

The Montague Reporter

Year 24 – No. 13

MARCH 5, 2026

\$2

editor@montaguereporter.org

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

Incumbents Stepping Down In Gill, Montague, Erving

By JEFF SINGLETON and MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – At least three of the incumbent select-board members up for reelection this spring in our five coverage towns – Matt Lord in Montague, Greg Snedeker in Gill, and James Loynd in Erving – have chosen not to run, leaving wide-open seats on their respective boards.

In Leverett, Tom Hankinson reports that he is still undecided. Only Paul Doud of Wendell says he intends to seek another term.

“It feels like an appropriate time for me to leave the board and let

someone else represent the Town,” Snedeker wrote this week when asked if he planned to run. “A fresh perspective should always be welcomed in the democratic process.”

Snedeker, who was first elected to the board in 2014, currently serves as assistant town administrator in Deerfield, and is vice chair of the Six-Town Regionalization Planning Board, which is advocating for Gill to join a new school district with Montague, Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, and possibly Warwick.

“I would like to thank Gill residents, departments, committees, see **INCUMBENTS** page A4

One More Town Treasurer May Soon Be Appointed

By KATIE NOLAN

ERVING – Voters approved all the items on a special town meeting warrant Monday night, including voting to transition the town treasurer from an elected to an appointed position.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith told the voters municipal finance has become increasingly complex and there was a need for strong financial management. With an elected treasurer, he said, there was “no test of skills or requirements.” He noted that of the 26 towns in

Franklin County, only four still elect their treasurers.

“Things are so much more technical than they were,” finance committee member Daniel Hammock agreed, arguing that appointment would allow the town to hire a qualified person whether or not they are a resident.

The question of transitioning to an appointed treasurer will appear on the ballot for the May town election.

The voters also approved moving \$742,482 from stabilization to the assessors’ operating budget to see **ERVING** page A4

SCENE REPORT

Back Before the Bridges



Wren Wood (standing) recounted local ferry tales last weekend in the Great Hall.

By MAGGIE SADOWAY

TURNERS FALLS – At the Great Falls Discovery Center last Saturday, several dozen attentive audience members, none of whom arrived by ferry, listened as Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation interpreter Wren Wood shared research on the history of crossing the Connecticut River by ferry.

After years of fierce debate, the Red Suspension bridge opened in

1878, connecting Gill’s Riverside with the current site of Unity Park. As more and more bridges were built, the last of over 30 ferries up and down the river went out of business in 1935.

The next installment in the series of local history talks takes place on Saturday, March 14 with a presentation on the Grand Trunk Hotel, built in 1872 and demolished in 1968, which stood on Avenue A where the public library trustees propose to build a new main library building.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

R. GILES PHOTO

Multiple readers sent in photos they took over the weekend of this curvaceous snow guy, hanging out in front of Mark’s Auto on Route 63 in Montague Center. Another storm deposited a half foot of powder here on Tuesday, then glazed it with a crust of ice overnight, which melted in the sun by Wednesday afternoon. As of press time there is talk of yet more snow to come this week, though no one knows what to believe.

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD Expert Panel On Farren’s Future Slated For Tuesday

By JEFF SINGLETON

On Monday night, the Montague selectboard approved \$800 for food, refreshments, and outreach for a “technical assistance” event next Tuesday to discuss the town’s options for marketing the former Farren Hospital property. The board also reviewed a revision of town personnel policies, considered endorsing next week’s “Rural and Declining Enrollment Schools Week of Action,” and supported an application by the Brick House for a grant to address social isolation.

The meeting opened with a number of statements by residents opposed to the selectboard’s vote last week to “adopt” a specific definition of antisemitism requested by the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts, and a statement which seemed to suggest that the vote of town meeting last October linking Israeli policy to apartheid had “crossed the line” into antisemitism. The critics argued that the board’s vote had been taken without proper public notice or discussion, and was therefore undemocratic and should be rescinded.

