

The Montague Reporter

Year 24 – No. 16

MARCH 26, 2026

\$2

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Interim Super Up for Staying; Staff Warn Planned Cuts Will Hurt Teachers, Students

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – With the regional school district’s plan to balance its budget with staffing cuts and restructuring now rolling out, some rank-and-file educators aired criticisms of the plan during Tuesday’s Gill-Montague school committee meeting.

The committee also approved

a new contract for custodial and maintenance staff, set caps on how many students can choose in next year, and accepted an offer from Tari Thomas, who is serving a one-year term as interim superintendent, to stick around for another year.

During the meeting’s public comment period the committee heard in particular from staff – and

see **GMRSD** page A8



JACKSON PHOTO

Jessica Hesse (left) warned that eliminating her position teaching English language learners will likely lead to the students falling behind in other subjects.

Distant, Troubling Hum Successfully Extinguished

By SARAH ROBERTSON

ERVING – A distant humming sound that plagued some Wendell residents intermittently for over a year was muffled this winter. Local residents believed the sound was coming from the Erving Paper Mill, and the solution came in the form of a giant metal cylinder installed on the mill’s roof.

“Our vacuum fan for one of our machines was the loudest noise emitted from the roof, so we de-

ecided to test the theory that this fan could be the culprit,” said Eric Whitman, an Erving Paper manager who worked with neighbors to identify and remedy the noise. “This is not a new fan; this machine has been running for over 60 years and with a similar setup and same sized motors.”

Since September 2024, at least 16 Wendell residents reported that they had been hearing a mysterious hum. Following discussion on

see **HUM** page A7

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Field Building Fate Goes to Town Meeting

By GEORGE BRACE

On Tuesday, Leverett’s selectboard and finance committee approved a “reduced budget” for the town to consider at an upcoming hearing before voting on it at the annual town meeting on May 2. The selectboard also held a dog hearing, and heard recommendations for next steps for the historic Field building.

Maureen Ippolito of the Field Building *ad hoc* committee reported its final recommendations for what the town should do with the historic property, which consisted of three options: use it as a museum, use it as a multi-purpose facility, or sell it. Ippolito said the strongest sentiment of the committee was for the town to retain ownership for “multi-use” purposes.

A special article will ask voters at the annual town meeting to choose among these options. Selectboard chair Patricia Duffy and town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said they would consult with Ippolito and *ad hoc* committee member

see **LEVERETT** page A8

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Officer Hired; Late Dancing, Drinking on Sidewalks OK

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard made recommendations at its Monday meeting for nearly all the articles expected to appear on the annual town meeting warrant in May, rejecting only a request from the planning department to create a fund for cultural planning because it had not yet been “baked.” The board also approved a number of events, began developing a town policy on outdoor dining, and filled remaining vacancies at the police and public works departments.

“Now the moment that everyone’s been waiting for,” said selectboard chair Matt Lord. “We get to vote recommendations on the FY’27 budget.”

The main warrant article for the budget, which will be sent to town meeting on May 2, has not yet been finalized, but the board moved ahead with recommending budgets of \$13.82 million for general town operations, \$3.31 million for the Clean Water Facility (CWF), \$452,272 for the Turners Falls municipal airport, and \$52,250 for the

see **MONTAGUE** page A6

HINDSIGHT

Could the Strathmore Have Been Saved?



BRIAN ZAYATZ PHOTO

Ahead of the historic Turners Falls paper mill’s near-certain demolition, the Montague Reporter and The Shoestring examine eight crucial years through the eyes and voices of its stewards.

By MELISSA KAREN SANCES

September 1993

Jan Ross heard the whir of the fax machine and grabbed the message while it was still warm to the touch. “Hiring Freeze: Immediate,” it read. She sucked in a breath. She had joined the staff of Strathmore Paper Company less than 24 hours ago.

“And I thought, ‘Phew!’” she remembered. “Oh my goodness.”

She delivered it to her manager. “Just don’t say anything,” he told her, closing his door to call Memphis. Strathmore was owned by International Paper (IP), and their global headquarters was in Tennessee. A call to Memphis was serious.

Even though it was her second day as a permanent hire in the human resources department in Westfield, Massachusetts, she had worked as a temp there for six months. Through the company picnics, held on the lush grass at nearby Stanley Park, she had met people who worked in the company’s mills in Russell, Millers Falls, and Turners Falls, where 123 employees’ lives would be upended within a year.

At these beloved events, employees and their families basked in the sun. They were far from the production plants, where staff worked around the clock in three shifts, the paper shot out of machines at high speeds – *chu-chu-chu-chu* – and the guillotine chopped ream after ream with deafening precision – *thunk-thunk-thunk-thunk*. Sometimes it was so loud the mill workers had to communicate with hand signals.

It was a dangerous job, making paper, and even Ross had to suit up in safety gear if she was entering the manufacturing side of her own building, a calendaring facility where paper was finished. On those occasions Ross laced up steel-toed boots, donned safety glasses, and slipped on earmuffs. She followed the line of yellow tape on the floor; everyone was advised to stay inside of it. The team in Westfield did regular safety drills after someone at a nearby mill fell into the pulper and drowned.

So it was jarring now, this portentous message that threatened the employees’ security. She stayed quiet while her boss emerged from his meeting and made an official announcement.

“It was a definite damper in the

office, because we knew if that’s for regular staff, what does it mean for the rank and file?” said Ross.

“It was the beginning of the end, I guess.”

February 2026

Can the end of the end be foreseen? Does identifying the years when Strathmore’s parent company, International Paper, might have made different decisions – 1993 to 2001 – assuage a town’s grief, or only complicate it? Today the sprawling, 224,000-square-foot complex is rusted and rotting on the banks of the Connecticut River, but it was once a beacon of prosperity. And as long as the ruins remain, they are a visible reminder of the mill’s history.

On a snowy Monday morning in February, the Montague historical commission was stuck at home, Zooming into its monthly meeting. The topic at hand was whether the group should invoke the town’s demolition delay bylaw for the Strathmore complex. (Turners Falls is one of five villages in the town of Montague.) The town had seized the decaying property under tax title in 2010.

What has halted the paper mill’s destruction, time and again, is exactly what got it off the ground: hope.

Janel Nockleby, the commission’s chair, called the vote. Chris Clawson, Ed Gregory, and Jen Viecek prepared to cast their decision on whether they should interrupt the demolition, scheduled to start in November 2027 thanks to \$10 million in state and federal grants.

In 1871, the revered John Keith was running a mill in Adams when asked if he would like to build one from scratch. Soon, the Keith Paper Company was erected in Turners Falls, and the mill opened in 1873.

“It was unhesitatingly pronounced by experienced papermakers the best mill in the world,” the *Springfield Republican* bragged in 1877.

That same year a fire burned down the mill, and Keith took a second opportunity to define an institution in the up-and-coming manufacturing town. Upon hearing the steam whistle from his Greenfield home, according to Wren Wood, the park interpreter at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls, Keith snapped

see **STRATHMORE** page A4

A FRESH SWING

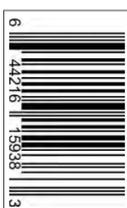


DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Turners Falls High School junior Ivy Lopez is “locked in” at the plate as the Thunder hosted the Keene Blackbirds for an early-season scrimmage Wednesday afternoon. Turners Falls hosts Frontier Regional for the season opener this Friday.

They Say It’s The Most Over A War Has Ever Been

| | |
|--|---|
| Fell Into the Pulper.....A1 | Stand-In For the Great Whale.....B1 |
| Fearful Puddle-Duck Consciousness.....A2 | House-Trained and Microchipped.....B2 |
| When We Harden Our Hearts.....A3 | Probably Already Dead From the Shock.....B3 |
| For Bibles and Cigarettes.....A4 | Rubber Ducks Playing in the Snow.....B4 |
| This Really Dark Waterfall.....A5 | Nudg’d the Duck Across Some Threshold.....B5 |
| This Kind of Mother-Of-Pearl.....A6 | Rare Geese, Father Otter, Secret World.....B6 |
| Over the Flank of Bear Mountain.....A7 | Stick Men, Bird Friend, Worm Altar.....B7 |
| On Its Deteriorating Envelope.....A8 | An Ocean Wheeling With Gulls.....B8 |



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August 2002

Letters to the Editors



A Third Space

In 1989 sociologist Ray Oldenburg discussed the concept of "third spaces" in his book, *The Great Good Place*. A third space is not your home nor your school or work place. It is another space where you feel you belong. A place where you are welcome.

Some people find this space in a religious setting. Others in a drinking establishment. But a third space where you can spend time without the obligation of paying or believing is rare. And these spaces are vital! Third places function as societal glue, binding people together through the fabric of community.

The public library should be such a space. A place where you can relax and feel a part of your community. Where you can escape into a good book or learn something new.

In this age of isolation and loneliness, of political silos and ideological bubbles, it is more important than ever to have a third space where people can make social connections. We need these neutral spaces where everyone can feel safe to just be human.

In a library it doesn't matter what religion you practice, whether you drink alcohol or not, which political party you support, or even which sports team you cheer for. All you have to be is curious; open to meeting people both in person and on the page; open to new ideas, new worlds, new ways of thinking.

The Montague Center branch library is a third space for many in the community. I love to watch neighbors catch up and exchange reading recommendations. I marvel at the

local talent shared at local author events and in our local artist exhibitions, but even more so at the outpouring of interest and support that the community brings to these events – eager to learn from their friends, and to see the world through a different set of eyes.

But not everyone comes to Montague Center. For the many people who live in Great Falls it's inconvenient or inaccessible because of lack of transportation. Our hours are admittedly limited. The Carnegie library can provide these patrons with reading materials but little else in its current form due to space constraints and lack of accessibility.

Great Falls deserves a library accessible to all, that is big enough to host small informal gatherings as well as large community events; a space for art exhibits, and children's programming, for research, and daily newspaper reading. The new proposed library would be a wonderful third space for all in the community to enjoy! I look forward to meeting you there!

Kate Martineau
Millers Falls

The Duck King's Declaration of Dependence

WHEN in the course of tyrannous events it becomes necessary for a self-absorbed ruler with one big beautiful bill and a gorgeous orange crown to dissolve all bonds formerly connecting him to Earth, the Laws of Nature, and the concerns, cares, and needs of millions of lesser fowl, it becomes necessary to tweet to the World the causes for his Severing of all ties with the common rabble of a lesser plumage.

THEREFORE:

I hold these truths to be self-evident: that massive wealth and its pursuit are the sole signposts of worthiness and respectability on a planet in need of more country clubs;

THAT POWER, beautiful power – power like the world has never seen – derives from the application of fear, mistrust, jealousy, and hatred among your regular run of ducks;

THAT FRIENDS, neighbors, trust, and reliability are tools of fops and odd ducks – useless waterfowl lacking the cachet of my corporate, newly monetized Duck Royalty;

THAT A DUCK KING can decree war as peace and cruelty as compassion, and quack all sorts of cloned-up doubt into instantly manipulating a wavering and fearful puddle-duck consciousness in just a few tweets of a webbed foot, raising stock market bids, fuel costs, and grocery spikes at his royal whim;

THAT A DUCK KING'S PERSONAL COURT forever sits ready to deflect all balls aimed, between established lines, at adherence to that silly Bill of Rights;

THUS I, THIS DAY, declare myself free from all constraints and bonds with the ponded and keening mass of lame the late lame-duck democracy.

H. Humpty, DUCK KING

P.S. Hereupon: All subsequent purchases must be made via my family Duck Crypto.

Submitted under the scribe
and seal of my faithful servant,

Karl Meyer
Greenfield



MAGGIE SADOWAY PHOTO

The weather has ushered in a rash of public art. Above: a temporary installation on the floor of the Patch.



NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Jefferson's Safe Haven in Leverett has 40 animals in residence, including donkeys, hens, alpacas, and goats. Founder Kathy LeMay is pictured here with some of the rescues outside the barn she and her husband John plan to expand and make climate-proof for extreme weather. Jefferson's welcomes visitors, as well as donations (vet bills! hay!). See www.jeffersonssafehaven.org for more information.

Sunday: Repro Justice Talk

This coming weekend will be a busy one. For those who oppose the Trump administration, there is much with which to be concerned. As if seizing federal state power, unconstitutionally bypassing Congress, and unilaterally starting a war against Iran were not enough, we are also faced with ongoing attempts to undermine democracy.

As a result, many of us will be turning out for No Kings Day 3 on Saturday, March 28 at various demonstrations around western Massachusetts to protest the takeover of our federal government.

But there is another human rights issue that is at stake, one that requires our attention. This is the right-wing attack on reproductive rights. The 2022 Supreme Court decision (*Dobbs*) overturned the constitutional right to abortion that was guaranteed by *Roe v. Wade*

in 1973. Furthermore, Trump and his appointees have destroyed \$10 million worth of contraceptives that USAID promised to provide women in Africa. Continuing their patriarchal war on women, LGBT, and poor people's rights, the administration is threatening to overturn nationwide FDA approval of medication abortion pills.

A coalition of organizations, including Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution and Amherst Feminist Generation, have organized an event that challenges this attack on reproductive rights. This Sunday, March 29, from 2 to 4 p.m., two well-known local reproductive justice authors and activists, Marlene Fried and Loretta Ross, will discuss their new book, *Abortion and Reproductive Justice: An Essential Guide to Resistance*.

The event will be held at Mount

Toby Friends' Meetinghouse at 194 Long Plain Road (Route 63). Books will be available for purchase and signed by the authors. It is free and open to the public with light refreshments served.

Ross is one of the co-creators of the theory and practice of reproductive justice as a broader defense of reproductive rights, one that goes beyond the debate between pro-choice and pro-life positions. She is a professor at Smith College who has been an activist and author since the 1990s and has focused on the experiences of women of color and other marginalized peoples.

Ross's reproductive justice approach weaves the history of reproductive oppression and population control. She illustrates how white supremacy, patriarchy, and class injustice in the US have undercut the human right to bodily autonomy, to have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.

Fried, a retired professor at Hampshire College, has worked with Ross since the late 1990s and is one of the founders of the National Network of Abortion Funds, as well as Collective Power for Reproductive Justice. They are both powerful speakers.

Please don't miss the chance to meet other reproductive justice activists and gain new insights into the tools forged by reproductive justice advocates as they continue the resistance against patriarchal white supremacists and corporate billionaires.

Ann Ferguson
Leverett

Victoria Kent Worth
Ashfield

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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

As we put this edition to bed, the digital thermometer readout on the credit union sign down the block says it's over 60 out! **Fahrenheit!**

Reader Ann Fisk, who has a considerable interest in the story, passed along a news tip which I'll just share here in its pure form.

"I thought I would pass along that this weekend **Capt. Mark Fisk** will retire from the Montague Center Fire Department," she writes.

"He joined in September 1974, still has the letter informing him he was voted in. Plus he was on "Company B" for two years prior to joining. Company B was made up of high school boys that were 'in training.'

"He certainly has seen a lot of changes in the fire service, and given countless hours to the community... It's going to be a little odd for me to leave home for an EMS call and he stays behind!"

Congratulations to Captain Fisk! And to Ann, who works as an EMT and EMS instructor in the department.

It seems like it has been a busy season for local fire departments. For the second week in a row, all the companies in the vicinity sent personnel and equipment to a **major blaze in the wee hours of Wednesday morning.**

This week it was a single-family home on Vas-

sar Way in Gill – according to the Gill fire department's social media account, "all residents and pets were able to safely escape the home," but as it was fully engulfed when firefighters arrived and most of the departments "needed to hike in to assist with the extinguishment," the building was lost. Our hearts go out to the residents.



Here's a photo of Minerva the Owl, still under construction, out in the wild in Montague Center.

We've been fairly bombarded by readers telling us about the **"No Kings" rallies** in the area, particularly this Saturday, March 28 in Greenfield. I guess it could be a big one, because a lot of people are mad about the government!

They're gathering at Beacon Field at noon and parading down Federal Street to the common with speakers in front of City Hall at 1 p.m., with different brass bands and choirs and giant puppets (like Minerva up there), permitted by the city and endorsed by a list of councils and networks and affinity groups and centers so long I could probably fill the rest of this column. The event is scheduled to extend to 2 p.m.

Rallies are also planned that day in Orange, North Adams, Worthington, Belchertown, Amherst, Northampton, and all around the country, if you are interested in shopping around. Check out www.nokings.org for a map of them.

We were also sent a photo of the Minerva puppet in much more complete form, but I like the one Will sent us much better....

Tuesday morning it was reported to me that a **gallon of gasoline** could be purchased in this vicinity for \$3.54 at Nouria, \$3.66 at Cumberland Farms, and \$3.91 at the Mill in Gill. I think they call that uneven and combined development. Someone with a tanker truck and some free time on their hands could make a killing on arbitrage.

Nomination papers for Montague selectboard are due back in next Wednesday, April 1. As of press time we've been told three sets went out and only one had been returned and certified.

