut-sided warblers.

A fresh species inventory is planned as a first step, which will help inform management strategies, Small said. He noted that the last survey was taken 25 years ago, and that newer methodologies would supplement a fresh survey.

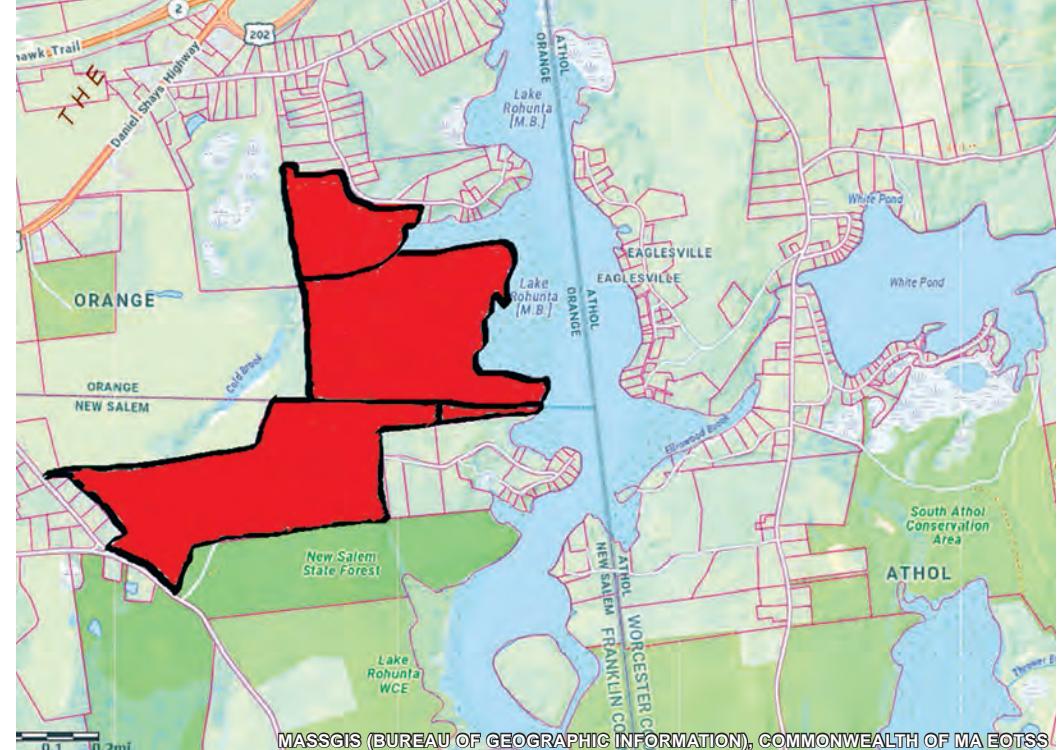
The area is also culturally important for hunters. Small emphasized that the land will remain open for hunting, which Mount Grace allows on several of its protected lands, and that accessible trails are also planned in the Barrens.

Lake Rohunta itself is also popular with anglers, though the lake is quite weedy in parts — good for bass, trickier for anglers.

Lucky anglers might catch largemouth bass, black crappie, or yellow perch, according to a June 19, 2025 "Sportsman's Corner" column by Mike Roche in the *Athol Daily News*. Roche mentioned the lake also features a handicap-accessible fishing location.

According to MassWildlife, Lake Rohunta was also stocked with northern pike in 2006, though it is not listed as a location for catching either trophy-sized pike or pickerel on the agency's website.

A lone ice fishing shanty stood on the



The four parcels indicated in red, totaling roughly 200 acres, were sold by W.D. Cowls to the Lyme Timber Company a year ago and transferred to Mount Grace in December.

snow-blanketed ice one frigid Sunday afternoon when this reporter drove by, and foot and snowmobile tracks indicated decent use of the lake during winter.

In addition to critical and threatened species, more common forest species in the area include deer, turkey, and bobcat. A variety of ducks can be seen on the lake, and Small said that in his opinion, Lake Rohunta is one of the "best waterfowl stomping grounds in the North Quabbin," featuring species like goldeneyes, ring-necked ducks, buffleheads, wood ducks, and mergansers in early spring.

Now under the care of a conservation land trust, the newly acquired land is open to the public and offers many forms of outdoor recreation. The acquisition adds to a large and critical corridor of protected land spanning from Mount Wachusett to the Quabbin region.

W.D. Cowls and the Lyme Timber Company are no strangers to land conservation.

The *Daily Hampshire Gazette* reported that in January 2025, both companies announced the purchase of 2,864 acres of land in Hampshire and Franklin counties, sold to Lyme from W.D. Cowls for \$20 million and expanding on a 2024 conservation purchase of 2,396 acres in the two counties.

According to an August press release from Lyme, the company planned to finalize permanent protection of that land and keep it open to the public, working with Kestrel Land Trust and the Trustees of Reservations.

In a statement in January 2025, W.D. Cowls president Cinda Jones noted that her company had conserved a third of its timberlands over the years.

Note: The reporter co-owns 28 acres of land on which Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust holds an unrelated conservation restriction.



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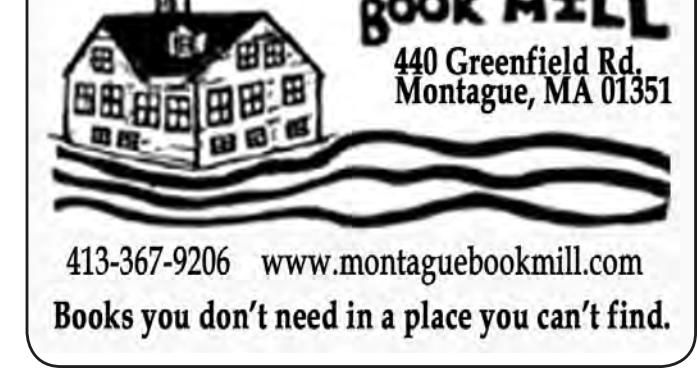
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Students at Four Rivers Charter Public School in Greenfield staged a walkout last Friday afternoon in conjunction with nationwide protests of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement campaign in Minneapolis and elsewhere.

JACKIE MACNEISH PHOTO

MONTAGUE from page A1

wage increases, or one with spending cut 2% from that point. Draft budgets reflecting both scenarios were previously requested from department heads.

Ramsey said that the budget with the 2% cuts totaled about \$150,000 less than the level-services version, but that the latter would actually cause the town's "affordable assessment" to the Gill-Montague regional school district to increase, "so it's more like a \$300,000 delta." Even under the lowest scenario, he said, the town will need to reduce its so-called "excess capacity," the amount of potential taxation it chooses to forego.

Selectboard chair Matt Lord noted that in December, based on input from department heads, the board had divided the departments into those that could easily implement the 2% cut, those that could not realistically do so, and those which needed to be reviewed more closely with the finance committee.

Lord and member Rich Kuklewicz suggested that the cuts could be imposed on all departments, and that if those in the "no way" category — including information technology, the Council on Aging, the Turners Falls municipal airport, and the cemeteries — run into problems during the year, the holes could be plugged using transfers from the town's reserve fund.

The board passed a motion directing Ramsey to work with town accountant Angelica Desroches "to use the 2% cuts to budgets that have been proposed by department heads for the working budget for the selectboard, finance committee, and others to use moving toward town meeting."

After the meeting, however, Ramsey told the *Reporter* that using reserve funds in this manner might not be appropriate under state law, which states that such reserves may be used only for "extraordinary, unforeseen, or non-recurring expenses, rather than regular operating costs."

Ramsey added that the recommendations finalized this month could change as the May annual meeting approaches, and might not be exactly what will appear on the posted warrant.

"We still have a ways to go on this budget process," he said.

One of Two Officers Hired

Acting as the personnel board, the selectboard made a number of staff appointments, including Joshua Lemay as a full-time patrol officer.

Lemay, who has worked for the last 11 years as a patrolman and detective in the Greenfield police department, will not require extensive police academy training at Montague's expense, and will therefore receive the \$10,000 signing bonus offered to so-called "lateral" transfers.

Police chief Jason Haskins also said he had "bad news," which was that a second full-time officer who was going to be appointed, Jacob Thompson, "unfortunately had to withdraw, so we are down that one position." Thompson would have needed training at the academy.

The selectboard also appointed Olivia Parmanen as a part-time custodian at the police department. Parmanen, who also works at Athol Regional High School, will be working five days a week. Haskins told the *Reporter* she will only be working on the police side of the public safety complex, which the department shares with the Turners Falls fire department.

At the request of public works superintendent Sam Urkiel, the board appointed Richard Hebert II to the position of light equipment operator. Merlin Waldron was promoted from the position of substitute library assistant to part-time library assistant.

Battle Board Dissolved

David Brule, who chaired the advisory board that oversaw the grant-funded project to study the 1676 massacre and battle at what is now called Turners Falls, came before the selectboard to officially disband the advisory board.

Brule traced the history of the project, which began in 2012 and included representatives of the historical commissions of five local towns and of up to five tribes in New England.

The board reviewed the research, which includes an extensive inventory of objects and documents in local collections as well as an archeological investigation of the battlefield, primarily the retreat route of the English militia through what is now Gill and Greenfield following the massacre. The site of the massacre itself is now under the Connecticut River.

Brule noted that some of the members of the advisory board will continue on as a new informal committee to continue the project without grant funds, seeking to find ways to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the massacre and battle and of King Philip's War, the larger conflict of which these events were a part.

The selectboard voted unanimously to disband the battlefield grant advisory board.

Race Rescheduled

Parks and recreation director Jon Dobosz came before the board to request a permit for a revival of the annual soap box derby, which did not take place last year. The board approved the use of public property for the event, which is slated for September 27.