Matt Atwood of Precinct 2 said he was “confused and disappointed” by the vote, which he felt contradicted the “will of the town” expressed at town meeting. He also said the “personal beliefs” of one selectboard member “trumped your commitment see **MONTAGUE** page A5

State OKs \$11.3 Million For Downtown Library

By REPORTER STAFF

TURNERS FALLS – At a meeting Thursday morning, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) approved a package of up to \$11.29 million to subsidize a new main library in Montague, according to information shared with the *Reporter* following the meeting.

The state match, composed of a base award of up to \$10.96 million plus an incentive bonus of about \$329,000 for meeting sustainable

building goals, would reimburse 47.6% of the projected total cost of \$23.70 million.

“It was awesome, hearing the state recognize our work and support our project,” Montague public libraries trustees chair Will Quale said of the board’s decision.

According to Quale, Montague is one of three Massachusetts towns approved this week by the MBLC for immediate construction funding, with four more expected at an April meeting and another six see **LIBRARY** page A4

DOCUMENTARY

Caught In the Crossfire: Library to Screen *Librarians*



Former high school librarian Martha Hickson testifies before the New Jersey state assembly in a still from the 2025 documentary *The Librarians*.

By BRUCE WATSON

MONTAGUE CENTER – A specter is haunting America: the specter of fearful minds. Here in Massachusetts, it’s easy to feel far from the fault lines, but a new documentary to be shown next Wednesday at the Montague Center Public Library brings the specter up close and makes it personal.

The Librarians will screen in the library on March 11 at 5:30 p.m. The documentary, honored

at 22 film festivals, takes us into the trenches of our fiercest culture clash, the battle of the books. Amidst scenes of screaming parents and First Amendment claims, *The Librarians* quickly makes “We, the people” seem quaint.

Because some Americans see Black history as empowering, while others see the same history as “making our kids hate America.” One group sees LGBTQ lit as “a push for love and acceptance,” see **CROSSFIRE** page A6



Will It Buy You Forgiveness?

Far From the Fault Lines.....A1	Like a Fish Out of Water.....B2
Would Love Peace Across the Ocean.....A2	Stupifies a Growing Lad.....B3
Permitted to Oscillate Conformistly.....A3	The Whole Room Fluctuates.....B4
To Keep Fresh Blood Pumping.....A4	Una Catástrofe Humanitaria.....B5
Virtual Relationships and Social Bubbles.....A5	Bulb Show, Floodplains, Dust Witch.....B6
Haunts Our Founding Principles.....A6	Cow Person, Voicehandler, Pallbearer.....B7
The Soul’s Deepest Juices.....B1	Wintry Themes to Ponder.....B8

The Montague Reporter

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The Crusade

For those of us who have long argued Israel's military and policing decisions reflect, rather than shape, the consensus of US power brokers in Washington, Secretary of State Marco Rubio's explanation Monday was startling. "The imminent threat was that we knew that if Iran was attacked – and we believed they would be attacked – they would immediately come after us," he said. "We were aware of Israeli intentions... and understood what that would mean for us, and had to be prepared to act as a result of it."

President Trump contradicted this on Tuesday: "No, I might have forced *their* hands," he said. "You

see, we were having negotiations with these lunatics," i.e. the Iranians, "and it was my opinion that *they* were going to attack first..."

It doesn't matter anyway, as there is no longer any international law beyond force, and the greatest capacity for force in the world is in Pete Hegseth's sweaty grip.

The Military Religious Freedom Foundation received over 200 complaints this week from US service members that their commanding officers are describing the joint Israeli-US war on Iran as a fulfillment of Christian prophecy.

As of press time the conflict is still escalating, wildly, by the hour.

CLARIFICATION

In last week's editorial we wrote of the Final Report of the state's Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism that "[t]he 73-page report does not mention BDS."

One reader objected that the Report's first appendix, a list of meeting agendas, notes that the Commission did hear a discussion of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement from one of the over 80 experts who offered testimony.