I spoke with the certified candidate, **Nathanael Card**. Nate lives over on L Street and moved to town fairly recently, having been economically displaced, as he puts it, from Greenfield.

"I'm running for selectboard because," he writes, "in the face of this unprecedented collapse of federal accountability – in spite of it, even – I want my neighbors to feel hope, to feel community, to feel supported, to feel heard; and I feel called to serve in that capacity."

I knew that **Mike Henry** of Millers Falls was a second candidate, and on Wednesday he told me he was on track to getting his papers in. Mike used to run a local news and discussion blog at montaguematters.com.

"I'm running for Selectboard because this is my family's hometown," Mike writes. "My mom grew up right here in Montague, and passed away recently; both of my children were raised here, attended Montague public schools, and all of us went to the Tech. I want to make our town better by fixing the basics: reliable trash and recycling pickup, cleaning up litter and blight, keeping our roads safe, and delivering the public services residents actually pay for."

Next week we'll talk with both of them in more depth, and anyone else who throws their hat in!

Just a reminder that **our ad rates** are extremely favorable to the advertiser, and that we depend on people putting ads in the paper to be able to do anything at all of the rest of what we're doing here. If you ever absolutely need to have something you're doing publicized in the manner in which you most prefer, please consider taking direct action. It'll be a win/win.

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

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OP ED

The Season's Shared Lessons of Hope

By ADAM M. SOLENDER

SPRINGFIELD – This year, the calendar offers us a poignant alignment as the first full moon of Spring rises. The Jewish community gathers for the Passover Seder to recount the journey from bondage to sovereignty and simultaneously, Christians around the world observe Holy Week, moving through the sorrow of the Passion toward the joy of the Resurrection. This convergence of Passover and Easter is more than a chronological coincidence; it is a collective summons to find hope in an era increasingly defined by the "darkness before the light."

The timing could not be more urgent. As we set our tables and fill our sanctuaries, our headlines are dominated by the harrowing war in Iran affecting most of the Middle East. The specter of conflict casts a long shadow, reminding us that the "cost of freedom" is not an abstract historical concept found in scripture, but a heavy, daily price paid in human lives.

Whether it is the ancient cry for liberation from the Pharaoh's tyranny or the modern struggle for

peace in the Middle East, the story remains the same: the road to the morning always passes through a midnight of uncertainty.

At the heart of both traditions lies a radical, uncomfortable command: welcome the stranger. In the Passover Haggadah, we declare, "Let all who are hungry come and eat." This isn't just an invitation to dinner; it is a recognition that we were once strangers in the land of Egypt. Similarly, the Easter story is rooted in the radical hospitality of Jesus who walked with the marginalized, the sinners, and the stranger and prioritized defending the vulnerable and inviting the poor to his table.

In our current American landscape, this ancient mandate clashes harshly with the modern complexities of legal immigration. We find ourselves in a national tug-of-war, where the stranger at our gates is often viewed through the lens of policy and partisan debate rather than shared humanity.

Yet, the holidays remind us that the "stranger" is not a political talking point, but a mirror of our own ancestral stories. To ignore the plight of those seeking a legal

path to safety and contribution is to forget that our faiths and our nation were built by those fleeing their own versions of Egypt. When we harden our hearts against the newcomer, we risk losing the very soul of the liberation we claim to celebrate.

While the rituals differ, the spiritual underpinnings of these holidays are remarkably consistent, woven together by a shared belief that the human spirit is designed for transformation. Both observances celebrate the profound movement from liberation to renewal, asserting that no chain, be it the physical shackles of slavery or the spiritual weight of despair, is permanent. This journey acknowledges that the cost of freedom is rarely a gift, but a hard-won victory born of sacrifice, endurance, and the staggering courage required to walk into the unknown.

Ultimately, this season serves as an annual rededication, a "reset" that asks us to move beyond our individual concerns and pledge ourselves once more to the collective well-being of our neighbors.

The convergence of these holidays suggests that light and dark are not merely opposites, but part

of a cycle that requires our active participation. We cannot wait for the darkness of war and division to dissipate on its own. We must be the ones to strike the match.

Whether it be in Ukraine, Venezuela, Sudan, or the Middle East, the smoke of conflict hangs over the world. These holidays offer a blueprint for a different way of being. They remind us that liberation is a collective project. We are called to move beyond our tribal silos and recognize that my neighbor's freedom is inextricably linked to my own.

This spring, as we light the candles and break the bread (or matzah), let us take the common lessons of our traditions to heart. Let us choose hope over cynicism, and radical welcome over fearful exclusion. In the face of a world at war, our greatest act of resistance is to rededicate ourselves to the simple, holy act of caring for one another.

Adam M. Solender is the interim executive director and chief philanthropy officer at the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts, and director of the Jewish Endowment Foundation.

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David Brule
King Philip's War
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to Peskeompskut

Monday, April 6 at 7 pm
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85 Montague Road, Leverett

Free Admission
(Donations Encouraged)

The massacre at Peskeompskut/ Turners Falls took place 350 years ago, during King Philip's (Metacomb's) War. David Brule coordinated the just-completed 12-year study of the site and its surroundings sponsored by the National Park Service Battlefield Grant Program. He will talk about the precedents, aftermath, and present implications of that war, and the fascinating and often surprising results produced by the project team - research scientists, town historical commissioners, and Native American cultural custodians.

What really happened here in our backyard?

David is a member of the Nehantic Tribe in Connecticut and Chair of its Tribal Council. He coordinates the 1676 Commemoration Steering Committee in Montague and is president of the Nolumbeka Project, dedicated to honoring the presence and culture of Native Americans in the region. A well-published book author and columnist, he is a very engaging speaker! He lives in Millers Falls/Erving.

STRATHMORE from page A1

into action, arriving on horseback and directing the firemen to save the financial records.

The mill was rebuilt within four months. In 1953, Keith Paper Company would be bought by Strathmore Paper Company and the structure became known largely as "the Strathmore," even after Strathmore was bought by Hammermill in 1962, and after Hammermill was bought by International Paper in 1986.

"I don't call it 'the Strathmore' or 'International Paper,'" said Clawson at the meeting of the historical commission. "There is a history surrounding the creation of the Keith Paper Mill. It is part of the story about the re-tasking of the canal system, and [its] industrial use following the Civil War."

Clawson and Gregory, who also administer the Montague Historical Society archives, are invested in continuing the story. It is "extremely important to the country," said Clawson.

September 1993

Brad Peters was sent to Strathmore to manage its demise. He was called a communications manager, but he had a reputation for silencing the conversation - he was given the unenviable task of making a living by stripping away people's livelihoods.

"When he'd go to other mills and they saw him coming, they'd go, 'Uh oh,'" said Ross, who now lives in Erving.

International Paper had already used him in Jay, Maine, where a 16-month strike ending in 1988 led to the loss of hundreds of jobs after the company hired scabs to replace seasoned workers. Shortly after Peters came aboard in 1990, those replacement workers voted to decertify two unions, leaving negotiations with the conglomerate in individuals' hands. True to its name, International Paper already had a worldwide presence then; today it operates at nearly 250 sites in 30 countries.

International Paper did not respond to a request for comment for this story.

Peters was dispatched to Westfield in June 1993, where, he eventually admitted to Ross, "there was going to be some efficiency" at Strathmore's Fine Papers division.

The two began dating the summer before the fateful fax came in, and continued a discreet office romance until 1995, when they married.

"Don't take this wrong," Ross told the *Montague Reporter* and *The Shoestring* during a visit to her home, where she and Peters lived until his passing in 2023. "He'd know how to manage this conversation with you. 'Control the interview' - that was the phrase. I hated him for that."

She loved him for it, too. It was Peters's precision, his insistence on reading her every memo before anyone else saw or heard it, that demonstrated two things: he prized her opinion, and he valued the employees' welfare. Before IP announced it was downsizing, Ross said, Peters spent nearly a year advocating for the workers behind the scenes and writing helpful bulletins - to be included with their severance packages - on how to put together a resume and apply for unemployment.

"He understood he was dealing with human lives," she said, "and he wanted it to be done right, and in the least hurtful way."

While he managed the overarching downsizing, Ross assembled each severance package.

August 1994

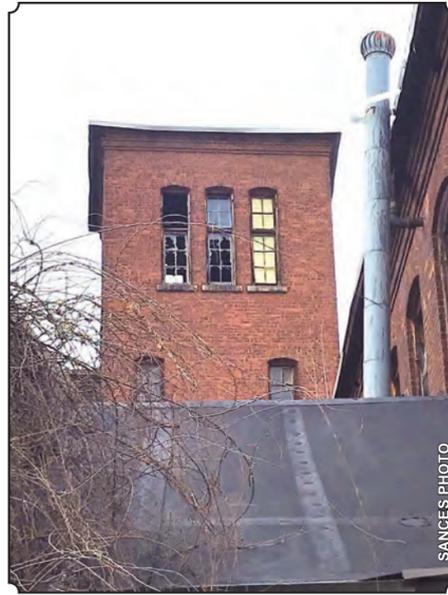
"Strathmore Paper in Turners Closing," the headline on Page 1 of the *Greenfield Recorder* read on August 4, 1994. Ninety-seven hourly and 26 salaried employees were told that they were being let go, "because the factory's outmoded paper machines are the smallest and slowest of all the machines used in the Fine Paper Division of International Paper... according to Brad Peters, Strathmore's communications manager."

On the same day, the *Springfield Republican* reported, "Strathmore officials said yesterday that the mills in total are putting out more paper than needed, and the closing is meant to pull production back even with demand."

It's possible that the writing was on the wall as far back as 1986. Anton Zamachaj, a mechanical engineer at Strathmore in the 1980s, explained that after IP bought the company, it "lost [its] deal with the small-order purchasers" such as

Hallmark Cards. To make complicated papers with "watermarks and feltmarks and specific colors," he said, it could take half a day to set up the machinery correctly, which led to a lot of waste.

"They were doing runs that were probably spitting one or two bad rolls out to make one or two good rolls, then IP put a 10,000-pound minimum on orders," said Zamachaj, who now lives in Chicopee. That was too much for Hallmark, a major buyer. "I'm assuming they just went, 'We're done.'"



However you look at it, the employees were devastated. "'Dark' isn't the right word," said Ross, remembering the ensuing heaviness at the office. "The sun could be shining and it wasn't cheery."

When it heard the plant would close, Local 1711 of the United Paperworkers' International Union (UPIU) attempted an employee buyout, but International Paper said it couldn't support the competition. According to the *Recorder*, on October 6 IP sent a letter to UPIU representative Ronald Pickering barring the manufacture of any paper product on the site. Because the company was not actively seeking a sale, the letter stated, "we are not prepared to make a sale offer."

But Local 1711 president Bob Emond said that IP first dangled a carrot: there could be a sale - but the employees could only make paper for Bibles and cigarettes.

"The paper for Bibles was real thin," said Emond, reached on vacation in Florida. Rolling papers are even thinner. "We made artist-grade materials. They weren't going to let us make that."

"And we didn't know how to get into anything else," said Greenfield resident Dennis Richotte, who was let go after working at Strathmore for 21 years.

Emond, who had started work at Strathmore out of high school in 1976, said the announcement the plant was closing wasn't a surprise. "We were thinking it for a long time," he said. "Once IP took over, they brought in all these different people to write down all the steps we took. They wanted to learn all our grades of paper, then they were thinking of how to close us down."

After working his way up through the Local 1711, Emond was crushed when the union international told him that there wasn't any money to help his workers. "That left a sore spot on my heart," he said.

Despite its reluctance to kick in money, the international did help with negotiations around the employees' severance packages. Originally, Emond said, IP wanted to spread out the severance payments, which would have delayed the workers collecting unemployment. The international union helped them win one lump sum.

With the remaining dues for his local chapter, he said, "We had a few parties, different drawings with gift cards, trying to help people get groceries. We did what we could to help the 100 people losing their jobs."

Following the initial announcement in August, local churches quickly offered their support. "We really got concerned when they announced they were closing," said Reverend Stanley Aksamit of Our Lady of Peace Church in Turners Falls. "We tried to gather people together to pray, we took up a collection [and divided] the money evenly among the employees who were about to lose

their jobs. We couldn't stop the process from evolving, but at least we tried to let the workers know we were with them."

Aksamit, who grew up in Turners Falls, said the community's manufacturing institutions - like those across the country - were no match for globalization. During his adolescence, he remembered, "We had a lot of stores in the downtown area, and between Turners Falls and Greenfield we could take care of all our needs." Soon the Eastfield Mall arrived in Springfield, and the freshly constructed Interstate 91 allowed for easy travel out of town.

"When I was in high school, a friend of mine whose dad worked [at Strathmore] said the mill would never close, because there was a certain color of purple paper," Aksamit explained, that no one else could replicate.

Truth or myth, everyone, everywhere was eager to make products that cost less to create. The mill closed on November 6.

January 2026

A month before the Montague historical commission gathered to vote on proceeding with leveling the Strathmore complex, Wood gave a talk at the Great Falls Discovery Center on the company's legacy.

"We had six former employees who attended," said Wood, though it wasn't clear if they had worked for Strathmore in Russell, Millers Falls, or Turners Falls. "It brought a history alive."

The park interpreter pointed out that the Keith Mill wasn't just any institution - it was a catalyst for Turners Falls's growth: "Without it, there wouldn't have been the financial backing to build housing and create jobs. The village as we know it wouldn't exist." The paper mill paid well for people starting work out of high school, Wood said, noting that generations of workers have remained here.

But when Wood invited the former employees to share their memories, they recalled the mill's limitations, such as how dark it was, not having exposure to fresh air, and the ever-present possibility of getting hurt.

Strathmore was once one of the main employers in a town now deemed "one of the most economically distressed communities in the most rural counties in the Commonwealth," in the words of the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC), which noted in a 2022 report that a "steady erosion of traditional manufacturing has left the town saddled with a backlog of aging infrastructure."

That same year, the town's master plan for the redevelopment of what officials now call the "Canal District" reported that most of the Strathmore complex is made up of "buildings in distress." The document includes 13 photos showing rotting walls, caved-in ceilings, and window panes reduced to jagged glass. Its suggested solutions included performing "selective demolition" and creating space for "historic interpretation."

This razor-thin line between reality and possibility, and the human desire to maintain it, is a recurring theme in discussions of the complex's past, present, and future.

Wood said they hoped their presentation provided a useful reframing. "Many folks across the valley, at least by my perspective, are sort of feeling burned or burnt out on the industrial history of the area and how it dominates narratives," they said. "I'd like to give folks the chance to cut through that disillusionment, and see the hope it once offered the community."

January 1995 - December 1996

After the Turners Falls mill closed, International Paper sold the machinery to a Turkish company. "For several months, a group of workers carefully took apart the machines, catalogued the parts, and loaded them into shipping containers," Peters would later write in the *Montague Reporter*. "The machines were reassembled and paper was again produced."

This kind of outsourcing wasn't uncommon, said Zamachaj, the mechanical engineer: "All I did for 15 years was tear machines down to be recycled, or boxed them up and sent them overseas."

Meanwhile, IP assigned a 15-year lease to its neighbor, Indeck Industries. The co-generating power plant, which had operated next door

see **STRATHMORE** next page

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STRATHMORE from previous page since 1989 and provided the building with steam, now set out to find tenants for what it called the “Canal Road Arts & Industries Building.” It was another hopeful beginning, this time for an arts incubator that at its peak housed 35 individuals and businesses.

But there were cracks in the foundation – and they had been there for a while.

“When I would go up there to my temporary office off the courtyard, in the wing closest to Esleek [Manufacturing Company],” said Zamachaj of the state of affairs in 1985, “every time the fork truck hit the wall we wondered if this was going to be the time we’d go down with it. The building was so cockeyed that when I put my back against it and looked up, I couldn’t see the sky.”

Ten years later Indeck plant manager Fran Zabek, tasked with finding lessees, was “watching out for bricks falling out of the wall.” The Art & Industries effort, he admitted, was “just a stopgap until the higher-ups made the final decision to shut the place down.”

But Zabek, who now resides in Florida, remembers fondly tenants like Jim Slavas, a senior scientist at Spray Research, Inc. who manufactured fog nozzles, and Paul Franz, who owned a photography studio and worked as the photo editor for the *Greenfield Recorder*.

“It was a big happy family – until it wasn’t,” said Zabek.

“It was a great thing, all these artists,” agreed Franz. “I was in Building 11. Jim [Slavas] was right below me. He was like a mad professor, testing nozzles and playing classical music on his cello. The building was full of characters.”

Franz noted that Indeck often steamed up the windows, but that was the least of the issues.

“We called the lower part of the building ‘the Dungeon,’” remembered Thor Holbek, who created museum displays and now lives in Maine. “It was dark down there, with big chambers, different stainless-steel vats, and acid to clean the paper and color it.”