Dobosz said the derby had originally been scheduled for June, when it was held in 2024, but was being moved back to the fall in order to "give people more time to build their carts" and because there tends to be more hay, bales of which are used to line the course, available in the fall. The event starts at the top of the First Street hill next to Kostanski Funeral Home, and the street is closed along Unity Park to the L Street intersection.

Dobosz told the *Reporter* that the main factor causing the cancellation of last year's event was a lack of volunteers for the committee that organizes the derby. He expressed confidence that the added time this year will improve outreach for that committee.

Other Business

The selectboard voted unanimously to endorse a proposed set of amendments to the town's zoning bylaws in order to comply with new state laws on accessory dwelling units (ADUs), as well as to expand the type of ADUs allowed locally by special permit. (See article, Page A1.)

At the request of assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller, the board approved a \$30,000 contract with Berkshire Design for bidding and construction oversight of the next phase of the ongoing streetscape project on Avenue A, funded by a federal community development block grant.

The board authorized Urkiel to sign highway purchasing and services contracts negotiated by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and adopted a revised policy for "sustainable purchasing" as required by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

It also agreed to move forward with several studies of regional consolidation currently underway: of public school districts, of ambulance services, and of police dispatch services.

The selectboard's next meeting will be held Monday, February 9.



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LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on February 4, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Pipeline Challenge

At the Montague selectboard meeting February 1, Ariel Elan, the board's "pipeline liaison," announced that the town has been granted full intervention status by the Department of Public Utilities to challenge the "supply path" contract between Berkshire Gas Company and the Tennessee Gas Pipeline, LLC.

TGP is seeking federal approval for a natural gas transmission pipeline, known as the Northeast Energy Direct project, that would run through Franklin County. Elan has argued that a success-

ful challenge could undermine support for the pipeline from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

It's Your Job, Verizon

At its January 27 meeting, the Wendell selectboard heard that the battery is dead in the Verizon switch box meant to maintain telephone service in town when electric service is cut off.

Since Verizon has not responded to a town request to replace it, even though it is a potential public health issue, board member Jeoffrey Pooser suggested town officials could connect a battery themselves. But the real solution, he said, is for Verizon to maintain their own equipment.

20 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on February 2, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

A Bridge Too Far

On April Fools' Day in 1999, Massachusetts Highway Department spokesman Jon Carlisle said of Montague's Greenfield Road overpass, "We certainly don't want it to be closed for a year."

Now, almost seven years later, his colleagues have told the public that MassHighway would prefer not to rebuild the demolished bridge at all. Instead, the state highway department offered a total rebuild of Hatchery Road, the detour commuters have used since the bridge came down seven years ago. They also offered to build a

\$150,000 pedestrian/bicycle bridge to connect the dead ends of Greenfield Road over the railroad in place of the former vehicular overpass.

Few of the crowd at the Discovery Center seemed satisfied with that solution.

Back to the Drawing Board

On Tuesday, the Montague selectboard accepted the landfill committee's recommendation to reject the bid of Coventa Haverhill, the only vendor in line to develop the town-owned landfill off Turnpike Road. According to town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, the bid did not meet minimal technical requirements.

The board will assess reopening the bidding at a later date.

140 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on February 3, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

A long-felt need has been supplied — another grocery.

W.B. Hayden was the name of the beat who sold goods at auction in Keough's block and "scooted."

O.C. Hitchcock owns a portable steam saw mill of considerable power, and has just started to cut the lumber on S.E. Ripley's Will's Hill wood lot.

If the rain and slush made the sojourn at R.M. Starbuck's smaller, it did not hinder their having a good time, and the art gallery and wax-work was novel and very amusing.

Clarence Jones came east a short time ago to tell his old friends here how rich he was getting in the west, fairly rolling in wealth, he was; but before he returned he took the poor debtor's oath.

It has been fully decided to change the grade crossing of the

Fitchburg and Connecticut River roads at Cheapside, and that the Fitchburg officials have been negotiating for land next the river in order to swing out around and lower their grade to go under the River road tracks.

The voters of Turners Falls are warned to meet this evening, February 3d, at 7:30, for the purpose of taking action upon the petition of John McIlvene and others in regard to a water supply for the fire district. A lively time may be expected.

W.J. Drenery, a workman in the kindling-wood factory at Riverside, was severely injured in the eye one day last week by a stick being thrown from the saw which he was tending.

R.S. Locke, who drove the stage between here and Greenfield, died Thursday noon, after a short illness. He was one of the old settlers of the place. The Grand Army Post and the Council of America Legion of Honor attended the funeral, Sunday.



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WENDELL from page A1

Martin spoke at length and cited many numbers. The existing tech school was built in 1975, and is now showing its age. The electrical system, he said, requires a "constant battle" to keep in operation; it needs a new switch gear, which allows the building to switch to a generator when the grid supply is interrupted. The waiting list for a replacement is two months.

The lights had flickered the previous Friday, but did not go out for long, the superintendent said, and that the school cannot operate for two months without electricity. The estimated cost for replacing the building's entire electrical system is \$32 million, and a new sprinkler system would add \$8 million.

The roof coating is in its last five years, and its replacement would cost \$1.7 million, he added, and the sewage system is backed up and needs a repair estimated at \$10 million.

The FCTS administration's application for a new construction grant from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) was initially put off, Martin said, but an MSBA inspector who visited the school said the application should move to the top of the state's list. MSBA grants typically pay 65% of construction costs, but he lowered the actual value of the grant to 50% of costs, citing hallways and demolition.

Martin said the mandatory cost to FCTS of sending a single student to Smith Vocational School is \$35,000 in transportation plus \$22,000 in tuition. FCTS alleviated that potential cost by building a hangar and starting an aviation technology shop, as well as an animal science shop, which have encouraged more students to stay in the district.

Martin said FCTS leads all other technical schools statewide in the percentage of students who start employment and stay in the area.

In the present building, he continued, shops and classrooms are across the hall from each other, allowing smells and noises to be disruptive. The architect's new design would have the shops in separate wings. The new building is planned to go where the baseball and soccer fields are now, and the fields would move to the present building's footprint after it is demolished.

The total project cost for the new building has been estimated at \$247 million.

The numbers cited at last week's meeting were preliminary, but Wendell's expected annual cost for a 30-year construction bond would ramp up to \$123,000 in 2031.

Wendell currently sends seven students to FCTS, at a tuition of \$9,500 per student or \$66,500 total, and this cost is expected to continue.

Budine said at least two more information meetings are planned, the first at 6 p.m. next Tuesday, February 10 at Greenfield Community College. Martin offered to meet with Wendell's finance committee if invited.

Asked by Wendell selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato about projected enrollment, Bouchard said the MSBA, using numbers of students in lower grades, projects a slightly smaller tech school enrollment in the future. The school currently has 579 students, and the new building design is aimed at 600 students, smaller than most MSBA projects.

Special Town Meeting

Pending constable Anne Diemand's availability, the selectboard picked 7 p.m. on Monday, March 9 for a special town meeting.

The meeting will be asked to accept the town's free cash amount, and make it available for use in the current year. Treasurer Carolyn Manley said there is a laundry list of other needs to be addressed.

The warrant for a special town meeting must be posted two weeks before the meeting, and the town website is now the legal posting place. All posting to the site is handled by town clerk Anna Wetherby, and she needs a week to process documents and post them, stretching the lead time to three weeks.

The selectboard has received two requests for remote participation at the meeting. Protocols for this have been established, and the board thought Wetherby would be the person to tell residents who request remote participation what they need to do.

Other Business

The selectboard approved an updated shared-policing agreement with Leverett.

The board considered a request by the volunteers who operate the Wendell Townsfolk email listserv to use the town's domain in order to overcome some difficulties the listserv has been facing, but decided to wait for more information.

Selectboard member Paul Doud suggested adding a link to Franklin Regional Council of Governments programs to the town website. He will contact the website committee.

Town coordinator Kelly Tyler was appointed as the department head for the kitchen coordinator, so she can sign off on kitchen payroll and purchases. Al MacIntyre and Choc'late Allen were appointed to the finance committee for terms ending with the May election.

The board voted to allow road worker Hayden Kanash five years' credit for similar work done in other towns, to be applied toward earning vacation time.

The board received a request to make an all-gender bathroom at the town hall, and decided the men's room would serve that purpose with just the sign on the door changed.



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is a music show from Athol and airing throughout WMass. New episodes on the 1st of each month.



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Tip of the week ...

Liability protection for snowmobiles is not typically included in standard homeowners policies. It's a good idea to review your coverage or speak with your insurance agent to ensure you have the necessary protection.



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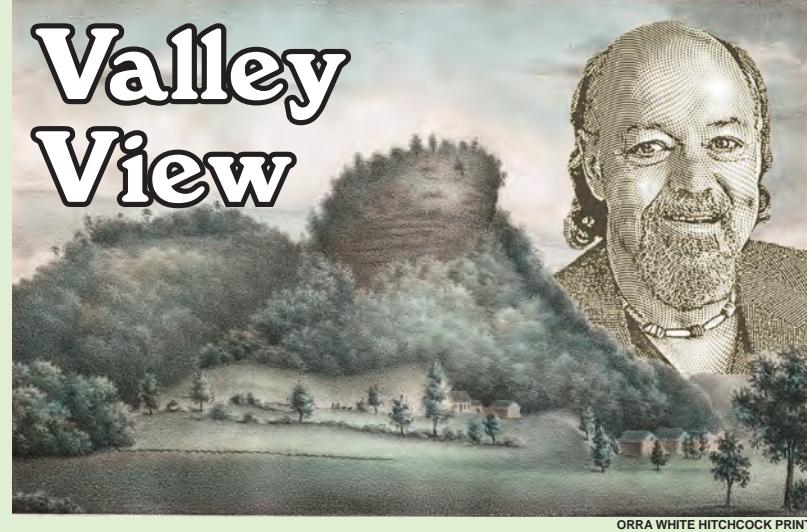


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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

FEBRUARY 5, 2026



ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

A Long-Lost Family Blanket

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – A midnight glance at February's cold Snow Moon high in the sky unleashed thoughts of an old family treasure, held by five generations of female heirs from my Sunderland/South Deerfield ancestry before vanishing in the Wild West.