The Commission did not mention BDS in its own writing, though perhaps we should have called it a "55-page report." Appendices, after all, are *appended* to reports.

Centrally, this makes it no less untrue that the Report "identifies the BDS movement as a primary driver of a hostile climate for Massachusetts Jews," as the Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts is telling town governments.

A Shocking Development

I want to echo selectboard chair Matt Lord's comments commending Police Chief Haskins for keeping his 15% budget increase to "level services."

I'm particularly glad \$10,000 of that increase will go towards a new set of Tasers. Electrocutation is one service that I think we can all agree this community simply cannot do without.

Of course, times are tough, and if things don't shake out during budget

discussions the way we would all hope, I humbly offer that the next time one of the – seemingly increasingly frequent – traffic stops requires some voltage, the police can call me and I'll come running with a car battery and some jumper cables.

But hopefully the school district can cut enough positions that that won't be necessary!

Brian Zayatz
Turners Falls

A War of Distraction?

Donald Trump has started a war against Iran without the consent of Congress, the support of our allies, or an explanation to the American people. (Why did our president not feel it was important to mention his war plans at the State of the Union a few days earlier?)

Could Trump be waging this reckless and dangerous war, in part, to distract us from his latest failures – including illegally establishing tariffs and hiding the remaining million pages of the Epstein files?

Trump and his billionaire cro-

nies have destroyed our democracy and endangered the world with their unchecked power.

If you have had enough of authoritarianism – and would like to go back to a government that respects and cares for its people – come to the next No Kings Day, Saturday, March 28. Join us at noon on Beacon Field in Greenfield, or check out www.nokings.org for other times and locations.

Susan Kramer
Gill



NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Orla is the latest shop to open in the little yellow brick building at 38 Third Street in Turners Falls. The shop sells housewares, crafts, jewelry and accessories, vintage items, and beauty products. In this picture, employee Zora Gamberg holds up a sweater designed by a friend. When Gamberg isn't working at Orla she designs and knits items as well. Find out more at www.orla-store.com.

Letters to the Editors

'Hyperfocus' on Israel Disheartening

As I continue to read responses to Montague selectboard's decision to adopt the IHRA definition I am getting more and more depressed. It is hard to read everyone who is against it. It may not be a perfect definition, but it showed me that maybe my town does care about antisemitism and making everyone feel safe in this community.

No one is saying you cannot disagree with the Israeli government's actions but sometimes this hyperfocus on the only Jewish state and

using blanket, divisive statements that sometimes are wholly inaccurate can feel disheartening.

Almost no one is denying they would love peace across the Ocean, but there are community members seeing antisemitism rising here at home and want to know their community cares about the local antisemitism and creating a safe community here.

Sometimes I feel my voice is lost to those who are shouting louder. But I do care about my Jewish children's

feeling of belonging and safety.

Sometimes I think more in person conversation needs to happen for us all to see that we maybe agree more than we think and there are things we could do as a community to be more embracing of everyone. In the meantime I second the idea that I hope to see people shift focus from this one issue to many other pressing and important local issues.

Tina Wenger
Montague

Decision Explicitly Anti-Democratic

I was very upset to learn of the Selectboard's decision to adopt the IHRA definition of anti-semitism. There will certainly be letters debating the virtues or lack thereof of the definition, continuing the discussion that has been going on in the paper for months now.

I'm writing to express my disappointment with the undemocratic nature of that decision.

I've lived in Montague for 25 years, and throughout that time there has been a contingent within town government that seems to feel that town meeting should be restricted solely to up/down votes on expenses and budgets and nothing else. If you've been to a town meeting, or watched the video of one, you've inevitably heard someone comment that politics should be left out of the debate, that we're a small town and larger issues should be left to larger stages.

I disagree with this – politics are an expression of how we want to live in this world. All politics are truly local, and I think that if we can recognize that as a community, it makes our town a stronger and more vibrant place to live.