Nina Rossi, who interned with Holbek and now handles distribution for the *Montague Reporter*, described a side room where

water seepage from the canal created “this really dark waterfall.”

But everyone felt the mill still had potential.

January 1997 – January 2000

Indeck shut down its operations in October 1996, and Zabek told the tenants they would have to leave by 1998. This would ultimately be extended until 2000, but in the meantime, four more attempts to buy the mill buildings were quashed by International Paper.

In January 1997 David Manning, the president of Applied Dynamics Corporation, which leased space in one of the buildings, offered to buy the complex. Manning thought he had secured a verbal agreement, but IP shut it down that October.

“The offer was ridiculous,” an IP representative told the *Recorder* at the time. The *Springfield Republican*, meanwhile, reported that IP had put a \$10 offer on the table, then rescinded it.

That December, Slavas and Holbek teamed up to buy 65,000 square feet of the space, but International Paper told them it preferred to sell the entire complex.

Slavas told the *Recorder* on December 2 that he had written a letter to Montague’s board of selectmen but had not received a response.

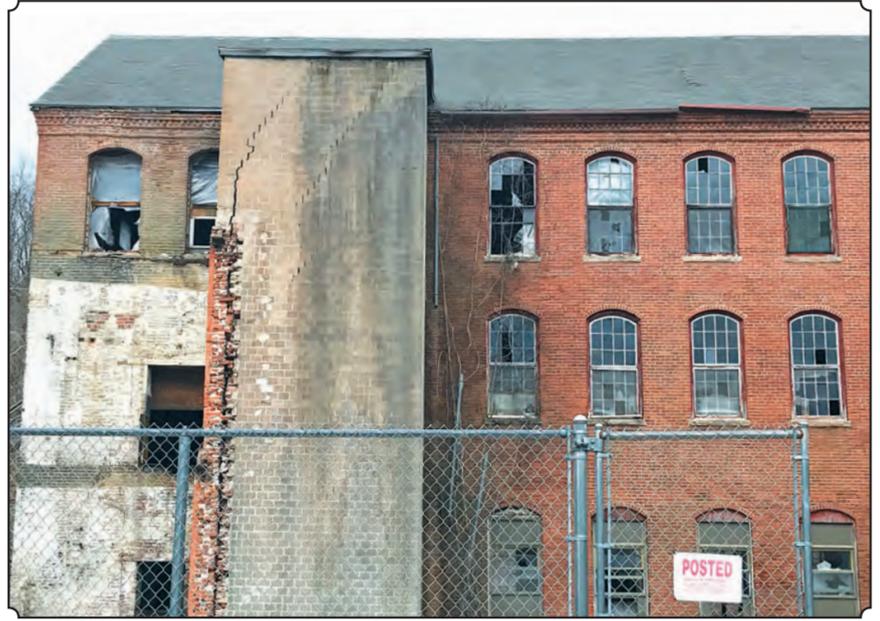
Reached by email this year, Slavas, who resides in Monroe Bridge, was critical of all parties involved in the rejection – especially the town.

“Although IP certainly shares responsibility for the outcome owing to their own fantasy of the complex’s value... the Town’s failure to grasp both the promise and vulnerability of the nascent ‘Arts and Industry’ community was the most damaging,” he wrote.

In September 1999, Holbek returned with an offer to buy the entire complex, but IP rejected a purchase-and-sale following a verbal agreement. “The deal is off,” IP’s spokesperson told the *Recorder*, adding cryptically that Holbek had requested “a lot of changes.”

Holbek would later recall that these were environmentally related, but couldn’t remember any specifics.

Finally, in January 2000, IP rejected a \$1 bid from the Franklin County Community De-



velopment Corporation (FCCDC). The *Republican* reported that the paper company wanted to sell the property as-is, but the FCCDC had asked it to “replace fire doors, change the sprinkler system to accommodate multitenant use and repair the heating system.” The nonprofit, which supports the development of small businesses, could not afford these repairs.

“The whole idea was [to] carry the building through the winter so we would have time to pull money together... to make this a viable building,” FCCDC vice chair Molly Wood told the *Recorder* at the time.

John Waite, who was hired as the executive director of the FCCDC that spring, was not involved in any attempts to purchase the building, but, he told the *Reporter*, “I do know there were a lot of environmental cleanup issues. When I came on, people said, ‘Don’t get involved with Strathmore.’”

July 2000 – June 2001

The sixth time was apparently the charm – or, depending on who you ask, the curse.

In July 2000, International Paper received an offer from Swift River Hydro, LLC, which sought to buy only the mill’s hydroelectric turbine, which amounted to less than 4% of the complex. Because the power plant shared walls with other buildings in the complex, the town was asked to allow easements proposed by IP.

The question at hand, reported the *Recorder*, was whether Montague planning board members had the “authority to give approval for the subdivision of a building in the same manner as for land subdivision.”

It was baffling. “It’s like looking at an ANR (Approval Not Required) to separate the bathroom from two other rooms in my house,” member Steve Ellis told the newspaper.

Looking back, David Jensen, who served as the town’s building inspector from 1988 to 2018 and is now the alternate building inspector, said that IP ultimately “wanted to dump the problem” – on Montague, and on him.

“Shit runs downhill,” he said. “Since I was probably an advocate of saving the building, it was like, ‘Okay, now it’s your problem’ was how the bureaucracy worked.”

Jensen, with his dry sense of humor and gravelly voice, might sound like he is over the endless will-they-or-won’t-they around the Strathmore. But when he gave the *Reporter* a tour outside the old buildings – buildings he may know better than anyone – in early 2026, he demonstrated otherwise.

When we came to the former courtyard, Jensen stopped and looked out at the overgrown space. “A guy used to play his cello here,” he said wistfully.

Asked if it had seemed as though the Strathmore was already doomed when the town was deciding whether to section it off, Jensen replied, “Doomed” – that’s retrospect. I don’t think anybody was under the illusion that this was somehow going to be easy. It was an uphill slug no matter how you looked at it.”

In April 2001 the zoning board of appeals (ZBA) decided that the sale of the power

plant, though not ideal, could mean another start. In June Swift River’s subsidiary, Turners Falls Hydro, moved in.

“With an occupant in the complex, it might have grown,” said Jensen, who had approved the easements.

The only member of the ZBA to dissent was Dennis Booska, whose prescient opinion echoes like a warning: “Leaving the remainder with no reuse plan except for ‘it’s for sale’ raises the specter of a purposeful abandonment of responsibilities [by IP],” he wrote. “To allow this condition to be aggravated by separation of the building as it is into ‘lots’ cannot be reconciled with the intent of the zoning bylaws nor deemed to be in the public good.”

Reached through his son at Booska’s Flooring in Turners Falls, Booska declined an interview.

IP would go on to sell the remainder of the complex in 2002, and after a series of additional tragedies including an arson fire in 2007 that burned down Building 10, the town seized the property in 2010. As of December 2025 officials have been in talks with Eagle Creek Renewable Energy, which now owns Turners Falls Hydro, to discuss “site access, project sequencing, and interface with adjacent hydroelectric infrastructure,” according to the town’s webpage for the Strathmore Mill Site Cleanup Project.

The physical connection between the power plant, still operating today, and the empty complex has made rehabilitation or demolition extremely complicated.

“I don’t think all the possibilities have been exhausted,” said Jensen. “I think the motivation to pursue them is basically zero, and the path is looking inevitable. The potential was pretty good, the finances are horrible, but the dream goes on.”

February 2026

As the Zoom meeting of the historical commission continued on that snowy morning, Nockleby agreed with Clawson that despite its condition, the Strathmore “invokes a sense of place.”

“It’s very much a big presence,” Nockleby said. “It’s a touchpoint for the memories of everything from the workers, their injuries, the person who after a fire rose from the ashes and rebuilt it in the 1870s... All those stories matter.”

But.

“But where we’re at, the building inspector, the police department, the fire department, the town administrative staff, nobody wants these buildings. They’re condemned, basically. And we’re in rural Franklin County; there is no white knight coming to save us, there’s nobody with deep pockets to help.”

The commission voted unanimously not to delay the demolition.

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



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LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on March 24, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Town Enters Talks With Condo Developer

At the Montague selectboard meeting on Tuesday, town planner Walter Ramsey announced that the town had received a \$2.2 million proposal from the Obear Construction Company, owned by local contractor Bob Obear, Jr., to develop Building 11 of the Strathmore complex.

The board voted to accept the proposal, and begin the process of negotiating a land development agreement (LDA) with Obear. The proposal was submitted through the Urban Homesteading program, under which the town sells property for a nominal fee but retains a good deal of control over the development process.

Board member Rich Kuklewicz stated that he supported

moving forward with negotiations on the proposal, in light of the other local projects Obear has been working on. "This gets the ball rolling," he said.

Sheffield Dream Come True

For the second year in a row, Eichorn's Acorns – Amy Eichorn's fourth-grade class at Sheffield Elementary School – has triumphed in the Lexia Learning Competition. Competing with 4,200 fourth-grade classes across the United States including much bigger urban schools, the Acorns ranked 25th, and won for the East.

Ms. Eichorn, who has been teaching fourth grade for 12 of her 15-year career, clearly provided enthusiasm and inspiration. The class won in the "Share Your Story" category, an exercise in using social media to chart their reading progress. Their \$100 prize paid for a celebratory pizza party at Turners Falls Pizza House.

20 YEARS AGO

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

Elks Plan New Lodge

The Montague Elks have unveiled ambitious plans to build a new 20,000-square-foot lodge on the corner of East Mineral and Millers Falls roads in Millers Falls, at the site of a former auto race track.

Past Exalted Ruler Jason Clark presented conceptual plans to the Montague zoning board of appeals on Wednesday, saying he hoped the proposed one story structure would

be "the largest and most beautiful banquet hall in the area."

Ross Runs Again

"I'm interested to know what goes on in the neighborhoods," said Allen Ross, when asked why he spends so much time observing the goings-on in Montague's five villages. "I like being connected to the place I live," the current chair of the Montague selectboard said, explaining why he is running for another three-year term. At this point, no other candidate has come forward to take out papers for the seat.

140 YEARS AGO

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

Turners Falls and Vicinity

President John Keith of the Keith mill, has been quite ill the past week, but is getting better slowly.

J.F. Bartlett has men at work thoroughly renovating the Kelly block on Fourth street, from cellar to garret – painting, graining, papering, kalsomining, etc. He wants to engage six good painters at once. For good men, this is a splendid opportunity.

"Why do teetotalers live one third longer than moderate drinkers?" is the subject on which Rev. Mr. Batson is to lecture on Sunday evening.

Secretary Manning, through Assistant Secretary Fairchild, on Thursday decided that mother-of-pearl in plates should be ad-

mitted free of duty, as the mother-of-pearl of commerce does not pay 25 per cent duty as an "un-manufactured shell." This decision settles the appeal taken by the John Russell Cutlery Company of Turners Falls, which is a large importer of this kind of mother-of-pearl.

Negotiations have been resumed between several people interested in the Lake Pleasant camp-ground and the Fitchburg railroad company, for the purchase of the real estate at Lake Pleasant, and last week the company made an offer to sell to the road the old grounds on the west side for about \$15,000. An effort is now being made to form a stock company to buy up the lands and several of the men who started the enterprise last fall, are still ready to put money into the scheme.

Horatio S. Bagnall, a Brockton druggist, and brother of the editor, is in town for a few days.



MONTAGUE from page A1

town-owned Colle building, as well as assessments of \$13.12 million for the Gill-Montague regional school district and \$1.13 million for Franklin County Technical School.

The board also recommended a number of non-capital articles: \$163,718 for an after-school program at Sheffield Elementary School and instructional materials at other schools in town; \$5,500 for resealing Unity Skate Park and \$7,326 for improvements at the Montague Center playground; \$16,500 for repairs at the Carnegie Library, \$13,200 for miscellaneous police equipment, \$23,705 to fund a redesign at the CWF, and \$8,144 to cover a deficit in this year's airport budget.

The only article not recommended, by a unanimous vote, was a proposal for \$7,500 to fund arts and culture because, in Lord's words, the board was "not sure this is fully baked yet." Member Rich Kuklewicz agreed, and member Marina Goldman noted confusion as to the nature of the committee that would oversee the new fund.

"We have a process for making capital requests," said Lord, "and this sort of bends that."

The board agreed to wait a week to vote on an article transferring a total of \$339,289 of unspent revenue to a variety of stabilization and trust funds so that the finance committee would have an opportunity to weigh in on the allocations.

Ramsey told the board he was considering offering town meeting members a "pre-town meeting" Zoom discussion on April 28. A meeting for new town members will also be held on that day.

Restaurants

There was a good deal of discussion of a request from the Avenue A restaurant Cocina Lupita to extend the end time of its entertainment license for dance events on Fridays and Saturdays from 9:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.

Co-owner Josh Breitner said these events, which were originally approved by the board several months ago, have gone "very well," but that venue does not start to get busy until 8:30 or 9 p.m.

In response to a question from Kuklewicz about complaints from residents living above the restaurant, Breitner said there had been "one complaint from an upstairs neighbor about the volume, [and] we turned it down." He said that if it became a consistent issue, the restaurant would look into soundproofing.

Executive assistant Fern Smith said that the end time could be extended under the license, but that the issue of noise would fall under the town's noise ordinance.

Kuklewicz suggested a 30-day trial period for the extension, "to see if there were any issues."

Lord said he was sympathetic to the idea of putting the extension on a "short leash," but Goldman said she felt it was "really nice to see our downtown active," and pointed out that events at the Shea Theater and Rendezvous frequently let out later.

Kuklewicz agreed, but said that he had "lived through some challenges" with other indoor venues.

Ramsey noted that the license could be revoked if noise violations were reported to the police or board of health, but Smith noted that the noise ordinance defines

"very specific parameters" that require the noise to first be monitored by the police.

Kuklewicz said he had been through some "very contentious meetings" on the issue in the past, and that the noise levels allowed under the ordinance are "relatively low, and they're not hard to exceed."

In the end the board voted to support the extension.

Smith introduced a proposed town policy to regulate the expansion of liquor and restaurant licenses to outdoor dining by explaining that the state Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) had handed off approval to municipalities in 2024, but required they have clear written policies. She called the process, which would not apply to licenses already approved by the state, "housekeeping."

Smith did not read the policy aloud, but asked board members if they had any questions about the document, which appeared in the meeting materials and was said to closely follow the old state policy.

Lord, who works as a lawyer, commented on what he said was "ambiguous wording" in portions of the document. Kuklewicz said he felt the policy should make clear that outdoor seating should not impede pedestrian use of sidewalks, and reference the use of parking lots for food and beverage service.

Lord said he would work with Smith on these edits.

Personnel

Acting as the personnel board, the board appointed Casey Hoffman, Jr. as a police patrol officer see MONTAGUE next page

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Dead Zone, Short Sale, Salt, Grease

By MIKE JACKSON

Monday's Gill selectboard meeting opened with a half-hour "public listening session" required by the state's Municipal Vulnerability Program, which provides towns with grants aimed at helping them withstand different issues that could be exacerbated by further climate change.

"The cornerstone, key element of this is that each town selects and identifies things that are important to them," explained Andrea Donlon, a land use planner at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. Donlon presented a summary of findings from two recent public input sessions and explained that the next step is for the town to rank its top funding priorities.

Highway superintendent John Miner said his top priority would be culvert repair, and fire chief William Kimball discussed the notorious radio and cellular "dead zone" around the public safety complex. "My portable radio doesn't work anywhere at the station," he said.

Town administrator Ray Purington said asking a fluvial geomorphologist, an engineer, and wetlands specialists how to prevent a flood-swollen Unadilla Brook from disturbing the graves at Center Cemetery would be a "top five" priority for him.

The report is available at www.gillmass.org/MVP, and community input is being collected until April 6.

Kimball was approved to spend up to \$5,000 to purchase and retrofit a water tank for his department's brush truck. He reported that Verizon plans to discontinue phone service to the public safety complex this year, and agreed to research voice-over-IP (VOIP) options with police chief Chris Redmond.

Memorial committee member Doug Smith was approved to spend \$12,133 to purchase a new monument for the town's war memorial, "to take us from Vietnam up to the current... ongoing..." He trailed off.

The money would come from the committee's past fundraising, Smith said, and he had been talking with Negus & Taylor of Greenfield about carving text into a granite stone that would join the two already standing.

By a unanimous vote, the selectboard declined to contribute \$14,250 toward an agricultural preservation re-

striction on land off Boyle Road owned by Sue Kramer. The sum, a 5% match, would have made Gill a co-holder of the APR and granted it the right to enforce its terms.

"The town is in such dire straits, budgetwise," said member Greg Snedeker. "We're looking at a potential [Proposition 2½] override right now.... It's just a really bad time."

"I feel bad that we're forcing the seller into a short sale, and saying 'You're going to get 5% less for this piece of property than you thought you were going to get,'" said member John Ward.