Thoughts of the relic entered my consciousness due to recent email correspondence about it and related topics with an old *Greenfield Recorder* colleague now residing near Lawrence, Kansas, where some of my peripheral genealogical tendrils lead.

I don't expect ever to see or touch this once-worshipped family relic, which Sunderland historian John Montague Smith describes as a "bed blanket" in a genealogical footnote on Page 549 of his 1899 *History of the Town of Sunderland, Massachusetts (1673-1899), Which Originally Embraced Within Its Limits the Present Towns of Montague and Leverett.*

What follows may get confusing. I'll give it my best shot.

Smith says the homespun blanket came to my family with Mary Maghill, a colonial dame of unknown parentage who in 1736 married the Deerfield-born Fort Dummer soldier Joseph Alexander (1705-1761). They settled and eventually died in Hadley. From Maghill/Alexander, he said, it descended through four consecutive daughters and granddaughters named Mary, ending with the twice-married Mary (Augusta Arms Eldridge) Torbert (1826-1913) – a so-called "Free-Stater" or "Free-Soiler," who moved to Bloody Kansas in 1856 and was widowed two years later.

Sharing her mother's first name, this Mary – the younger sister of Eliza Arms Woodruff (1824-1898), my great-great-grandmother – went by Augusta, and was responsible for removing the blanket from a community where it was meaningful. At some point just before, or more like

ly after, her mother's Christmas 1887 passing in South Deerfield, it went to the aforementioned Lawrence, Kansas, where its far-away importance diminished and it has since vanished.

Typewritten family records from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and today in my possession mirror Smith regarding the blanket's Mary Maghill Alexander genesis, but then my records take the provenance a step further. I'm guessing my unnamed source was Eliza, with important 20th-century additions and corrections by her daughter Fannie Woodruff Sanderson (1865-1947), my great-grandmother.

Between the first and last blanket heirs – Mary Maghill/Alexander and Mary Augusta Arms Eldridge/Torbert – Smith names the heirs as Mary Alexander Smith, who married David Smith of Montague; Mary Smith Graham, who married tanner and shoemaker Benjamin Graham of Sunderland; and Mary Graham Arms, who married South Deerfield shoemaker Erastus Arms.

The blanket first tickled my curiosity nearly 40 years ago, soon after the passing of my 93-year-old spinster great-aunt Gladys Hayes Sanderson (1895-1989). Known to my immediate family as "Antie," she was Fannie's daughter and our unofficial family historian, steward of records and photographs. "Antie" and I lived under the same roof twice: first when I was a boy, and again after I bought the South Deerfield home to which she was born and granted life-estate.

The blanket first crossed my path in the *History of Sunderland*. I then chased down confirmation along with some crucial additional information in the private records squirrelled away by "Antie" in an old, black, trifold, plastic insurance packet. A comparison of the two sources revealed one troubling inconsistency involving the identity of Augusta Eldridge's second husband. His given name

see VALLEY VIEW page B4

RURAL HEALTH

With No Answers for a Feared Disease, Some in New England Blamed... Vampires

By RAY DIDONATO

MANCHESTER, VT and EXETER, RI – Nestled in Vermont's Green Mountains, Manchester is a quaint town about two hours away. It features a river walk, art and sculpture museums, various shops, and the American Museum of Fly Fishing, as the Orvis Company was founded here. The Battenkill River, known for good trout fishing, runs through town.

But two hundred and thirty-six years ago, a problem in the village of Manchester drove residents to exhume a body, remove its internal organs, and burn them.

During the coronavirus pandemic of 2019, grossly misinformed folk remedies emerged, such as hydroxyquinone or ivermectin. People also had odd ideas about disease transmission. I remember on one flight, when masks were required, a man a seat ahead of me said to a young woman next to him, "Smell the jet fuel? It means these masks don't work!" Never mind the fact that a molecule of jet fuel is much smaller than a viral particle, let alone a virus-carrying droplet.

In 2026, modern American medical advice is turned on its head with a Health and Human Services secretary who embraces pseudoscience, a sign that even now some Americans have been deeply misinformed when it comes to transmissible disease.

Is it any surprise, then, that disease was somewhat of a mystery to 18th- and 19th-century New Englanders?

With the quiet of the winter months upon us and flu cases climbing, my mind wandered to tales and folk remedies for an affliction that captured the imagina-



A sign in Manchester, Vermont, near Factory Point Cemetery commemorating Rachel Harris Burton. Her grave site is nearby.

tions of rural New England for at least a century:

Vampires.

The Hollywood portrayal of vampirism traditionally links the superstition to European, particularly Slavic countries, which certainly did have folklore about vampires, revenants, and other evil creatures. But it might surprise you to learn that even in 19th-century New England, belief in vampires of a sort was alive and well, particularly in Rhode Island, but in other parts and in every New England state.

The concept was not necessarily of vampires in the classical sense, and in fact the name "vampire" wasn't always given to the superstition, or commonly used by

see VAMPIRES page B2

RECIPES

CHOCOLATE ACROSS THE CENTURIES

By CLAIRE HOPELY

LEVERETT – One of the charming things about chocolate is that it shifts shape so easily that it fits into every holiday. It appears as Christmas stars and Santas and transforms into bunnies and eggs for Easter, hav-



Look within for a recipe for these chocolate-rum truffles.

ing already put in a major stint as cakes and truffles for Valentine's Day.

Chocolate on Valentine's is now commonplace, but not an ancient custom. Richard Cadbury created the first heart-shaped box of chocolates for the holiday in 1868. Even the chocolates were quite a new treat, because until earlier in the 19th century it was hard to make a palatable eating chocolate. The cocoa butter in chocolate made it greasy, while the cocoa solids made it gritty.

Chocolate had therefore appeared most often as an elite beverage, and making it was a chore.

In Mozart's opera *Cosi Fan Tutte*, the maid Despina enters alone with a chocolate pot and cups. She deplors the life of a lady's maid: "Sweating, toiling, laboring from morning until night... and we get nothing out of it ourselves," she sings. Explaining her frustration, she continues: "I have been beating the chocolate for half an hour; now it's ready. Am I to just stand and smell it, my mouth dry?"

Finally, she asks the audience: "O gracious mistresses, why should you get the real thing and I only the smell of it? By Bacchus, I am going to taste it."

You know the outcome: she loves it.

Despina would have rolled a swizzle stick between her palms to emulsify the rich cocoa butter with water and to raise a froth on top. The Spanish, who had brought chocolate to Europe two centuries earlier, had seen it being made in Mexico by servants who poured it back and forth between two pitchers, one held high

see RECIPES page B8

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

'NOAH'

Meet Noah, a three-year-old lady looking for a calm home where she can enjoy time out of her cage. While Noah can be hand shy and doesn't enjoy being held, she will happily climb all over you and treat you as her own personal jungle gym.

Chinchillas can live between 10 and 20 years. As part of this gorgeous girl's beauty routine, Noah needs a dust bath in special chinchilla dust once a week. She can overheat easily and prefers temperatures between 59 and 77 degrees fahrenheit.

A nocturnal explorer, Noah will sleep all day and be active at night. Chinchillas are a social species and

enjoy the company of their own kind. We do not know if Noah has shared her home with another chinchilla. She does enjoy certain pets, and did well with cats. Because she will be spending most of her time inside a cage, housing must be adequate to meet her need for space.

Her adoption fee is \$75. As most of our small animals are in foster care, if you're ready to adopt and want to learn more about Noah, call the Dakin Humane Society at (413) 781-4000 ext. 1, or email springfield@dakinhumane.org. If you already have a cage, please send a picture when you inquire.

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11 a.m. Social Stringer

Wednesday 2/11

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

Thursday 2/12

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

Friday 2/13

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

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

Monday 2/9

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

3 p.m. Beginner Yoga

Tuesday 2/10

9 a.m. Chair Yoga
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday

3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 2/11

Foot Clinic by Appointment
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 2/12

1 p.m. Pitch

Friday 2/13

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tax Return
Preparation by Appointment

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom. Foot care clinics are the third Tuesday of each month. The next clinic is February 17. Luncheons are the fourth Friday at town hall. For more information, contact (413) 548-1022 or coa@leverett.ma.us, 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.

VAMPIRES from page B1

New Englanders. But a belief that parts of the buried dead continued to live and "feed" off their living relatives, like a sort of lingering supernatural attachment, fell squarely into vampire traditions, according to George R. Stetson's article "The Animistic Vampire in New England," published in January 1896 in *The American Anthropologist*.

It's first important to understand that germ theory was not widely understood or accepted in America until the late 19th century, and that even doctors blamed transmissible disease on any number of causes, from miasma to poor constitution to heredity.

Ordinary Americans not expert in medicine, or who lived in rural areas with infrequent access to doctors, had an even poorer understanding of disease.

Consumption, today known as tuberculosis (TB), was a particularly confounding and dreaded affliction in the 18th and 19th centuries, since patients would seem to waste away. Entire families might be afflicted by the illness over the course of years, and in Europe, a quarter of the population suffered from TB. Even today, TB takes a long time to treat, and some strains are drug-resistant, making treatment more difficult.

It's no surprise, then, that the disease was particularly feared in New England at the time, which brings us back to Manchester, one of two road trips I took to research this story.