I highly recommend watching a video of the last 30 minutes or so of the special town meeting that passed the "apartheid-free community" resolution. You'll see a collection of your friends and neighbors, all at the end of a long meeting, in the middle of a long week –

all people who want to get home to their families, who have to get up in the morning and go to work – expressing themselves eloquently and respectfully about Montague's place in a global issue.

It is very clearly real democracy at work, and it's a beautiful thing. I felt a lot of pride in my town when I watched it, and deep gratitude for the people who organized the resolution, and the town meeting members who participated.

In comparison, the rapidity of Selectboard's decision to adopt the IHRA definition felt vindictive. Within 90 seconds of opening the discussion, there was a vote made to adopt the definition. There were several comments expressing a lack of regard for the town meeting, calling it performative and disappointing.

The Selectboard could have chosen to do nothing. They also could have chosen to involve the greater community in the discussion. Instead, they pushed through a decision with no real discussion.

It was explicitly anti-democratic in a way that resonates with how our national government has been behaving in the last year or so. Like they say, all politics are local.

Cass Mitchell
Montague Center

Published weekly on Thursdays.
Every other week in July and August.
No paper the fourth week of November,
or the final week of December.

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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

Tuesday's full moon was the worm moon, and it was a blood moon. A **worm blood moon**.

Somewhere down below the worms are stirring, and their blood is our blood. We'll get through this.

This weekend, as we do twice a year every year, we'll all sacrifice time itself and any sense of an orderly flow of lived experience to demonstrate our fealty to the principle of an unseen bureaucracy that knows better than we do.

That's right, the **Daylight Saving Time** knob is going back over to the On position, meaning that when you wake up on Sunday an hour will have been stolen from you. A completely *different* hour will be returned, not at a time of your choosing of course but in early November, if we make it that far.

This abrupt switching – just like gaslighting, but with time instead of gaslight – severs us from the rest of the animal kingdom, and it supposedly must continue, though for reasons no one can coherently articulate. It's a practice almost perfectly designed to make you feel wrong, incapable of grasping basic facts.

The Canadian province of British Columbia has had enough, and after this week it will never again leave Daylight Saving Time. In its brave decision BC is following the lead of Saskatchewan, which never fell for the time hoax and decided, in its Time Act of 1966, to remain on a single continuous timeline year-round, though certain towns out on the western border with Alberta are permitted to oscillate conformistly.

As observance of Daylight Savings Time has clearly correlated with humanity's slow descent into

war and barbarism, and as President Trump's past indications that he would favor its abolition were apparently a cynical ruse to win our votes, maybe we should be considering ditching the practice at the state level, or even town by town. Something to think about.

Early Tuesday morning a **fire on a back porch** at 108 Avenue A brought the Turners Falls, Montague Center, Gill, Greenfield, Erving, and Bernardston fire departments downtown. Their quick work prevented the blaze from spreading into the large, multi-unit apartment building.

Waking up later, I wondered what the Berkshire Gas vans were doing in the neighborhood, and learned about the event from other news sources.

Running a weekly paper is funny – friends and family have known me to say a fire is *not really news* if it's on a Friday – but I'm mentioning it here for the historical record, along with the determination by the state Department of Fire Services (via TFFD) that "the cause was determined to be careless disposal of smoking materials."

An event next Tuesday evening at the Shea Theater – discussed at some length in Jeff Singleton's selectboard coverage on A1 – looks like it should be pretty interesting to anyone with a stake in what happens at **the former Farren property**.

A cabal of "senior-level land use and real estate professionals" will have been scouring the vicinity and grilling our local officials all day, and at 6 p.m. the doors will be flung open to you and me, the public, to hear their "findings and recommendations" as to how the land might best be put out to redevelopment.

Is it a single parcel or should it

be split up? If it is split up, are we looking for one "Master Developer" (pretty sure that's a rare and sought-after *Magic: The Gathering* card), or letting lesser developers tear off chunks of their own?

And, crucially, there will be refreshments.