The board discussed with Miner the idea of replenishing the highway department's salt supply this spring, as prices are expected to rise significantly. No vote was taken, but Miner was encouraged to use his budget to buy a couple truckfuls at a time.

Miner said the department plans to chip-seal a mile of Mountain Road using state Chapter 90 funds, and after consulting with the board agreed to crack-seal the same stretch using \$12,536 from his highway budget rather than from Chapter 90.

The selectboard agreed unanimously to renew the concession license held by the Cielito Lindo food truck after hearing the business had met with plumbers about installing a grease trap, a new requirement in the Riverside sewer district.

Meeting next as sewer commissioners, they agreed it should be the board of health's job to follow up with the business about proper disposal of the grease.

They then reviewed a memo from engineers Tighe & Bond about long-overdue upgrades to the neighborhood's sewer pump station, which could cost as much as \$1.3 million in "2029 dollars."

The project's necessity was underlined by a report from Miner about a recent night spent troubleshooting failing pumps in the station's pit. "The [flow] meter was showing that we were pumping, and nothing was pumping," Miner recounted. "The tank kept rising and rising and rising."

The selectboard's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 6 at the town hall.

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MONTAGUE from previous pg beginning on April 5. Police chief Jason Haskins said Hoffman will need to attend the police academy for certification, hopefully in June.

If he was not attending the academy until then, Lord asked, "what sort of things would Mr. Hoffman do in the interim?" Haskins said Hoffman could take medical and psychological evaluations, and start the local training process.

The board approved the request, which fills the last vacant position in the department.

The board appointed Paul Platek to the building maintenance position at the department of public works (DPW). Platek has been working in a similar role for the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and Ramsey said DPW superintendent Sam Urkiel and supervisor Jim Whiteman were "excited to bring him on board."

"When Jim's excited about something, it's got to be good," said Lord.

Other Business

At the request of assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller, the board approved an agreement with the state Department of Transportation to provide the town with a solar-powered speed feedback sign to be placed at 446 Millers Falls Road.

Nolan-Zeller said the location, near the Highland School Apartments, requires motorists to abruptly reduce speed from 40 to 20 miles per hour, and there have been multiple complaints from residents of the neighborhood about speeding. The town will need to install the sign, and will be able to keep it for three years.

The board approved requests for the use of public property for three spring events – the annual Newt

Guilbault little league opening day parade on April 26, beginning at Turners Falls High School; a 5K "Fun Run and Walk" in downtown Turners on the morning of May 16; and a Bikes Fight Cancer charity ride, also downtown, on the morning of June 20.

There was a brief discussion of a request by Maggie Martin, representing the Brick House Community Resource Center, to place signs around town advertising the benefit "Fun Run."

Goldman said she was not aware that the board's approval was needed to place signs on public property, but Kuklewicz said it has been common practice in recent years, noting that the organizers of the former Pumpkifest festival had been required to apply to place signage.

The selectboard's next meeting will take place Monday, March 30.



HUM from page A1

the town listserv, a group started a private email thread to investigate the hum's patterns and origins. It seemed that the sound was most audible on the northern slope of Bear Mountain, at higher elevations, and on quiet nights and early mornings.

"Some other external factor must have made the sound traveling path easier," Whitman said, unsure why it only became a nuisance in 2024. "Less trees that buffer sound possibly, lots of forest has been cut down on that side of the river the last couple of years."

Stone Road resident Corwin Ericson told the Reporter the noise was loud and insidious, with a variable volume and pitch, and was especially loud in the summertime. It was audible in trail camera recordings from his yard, and he could sometimes even hear it inside his house with the windows closed. After taking a hike down Sears Road to the river bank opposite the Erving Paper Mill in 2024, he became certain the mill was the source of the sound.

"I don't know why, but I suspect it had something to do with the topography and atmospheric conditions – in addition to the mill's operations, of course," Ericson said.

According to Whitman, the vacuum fan runs around the clock, shutting down every 45 to 60 days for routine maintenance. It serves as a heat exhaust for a massive spinning machine inside the mill which helps to remove water from recycled paper pulp.

Last September, Wendell resident Jennifer Gross approached the Wendell selectboard with concerns about the noise, then contacted Whitman to share the group's concerns and suspicions that the sound was

coming from the mill.

"In my first call with Eric he was receptive and committed to identifying the likely culprit," Gross said.

"As the town email chain would let me know when they could or couldn't hear the sound, it was sort of mysterious," Whitman said. "They put me on the email group and when the mill could shut the fan off for routine maintenance, I asked that group to listen and see if it went away."

The sound did go away when the fan was off, and at Whitman's suggestion Erving Paper purchased and installed what was essentially a six-foot-tall vertical muffler for the exhaust pipe. After renting a crane to hoist it on the roof, the company spent about \$10,000 on the endeavor. "It weighs a few thousand pounds so we had to build supports for it," Whitman said.

The work was completed during the mill's Christmas break.

"I think that it was the great communication between the mill and the town residents that figured this out and were able to pinpoint the item making the noise," Whitman said when reached for comment this month. "Both sides were chasing potential culprits, and together we found the right one and committed the resources to the root cause, a very efficient process."

"There have been no complaints about sound from the direction of the mill gliding over the flank of Bear Mountain and disturbing the peaceful citizenry of Wendell," Gross said, since the muffler was installed. "For now our little hamlet on the hill seems to have returned to its former serenity."



NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Fund for Future Benefits Strong

By **KEITH WATERS**

The Erving selectboard met jointly on Monday, yet again, with the finance and capital planning committees to continue their review of FY'27 budget requests.

The selectboard had half an hour to itself before the joint, and was productive with it. Members James Loynd and William Bembury went over the IT director job description without Jake Smith, who was absent from the meeting, and after some minor spelling changes approved it and gave it to town administrator Bryan Smith to advertise.

The board also had time to finalize and approve another job description, that of facilities maintenance manager, with highway superintendent Glenn McCrory, as well as a contract with Axon Enterprises to buy some Tasers for the police department at a cost of \$32,000 for five years of Taser use.

Lastly before the joint meeting, the board approved a request from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) for additional time to work on the town's open space and recreation plan that it is preparing for the state. The board expressed its satisfaction with the work FRCOG is doing for the town on this matter.

The joint meeting began with Bryan Smith giving an overview of the FY'27 budget. As it stood, the town was about half a million dollars short.

Bryan Smith suggested the town could begin harvesting interest from its other post-employment benefits (OPEB) account to use as revenue. This account

is invested with the intention of the interest eventually paying out what the town will need to cover retiree benefits each year. As the town administrator explained it, the account is two years away from reaching that level, but at this point it is compounding about \$425,000 a year in interest.

"You're in a rare position that most towns have not reached yet where you're close to what the actuaries say is full funding," he said.

Fin com chair Debra Smith asked Bryan Smith whether the OPEB account is required to be fully funded before the town may withdraw from it. He replied that it is not, and added that fully funded is a moving target: it moves further away as insurance costs go up, but comes closer as life expectancies go down.

No decision was made about using the OPEB fund. Returning to its general session, the selectboard approved a "pre-25%" design, drafted by Pare Corporation, for the replacement of the Swamp Road bridge that washed out in 2021. "We're not constricting the brook, as the previous structure did," Bryan Smith noted. The project is being funded under the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT)'s small bridges program, and the next step will be to formally submit a "25% design" to MassDOT for review.

The board also approved a ballot question for the annual town election that would change the town treasurer from an elected to an appointed position.

Mike Jackson contributed additional writing.

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**LEGAL NOTICE of PUBLIC HEARING
LEVERETT CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

In accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act (MGL c.131 §40), the Leverett Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on April 6, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. at the Leverett Town Hall, 9 Montague Road to review a Notice of Intent for **culvert replacement in a tributary of the Sawmill River at 55 Dudleyville Road**. The application is on file and is available for public inspection in the Conservation Commission Office on Wednesdays, 12 to 2 p.m., or by appointment at (413) 548-1022 ext. 3.

This notice is also available at <http://masspublicnotices.org>.

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
MONTAGUE ZBA #26-02**

Notice is hereby given that the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, April 8th, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** VIA ZOOM and IN PERSON at the Montague Town Hall Annex conference room, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA at the request of **Melissa Terault** for a Special Permit to allow the conversion of an existing single-family dwelling into a two-family dwelling by constructing a 1,200-square-foot addition, under sections 9.2 and 5.2.3(b)ii of the Zoning Bylaws, located at **127 Federal Street (Map 34, Parcel 21), in the RESIDENTIAL 1 (RS-1) District**. The filing is available for review at Town Hall.

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

Joshua Lively, Chairman
Montague Zoning Board of Appeals

**TOWN OF GILL
PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

The Town of Gill Planning Board will hold a public hearing pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 5 on March 26, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at the Gill Town Hall, 325 Main Road, Gill, MA. In the event of inclement weather, the public hearing will be held on April 2, 2026, at the same time and location. The purpose of this public hearing is to review proposed bylaws and amendments to the Gill Zoning Bylaws and provide interested parties with an opportunity to comment on the proposed changes. Written comments will be accepted by the Planning Board prior to the hearing.

Proposed changes include amendments to the following sections of the Town of Gill Zoning Bylaws: **1) Section 2C, Table Of Use Regulations** – to replace "Accessory Apartment" with "Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)" and replace "Mobile Home" with "Manufactured Home"; **2) Section 17, Definitions** – to delete the definitions of "Accessory Apartment" and "Mobile Home" and insert a definition of "Manufactured Home."

In addition, a new **Section 4, Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)**, is proposed to be added to the Gill Zoning Bylaws to establish the purpose, definitions, regulations, and administration & enforcement relating to the establishment ADUs to be built as-of-right in Gill.

In addition, the existing **Section 15, Flood Plain Regulations**, is proposed to be deleted in its entirety and replaced with new language that complies with current FEMA regulations.

In addition, a new **Section 18, Building Integrated Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Data Centers**, is proposed to be added to the Gill Zoning Bylaws to establish a one-year moratorium on Building Integrated Energy Storage Systems and/or Data Centers.

The complete text of the proposed zoning bylaws and amendments is available for inspection during the regular business hours of the Town Hall, can be found on the Town's website at www.gillmass.org/calendar, and may be requested via email to clerical@gillmass.org.

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LEVERETT from page A1

Silas Ball to draft the article.

If the town keeps the building, Ippolito said, it should prioritize work on its deteriorating “envelope” – roof, porch, and walls – and commission a septic design study, which would determine what future uses would be possible.

Ippolito also suggested a new committee be formed after the town meeting with members of the selectboard, the Leverett Historical Society (LHS), and the Leverett historical commission (LHC) to lead further decision-making.

LHC chair Susan Mareneck said that overseeing such efforts was in the commission’s purview, and that it and the LHS would be happy to take part.

Selectboard member Tom Hankinson commented that a part-time home for a senior center might be an “ideal” component of a multi-use facility.

At the end of the discussion, the *ad hoc* committee received a round of applause for its three-year effort on the project.

Field Building

Fin com chair Phil Carter presented a “reduced” FY’27 town budget of \$8.487 million created by his committee alongside the budget requests submitted by departments, which totalled \$8.556 million. The two budgets would represent increases of 4.6% and 5.7% respectively.

Department heads had been asked to seek no more than a 2.5% increase, excluding cost-of-living adjustments and some other payroll expenses, but several went over that figure. Carter, citing concern with the property tax rate and Proposition 2½ constraints, said cuts were necessary.

The fin com created its proposed budget, he explained, by applying a 2.5% increase to all departments. At Tuesday’s meeting, a total of \$5,033 was added back in for state-required software support for the police department, fire department salaries, and materials that would qualify the library for state matching funds.

The fin com and selectboard cut a \$10,000 allocation to the town’s “other post-employment benefits” (OPEB) fund, which was created to cover future retiree benefits, but has grown to over \$400,000 and has not yet been used.

Questions were raised about

the functionality of the OPEB fund, and the officials agreed that a special article proposed for town meeting, for a \$6,300 study to analyze the liability, was a good idea.

Dog Hearing

The selectboard held a hearing about a biting incident that took place at the entrance to Rattlesnake Gutter hiking trail on February 11.

Maria Gallo suffered significant bruising to her arms and legs after being attacked by a large dog named Rosie, owned by Diana Balmonte. Gallo said the attack was “terrifying,” and that if she had not been wearing many layers of clothing due to an especially cold day, her injuries would have been much worse.

The board took into account the incident being Rosie’s first attack, Balmonte’s cooperation, and steps she had already taken to address the incident, and decided not to order that Rosie be euthanized. The board ordered that she be designated as “dangerous,” securely fenced in on Balmonte’s property, and only taken for walks by a person capable of restraining her, and not with other dogs.

Gallo and Balmonte both said they were satisfied with the decision.

Other Business

Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA) community development director Brian McHugh discussed the contents of a community development block grant application for a townwide housing rehabilitation program.

This hearing was required to grant permission to FCRHRA to administer the grant. The board voted in favor of doing so.

Duffy reported that a “straw poll” conducted earlier in the day had favored Leverett continuing to retain the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust for its employee health insurance. Because the plan design is changing, with increases to employee copays and deductibles, the town is legally required to notify and negotiate with staff unions.

The board voted to remain with the trust, pending those negotiations, and to form a health insurance advisory committee.

The board appointed Ashvik Garg to a firefighter position.

Hankinson announced that he is running for re-election.

GMRSD from page A1

one student – about the decision to ax one of the English Learners department’s four teachers.

Only one commenter was supportive: pupil services director Kristin Dietz, who read a statement asserting that the district would still be able to meet student needs. “The academic success, legal rights, and overall well-being of our English learners remain the absolute highest priority in our district planning,” she said. “We fully recognize and respect the grave concerns that have been raised. Please know that the cut of this position does not equate to the removal of [ELL] services for high school students.”

Dietz said administrators were “acutely aware of our legal obligations” and “deep into the process of developing a comprehensive restructuring plan.” The current ELL caseload, she said, is 48 students; according to budget presentations, total enrollment stands at 730.

At the March 10 school committee meeting, Thomas had cited a declining caseload and the end of pandemic-era federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding as the reasons to “right-size” the department to three.

“You can say that we’re going to provide instruction and support high school students, but it’s going to be lip service,” Hillcrest ELL teacher Lea Wulfkuhle told the committee on Tuesday. “There’s really no logistical way that we can service those students in the high school – we had a [single] middle school / high school ESL teacher for a number of years, and it was a disaster.”

Olivia Cifrino, who teaches ELL students at both secondary schools, read a letter on behalf of her colleagues. “Eliminating this position would violate state requirements and expose our district to potential sanctions and compliance gaps,” it said.

A seventh-grade ELL student, Evelyn Galvez, read a statement she had written. “A helpful ELL teacher not only teaches language skills,” she said, “but also helps students understand other subjects, adjust to a new environment, and feel included in the classroom.”

Jessica Hesse, who was notified her position teaching at the high school and Sheffield and Gill elementary schools will be eliminated, said she had been “very shocked” upon arriving in the district to learn that none of the ELL students at the

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high school were taking any English language arts courses, as a district policy made passing a standardized English-proficiency test a prerequisite for accessing mainstream classes. “This was two years ago,” Hesse said. “This had been totally overlooked.... All [ELL] students deserve equitable access to mainstream classes.” Now, she said, participants have all been passing American literature and honors history classes “with flying colors,” thanks in part to “push-in” classroom support from the department.

“There’s still time to control how that budget is spent,” said Gill first-grade teacher Jenay Hall, “and what restructuring can and should look like in our district.” Hall argued against the elimination of math and reading interventionists and warned that “mixed messages” about who was at risk were “contributing to some low spirits” among staff.

School committee chair Jane Oakes said a discussion on the staffing topic was not on the agenda, and therefore could not legally be held, but she thanked the commenters.

“Is this something that we could have a conversation about on a future agenda, potentially?” Montague representative Steve Ellis asked.

“Yes,” Oakes replied.

Other Business

Before the public meeting the committee met in executive session to discuss the custodians’ contract, and they later voted to approve a

new three-year contract, 6 to 0, with two members abstaining.

Oakes announced that only Thomas had submitted a letter of interest for next year’s interim superintendent role, which the district had posted internally after a failed search for a permanent superintendent.

“I didn’t expect to fall in love with your district the way I have,” Thomas said. “While the work has been very challenging, I’m just in awe of the community, our staff, our kids.”

The committee voted 8 to 0 to offer Thomas the job.

After balking on March 10 at a proposal to allow up to 57 elementary and 140 secondary students to choose in, the committee approved more modest caps totaling 52 and 70.

Business manager Joanne Blier reported that as of January 1 the district was running a small surplus, but that paying consultants for “personnel-related reviews” had created a deficit in the administrative account. She promised to exercise due diligence regarding the expenses.

Ellis announced that the Center for Educational Services has “stabilized” this year, and was looking into setting up a regional transportation service for students with special needs. The committee murmured excitedly at the prospect.