Burned on the Forge

The trouble in Manchester started in the stark winter month of February 1790, when Rachel Harris (Burton) fell ill with consumption and died. The wife of Captain Isaac Burton, Rachel was described by accounts as "a fine, healthy, beautiful girl," according to Judge John S. Pettibone's 1800s manuscript *The Early History of Manchester*.

Harris died about a year after her marriage to Isaac. By that time, her body would have been weak and ravaged by the disease, and her breathing shallow, as if she were dying from the inside, perhaps coughing blood.

After Rachel's death, Isaac Burton remarried to Hulda Powell, described as a beautiful girl as well, but not as "handsome" as Harris.

Powell also fell ill shortly after her marriage to Burton, and according to Pettibone's second-hand account, her friends and family soon became convinced that the deceased Rachel Harris Burton was a vampire, preying on Isaac Burton's current wife.

An exhumation was ordered, and Harris's "liver, heart, and lungs" were removed and burned on the forge of local blacksmith Jacob Mead. Her lungs and heart were likely filled with either liquid or clotted blood, not uncommon, giving locals the impression that she was undead.

If you're wondering how a body could be exhumed in February in Vermont in the late 1700s, I was wondering the same thing.

An article by Robyn Lacy in the journal *New England Historic Archaeology*, entitled "An Inconvenient Corpse: Settler Adaptation to Winter Death," might give us some clues. She examined burial practices in areas of Canada during colonial times and found that while winter storage was a common way to deal with bodies during winter, in other areas the ground was "chopped and burned using whatever means required."

DIDONATO PHOTO



The gravestone of Mercy Lena Brown, in the Brown family plot at Chestnut Hill Cemetery in Exeter, Rhode Island.

Given that people in Manchester were desperate to conquer what they considered a lethal threat, it's not unimaginable that similar means were used to bring up the body of Rachel Harris in the dead of winter.

Between 500 and 1,000 people attended the exhumation and burning, according to Pettibone's account, in a February that was "about three years" after Harris's wintry burial, as sleighing was described as "good."

Harris's grave site is located at Factory Point Cemetery. A sign in Manchester Center commemorates the "Manchester Vampire" and notes the date of Rachel Harris' exhumation as 1793, in line with Pettibone's account.

Hulda Burton went on to die that September.

Horrible Relics

Rachel Harris wasn't the first vampire suspected by New Englanders, and she wouldn't be the last. Nearer to us, just a few years earlier, Belchertown minister Jus-tus Forward detailed in a letter how his daughter Martha's body was exhumed for a similar reason. Earlier cases were also documented in Connecticut.

In his book *A History of Vampires in New England*, Thomas D'Agostino painstakingly details cases in each New England state, beginning in 1784 and ending in 1892. These strange traditions were noticed by outside observers, and by the medical establishment.

Henry David Thoreau got wind of it and was repulsed, writing in his journal on September 26, 1859 (*The Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, Chapter VII) of the "savage" nature of a Vermont family that "burned the lungs, heart, and liver of the last deceased, in order to prevent any more from having it."

Thoreau himself suffered from tuberculosis and would ultimately die of the disease in 1862. By 1859, he realized his health was declining, and he also had family members and acquaintances, including family of his close friend Ralph Waldo

Emerson, who had suffered or died from consumption.

Perhaps a tale of people in Vermont digging up the bodies of loved ones who died from consumption struck a particular nerve for Thoreau, since he took the time to note it in his journal.

The *Fourth Annual Report of the State Board of Health* was published in Boston, Massachusetts in 1873. In a section exploring the causes and treatments of consumption, survey respondent Dr. Lucy Abell described it as a "horrible relic of superstition" that a family had burned the heart and other organs of the deceased and ingested the ashes as a folk remedy. It did not work, and "another son fell victim."

But consumption confounded doctors even in the late 1800s, allowing superstitious beliefs and associated remedies to take hold in more rural locales. The era brought with it perhaps the most famous New England "vampire," Mercy Lena Brown. The March 20, 1892 *Indianapolis Journal* ran a contemporary story entitled "Old Superstition Put to the Test."

The Vampire Hypothesis

Exeter, Rhode Island was a small hamlet dotted with farms. Even today, houses are relatively spaced out and old farms line Ten Rod Road, a busy street that crosses through its center. Cars rush by a small white Baptist church and neighboring cemetery.

A little over a century after the troubles in Manchester, Vermont, a farmer by the name of George T. Brown had his own problems.

George had lost his wife, Mary, and daughters Olive and Mercy to consumption over an eight-year period. Nineteen-year-old Mercy died in January 1892 and was buried in what is now Chestnut Hill Cemetery, a modest 10-acre burial ground behind the old Baptist church.

The 1892 Exeter death record at the time lists Mercy's cause of death as tuberculosis. Not only had George lost his wife and daughters

see VAMPIRES next page

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VAMPIRES from previous page

to the disease, but his son Edwin was in its late stages.

Edwin had left Exeter because he and his wife, Hortense, had gone to Colorado Springs, known at the time as "America's Greatest Sanitarium" due to its "healing" climate and altitude. In fact, one-third of the population of Colorado Springs were tuberculosis sufferers in the late 1800s.

But now Edwin was back in Exeter, pining for home and quite sick. Neighbors could see he wasn't long for this world.

Not too long after Edwin's return, locals pressed George Brown into exhuming the bodies of his wife and daughters, thinking for sure that there was a vampire at work, preying on Edwin.

Brown was reluctant, but his neighbors prodded him into action. He enlisted the local medical examiner, Dr. Howard Metcalf, to exhume and examine the bodies of his wife and daughters. Metcalf noted that the bodies showed a normal amount of decay for the time they had been buried. The bodies of Mary and Olive Brown were skeletons at this point.

Mercy's body was in better condition, buried just a matter of weeks ago. But a small amount of blood in her heart, considered "nothing unusual" by Metcalf, was enough to convince locals that Mercy was a vampire. Her "heart and liver" were "cremated and the bodies reinterred."

This did not cure Edwin Brown, however, and he died that May. Other members of the Brown family also fell victim to consumption.

For those who are more curious, a January 1896 *Globe* article entitled "Believe in Vampires. Rhode Islanders Who Are Sure That They Do Exist" details other interesting examples of families in Rhode Island suspecting vampires were kill-



An illustration from the January 6, 1896 Boston Daily Globe ("Believe In Vampires"), depicting a woman tormented by the vampire of her deceased husband. Stories like this were commonplace in 19th-century Rhode Island.

ing their consumptive relatives.

By the late 1800s, the medical concept of miasma as a cause of transmissible disease was being displaced by germ theory, and the German bacteriologist Robert Koch published his postulates linking transmittable diseases to microbes. These and other scientific developments drove a stake permanently into the heart of the "vampire hypothesis" as a cause of consumption, and Mercy Brown's case seems to have been the last of its kind in New England.

The phenomenon of the human imagination conjuring up various explanations and remedies for aspects of nature that might not be fully understood at the time is as alive today as it has been in the past.

This is essentially part of how we are wired as humans – to quickly assign causality to a threat.

Sometimes this serves us well. Other times, not so well.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Dog In Snowbank; Repetitive Music; Car In Snowbank; Truck In Ditch; Strange Man Installs Meters; \$400 Found

Monday, 1/26

9:58 a.m. Caller from Sunrise Terrace states that her dog ran out of the house and she has not been able to locate him. Described as a black-and-white dog with floppy ears. Off-duty officer located the dog stuck in a snowbank. He retrieved it and brought it inside his garage to warm up. Officer will pick up the dog and bring it back to the owner.

10:08 a.m. Caller from Kingsley Avenue states that there are a couple of cars parked in the road despite the parking ban. Caller called back to say that the upstairs neighbor shoveled snow from his car in front of her car and now she is blocked in. Report taken.

1:25 p.m. Walk-in would like to speak with an officer about a neighbor issue; concerned about the neighbor being loud and playing repetitive music very loudly. Officer spoke with other involved party and advised how he could handle complaints about the caller.

3:04 p.m. 911 caller states that a car blew a stop sign and he hit her with his plow. Rau's *en route* for Honda. Citation issued.

5:04 p.m. Walk-in reports that his car was backed into down the road. Investigated.

8:39 p.m. Officer conducting vehicle stop on Turnpike Road; following vehicle

home. Operator issued criminal application for operating after suspension/revocation and an unregistered motor vehicle.

11:01 p.m. Caller from Avenue A reports that a male keeps ringing the doorbell buzzer to the apartment to be let in. Units advised. Officer advises nobody outside of building or in area.

Tuesday, 1/27

4:05 p.m. Caller wants an officer to respond to her home; she called the other day and still has not heard back. States someone replaced parts in her car and it is not right and it is hard for her to use. Referred to an officer.

5:25 p.m. Caller states that a car is parked in a no-parking area between the Pizza House and the coffee shop and he is unable to get by; would like the car removed as someone already hit the car, and nobody can get in or out of the alley. Officer states the vehicle is parked in the fire lane; asked to make contact with female.

Female states she was unloading her car and wasn't going to leave it. Officer states she is outside moving it now.

5:45 p.m. 911 caller from Canal Street states she rear-ended someone because she hit black ice and couldn't stop. Officer advises that this happened in Greenfield; they crossed and pulled over by the bike shop. Greenfield is

sending officers.

6:10 p.m. Report of a vehicle hitting canal bridge. Greenfield has a tow company coming to pull the car out.

Wednesday, 1/28

9:15 a.m. Detail officer requesting on-duty officer to L Street at Prospect to assist with trying to get some parked cars to move. Vehicle moved.

12:58 p.m. Walk-in concerned about a construction vehicle parked on South High Street impeding traffic and snow removal. Investigated. Vehicle not blocking traffic; road has been cleared of snow. No issues.

2:48 p.m. Caller states that he saw a male, standing outside of a black Subaru on Second Street, punching a girl who was inside the car. She eventually got out and they both walked behind a building on Avenue A. Officers spoke to caller and checked area; unable to locate.

3:14 p.m. Manager looking to speak to an officer regarding a stolen key to the business. They believe that a former employee took it; involved is refusing to give it back. Unable to contact involved party. Requesting Greenfield PD make contact with party and have him call MPD.

Thursday, 1/29

7:44 a.m. Alarm company reporting burglar alarm sounding at 253 Farmacy in the area of reception and an outer electrical room door. False alarm; employees on the scene.

11:18 a.m. 911 caller reporting CO alarm sounding in a Third Street building. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

1:47 p.m. Officer flagged down on G Street about a hit-and-run that occurred earlier in the day. Report taken.

1:58 p.m. Walk-in requesting to speak with an officer about a concerning post on a social media app. Information taken; will follow up.

3:42 p.m. Caller reporting Medicare fraud on behalf of his brother. Advised of options.

3:56 p.m. 911 call reporting car vs. snowbank on Main Street. Operator is out of the vehicle; not injured. States he is standing in a snowbank. Officers attempting to get it out. Car removed; tow needed. Operator contacting AAA. DPW advises that the speed limit sign has been snapped off. DPW contacted regarding snow bank in road. They will plow it back. Officer staying with vehicle and operator until AAA arrives.

9:58 p.m. Officer advising truck in ditch at Montague City Road and Warner Street. Vehicle registration revoked for insurance; registered owner has suspended license. No operator on scene. Officer requesting Greenfield PD attempt to make contact with vehicle owner. Officer advises keys are gone; vehicle is still warm. Greenfield PD advises their officers saw the male walking on Deerfield Street earlier today; reporting he is possibly selling his vehicle. Officer attempted to call involved male; call went straight to voicemail. Officer advises Sirum's is pulling the vehicle out.

Greenfield PD advise contact made with male, who is uncooperative and slammed the door in the officers' faces. Greenfield PD advises that if Montague goes over to speak with the male, to have additional officers and to contact Greenfield PD as party is volatile and not listening to officers.

Friday, 1/30

10:03 a.m. Caller from Wentworth Avenue reporting strange man at property. Contractor installing new meters.

2:50 p.m. Verbal argument resulted in both parties coming to the station to speak to an officer. Courtesy transport provided.

3:35 p.m. Caller reports someone is walking in the river under the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Officer advises male near island appears to be taking pictures. Officer spoke to male, who states it's a beautiful day and he wants to take pictures; not in any distress.

Saturday, 1/31

2:06 p.m. Caller from East Main Street reports that a male was attempting to pick the lock of the apartment building he lives in. States he told the male to leave, and he did; he is now in front of his own house with his friend; caller believes they are under the influence of drugs. Referred to an officer.

1:58 p.m. Walk-in requesting to speak with an officer about a concerning post on a social media app. Information taken; will follow up.

3:42 p.m. Caller reporting Medicare fraud on behalf of his brother. Advised of options.

3:56 p.m. 911 call reporting car vs. snowbank on Main Street. Operator is out of the vehicle; not injured. States he is standing in a snowbank. Officers attempting to get it out. Car removed; tow needed. Operator contacting AAA. DPW advises that the speed limit sign has been snapped off. DPW contacted regarding snow bank in road. They will plow it back. Officer staying with vehicle and operator until AAA arrives.

Sunday, 2/1

5:33 a.m. Third of three 911 calls regarding a loud verbal argument between two parties. Male party is getting his stuff and leaving for the night.

Ice Sculptures at the Winter Carnival

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – One part of the annual Winter Carnival in Greenfield is an ice sculpture contest that has some very nice sculptures created for it. They are usually positioned around Main Street for people to see, and are lit up at night.

Robert Markey is an artist who has been part of the contest several times. "I did one in them most years since 2018," he told me. He won a third-place People's Choice award that year for a sculpture in front of Greenfield Savings Bank called "Coyote Howling." The other artists who won alongside Markey at that time were Mark Bosworth in first place and Marc Cinamella in second.

Markey also carved a sculpture called the "Valentine Ice Girl" for the first one in 2013. "I was doing sculptures in marble," he explained, "and it was amazing to me that I could create a sculpture in ice in one day that would take a month to make in marble." At the 2014 winter carnival, he carved a St. Bernard.

From the images I have seen on Markey's website, I would call his sculptures very realistic-looking.

"It usually takes me around five hours to create an ice sculpture," he said, "sometimes a little more, and sometimes a little less."

I got a hold of another artist involved, Mark Bosworth, from Athol. Bosworth told me he has been carving ice off and



Left: Robert Markey's sculpture "Coyote Howling," at the 2018 Greenfield Winter Carnival. Right: Mark Bosworth's fire-breathing dragon sculpture.



IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

on for over 20 years, and has "carved, competed, and won many first, second, or third-place awards over the years at the Greenfield Winter Carnival." Bosworth said he likes the pleasure and reward it brings from reactions onlookers have. Sculptures he has carved include a winged lion, a knight on a dragon, two people in hats kissing, a single knight, and a dragon breathing fire.

Another bit of info on the contest is that Ryan & Casey Liquors has sponsored an ice sculpture each year since they have started doing them. "It's a different sculpt-

ure every year," the owner, Kristie Faufaw, told me. "It's different artists every year since Chainsaw Sue stopped doing it." Chainsaw Sue was the artist who regularly did the one the liquor store sponsored.

Robert Markey said he will not be doing one this year. He is in Brazil in January and February, creating mosaic projects. "Hopefully next year I can [make] one," he said. "Making an outdoor ice sculpture is always such a good winter project." His official website, where you can see those ice sculptures and other works yourself, is www.robertmarkey.com.

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THE
SPIRIT SHOPPE

VALLEY VIEW from page B1

was John B. (a/k/a J.B.) Torbert, a Humboldt, Kansas physician who tied the knot in 1871 and died 14 years later, leaving Augusta widowed for a second time.

We can excuse Smith's *History* for incorrectly reporting her new married name as "Talbot." My private records originally shared the mistake before it was crossed out and corrected to "Torbert" in permanent black ink. I have also found his last name inaccurately spelled "Tolbert." Online today, however, it is easy to verify that the right name was Dr. J.B. Torbert.

Though still anyone's guess, our blanket probably resided in South Deerfield for the duration of Mary Arms's (1794-1887) long life. Some readers may remember that I featured her in this space a few months ago, accompanied by her circa-1855 ambrotype photo, expertly restored by Chris Clawson.

Had her daughter Mary Augusta taken it with her on her maiden voyage to Kansas, it undoubtedly would have soon vanished during Bloody Kansas guerrilla skirmishing between anti-slavery Free-Staters from New England and Southern pro-slavery Border Ruffians from Missouri.

In the spring of 1856, Mary Augusta accompanied her first husband James Monroe Eldridge to Kansas City. There he and his brothers briefly owned and operated a hotel that served as a staging area for newcomers from the New England Emigrant Aid Company.

The Eldridge gang soon moved to Lawrence, where the brothers built two hotels – the Free State and the Eldridge – both of



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Mary Graham Arms, the author's great-great-grandmother, was his last ancestor to keep the homespun bed blanket in Deerfield. This ambrotype photograph of hers was restored last year.

which were destroyed by Border Ruffians. The Eldridge Hotel was the target of the famous August 21, 1863 Quantrill Raid of Civil War lore. Had the blanket been there, its probability of survival would have been minimal.

Luckily, Mary Augusta was out of town for Quantrill's blood-lust attack. As the frontier town burned and residents were murdered in the street, she was back home visiting her South Deerfield family, with young biological son Edwin in tow.

The teenage stepson she left behind in Lawrence was not so fortunate. Store clerk James Eldridge – born in South Deerfield to

her husband's deceased first wife – was shot down by Quantrill's gunmen after opening the store's safe for them.

I suppose our heirloom blanket might have accompanied mother Augusta on the passenger train back to Kansas, but it's doubtful she would have risked it with the state so vulnerable.

Augusta was back in South Deerfield again during the summer of 1884 to celebrate her mother's 90th birthday. Perhaps by then her mother thought it was time to part with her sentimental blanket. If not, Augusta returned to her old hometown for the last time in 1909, accompanied by adult son Edwin. By then, her mother had been dead more than 20 years. It was time for a move to Kansas.

Had she neglected to claim her inherited prize, it would likely have wound up in the family home where I spent my first 12 years. There, in the sunny front parlor that waked a few family members over the years, a red-stained 18th-century blanket chest with boot-jack ends was cherished by "Antie." It contained old, neatly folded blankets and quilts, an 1827 Bardwell sampler, and bagsful of fabric shards stored for patchwork quilt-making.

I believe that piece of furniture came across the river to South Deerfield whenever possession of the blanket was transferred from Sunderland's Mary Smith Graham to her daughter Mary Graham Arms. Today the blanket chest stands against the east wall of my mother's bedroom.

Although the *History of Sunderland* follows the bed blanket only as far as Mary Augusta, my private records take it a step further. An ink note concluding the genea-

logical records says that the "Blanket made by Mary Alexander [is] now (Aug. 21, 1913) held by Nellie Augusta Rickerson, Colorado Springs, Colo., granddaughter of Mary Augusta Torbert."

It's worth noting that this note was entered into the record only three days before Mary Augusta's death. As she lay dying, her family considered the blanket important enough to ask about its whereabouts. Thankfully, the response was promptly recorded for posterity.

Some 20 years ago I followed this lead, chasing down Nellie Rickerson's Colorado grandson, Kurt Laidlaw, and querying him by email. He knew nothing about any heirloom blanket.

Now, an interesting little caveat.