Student representative Olivia Wolbach said the senior class is raising money for graduation caps and gowns by selling cotton candy, and that spring sports start next week.

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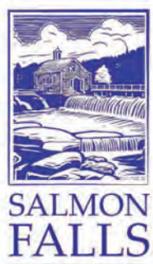


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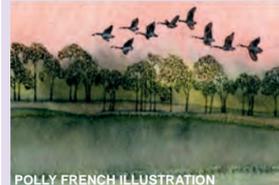
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MAGGIE SADOWAY PHOTO



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

MARCH AUBADE

By DAVID BRULE

*Eventually this thing or that
Will get the day rolling
On the parallel rails of another
month...*

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – I’m up early from bed and out onto the porch, the coffee already coursing through my veins. The day is gray, calm and damp, at this hour.

I sense an uptick about to occur...

Perhaps it’s the icy chill of a March morning that will give way to the persistent early sunshine.

Or perhaps it is the dozen song sparrows that greet this day, having traveled through the night to drop in on me this morning. All winter there had been but one or two, constant and quiet, with barely anything to say or sing about.

Today they’re everywhere to be seen, busy at the foot of the ice-beleaguered rhododendron, or on top of the picnic table where breakfast is spread out for them in the morning sun. Once in a while one of the songsters tries out his pipes, but mostly they’re busy at getting breakfast.

Then there’s the high-flowing river, whose new spring voice can be heard through the bare trees. It rushes off in its springtime duties, carrying away huge chunks of ice from the shoreline. The spring freshet plunges down to its appointment with the Connecticut, still slow-flowing and clogged with ice all the way to the falls.

Maybe too, it’s the calling of the redwings, or the car door slam of the newspaper carrier, tossing the paper full of yesterday’s news on the porch.

So off we go in the morning,

Mistress March and I, heading into another day in this still damp and gray paradise.

*Eventually this thing or that
will get the day rolling...*

Maybe it will be the Siberian, pushing aside the kitchen door with a certain authority as befits his job as trail boss. He takes a bath in the new snow that has dusted his realm last night, struts to the still-dormant blueberry bush and gives it a nonchalant squirt, then checks the fence row for intruders. He’ll listen to the 7 a.m. train wailing across the Montague Plains, out past Lake Pleasant, east toward Boston.

He’ll be satisfied that nothing has changed in the domain for which he is responsible. Then, with a sideward glance out here at me, he heads for the living room couch to resume his early spring snooze.

This is as good a starting point as any for my ode to March. I’ll take it and just go from there.

Perhaps it is the four and twenty red-winged blackbirds having breakfast on the picnic table. There’s no way *they’ll* be baked in a pie, or any dainty dish to set before the king!

And what about the pair of gray foxes who’ve been finding kitchen scraps we set out in the woods since the depths of February covered the ground with its two feet of snow? They’re very much at home here in our wild woods, just beyond the civilized edge of the yard. The hidden trail camera keeps us informed of their visits.

The cunning little gray fox vixen looks so clever in her winter furs, and is very obviously expecting kits. She munches a slice of raw chicken from the local see **WEST ALONG** page B3



KEVIN BRULE PHOTO

A bald eagle, Haliaeetus leucocephalus, watches over the Connecticut River this winter.

Above: The safety floats for the Turners Falls dam impoundment eagerly await deployment at Riverside.

BOOK REVIEW

A Region’s Portals Into Melville

John S. Dickson,
Herman Melville in the Berkshires
(The History Press, 2026)

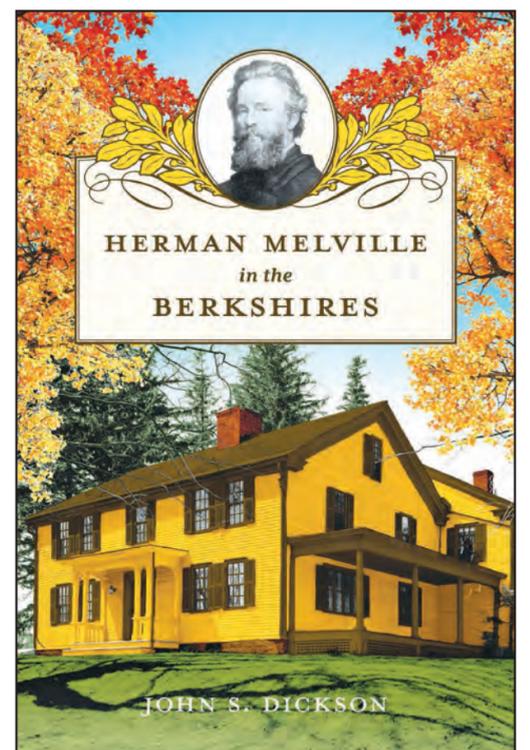
By DUSTON SPEAR

MONTAGUE – In his book, *Herman Melville in the Berkshires*, John S. Dickson has given his readers a gift by drawing another kind of picture of the great writer, for whom it was a curse to walk in a straight path. “He would rather wander circuitously, to see more, to see different, to see new.” Herman Melville was just thirty-two when he finished his final draft of *Moby-Dick* at his home, Arrowhead, in Pittsfield. Wandering was an essential part of his writing process.

An enthusiastic social vagabond, happy to add a bigger buggy to his rig and transfer ten friends and family to the site of a Berkshire trailhead, he prepared tasty picnics and cool champagne for his guests and stuffed these provisions around the floorboards.

Now we can conjure the naturalist behind the formal portrait of the acclaimed author, a younger man seduced by his surroundings. While his guests scurried for shelter under a rock ledge at the first sign of a rain shower, he would hoist himself up to the overhang like it was the prow of the *Pequod*, daring the thunderous skies and his group onward. Or picture him appearing like Pan on the precarious high limb of a tree above the rocky trail to coax his party of New Yorkers to reach the nearest peak.

This is a wonderful side of Melville to discover – not clamped to his desk in his study at Arrowhead, where Dickson has been a long-time volunteer – staring out at Mount Greylock, his mountain-muse stand-in for the great whale, but instead hacking at its rugged terrain, determined to hike along the dorsal surface of



his literal Leviathan.

Dickson describes in detail the fateful day, August 5, 1850, during a group hike to Monument Mountain in Great Barrington, where Melville met Nathaniel Hawthorne. *Moby-Dick* was dedicated to Hawthorne when it was published, and their first conversations began with this hike, as the two writers – avoiding eye contact to focus on the rocky path – forged a friendship.

An avid hiker himself, Dickson understands the see **REVIEW** page B4

MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

Interview by J. BURKETT and TROY CURRY

TURNERS FALLS – Wow, this week we have a super special interview – with Alastair Galbraith!

Alastair first came to the attention of many of us US underground music folks in the early ’90s and has been talked about in hushed reverence ever since. His solo records and other projects – Plagal Grind, A Handful of Dust, \$100 Band – have made a big impact on listeners over the years in very magical ways, but his solo records in particular are super unique and great: so quiet and personal, yet also very rocked out.

If you haven’t checked him out, we recommend listening to him ASAP, as well as so many other great New Zealand bands: The Clean, The Dead C, This Kind Of Punishment, Tall Dwarfs, The Cakekitchen, Wreck Small

Speakers on Expensive Stereos, The Great Unwashed, and almost anything on the Flying Nun or Xpressway labels.

Thanks so much to Alastair for beaming this interview over from New Zealand. Make sure to check out his newest LPs, *Seconds Mark III* and *Lagash*.

MMM: Do you have early music experiences you would like to share?

AG: When I was a toddler being driven in the car I struggled to get the side of my head in contact with the body of the car, or preferably the gearstick knob. There being no infant car seats in those days, my parents let me do it. It must have been difficult for my father to change gears.

I remember the sounds and sensations of doing that – I could hear the engine and the road, could tell if we were going up or down a hill

or around a corner. I had this private aural picture of the journey that I *loved!* Apparently I was also a big fan of washing machines, see **MUSIK** page B8



Alastair Galbraith

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

'BLANCO'

Meet Blanco, an energetic three-year-old Labrador/German Shepherd mix, who lives with a family of eight and loves to play with kids.

He gets excited with new toys and loves running outside. Blanco adores snacks, especially peanut butter, and knows simple tricks like sit, come, and paw, and hug.

He's an expert cuddler and needs an owner that's active and full of

life just like he is. Blanco is house-trained and microchipped; he is not good with cats.

There is no fee for adoption. To adopt this playful friend who lives in Springfield, find "Available Community Animals" under the "Adopt" menu at www.dakinhumane.org. A potential adopter must submit an application, interview and meet the pet, and sign an adoption contract.

Senior Center Activities MARCH 30 TO APRIL 3

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill-Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information, please call 863-9357.

Monday 3/30

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

Tuesday 3/31

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

Wednesday 4/1

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

Thursday 4/2

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

Friday 4/3

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
2 p.m. Chair Dance
3:30 p.m. Computer Class

ERVING

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

Monday 3/30

Spring Bake Sale Begins
9 a.m. Good For You
10 a.m. Seated Fitness

12 p.m. Pitch

1 p.m. Yoga

Tuesday 3/31

9 a.m. Stretch and Balance
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer
12 p.m. Painting with Bill Dolan

Wednesday 4/1

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

11:30 a.m. Bingo

1 p.m. Veterans' Services

Thursday 4/2

9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow
12 p.m. Brown Bag Lunch

Friday 4/3

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

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom. Foot care clinics are the third Tuesday of each month. The next clinic is April 21. 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 LeverettConnects listserv.

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is April 1. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Poet Headlines People's Fund Benefit

By RICHARD ANDERSEN

MONTAGUE CENTER – Martín Espada didn't immigrate to Brooklyn from Puerto Rico – his parents did that, for his benefit, before he was born – but the family moved around a lot, and not all of the locations were welcoming.

Martín quickly learned what it meant to be marginalized. It wasn't that he didn't exactly fit in with the culture of any specific neighborhood so much as he wasn't allowed to be more than a small part of any one of them.

By the time Martín was a teenager, his experiences as an exile in his own country became the determining factor in almost all he has accomplished as a poet, essayist, teacher, and indefatigable social activist. He would tell you it is the determining factor in the life of every immigrant.

Contrary to what any of the above might imply, Martín is not an angry ideologue (though he pulls no punches in his frustration with the status quo), a card-carrying victim (though he's no stranger to heartfelt emotion), or a brooding scholarly type (though he does hold a professorship at the University of Massachusetts). He's a readily accessible poet who would never use the word "marginalized" and has a long-honed, finely-tuned sense of humor that ranges from the ironically witty to the subtly satiric.

Full confession: Over the course of 27 years, I shared Martín's poems with thousands of non-traditional, adult learners in a program created for their specific needs at Springfield College. He was by far the most favored poet in every course.

Please welcome Martín to a reading of his poems at the community

fundraiser for local immigrants facing family separation, deportation, incarceration, and housing instability. The festivities will take place starting at 4 p.m. this Sunday in the Montague Center Congregational Church just off the town common. State senator Jo Comerford will be there to say a few words, and vocalist Moira Smiley will bring her special kind of music to your ears.

"A Benefit to Support Our Immigrant Neighbors" will take place from 4 to 6:30 p.m. this Sunday, March 29 at First Congregational Church, 4 North Street in Montague Center. All proceeds benefit the Franklin County People's Fund.

A full program is available at www.franklincountymutualaid.org, as well as an opportunity for readers who cannot attend the event to purchase raffle tickets directly.



By CASEY WAIT

TURNERS FALLS – Happy Spring, darling readers! Due to a January overtaken by influenza and two broken bones, and a February spent quarantined with my ninth COVID-19 infection – acquired at the ER whilst getting my fractures tended to – this is my first column for the year 2026.

As you can imagine, it's been a rough couple of weeks. I've spent a lot of time contemplating my body's vulnerability, and our political leaders' many failures in the area of public health. March 11 marked six years since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a worldwide pandemic, and roughly a month before that, I passed my own six-year anniversary of developing Long COVID.

These anniversaries have only gotten heavier to face as time goes on, both because I am forced to reckon with how much my life and health have changed since 2020 and because I feel myself increasingly alone in acknowledging these anniversaries at all, despite knowing more and more people who have become chronically ill following COVID infections.

A 2023 study in the journal *Nature* estimated that 400 million people worldwide were affected by Long COVID. This number has likely grown significantly since then, and increases daily as COVID continues to spread, almost entirely unmitigated. While deaths from COVID have decreased significantly as the pandemic goes on, the disabling nature of Long COVID has taken a massive toll on people of all ages, health backgrounds, and countries of origin.

This is the largest mass disabling event in history, reflected in data on Labor Force Disability from the US Bureau of Statistics. Long COVID has also surpassed asthma as the number-one chronic illness in children.

Despite its prevalence, many people, including health professionals, still don't understand how COVID spreads, or even know that their likelihood of developing Long COVID increases with each reinfection. COVID has been shown to cause lasting damage to the immune system, increasing its susceptibility to other infections. The *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* found that a single COVID infection increases risk of autoimmune disease by 49%.

Long COVID can affect every single organ and system in the body. We are also discovering that COVID is oncogenic, meaning that it increases our risk of developing cancer. This virus is seriously dangerous, and it should be treated as such!

Using myself as a test case: since developing Long COVID I have received seven new medical diagnoses.

In these last six years I have lost the ability to work, even part-time, and I can no longer regularly partake in pastimes I used to love, such as going on long walks, hiking, dancing, drawing, cooking, gardening, eating at restaurants, playing with my friends' kids, or traveling. I now use a powerchair to get around in public, and regularly need to wear at least one brace to keep my joints in place.

Because of COVID denialism in my personal life I have lost close friendships and romantic relationships, and already-fraught family relations have become harder to navigate safely.

Because of COVID denialism within the medical system I have contracted COVID at least twice in medical settings, despite wearing an N95 mask myself. It turns out one-way masking can only do so much! I have also had many necessary appointments and procedures canceled because either I or my healthcare provider was sick – usually the latter, since I mask everywhere.

Because of COVID denialism so much less feels possible. I struggle to picture a future, let alone plan for one. The reality that each time I leave my house I risk contracting a virus that has already upended so much of my life is a lot to deal with.

I'm grateful to have a tight circle of friends who share my mitigation practices and value Disability Justice, but I struggle to relate to people outside that circle. It really feels like we are living in different paradigms, and that scares me. Especially when the state of the world just continues to get more dire.

Last year, marking my five year Long COVID anniversary, I wrote: "We are living through a full-blown fascist upswell and so-called radicals can't even wear masks? Can't even make their punk shows accessible? How am I supposed to take you seriously at all when your maskless face shows me just how little you understand the material conditions at hand? How are we supposed to trust each other enough to effectively fight back? The stakes are life and death."

I wish I wasn't still asking these questions, but I am. Ignoring the death and disablement COVID has wrought has only made it easier to ignore the death and disablement elsewhere in the world. My heart and solidarity go out to the people of Cuba, Iran, Gaza, Lebanon, Congo, Sudan, Haiti, O'ahu, and everywhere the capitalist death-makers have sunk their teeth into.

The world over, it is always the sick and disabled who bear the brunt of this fascist violence first, and hardest. If you give a shit about liberation anywhere, for the love of God, wear a mask! You can get them for free at the Finders Collective at Fourth and L streets in Great Falls.

With love and rage,

Your Sick Friend

PLACE YOUR BUSINESS CARD HERE (12 WEEK MINIMUM). CALL 863-8666!

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WEST ALONG from page B1
supermarket, then sits and scratches, apparently content with being right where she is, not caring to be anywhere else. Her foxy smile tells me that.

Official Spring has been declared, but how would we know that today is any different from any other winter day?

It could be that eagle and his mate drifting over my west-running river, wheeling slowly, in time with Vivaldi's *Il Proteo (largo)* wafting out softly from the living room, where the household is beginning to stir.

He's carrying a hapless fish while he circles. Then, of all things, he drops it!

Knowing the sure clasp of the eagle's strong talons, could it be that he has dropped it on purpose? Down falls the fish, likely too late to find the safety of the river again, probably already dead from the shock of being ninety feet up in the air in the eagle's claws.

But the eagle folds his wings and plummets to swoop and snatch the fish before it reaches the river's surface. Just fooling with it... Or does the eagle have something else in mind?

I figure his mate, wheeling in the air nearby, is suitably impressed by her mate's prowess. This has got to be all part of the spring courtship ritual.

Closer to my armchair, the first phoebe calls its wheezy song from somewhere off in the near distance. Welcome back, I say, and make yourself at home!

And off we go, slipping around these many curves of March...

In what seems sometimes to be an indifferent world, there are small moments of grace like these to seize, like a line of rhyme. Unless, of course, you won't.

(Lines of poetry adapted from "Aubade" by Billy Collins.)



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Mysteries of Barking, Knocking Solved In One Night; Rash of Stalking, Harassment; Car-Keying Spree; Fire

Monday, 3/16

9:44 a.m. School resource officer at Franklin County Technical School approached by a student reporting ongoing threats and harassment. SRO will follow up with neighboring police department; advised caller to go to courthouse today. SRO made contact with involved male and advised him to stop contacting the reporting party, and that the school does not want him on the property and will be sending him a no-trespass order.