In recent years of researching Bloody Kansas, I uncovered a tasty little tidbit I'm not finished exploring. I found it near the end of Mary Augusta Torbert's lengthy Lawrence obituary in the July 30, 1913 *Jeffersonian Gazette*.

The bright, shiny object is that, to gain favor with Lawrence's Plymouth Congregational Church – not to mention acceptance into its cemetery – Mary Augusta donated to the church "the gift of a valuable keepsake."

The family blanket, perhaps?

I reached out to the church in recent years without the courtesy of a response.

Who knows? The chase may someday justify a road trip.

Stay tuned.

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

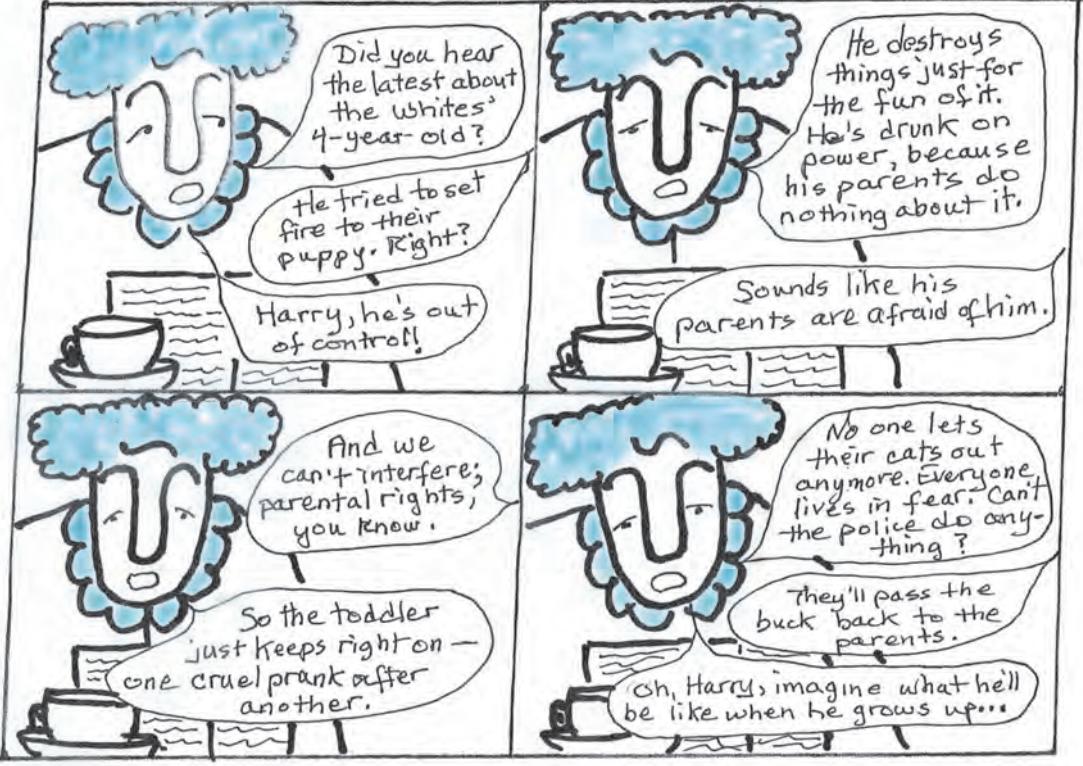


JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION

Cool Cats on the Ave *Suzie*

SUZETTE SNOW-COBBILLUSTRATION

OVER THE HILL



Carolyn Clark

MONTAGUE CRYPTOJAM !!!

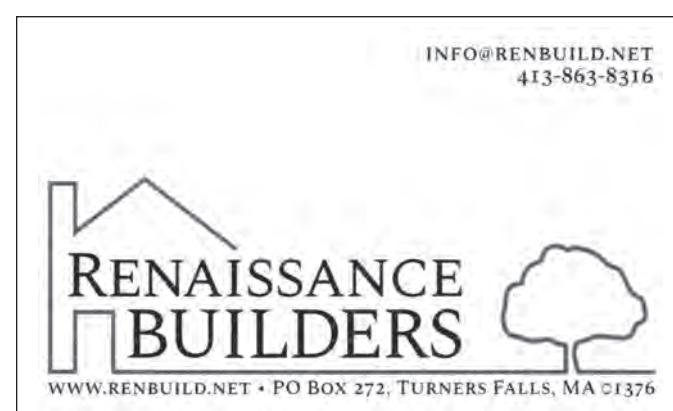
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Aquí se habla español

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



Venezuela, después de Maduro...

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

GREENFIELD – En enero de 2026 se produjo un acontecimiento sin precedentes en la historia reciente de Venezuela: tras décadas de gobierno bajo la influencia del chavismo, el presidente Nicolás Maduro fue capturado por las fuerzas de Estados Unidos en una operación militar en Caracas. Estados Unidos organizó a Nueva York para enfrentar cargos por narcoterrorismo y otros delitos en medio de la noche y el secreto.

Nos enteramos con la distribución de las fotos de Maduro vestido con ropa de una marca deportiva estadounidense que, por cierto, se agotó en las horas siguientes en todas las tiendas de la marca.

La detención del ex-presidente marcó un punto de inflexión en la política venezolana, latinoamericana y en las relaciones internacionales de la región. No solo representa la caída de un líder que había estado en el poder desde 2013, sino también el fin, para algunos, de un periodo político basado en el proyecto del expresidente Hugo Chávez y continuado por Maduro.

La captura de Maduro generó reacciones diversas en Venezuela y en el mundo, con celebraciones en sectores opositores y protestas de apoyo en áreas controladas por simpatizantes del antiguo régimen.

El presidente Donald Trump declaró públicamente que Maduro sería procesado ante la Justicia de Estados Unidos por delitos graves, incluidos narcoterrorismo, conspiración para importar cocaína al país y cargos relacionados con armas. Según fiscales estadounidenses, la acusación sostiene que Maduro usó el poder del Estado venezolano para facilitar que el llamado “Cartel de los Soles” enviase drogas ilícitas al mercado norteamericano, comprometiendo así la seguridad pública de Estados Unidos y violando sus leyes penales.

Trump explicó que la acción no era solo una operación policial, sino una denuncia de que las redes de narcotráfico del gobierno venezolano representaban una amenaza directa para la seguridad del pueblo estadounidense.

Además, el mandatario afirmó que Estados Unidos tenía poder legal para ejecutar el mandato de arresto existente desde 2020, en parte porque las autoridades venezolanas no lo habían cumplido y porque la DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) contaba con atribuciones para perseguir narcóticos que afecten al territorio estadounidense.

El gobierno estadounidense adujo los siguientes motivos para detener a Maduro en su propio país y traerlo a los Estados Unidos:

• **Lucha contra el narcotráfico:** El argumento central es que Maduro encabeza una estructura de narcotráfico transnacional que ha perjudicado a Estados Unidos durante años, lo cual justifica legalmente perseguirlo y arrestarlo bajo leyes federales.

• **Seguridad regional:** Trump presentó la operación como parte de una política más amplia de seguridad hemisférica, insinuando que un liderazgo responsable en Venezuela podría reducir amenazas a la estabilidad regional y al control de drogas, impulsando además la recuperación de un país devastado por la crisis.

• **Control de recursos naturales:** Si bien estirazón se mencionó con menos énfasis oficial, Trump también habló abiertamente de los intereses estratégicos en la industria petrolera venezolana, indicando que compañías estadounidenses participarán en la reconstrucción de infraestructura petrolera para generar riqueza y estabilidad.

Por supuesto, estos motivos mezclados con argumentos legales, de política interna y de geo-estrategia, están sometidos a debate tanto dentro como fuera de Estados Unidos acerca de su legitimidad y sus posibles efectos sobre la soberanía y el derecho internacional.

Tras la captura de Maduro, Venezuela atravesó un momento de enorme incertidumbre constitucional. Según la normativa venezolana, el vicepresidente debe asumir las funciones del presidente si quedase impedido de

ción de cuentas.

El proceso político en Venezuela sigue siendo observado con atención por la comunidad internacional. Estados Unidos afirmó que apoyará una “transición segura” para Venezuela, aunque ha sido reticente a colocar oficialmente a la líder opositora María Corina Machado al frente del proceso.

La líder opositora que fue galardonada con el Premio Nobel de la Paz en 2025, ha sido una figura central en la crítica al régimen chavista desde hace años. Machado se vio forzada a salir de Venezuela en 2025 y mantener actividades políticas desde el exterior, y ha abogado por una transición democrática completa y el fin del autoritarismo.

Machado ha mantenido reuniones con altos funcionarios y legisladores estadounidenses, incluido el presidente Donald Trump.



CC PHOTO BY JESÚS CARMERO

Nicolás Maduro, ex-presidente de Venezuela.

ejercer. El Tribunal Supremo de Justicia de Venezuela declaró la vacancia temporal de Maduro y autorizó que Delcy Rodríguez, la vicepresidenta desde 2018, tomó el mando como presidenta encargada.

Según la administración estadounidense, decidieron mantener la continuidad política en Venezuela ya que tener una figura local al frente del Ejecutivo ayuda a “garantizar una transición segura” y minimizar un vacío de poder que podría desencadenar caos o violencia.

Este enfoque ha generado críticas desde diversos frentes (incluyendo la oposición democrática venezolana), que ven en la continuidad de Rodríguez una forma de mantener elementos del antiguo régimen, aunque con un nuevo rol y bajo presión internacional.

La administración de Delcy Rodríguez ha propuesto una ley de amnistía para presos políticos, que cubriría casos desde 1999, incluyendo sectores opositores y defensores de derechos humanos encarcelados durante los años de chavismo. Aunque la medida ha sido percibida como un paso hacia la reconciliación, organizaciones de derechos humanos y la oposición han insistido en que muchos detenidos siguen bajo procesos judiciales sin claridad, y han criticado que la amnistía no aborda adecuadamente la justicia y rendi-

En una reunión reciente con Trump en la Casa Blanca, le entregó simbólicamente su medalla del Premio Nobel de la Paz como signo de compromiso con la causa venezolana.

Trump, por su parte, ha expresado interés en “involucrarla” en el futuro político de Venezuela, aunque no ha respaldado formalmente su ascenso inmediato al poder ni ha señalado que tenga suficiente apoyo interno en el país para dirigir una transición política por sí sola.

Machado ha fijado como una de sus prioridades regresar a Venezuela y liderar una transición democrática que implique elecciones libres y el restablecimiento de instituciones que funcionen fuera de la influencia del chavismo. Sin embargo, hay tensiones entre su visión y la de otros actores internacionales, que optan por una transición más gradual y con un papel importante de Estados Unidos y otros gobiernos en la supervisión del proceso.

La oposición venezolana también ha señalado que el levantamiento de las sanciones y la democratización plena no son posibles mientras existan estructuras de poder derivadas del chavismo, y que la migración masiva de venezolanos solo se detendrá si se logra una transformación estructural del país.

La situación en Venezuela ha tenido impacto directo en la región, particularmente en las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y Colombia.

El presidente de Colombia, Gustavo Petro, ha advertido sobre las repercusiones de las tensiones en Venezuela y ha pedido que Maduro sea juzgado en Venezuela ante tribunales nacionales, calificando su traslado a Estados Unidos como un secuestro injustificado. Petro ha mantenido un discurso que busca equilibrar la soberanía latinoamericana con la necesidad de justicia regional, lo que ha generado roces diplomáticos con Washington.

Las relaciones entre EE. UU. y Colombia, históricamente fuertes por la cooperación en temas de seguridad y narcotráfico, están ahora bajo una nueva tensión debido a las diferentes posturas sobre el manejo de la situación venezolana, la soberanía y la justicia internacional.

Mientras tanto, en el ámbito financiero y internacional, Suiza ha congelado cualquier activo que Nicolás Maduro y personas vinculadas a él posean en el país. Esta medida, adoptada por el Consejo Federal suizo como parte de su legislación sobre activos ilícitos, busca impedir la salida de fondos que podrían estar vinculados a corrupción o adquisición ilícita durante el tiempo en que Maduro estuvo en el poder.

La congelación preventiva busca asegurar que, en caso de investigaciones futuras, los recursos puedan ser utilizados en beneficio del pueblo venezolano o en procesos de restitución.

La crisis prolongada en Venezuela ha generado una de las mayores diásporas de la historia reciente de América Latina. Según datos oficiales y estimaciones internacionales, millones de venezolanos han emigrado a otros países, con números que superan los 8 millones desde la crisis política y económica que se intensificó a mediados de la década de 2010.

Entre los destinos fuera de América Latina, España se ha consolidado como uno de los países preferidos para establecerse. Las cifras oficiales señalan que en 2025 había más de 690 000 venezolanos viviendo en España, convirtiéndose en la comunidad venezolana más numerosa en Europa.

La caída de Maduro y la actual transición en Venezuela están reconfigurando el equilibrio político en América Latina. El proceso ha levantado interrogantes sobre la legitimidad de la intervención extranjera, el papel de los líderes opositores, y cómo las naciones de la región pueden colaborar para una salida pacífica y democrática a la crisis.

María Corina Machado representa una corriente opositora fuerte y con reconocimiento internacional, pero enfrenta retos tanto internos como en el marco de la política exterior de Estados Unidos y otros aliados. El papel de países como Colombia y España será crucial en la próxima etapa, tanto diplomáticamente como en materia de apoyo a refugiados y emigrantes venezolanos.

Mientras tanto, la comunidad internacional observa cómo Venezuela intenta recomponer su sistema político y social después de décadas de polarización, sanciones y crisis económica severa. La forma en que se lleven a cabo las reformas, las elecciones y el restablecimiento de estructura institucional determinarán en gran medida la estabilidad futura del país y la región.

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5

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

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Reception for *Trees*, informational exhibit celebrating tree projects in Greenfield. 5 to 8 p.m. Free.

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

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

Bezanson Hall, UMass Amherst: *Ilan Morgenstern Trio*. 7:30 p.m. Free.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Kenny Warren's Sweet World*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Dickinson Library, Northfield: Reception, *Tiny Art Show*, with warm drinks and baked goods. 10 to 11 a.m. Free.

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Workshop, *Zine on the River*. For teens and adults. Drop in and make a Connecticut River zine. 3 to 5 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Meet a Therapy Dog*, for children 3 to 12. 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Free.

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Restorative Jam*. Grounding and somatic exercises, followed by open time to rest, stretch, or move. In the Movement Studio. 3:45 to 5 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Common, Greenfield: *Torch Lighting*, to mark the beginning of the 104th Annual Winter Carnival. 4 p.m. Free.

Music Connection, Turners Falls: *JOJI* album release listening party. 5 p.m. Free.

Hampshire College Art Gallery, Amherst: Reception for *Daemonomania*, exhibit by Anthony Discenza. 5 p.m. Free.

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

Greenfield Community Television, Greenfield: Reception for *Eve Christoff* exhibit. 6 p.m. Free.

Downtown Greenfield: *Parade of Lights*. 6 p.m. Free.

Petersham Curling Club, Petersham: *Learn to Curl*. 6 p.m. \$.

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

Beacon Field, Greenfield: *Fireworks*. 7 p.m. Free.

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

Village of Light Ashram, Leverett: *Love Creates Action*, talk and discussion led by GurujiMa. 7:30 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Ignominious, Cave Dweller*, special guests. 8 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Jacob Kordas*. 8 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: *Pentland/Bergonzi Quartet*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Bassal, Monarchs & Masses*, Andrew Brooks. 8 p.m. \$.

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

Hampshire College, Amherst: *Sapien Joyride, Midnight Circus*. 9:30 p.m. By donation.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Food Pantry*. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Food Pantry*. 10 to 11 a.m. Free.

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Valentine Making*. Children welcome with caregivers. Materials provided. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Reception for *Positively Deerfield Street*, exhibit of photographs by Geoff Bluh. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free.

Central Square, Keene: *Keene Ice & Snow Festival*. Ice carvers, pony rides, s'mores, etc. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.



The Nields play Northampton's Iron Horse this Saturday.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Puzzle Olympics*. Registration req'd. 12:30 p.m. Free.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: Reception for *Annual LES Art Exhibit*, work by students and staff at Leverett Elementary School. 1 to 4 p.m. Free.

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

Greenfield Community College, Greenfield: *Full Snow Moon Gathering & Eastern Woodlands Social Dance*, led by honored guest Annawon Weeden. Easy-to-learn dances, refreshments. 1 to 4 p.m. By donation.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Local author reading, *David Detmold*. 1:30 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Screening, *Greenfield's Winter Carnival, 1923*, a restored nine-minute film from that year, looping in conjunction with this year's Winter Carnival. 2 to 4 p.m. Free.

EXHIBITS

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls:

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

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

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: *2026 Small Works Show*, featuring artworks all under ten inches in any direction contributed by local artists, through February.

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

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: *Annual LES Art Exhibit*, artwork by students and staff at Leverett Elementary School, on display February 7, 8, 14, and 15 with a reception this Saturday, February 7 from 1 to 4 p.m.

Greenfield Library, Greenfield: *If I Can Paint, You Can Too*, oil paintings by Fran Corriveau, through February 28.

LAVA Center, Greenfield:

Trees, informational exhibit celebrating tree projects in Greenfield, through February with a reception tonight, Thursday, February 5 at 5 p.m. *Positively Deerfield Street*, photographs by Geoff Bluh spanning several decades of changes in the Deerfield Street neighborhood, through February with a reception this Saturday, February 7 at 11 a.m.

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

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

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

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Winter Garden*, members exhibit, through February, with a reception this Friday, February 6 at 5 p.m.

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

Hampshire College Art Gallery, Amherst: *Daemonomania*. Anthony Discenza uses a diverse range of materials to illuminate our relationship to technology through occult metaphors. Through March 21, with a reception this Friday, February 6 at 5 p.m.

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

CALL FOR ART

ArtCulture Westfield is looking for new, emerging, experienced and professional artists for their annual community art and cultural experience featuring local and regional artists and authors at Amelia Park Arena on May 8 and 9. Cash prizes awarded in painting, drawing, mixed media, photography, printmaking, and sculpture. They will also accept artisan quality glass, wood, clay, and metalwork. No entry fee. See artworkswestfield.com/events/articulture for more information. Deadline is April 11.

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CALENDAR



Four Phantoms Brewing, Greenfield: *Just Fine Thank You Band*. 2:30 p.m. No cover.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Local history talk, *Quabbin Obscura: The Swift River in Black and White*. 3 p.m. Free.

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

CitySpace, Easthampton: *CitySpace Bluegrass*. Jam session. 4 p.m. Free.

Brick House, Turners Falls: *SSAJ Nonet, Dogpsaw, Jetties*. 6 p.m. By donation.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *A.A. Telmasani*, reading; *Rachid Halilah*, oud. 6 p.m. By donation.

Hot Plate, Pittsfield: *Fugue State, Modern Ego, Ferriday, Feminine Aggression*. 6 p.m. \$.

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

Prescott Tavern, Hampshire College, Amherst: *yourarmsaremylegs EP* release show, with *Dishpit, Sue, A Home Beneath, six2twelve*. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Restraining Order, COA, Price of Redemption*. 7 p.m. \$.