4:15 p.m. 911 caller reporting disturbance on Old Greenfield Road. Services rendered.

4:29 p.m. Walk-in reporting damage to a pole on his property on Poplar Street. Filling out statement in lobby. Party has pictures of damage and an involved truck and trailer.

5 p.m. Second 911 call from Old Greenfield Road. Parties separated again.

5:30 p.m. Caller from Winthrop Street states that her dog was attacked in her yard by a neighbor's dog. Call given to animal control officer; requesting officer check area to make sure the dog is not still roaming and being aggressive. Officer checked area; no dog located.

6:25 p.m. Caller from South Lyman Street reports that a child riding a red dirt bike in the road almost got hit by a car. Advised of complaint.

Tuesday, 3/17

12:15 a.m. Caller reports a barking dog on K Street for the past half hour. Caller states it is odd to hear the dog barking. Officer advises there is a vehicle in the driveway. Looked in house for registered owner; attempted to reach her via several phone numbers; no answer. Officer advises dog has calmed down and stopped barking; no further issues at this time. Officer advises that upon leaving he made contact with the resident, who states that she doesn't own a dog. Involved dog is a brown pitbull with a collar. No issues.

12:56 a.m. Caller from Central Street states she is house-sitting and watching a dog; however, the dog escaped outside while they were home. Caller

states the dog was last seen roughly three hours ago, and they have been looking for it for about an hour. Described as a grey pitbull with a bow on the collar. Caller advised of previous barking dog call; they will check that area. Caller advises dog has returned back home.

1:09 a.m. Officer conducting vehicle stop at Cumberland Farms. Vehicle with hazards on looking for dog. No issues.

1:30 a.m. 911 caller from Central Street reports hearing two or three knocks at the door of a house they are watching. Caller believes someone may be on the property. Officer advises fence was not latched, and the wind was causing it to strike the house. Fence secured.

3:03 a.m. 911 report of tree on wires on Hillside Road. Officer advises line to pole issue; tree not in roadway; requesting Eversource be contacted. Per officer, Eversource advises they may have to shut off power in the area for a brief time.

3:42 a.m. Additional reports of tree branches and limbs down in Montague Center and Millers Falls.

6:51 a.m. Caller from Hillside Road states that a tree fell onto his truck, which is on his property, and caused damage. Advised caller incident was on private property so they need to report it to the insurance company.

8:17 a.m. 911 caller reports that a pickup truck crashed into a Jersey barrier on North Leverett Road and has damage. Truck is blocking road. Unknown injuries. Officer advises passenger hit his head on the windshield and caught a ride to church in Leverett. Officer requesting Leverett PD check on him. Vehicle towed; operator transported to Baystate Franklin.

9:10 a.m. Walk-in reporting fraud in which several hundred dollars was taken from her. Advised of options. Party filling out statement form.

2:55 p.m. 911 report of disturbance on Old Greenfield Road. Nothing physical; just verbal. Male party will leave for the night in a few minutes.

6:32 p.m. Caller from Central Street reporting neighbor disturbance. Peace restored; one party transported to shelter.

7:35 p.m. Caller states that there is a cat in the middle of Montague City Road near Cumberland Farms that may have been hit. No sign of cat upon officer's arrival.

8:21 p.m. Caller from Third Street reports ongoing threatening/harass-

ment; male has been stalking the caller and his girlfriend. Caller states male just drove by girlfriend's house at a very slow rate of speed. Referred to an officer.

8:38 p.m. Caller from previous call states the vehicle has driven past the house four times since he hung up with the dispatcher. Caller called back stating he found the party in the alley and started following him; states he headed over the bridge into Gill. Advised caller to stop following the other party. Officers spoke to caller and advised of options to get a harassment prevention order.

8:44 p.m. Officer conducting vehicle stop in Third Street public parking lot. Male told to stop driving in the area or there could be stalking charges. Report taken.

Wednesday, 3/18

1:06 a.m. 911 caller reports active fire on top floor of building on East Main Street. Transferred to Shelburne Control; officers advised. Second caller reports active fire and states there are dogs and cats inside and possibly someone else. Officer confirming heavy smoke; advises all people are out of the building; animals still inside at this time. Officer advises TFFD on scene; requesting AMR to scene for individual who inhaled smoke. Requesting DPW be called to come out to treat area streets as water used to fight the fire is freezing. Officer advises TF fire engine remaining on scene for cleanup.

Thursday, 3/19

7:05 a.m. Car vs. pole on Avenue A outside Food City. Fluids leaking; no injuries. TFFD on scene. Vehicle towed; verbal warning issued.

9:05 a.m. Officer at Sheffield Elementary School for community outreach.

12:08 p.m. Walk-in reports that he lost his wallet two or three months ago, and someone has recently been using his identity. Officer advised party of options and provided a statement form.

12:46 p.m. Caller from Fifth Street reports that a male party against whom a no-trespass order is in place is currently in the building.

3:15 p.m. Caller from Dell Street states that a younger male came up to her front door and took a picture, then left in a small black car that was really loud. Unable to locate.

4:24 p.m. Report of a tractor-trailer unit blocking traffic and creating a hazard at Millers Falls Road and Industrial Boulevard. Truck has a broken axle.

Officers were able to help get the vehicle off the road and out of the way; no longer a hazard.

6:03 p.m. Caller from Dell Street called back to advise that two days ago, a red VW car was parked outside of her home and a younger guy got out and took a picture of his own license plate. He then put on a bright yellow vest and was taking pictures of other cars' plates as he was walking down the street. When he saw a couple walking their dog, he headed back to his car and took off. Caller took photo of VW's license plate. Advised caller to call back right away if the vehicle comes back.

Friday, 3/20

9:59 a.m. 911 calls reporting a dispute on Second Street. Second caller reports that the lady is trying to set her on fire through the window. Officers on scene. Neighbors arguing about second-floor porch. Report taken.

12:12 p.m. Caller would like a call back from an officer to talk about an issue that happened yesterday and a current issue today. Advised to seek an abuse prevention order at court and/or pursue a Section 35.

8:36 p.m. 911 caller reports that a male party is trespassing outside of the Shea Theater; states he is being disruptive and threatening. No-trespass order in place. Male party moved along; officer providing courtesy transport back to Greenfield.

Saturday, 3/21

1:25 a.m. Officer out with people yelling at an Avenue A apartment building. Females were in a verbal altercation. Peace restored.

8:18 a.m. Caller states that cars on L Street near his home have been being vandalized overnight; reports vehicles have been keyed. Report taken.

3:02 p.m. Caller from Old Greenfield Road would like to speak to an officer about a violation of an abuse prevention order. Caller was upset that officers went to his house at 9:30 p.m. to serve the order and felt that the involved party purposely sent them there at that hour in order to intimidate him. Caller unhappy with dispatcher's explanation and just wanted to be listened to. Situation mediated.

4:52 p.m. Multiple 911 calls reporting possible fire on James Avenue. Officer reports smoke showing. Chief notified.

Sunday, 3/22

1:31 p.m. 911 call reporting a domestic incident involving assault and battery on Fifth Street. Officer spoke with parties; all parties separated.

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Montague Community Television News Documented & Shared

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Greenfield and Mohawk High School students took to the Greenfield Common on March 20 with protest signs to practice democracy and show their support for immigrant families in our community. The Gill Standout continued to protest ICE as well on the 20th, taking up their residence on Route 2.

MCTV covered both of these efforts, and is proud of all our community members whenever they stand up and speak out! We amplify voices all around our community by providing free film coverage

of any event. If you know of something that should be documented and shared, please reach out and we will send a camera crew.

And if you've never been by the station, please stop by. It is not only a welcoming and friendly place, but also a community resource available to anyone interested in learning how to record and produce videos. Come check it out! We are located at 34 Second Street in Turners Falls, open Mondays through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can email us at infomontaguetev@gmail.com or even call us up at (413) 863-9200.

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

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REVIEW from page B1

particular sociabilities of walking that Rebecca Solnit exemplified so well in her book *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. Apparently, Melville was loath to retrace his steps – this ravenous curiosity might explain the stamina of the man whose masterpiece was not recognized in his lifetime.

Perhaps our guide was barbed



JOHN DICKSON PHOTO

Dickson points out that as Melville was writing *Moby-Dick*, in which he described the titular whale as being "like a snow hill in the air," he would have been looking out this study window at Mount Greylock in winter.

by a random molecule in the Arrowhead study, as swayed as a ship's deck, when he notes visitors to the farm who have found portals into Melville's writings, where they find and take what they need from them. John Dickson has clearly found his own path through their shared walks to Balance Rock, Shaker Village, Mount Washington, and Pontoosuc Lake.

Herman Melville in the Berkshires is a playful companion to the scores of books on this great writer and one that includes both authors' penchants for finding inspiration and sheer joy in the Berkshires, just down the road from Montague. Dickson describes the same paths first walked in 1850, sharing with us what Melville witnessed and what the trails look like now. This book is a well-researched map to a region butted against the author's farm, filled with tips on how to navigate the changes since these paths were unhacked and their peaks still difficult to summit.

I recommend you stuff a copy of this lithe book in your jacket, grab a recent trail map, and head for the hills.



ARTIST PROFILE

Chasing Trails With Monica Aguilar

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I found a woman, whose name turned out to be Monica Aguilar, painting a winter scene on a big window. I thought the scene was cool, and decided to write about her. I had noted several such images around Greenfield.

"I have been doing murals and window art for the last five years," Aguilar told me. "It has really taken off."

She has been working around Greenfield for the last two years. "It was mostly Greenfield Games," she said. "The Business Association commissioned me to do the businesses around town this year."

Aguilar decided to name her business Chasing Trails Art, "because I do a lot of backpacking." She is not formally trained – she started painting for businesses and individuals around five years ago, and the window paintings took off in the last three years. The window art allows her to work as a seasonal artist.

"I enjoy having freedom of work to pursue my other passions of backpacking, hiking, and traveling, so I decided to pursue entrepreneurship with my art," she explained.

Most of Aguilar's murals are residential, but her art is also on some electricity boxes in Northampton and Amherst, and she told me she is open to creating more murals for businesses and the community. Other places where she has painted windows include down-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Monica Aguilar painted this seasonal window decoration at Rise Above bakery on Greenfield's Main Street.

town Amherst and locations of Tandem Bagel Company, Greenfield Cooperative Bank, and Holyoke Credit Union throughout the Pioneer Valley.

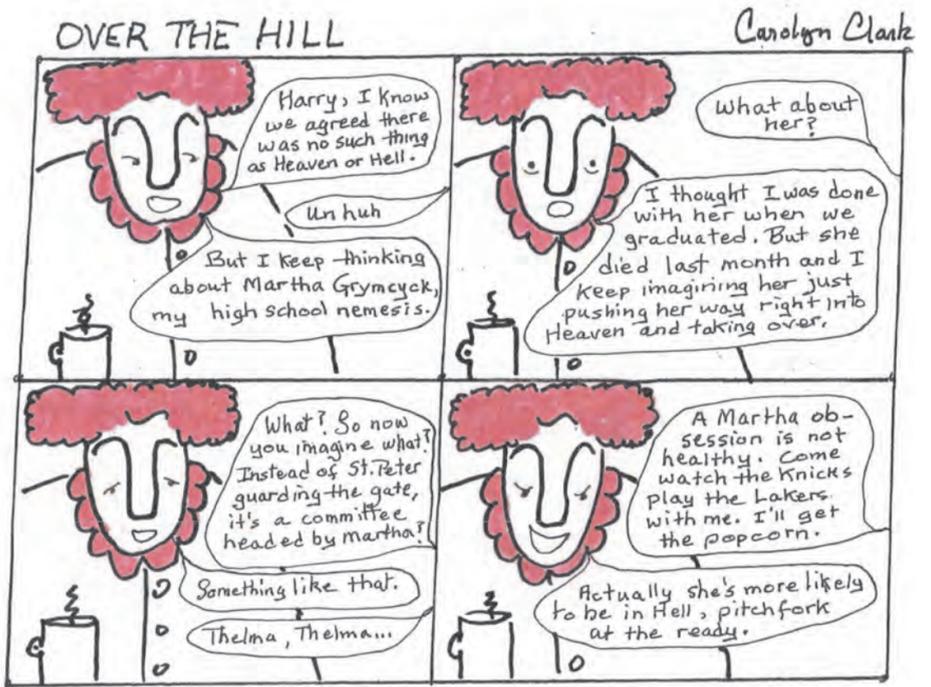
Most of the time the painting is decoration for the winter and holiday season, but sometimes she is hired for other seasons. Beside the window I found her painting, which resembled a prepared feast, there is one where she has a snowman dancing under a disco ball, and another with rubber ducks playing in the snow.

One of the murals on her website says "Love Damascus" on it. That is the name of the town in Virginia that commissioned her to create it.

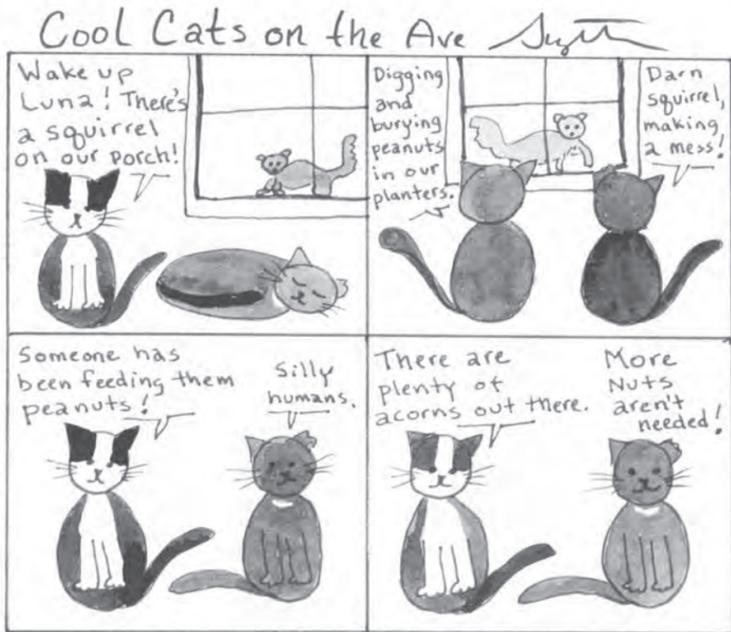
"I think people really enjoy my artwork," Aguilar said when I asked about people's opinion of it. "I think they really like walking by and seeing it installed." You can see more of her art at www.ChasingTrailsArt.com.



JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION



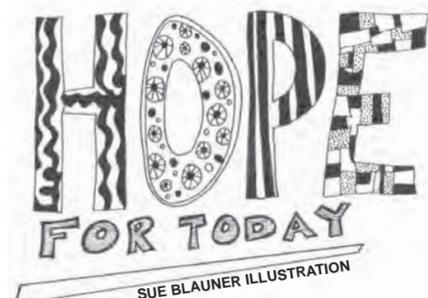
Carolyn Clark



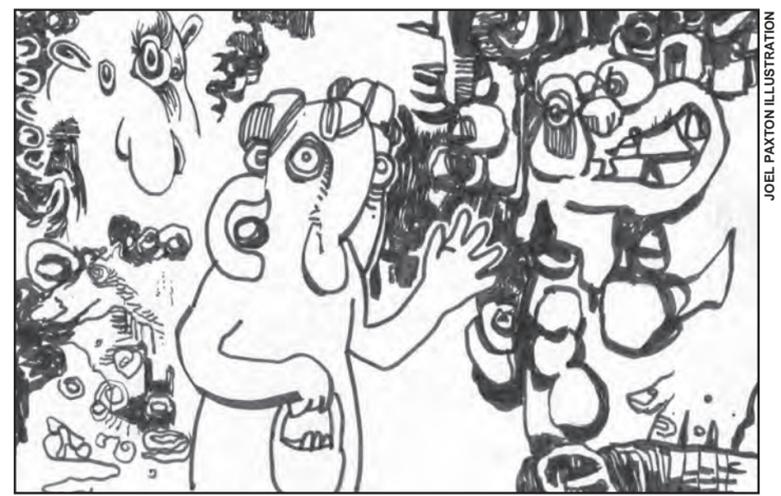
SUZETTE SNOW-COBB ILLUSTRATION



ROB MACHADO ILLUSTRATION



SUE BLAUNER ILLUSTRATION



JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION

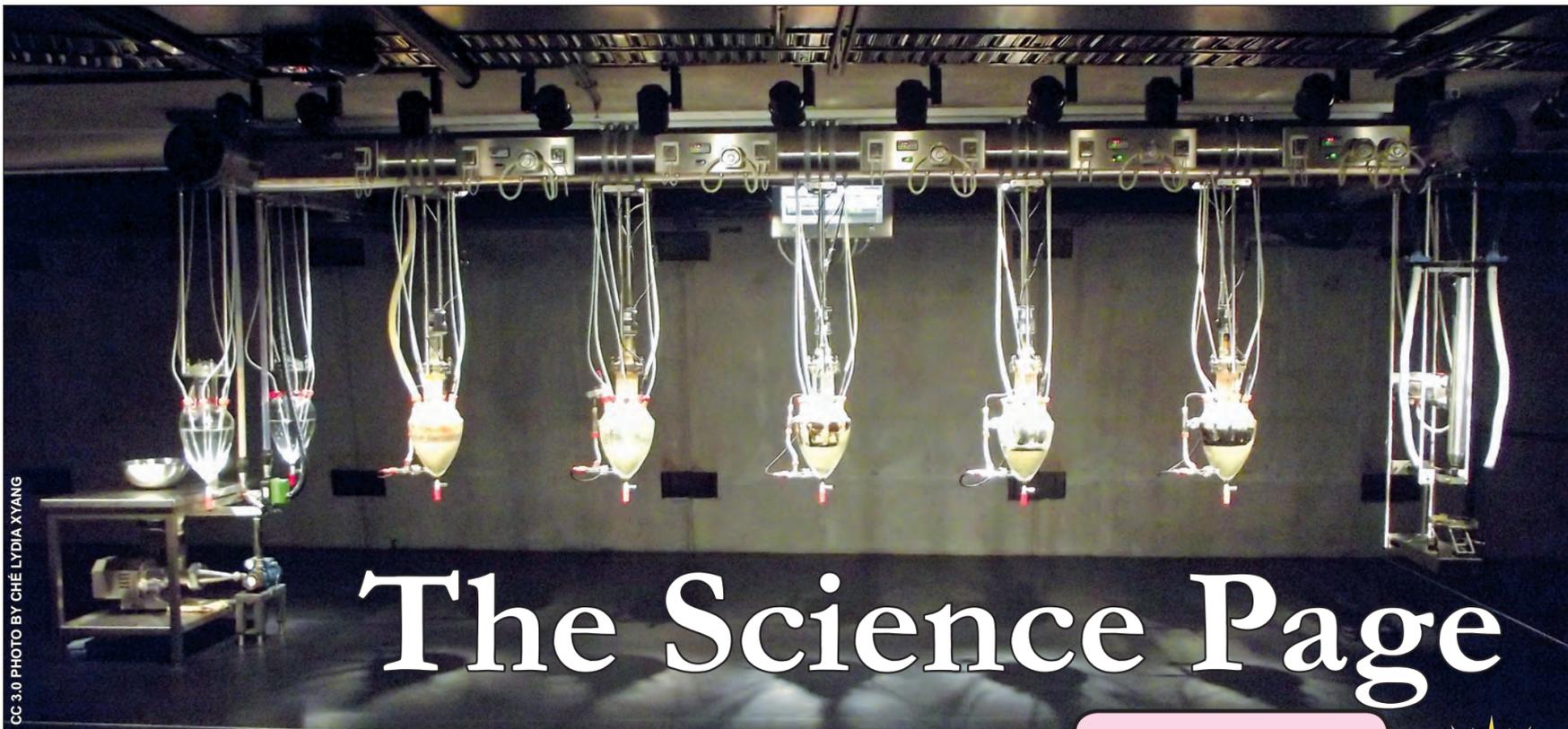
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The Science Page

Above: Wim Delvoye's 2010 digestive sculpture, Cloaca Professional, at the Museum of Old and New Art in Tasmania, Australia.

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



Automata for the People

By JOSH WATSON

TURNERS FALLS – In Thomas Pynchon's 1997 novel *Mason & Dixon*, set toward the end of the 18th century in a nascent United States, a once-renowned French chef named Armand Allègre has taken employment in a provincial inn, having fled his home country because of a mechanical duck.

The duck, he explains, is an automaton devised by the great inventor of mechanisms Jacques de Vaucanson, built as a simulacrum of a real duck, which flaps its wings, eats bits of foods, and converts that food to excrement. "A mechanical Duck that shits?" a customer replies. "To whom can it matter?"

A detective had come to warn Allègre of the duck's vendetta. De Vaucanson's "vain-glorious Intent," Allègre explains to his customers at the inn, "had been to repeat for Sex and Reproduction, the Miracles he'd already achiev'd for Digestion and Excretion. That final superaddition of erotic Machinery may have somehow nudg'd the Duck across some Threshold of self-Intricacy... Has an Automatick Duck, like the Sleeping Beauty, been brought to life by the kiss of... *l'Amour*?"

But why me, Allègre had asked the detective, as "thousands in France slay, cook, and eat Ducks ev'ry day."

"What more natural Enemy for the most celebrated Duck in France," the detective replied, "than the most celebrated chef?"

Pynchon exaggerates the tale, but de Vaucanson and the mechanical duck, known as Le Canard Digérateur, or Digesting Duck, are real.

Jacques de Vaucanson was born in Grenoble on February 24, 1709, as the Scientific Revolution was birthing the Age of Reason, while the elites of Paris were in thrall to the idea that the human body, perhaps even the human mind, were separate from the spiritual soul.

René Descartes had held that the body was a mere mechanical repository for the soul. Baruch Spinoza asserted that even the mind was inseparable from the body. The physician and philosopher Julien Offray de La Mettrie, who thought of the body as a clock-work, released a treatise titled *The Natural History of the Soul* which caused such outrage he was forced from France to the Netherlands and then, upon publication of *L'Homme machine*, from the Netherlands into Prussia.

Nonetheless, the idea that the physical processes of the human body could potentially be simulated by mechanical or chemical means inspired countless attempts to do just that.

The most brilliant was de Vaucanson. Educated by Jesuits at the Oratory in Juilly, he was 12 when he drew notice by constructing a mechanical boat. A novice at the Minims of Lyons at 16, he so scandalized the Order by demonstrating his automata that he was relieved of his vows and forced out, and his inventions destroyed.

In 1738 he rented a grand hall at the Hôtel de Longueville to debut his invention, a six-foot flutist, Le Flûteur. Le Flûteur didn't merely sound as if it were playing a German flute, now commonly known as a simple system flute. Instead, through a series of differently-pressured bellows, articulated lips, a mechanical tongue, and according to a contemporary account an "infinity of wires and steel chain [which] form the movement of the fingers, in the same way as a living man," Le Flûteur performed, as a human might, 12 separate musical pieces.

Le Flûteur was a sensation. De Vaucanson released a pamphlet, translated as "An Account of the Mechanism of an Automaton," and released it to the Royal Academy of Sciences.

"The German Flute having this Difference from other Wind-Instruments," he wrote, "that its Mouth is undetermined, the Advantages that arise from it, are that the Wind may be modulated by the greater or less Opening of the Lips, and by their different Position upon the Hole of the Flute, and by the Performer's being able to turn the Flute inwards or outwards. By this Means the Sounds may be swell'd and diminish'd, soften'd, and strengthen'd, produce Echoes, and give Grace and Expression to the Tunes that are play'd."

He next turned his attention to Le Canard Digérateur. More than a thousand moving parts allowed the duck to bend its neck, reach for food from the hand of a visitor, and preen its feathers, but its most notable and memorable ability was to consume corn meal and poop it out. De Vaucanson assured visitors that the process was a "chemical laboratory" which digested through "solvation," chemical means, rather than "trituration," mere grinding, as wheat to flour.

The method, he explained in a pamphlet, was "the matter being digested in the stomach being conducted by tubes as in an animal by its bowels into the anus, where there is a sphincter which permits it to be released."

Visitors came from throughout Europe; the writer and philosopher Voltaire, no slouch himself, called de Vaucanson "a rival to Prometheus, he seemed to steal the heavenly fires

in his search to give life." The admission fee was roughly equivalent to a week's pay.

In her 2016 article "The Biomorphic Automata of the 18th Century," the scholar Bianca Westermann suggests the reason de Vaucanson might have chosen to create a digesting duck rather than, for example, a digesting human, was to instill an objectivity we might not have summoned watching a human being excrete their dinner. "The biological body of a bird," Westermann writes, "does not run the risk of being too similar to the human body, but was close enough to point out the evident analogies at the same time."



This is presumed to be a photograph of Jacques de Vaucanson's famous Digesting Duck.

The original Digesting Duck is no longer extant, lost in a fire almost 150 years ago. Its reputed digestive processes were suspected even at the time to be a fraud, and this was confirmed upon its examination in 1844 by the magician Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin, who found the Duck's excrement, made from bread crumbs dyed green, would have been pre-loaded before the exhibition. The violin maker Sebastian Klotz, who attended the exhibition and recorded a contemporary account, suggested de Vaucanson may have faked the digestion simply because visitors would have grown bored had they been expected to stay through an entire digestive cycle.

Some years ago, in a bit of kismet, the artist Tim Hawkinson installed his enormous breathing machine, *Überorgan*, at the Ace Gallery on Hudson Street in New York

City, a half-mile or so from the New Museum in Soho, where the artist Wim Delvoye installed his enormous digesting machine, *Cloaca*. (The Ace Gallery has permanently closed; the New Museum continues in a brand new Rem Koolhaas building on the Bowery which opened last Saturday.)

The art critic Roberta Smith, writing for the *New York Times*, reviewed the installations together and noted the connection, beginning her review, "Bodily functions. You have to love them, because without them you're dead."

Überorgan, Smith wrote, "duplicates human breathing more metaphorically than exactly. It is in fact a large, slightly insane conflation of human body and musical instrument." Bellows filled bladders with air and pushed it through large plastic tubes, dispersed through five separate galleries through which visitors wandered. The air was funneled into a "big telescopelike horn made of foil-covered cardboard," she wrote; "at intervals, the bags expel the air through these horns in sonorous baritone blasts not unlike a whale's or a tugboat's."

Cloaca, by contrast, sat in one large gallery, a curiously sterile series of seven laboratory-style glass jars perhaps 20 liters in volume each, sitting separately in water baths connected to a pump and heat exchanger to maintain a steady temperature of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. At the front, a rolling step ladder was positioned to allow the feeding of the masticator.

Cloaca was fed twice each day, mid-morning and late afternoon. Meals, prepared by high-end local restaurants, were dumped into the masticator and pressed forward by a peristaltic pump into the series of jars, spending a few hours in each. Each jar represented a stage of human digestion, with base and acidic solutions of varying proportions.

At the end, 22 hours after having been fed, *Cloaca* pushed the material into a filter centrifuge and extruded the results, as Smith writes, "onto a small bright green conveyor belt that, thankfully, is sealed in a Plexiglas vitrine." It was, for all purposes, in shape, color, and consistency, human excrement.

The author Milan Kundera, in his 1984 novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, and quoted in the catalogue sold at the exhibition, writes: "The objection to shit is a metaphysical one. The daily defecation session is daily proof of the unacceptability of Creation. Either/or: either shit is acceptable (in which case don't lock yourself in the bathroom!) or we are created in an unacceptable manner."

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EVENTS



submissions:
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THURSDAY, MARCH 26

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

Millers Falls Library,
Montague: *Deep History of Millers Falls* with Professor Richard Little. 4 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Comedy Project Workshop: Now That's a Funny Story!* with Nisse Greenburg. Contact andrea@thelavacenter.org to participate. 6 p.m. By donation.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Figure Drawing*. 6 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Neonach, Death Spiral, Totorobyn, Shane "Bray" Kerr, Derick Noetzil*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Academy of Music,
Northampton: *Gaelic Storm, JigJam*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

Great Falls Harvest, Turners Falls: *Anthony Pasquarosa, Jenifer Gelineau, Deflator Mouse, Washatorium, History Teaches, David Shapiro, Bev Ketch*, more. 6 p.m. \$.

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

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Teen Night*. Pizza, games, crafts. 6 p.m. Free.

Various venues, Northampton: *Low Cut Connie, Rebirth Brass Band, Willi Carlisle, Olive Klug, Cloudbelly*, many more. See www.backporchfest.com for full schedule. 6 p.m. \$.

Four Phantoms Brewing,
Greenfield: *Drag Bingo*, fundraiser for the Peace Development Fund. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Shagohod, Astrophage, Monarchs & Masses*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Sean Rowe, Simon Gray*. 7 p.m. \$.

Palladium, Worcester: *Testament, Overkill, Destruction*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Salar Nader: The Afghan Music Project*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington: *Better Than Ezra*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *High Noon, Lynyrd Skynyrd* tribute. 8 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Magic Mojo Band*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Academy of Music,
Northampton: *Bertha: Grateful Drag*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater,
Easthampton: *White Belts, Cora Monroe*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Haunted By Possums*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

Various venues, Northampton: *Margaret Glaspy, Sean Rowe, Winterpills, Gold Dust, Mark Erelli*, many more. See www.backporchfest.com. 12 p.m. \$.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Favorite Storybook Character Day*. Dress up as your favorite character. 1 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Savings Bank,
Turners Falls: *Pioneer Valley Hospice & Palliative Care* staff offer information about "navigating end of life care with grace, comfort and respect." Light refreshments. 1 to 2 p.m. Free.



Local DIY icon Mal Devisa is on the bill for the last night of the Mystra Ooze Fest, this Sunday at the Rendezvous in Turners Falls, alongside Marcia Basset, Liz Durette, and Sunburned Hand of the Man.

Wendell Free Library,
Wendell: *Silk Painting Workshop*. 1 p.m. Free.

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

Incandescent Brewing,
Bernardston: *Heath Lewis*. 2 p.m. No cover.

Element Brewing,
Millers Falls: *Chuck Clough*. 3 p.m. No cover.

Four Phantoms Brewing,
Greenfield: *Tournament of Mini-Games*, fundraiser for Franklin County Pride. 5 p.m. \$.

Great Falls Harvest, Turners Falls: *Allysen Gallery, Ben Hersey, Spectre Folk, Amber Wolfe, Fugue State, Rare Geese & Wednesday Knudsen, Angela Sawyer*, more. 5:30 p.m. \$.

Workshop13, Ware: *Jason Wood, Samantha Herman, Morgan Alyse*, more. 6 p.m. \$.

Montague Common Hall,
Montague Center: *Swing Dance* with *Butterfly Swing Band*. 7 p.m. \$.

Floodwater Brewing,
Shelburne Falls: *Psychedelic Farm Girls*. 7 p.m. No cover.

THCC, Easthampton: *Sons of Greenwich, Mourn The Light, The Outlourdes*. 7 p.m. \$.

Palladium, Worcester: *Drain, No Pressure, Haywire, Secret World*. 7 p.m. \$.

Tillis Hall, UMass Amherst: *Chief Adjuah*. 8 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music,
Northampton: *Peter Rowan, Sam Grisman Project*. 8 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Always Manic, Andyhasaband, Van Chamberlain, Charm Person, Alejandro*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *BASSTOV3N, Father Otter, Studebaker Hawk, Eric Meissner*. 9:15 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, MARCH 29

Various venues, Northampton: *James McMurtry, Eli Catlin, Tommy Prine, The Mammals, Misty Blues*, many more. See www.backporchfest.com for full schedule. 12 p.m. \$.

Wendell Free Library,
Wendell: *Sunday Word*, writers' workshop with Paul Richmond. 1 p.m. Free.

Mount Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: Reproductive justice activists and scholars *Loretta J. Ross* and *Marlene Gerber Fried* discuss their new book, *Abortion and Reproductive Justice: An Essential Guide for Resistance*. 2 to 4 p.m. Free.

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EXHIBITS

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

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

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: *Neighborly*, an impromptu group show with sales going to support LUCE and RAICES, organizations supporting the immigrant community, through March. Guest photographer *Ray Brod* will be featured in April and May.

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

Leverett Library, Leverett:

The Art of Dorothy Masterson Bennett, a former Leverett resident who passed in 2024 at 92 years old, through April.

Leverett Crafts and Arts, Leverett:

Art for the Earth. Forty artists celebrate their love for the earth in a variety of media. April 4 through 26, with a reception Saturday, April 11 at 1 p.m.

Artspace, Greenfield: *Franklin County Teen Art Show*, through April 24.

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

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Find Your Voice, Speak Your Mind*, work by student artists at the Academy at Charlemont, through March. *Trees*, informational exhibit celebrating tree projects in Greenfield, through April. *Elaine VanGelder*, paintings, in April with a reception Saturday, April 4 at 11 a.m.

Looky Here, Greenfield:

Kids Art Show, work by youngsters up to 12 years old, through March.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *Annual Photography Exhibit*, featuring prints by New England artists, through March.

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

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Romanum*, Ron Maggio's mixed-media works inspired by Roman frescoes, through March. *Flora & Fauna*, artists' books and oil paintings by Nancy Meagher and Laura Holland, in April.

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

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Student Art Exhibit*, works by fifth- and sixth-graders in the Mohawk Trail regional school district, through April.