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wendell: *John Sheldon*, benefit for Good Neighbors. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Slow Pony, Aaron Wallace, Matt Fero, Abbey Gorey*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *2 Car Garage, Jatoba*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Open Decks*. Learn to DJ. 9 p.m. By donation.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8

Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: Screening, *The Goonies* (1985). 10 a.m. Free.

Montague Elks, Turners Falls: *Self-Love Spiritual and Wellness Fair*. "Spiritual and healing sessions, metaphysical and wellness vendors." Cash bar and lunch available. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. \$.

Beacon Field, Greenfield: *Winter Carnival* events: cardboard sled contest, music, cookie bake-off, chili cook-off, horse-drawn wagon rides, vintage snowmobile show and rides, tug of war, K9 keg pull, more. 12 to 4 p.m. Free.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Kyle Langois*. 12 p.m. No cover.

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

Amherst Regional High School, Amherst: *What's the Status of Our Connecticut River?*, panel discussion with Eve Vogel (UMass), Sarah Matthews (Western MA Rights of Nature), and Nina Gordon-Kirsch (CT River Conservancy). Refreshments. 1:30 p.m. Free.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

New York's *SSAJ Nonet* - led by vibraphonist/trombonist/conductor Selendis S. A. Johnson (above) - hits the Brick House this Saturday with *Jetties* and *Dogpsaw*. All ages, substance free, \$0 to \$20 sliding scale.

The National Spiritual Alliance, Lake Pleasant: *Jam in the Round*. Play an instrument, sing, listen, or simply be present. 4 to 5 p.m. Free.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Carlos Odria Trio*. 4 p.m. No cover.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Tarp, Impure Luck*. 5 p.m. By donation.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

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

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Chess Club*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

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

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

The Drake, Amherst: *Mdou Moctar*. 8 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Employer Spotlight for Teens*. Learn about resume writing, interview skills, and more. 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Free.

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

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *The "M" Word*, second of a three-part monthly class on menopause and perimenopause with Rachel Lempert, RN. 4:30 p.m. By donation.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12

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

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

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

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

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

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

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

looking forward...

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14

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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15

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

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

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

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: *Perennial, Big Girl, Sapien Joyride*. 7 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wendell: *Myrtle Street Klezmer*. Benefit for the Old Home Day Organizing Group. 7:30 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, MARCH 16

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Sangat*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

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

THURSDAY, APRIL 30

Palladium, Worcester: *Cryptopsy, Necrot, Fulci, Blood Monolith*. 7 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MAY 16

Colonial Theater, Keene: *Ghostface Killah, Sammus*. 7 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, MAY 17

Nova Arts, Keene: *Woods, Saintseneca, Thanya Iyer, Habitat, Nova One, Edsel Axle, Mary Elizabeth Remington*. 12 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MAY 23

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *King Tuff, Mod Lang*. 8 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, JUNE 2

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Little Feat*. 7 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, JUNE 27

Tanglewood, Lenox: *Paul Simon*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, JUNE 30

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Sister Wife Sex Strike, Brook Pridemore*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

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RECIPES from page B1

above the other. The many pourings mixed the cocoa solids and the cocoa butter to make a thick drink that Mexicans flavored with flowers, vanilla, and spices.

Back in their homeland, the Spanish also flavored chocolate with vanilla and often cinnamon. Though they tried to keep it a secret specialty reserved for aristocrats and churchmen, gradually the chocolate news got out, reaching first Italy and then France, and eventually even Massachusetts.

In the first American reference to chocolate in 1697, Judge Samuel Sewall reported breakfasting with the lieutenant governor "on Venison and Chocolate. I said Massachusetts and Mexico met at his honour's table."

A cup of super-thick chocolate remains a favorite Spanish break-

fast. But though chocolate drinks are still loved, to most people the word chocolate now suggests something edible: cakes, cookies, puddings, ice creams, truffles – all basically chocolate sweetened with sugar and enriched with butter or cream.

Even chocolate bars come with ingredients that soften its strong and bitter taste. You can appreciate this by sampling chocolate with differing percentages of cacao – the raw material of all chocolate. Many bars announce the cacao percentage prominently on the label. Typical amounts are 60%, 70%, and 85%. Harder to find are 92% and 100%, but they can be sought out.

Most people settle on 70% to 85% as their favorite. For many, 100% chocolate is so strong it's almost inedible. It can, however, be used in tiny quantities to balance ultra-sweet dishes, or to flavor

some savory dishes.

Savory uses of chocolate may seem bizarre, but just as the Spanish followed the Aztecs in making thick chocolate drinks, they also copied their use of chocolate in stews. One such Mexican dish is the classic *Mole Poblano de Guajolote*, which has between 20 and 30 ingredients.

Spain has recipes for beef stews fortified with red wine and chocolate, for game birds in a sauce with hints of chocolate, and even one for chicken and shrimp. Italians sometimes include chocolate in wild boar or hare dishes.

Cookbooks generally warn against adding too much. For example, in a recipe for Partridge with Grapes and Chocolate in *The Food of Spain*, Claudia Roden notes that "[...] the amount of chocolate in the sauce should be so small that you can hardly detect it. It just softens the acidity and lends a mysterious flavor. I overdid the amount once and didn't like it at all."

As well as chocolate that announces its cacao content, American home bakers use baking chocolate characterized as semi-sweet or bittersweet. The Food and Drug Administration doesn't recognize the distinction between these terms because they are solely the manufacturers' choices, but it demands that both types contain at least 35% chocolate liquor, and less than 12% milk solids.

Milk is, of course, vital in milk chocolate, a huge public favorite especially in candies, but rather scorned by chocolate aficionados. Like most of our familiar chocolate, milk chocolate is a 19th-century invention. In 1867 the Swiss chemist Henri Nestlé invented powdered milk for babies. Using this, chocolatier Daniel Peter created milk chocolate in 1873.

The names Nestlé, Peter, and Cadbury are still those of major chocolate companies, but the most important name is Conrad Van Houten of Holland. In 1828 he invented a hydraulic press that separated cocoa butter from cocoa solids, enabling manufacturers to re-mix them in proportions that make smooth chocolate – hence today's huge variety of chocolate confections.

The recipe at left for Turkey with Grapes & Chocolate uses chocolate in a savory context. Think of it as a possible choice for Valentine's Day this year, followed by a Chocolate Mocha Cupcake, or simply a chocolate truffle or two.

MQ

TURKEY WITH CHOCOLATE & GRAPES

4 boneless skin-on turkey thighs, about 6 oz. each, or four 5- to 6-oz. boneless turkey breasts, or chicken thighs
1 very large onion
1 large red pepper
4 Tbsp. olive oil
3 or 4 garlic cloves, minced
salt to taste
1 tsp. vinegar or lemon juice
½ cup white wine
1 cup chicken or vegetable stock
4 cloves
dash of cayenne or
slug of sriracha (optional)
1 bay leaf
2 to 3 tsp. finely grated dark chocolate
about 20 black or red grapes



to 300 degrees. Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a frying pan and brown the turkey pieces in it for 4 to 5 minutes per side. Keep the skin on to add flavor.

When its surface is golden, place the turkey on top of the onion and pepper. Season lightly with salt then add the vinegar or lemon juice, and the wine, stock, and cloves, plus a dash of cayenne or about a teaspoon of sriracha if you prefer. Stick the bay leaf among the meat and vegetable.

Bring to simmering point, then transfer to the preheated oven. Cook for 30 minutes. Remove and let the simmering fade before stirring in 2 teaspoons of chocolate and the grapes. Return to the oven and cook for 15 or 20 minutes longer. Taste, and add the rest of the chocolate if you like.

Serves 4.

Wash and thoroughly dry the turkey. Peel, quarter, and thinly slice the onion. Wash and dry the pepper and cut it into quarter-inch strips, discarding the white inner ribs and seeds as you go.

Into a casserole dish over low heat, or any pan that can go from the stovetop to the oven, put three tablespoons of olive oil. Drop in the onions, cover, and cook gently for 7 to 8 minutes or until they have softened.

Add the red pepper and the minced garlic, and season with salt. Cook slowly for 10 more minutes over low heat.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven

MOCHA CUPCAKES

2 Tbsp. baking cocoa
1 Tbsp. instant espresso
½ cup sugar
¾ cup flour
¾ tsp. baking powder
2 eggs
½ cup softened butter
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 Tbsp. milk
4 Tbsp. dark chocolate chips
½ cup heavy cream
12 Valentine candies
or strawberries

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Line a muffin pan with paper cups. In a small bowl, combine the cocoa and espresso powder and

mix into a thin paste with 2 Tbsp. boiling water.

In a large bowl or food processor, mix the sugar, flour, baking powder, eggs, butter, vanilla, and milk. Divide the mixture among the muffin cups. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes, or until a skewer poked in the middle comes out clean. Leave the cupcakes in the pan for 5 minutes, then transfer to a rack to cool.

Make the frosting by melting the chocolate chips in the microwave or in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Stir in the cream. Spread it on the cooled cupcakes, and decorate each with a candy or strawberry.



HOPLEY PHOTOS

A mocha cupcake (center), surrounded by chocolate rum truffles.

CHOCOLATE RUM TRUFFLES

3-oz. bar milk chocolate, chopped small
2 oz. dark chocolate or dark chocolate chips (60% or 70% cacao)
½ cup cream
1 Tbsp. butter
2 Tbsp. dark rum
cinnamon (optional)
chocolate sprinkles

of the bowl touch the water, as it may make the chocolate seize into a hard, unusable mass.

Warm the cream and butter in a small pan. Stir in the rum, and then mix this into the melted chocolate. Add 3 or 4 dashes cinnamon if you like. Chill for two hours.

Grease your hands lightly with butter, then roll the mixture into 12 to 15 balls. Spread the sprinkles on a plate and roll the balls in them.

Chill for at least 2 hours before serving or packing them for gift-giving.

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