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CALENDAR



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FRIDAY, APRIL 10

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Olivia Nied, Brian Dickens*. 8 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, APRIL 11

Leverett Arts and Crafts, Leverett: *Earth Day Cleanup*. Sign up at bit.ly/LeverettCleanup26. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free.

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Sleep Destroyer, Feldspar 00000, Glass, Rival Galaxies, Mibble*. 6:30 p.m. \$

FRIDAY, APRIL 17

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

MONDAY, APRIL 20

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Weedeater, Conan, Telekinetic Yeti, Come to Grief*. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, APRIL 24

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Roomful of Blues*. 8 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MAY 2

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

THURSDAY, MAY 7

Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Bella's Bartok*, acoustic. 7 p.m. By donation.

FRIDAY, MAY 29

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Chained to the Bottom of the Ocean, Anthropophagous, Worm Altar*. 8 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, JUNE 15

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Dark Star Orchestra*. 6 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, JUNE 16

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Dark Star Orchestra*. 6 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, JUNE 18

Palladium, Worcester: *WORM*. 7 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, JULY 14

Tanglewood, Lenox: *Ziggy Marley, Trombone Shorty*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8

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

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

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

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Daily Op, Easthampton: *Armand Hammer*, special guests. 7 p.m. \$.

Wendell Town Hall, Wendell: *City of Alanis, Alanis Morissette tribute; Carrie Ferguson*. Fundraiser for a community member's medical expenses. 4 p.m. \$.

Montague Common Hall, Montague: *Moira Smiley*. Workshop, 3 p.m.; potluck, 5 p.m., concert, 6:30 p.m. \$.

First Congregational Church, Montague Center: *Support Our Immigrant Neighbors*. Reports from state senator Jo Comerford and the Franklin County People's Fund; songs by *Moira Smiley*; poetry reading and signing by *Martin Espada*; raffle; potluck supper. Benefit for the People's Fund. 4 to 6:30 p.m. \$.

Montague Center Library, Montague: Documentary screening, *FAR OUT: Life On & After the Commune* (2024). 6 p.m. Free.

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

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

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Sunburned Hand of the Man, Liz Durette, Mal Devisa, Marcia Bassett*, more. 8 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, MARCH 30

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Tommy Feeley*. 8:30 p.m. No cover.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: Montague selectboard member *Matt Lord* meets with constituents. 4 to 5 p.m. Free.

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

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Board Game Night: Clue*. 5:15 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Stick Men, John Ferrara*. 7 p.m. \$.

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: *Les Déraillieurs, The Wind-Ups, Corsica, Jetties*. 7 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Readers' Choice Book Group*. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*. 10 a.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Tech for Seniors: Real Confidence with Artificial Intelligence*. 12:30 p.m. Free.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Half Shaved Jazz*. 8:30 p.m. No cover.

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Environmental Book Group*. Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History*. 3 p.m. Free.

Beit Ahavah, Florence: *Community Passover Seder*. Register by March 29 at tinyurl.com/PassoverAhava. Bring an item that represents freedom. 5 p.m. By donation.



Reprise, who recreated Phish's entire November 28, 1997 Worcester Centrum show at the Shea Theater last October, will return next Thursday to recreate Phish's entire November 29, 1997 Worcester Centrum show, known for its 58-minute version of the song "Runaway Jim." Something for everyone!

Colonial Theater, Keene: *Ladysmith Black Mambazo*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Reprise, Phish tribute*. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Hexx Head, Clock Serum, Snowbeasts, Midnight Psychic, BITCRUSHR*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Dalton Moon, Awnthay, Cheer*. 9 p.m. No cover.

FRIDAY, APRIL 3

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Nesting Birds Investigation Station*. 3 p.m. Free.

Looky Here, Greenfield: Book release event for *The Truth Is Not a Narrative*, new collection by the Public Interest Postal Service. 5 p.m. By donation.

Looky Here, Greenfield: Film screening, *They Live* (1988). 6 p.m. By donation.

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

Four Phantoms Brewing, Greenfield: *Game Night*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

THCC, Easthampton: *DC Wolves, Lostsol, Quartertone*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Olive Klug, Happy Just to See You, Eve Pierce*. Benefit for the Reproductive Freedom Fund of NH. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: World premiere, *Baker's Boy* (2026), "an absurdist transsexual short filmed across Franklin County," with cast and crew; followed by feature film *By Hook or by Crook* (2001). By donation. 7:30 p.m.

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

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Meteors, Slob Drop*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Moon Hollow, The Rear Defrosters*. 8 p.m. Free.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Deerest, Galeer, Libby Quinn*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bryan Gillig, Owen Manure, Washatorium*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

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

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

Unity Park, Turners Falls: *Peter Cottontail's EGGstravaganza*. Photo op; bake sale; egg hunt. Bring a basket. For ages 4 to 12. Rain or shine. 1 p.m. Free.

Element Brewing, Millers Falls: *Bekka Dowland*. 3 p.m. No cover.

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

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Little House Blues*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Deflator Mouse, Voicehandler, Hollow Deck*. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Accursed, Annihilus Mundi, Gravewraith*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Takaat, Kal Marks*. 7 p.m. \$.

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wendell: *Green Sisters*, benefit for the Friends of the Wendell Free Library. 7:30 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *DJ Lucas, Papo2004 & Subjcts, Finesse Fresco, Caplito & Studio Junkiez, Slaynstacy*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Love & Rage*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, APRIL 5

Leverett Congregational Church, Leverett: *Easter Sunrise Service*, 6:30 a.m.; *Easter Service*, 10 a.m. Free.

Leverett Town Hall, Leverett: *Community Pancake Breakfast*. 7 a.m. Free.

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Wendy Eisenberg, Ariel Vera, Shane "Bray" Kerr, Gloyd*. 6 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, APRIL 6

Leverett Elementary School, Leverett: *King Philip's War in Your Backyard: From Wequomps to Peskeompskut*. History talk by David Brule. 7 p.m. Free.

The Drake, Amherst: *Mike Doughty*. 8 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, APRIL 7

Olver Transit Center, Greenfield: *Jarice Hanson* presents her new historical monologue, *Martha Gellhorn: In Her Own Words*. Register at www.tinyurl.com/MarthaGellhorn. 2 p.m. \$.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *An Evening with Author David Brule*. 5 p.m. Free.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *The Art of Science Fiction: The History of Art and Imagination*, presented by Barry Deitz. 6 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Jax Hollow*. 7 p.m. \$.

Daily Operation, Easthampton: *R.A.P Ferreira, JPTRSMN, Quills*. 7 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Takaat, Sunburned Hand of the Man, Wednesday Knudsen, Dust Witch*. 7 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Stanley Jordan*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

THURSDAY, APRIL 9

Palladium, Worcester: *Poison the Well, Converge, Spy, Balmora*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Bird Friend, Mimi Fang, Josh Allen*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

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MUSIK from page B1

and embarrassed my parents on a visit to somebody's home by asking if they had a washing machine I could listen to.

At four years old I suddenly asked – out of the blue – if I could have a violin. By five I was getting violin lessons. At nine I joined a cathedral choir – boy soprano in red cassock and white surplice.

Then, in 1980 at 14, I saw The Clean play and that was the end of all that – I had to get an electric guitar and learn how to make that shimmering globe of metallic shards of sound. At 15 Robbie Muir, Nick Neill, and I had a band which began to fill support slots for all the early Flying Nun Dunedin bands, mainly at the Empire Hotel.

MMM: What were the first records you remember really loving?

AG: A Peter Sellers comedy 10" – the cover showed him polishing the Spirit of Ecstasy figurehead on the bonnet of his Rolls Royce. The track I loved was called "Auntie Rotter" and was a truly depraved parody of a kids' radio show – Auntie Rotter plays stripper music to dance to, then says "Here is your music for running to the kitchen

and plunging a knife into Mummy's back!"

An early '70s 10" of a radio play, *The Snow Goose* by Paul Gallico, sent my soul out and over an ocean wheeling with gulls and a lost longing.

American Pie by Don McLean – his melodies and vocal delivery really got to me. A voice aware of pain but gentle, understated and understanding.

MMM: Do you have other favorite music that you would like to share, anything that really stayed with you?

AG: There's so much – here's just a few dozen: The Clean, The Great Unwashed, Bill Dieren, early Tall Dwarfs, The Stones (NZ 1980s), The Sceptics, Marie and the Atom, Kath Bloom with Loren Mazzacane Connors, The Dead C, Iggy and the Stooges, Lee "Scratch" Perry, The Residents, Pip Proud, Lou Reed/V.U., Ginsberg's songs, Skip Spence, Captain Beefheart, Sarah Mary Chadwick, Patti Smith, Crabstick, Sarah Davachi, Syd Barrett, Can, The Incredible String Band, The Garbage & The Flowers, The Puddle, Jimi Hendrix, Maxine Funke, Peter

Jefferies, Phil Ochs, Albert Ayler, Yoko Ono, LSD Fundraiser.

MMM: What about favorite music you have made? Do you have any records you feel closest to?

AG: A list that changes, but currently includes: *Cry, Lagash, Radiant* with Constantine Karlis, *Seconds Mark 3, Long Wires In Dark Museums (Vol. 1)* with Matt De Gennaro, *Belsayer Time* with Richard Youngs and Alex Neilson, and *Pure Speculation* with Jean-Jaques Palix and David Watson.

MMM: We really liked *Seconds Mark III* over here. Would you like to discuss it?

AG: *Seconds* was a tape I made for sale on a US tour back in the mid-'90s. It came out just before *Talisman*, and shared some of the same tracks. A few years back Matthew Xue, who runs a label in Australia, suggested that he put it out again – this time on vinyl. It was fun for me to hear the Dave Merritt-and-me tracks, which I hadn't heard for years. I added one new short song to the album, "Swordfish."

My reel-to-reel four-track finally broke down – it had been a three-track for a few years – and no one here can fix them properly, or wants to! I'm just not a computer guy where recording's involved, so my last album *Lagash* was mainly recorded live, with minimal overdubs.

MMM: You're a visual artist as well as musician. How are those similar or different?

AG: Similarities: With painting you spend most of the time looking, trying to see, and only a little actually painting. With music you spend most of your time listening, trying to hear, and only a little actually recording. You don't know if anyone else will ever see or listen to the work – you are always hunting the lazy slips, hopefully to near extinction.

Both can absorb me for hours, abstract me from other thought.

Differences: The immediate simplicity of painting – no machinery needed, except fingers and paints on a surface. Music requiring instruments, recording or amplifying gear. Being able to see in a flash where a painting could go.

I am more deeply absorbed by painting, because there's no hitting the stop button, rewinding and lis-

tening back. The painting could go on forever, action after action.

MMM: What is the music scene like in New Zealand now? Are you still in touch with a lot of the other players there from the '80s and '90s? How about newer acts – any favorites?

AG: I'm 60 now. I'm almost completely divorced from any sort of scene, musical or otherwise. I live a quiet life far away in the country by the sea and enjoy not being in a town or city.

Several important musicians from my circle have died – Hamish Kilgour, Peter Gutteridge, Martin Phillipps, Peter Stapleton, Wayne Elsey, Lindsay Maitland. Those that have survived are legacy figures to the younger locals, and generally ignored.

I occasionally go to warehouse shows in the home of Dene Barnes, an old Masonic lodge just outside Dunedin. His music under the name LSD Fundraiser is great – dark and evolving.

Most outfits containing Chris Heazlewood (King Loser, Cash Guitar, Olla) or Mick Elborado (The Terminals, Trillionaires, Negative Nancies) are worth seeing, and still play in Dunedin fairly often. Bob Cardy (Axemen, Shaft) has done a few fairly recent shows at the basement cafe venue RDC – such a great songwriter.

Ex-Duneditone George Henderson (The And Band, The Puddle) comes back down south and is still a delight to go see. Matt Middleton (Crude, The Aesthetics, The Ho'Dogs) will blind you with genius two out of every three shows. And Harpo Wah, who have hopefully only temporarily relocated to Melbourne, are a new amazing duo of Kate Reid and Jackson Harry. Beautiful voice and guitar.

MMM: Are you playing shows these days? Any tour plans? Did you like playing in the US?

AG: I currently play live about three or four times a year – hardly ever in pubs, mainly with a band comprising Jackson Harry on lead guitar, Kate Reid on keyboard, and Matt Middleton on drums.

I have no plans to tour. I occasionally go over to Australia for shows, but just for a couple of nights at a time – I'm too old for

sleeping on floors, or having hangovers, or playing 20 shows in 30 days like I used to on US tours!

It was very exciting, touring the US and Europe. I met some incredibly lovely people, and the audiences were very kind.

MMM: Does *A Handful Of Dust* still play?

AG: It's been a few years since we have played live. The last time was Peter Stapleton's last show – this came out on the album *Dream Songs*. Bruce and I have recorded an album since then, *The Drum is the Shaman's Horse*. It's always been such a fluid thing – I'd guess we will play live again, and there might be one or two more albums.

MMM: Are there any present interests you would like to share? Books or writers you are into?

AG: I'm practicing reiki – I swapped a painting to get to Level 2.

I love reading a lot. Pynchon, Celine, Thornton Wilder, Denton Welch's *A Voice Through A Cloud*, Patrick White, Arthur Koestler, John Pilger, Ursula K. Le Guin, Castenada's last few books, Henry Miller, Elizabeth Knox's *Black Oxen*, Mervyn Peake, Heinlein's "Waldo," *Stranger in a Strange Land*, and *The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag*, Roger Zelazny's *Roadmarks*, H. P. Lovecraft, Frances Yates, William Burroughs, Wilhelm Reich, Mantak Chia, Katherine Mansfield's short stories, Janet Frame, Milorad Pavić, Susan Cooper.

I occasionally write fragments of my life. I "go to work" painting paintings four days a week in an old schoolhouse with no close neighbors. I love growing my own herbs and vegetables.

I'm fascinated by herbal medicine, acupuncture, and hypnotism. I love going for drives and exploring forests, beaches, cemeteries, and op-shops (Goodwill stores). I sit for hours under trees by the Tokomairiro River, allowing myself to slip into a trance of light and color and movement.

MMM: If you could have a drink or hang out with any musician, living or dead, who would it be?

AG: Living, Iggy Pop or Sarah Davachi. Dead, Albert Ayler or Wayne Elsey.

OOZE FEST APPROACHES

By J. BURKETT

TURNERS FALLS – Hi everyone! If you have followed the *Montv Musik Mountain* over the years, you might have noticed that we really cover all kinds of current (and older) musiks... If that is something you enjoy too (a variety of music, we mean), you might enjoy the next Mystra Ooze Fest. This fest is part of Mystery Train Records' 30th birthday celebration. And it's coming up soon!

The past Ooze fests have usually happened in Peske Park, but this special March 2026 Ooze is happening indoors over three days:

Friday, March 27 at Great Falls Harvest, with acts like Washatorium, experimental rock; Dan Gay, songwriter; David Shapiro, acoustic guitar; Jeffrey Unfortunately, lo-fi weirdness; History Teaches, jam band; Bev Ketch, poetry; and more;

Saturday, March 28 at Great Falls Harvest, with acts like Ben Hersey, performance art; Allysen Callery, quiet "ghost folk"; Tarp, experimental synthesizers; Angela Sawyer, comedy/noise artist; Wednesday Knudsen with Rare Geese, found sound, flute, and sax; Karen Zanes, cosmic songwriter; and more;

Sunday, March 29 at the Rendezvous, with Owen Masure, unique punk rock overlord; Sunburned Hand of the Man, large psychedelic jam band; Liz Durette, abstract keyboardist; Marcia Bassett, a guitarist from NYC; and more.

This is a once in a lifetime fest, and should not be missed! The door charge for the whole weekend is only \$10 to \$20, with no one turned away for lack of funds if you can't afford that. Hope to see you there. And let us know if you have ideas for the next Ooze...

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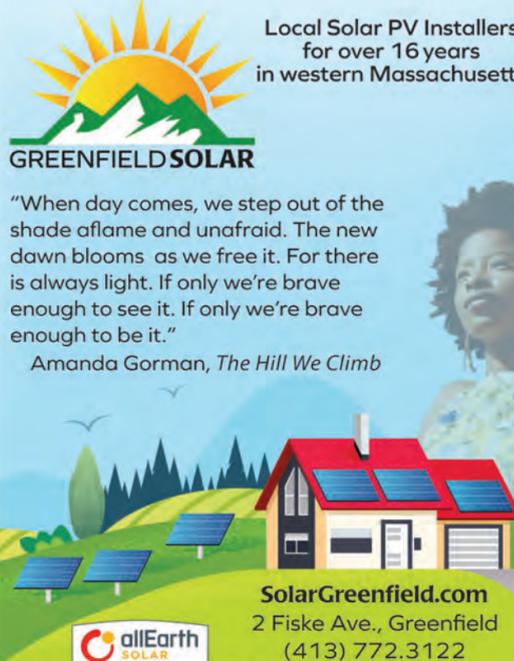
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