JOE R. PARZYCH PHOTO

Ongoing photo correspondent Joe R. Parzych sent us a small series of this, "a shadow of **natural artwork** in Greenfield." Good eye.

Bobby Naimark of Beit Ahavah, the Reform synagogue sharing a space with other projects at the Bombyx Center in Florence, reached out to us directly for help plugging **the congregation's silent auction**, "Light Up the Valley."

Sure thing. Readers can find a link to the online auction, now underway, at www.beitahavah.org. Items include acupuncture and crossfit sessions, gift certificates, a challah-baking lesson, a classical guitar, a menorah, stuff like that.

As of press time, dozens and dozens of items appear to still be available at their starting bids. The auction closes mid-month.

Next Thursday, March 12 from 6 to 7:30 p.m., staff and students at **Great Falls Middle School and Turners Falls High School** are hosting a community showcase, to "highlight our small school with huge possibilities." Traditional academics, Career Pathways, sports, clubs, music, and theater will be included, as will refreshments and even "prizes at the end of the evening."

If there's a relevant-aged kid in your household and you're shopping around for a school, this looks like an ideal time to check it out.

And even if there isn't, and you're not... Honestly, I'd encourage the wider community to consider dropping by. The strong athletic program has been a known factor, but it's been incredible to watch the music and theater programs burst into bloom in recent years, and it has a knock-on effect on our towns – having the marching band in the street last Halloween even brought new life to the Rag Shag Parade! Those kids were cool as hell.

And it shouldn't be lost on any of us that this showcase comes at the peak of a brutal budget cycle, with an axe about to fall on \$1.35 million worth of salaries and administrators signaling that they are focused on retaining core academics.

There are no easy answers, but you should go see what's at stake.

Bev Ketch, who besides being the head writer and ideas guy behind many of the storylines on our Children's Page, and besides featuring heavily on one of the best records ever recorded in West Mass (*Map of Our New Constellations*), is a good neighbor, and is currently pulling together **funds for a local friend in heavy material need**.

"She is dealing with food, housing, and transportation insecurity, and the weight of these challenges has left her feeling isolated," Bev writes. "Because she doesn't want to burden others with her troubles, she has become more withdrawn, even though she is someone who brings so much light to those around her."

There's a direct link to donate at gofund.me/bev-this-26feb – but much more excitingly, Bev has pulled together a benefit show this Sunday night from 6 to 8 p.m. at Great Falls Harvest featuring the songs of Elliott Smith, who is more popular now than he ever has been due to viral Zoomer interest. A rogue's gallery of local performers including Norma Jean, beetsblog, Jim Bliss, and Vanessa Brewster are signed up, and if you can make it out, I'll see you there.

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

Montague Dems to Caucus

Registered Democrats in Montague will hold a caucus on Thursday, March 19, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the first-floor annex meeting room of the town offices, 1 Avenue A in Turners Falls, to elect delegates and alternates to the Massachusetts Democratic Convention.

The Massachusetts Democratic Party 2026 Nominating Convention will be held in the city of Worcester at the DCU Center on Friday and Saturday, May 29 and 30.

This local caucus is open to all Democrats who were registered in Montague as of January 31, 2026. Registered attendees are eligible to vote and/or run for one of the openings available to represent Montague Democrats at the state-

wide convention. Delegates must be divided equally among men and women, and candidates must consent to nomination in writing. Candidates may each make a one-minute statement to the meeting, and may distribute materials.

This is a straightforward and transparent process in which any registered Democrat may participate or simply attend to observe.

For more information about the convention or caucus procedures, contact Democratic Town Committee chair Francia Wisniewski at (413) 768-8306 or francia.e.wisniewski@gmail.com, or by mail at 196 Turnpike Road, Montague, MA 01351, or visit the party website at www.massdems.org.

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Another Letter to the Editors



No Light Decision

I am deeply disturbed to learn that the Montague Selectboard adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism without seeking public comment. The IHRA definition has been condemned by organizers, many of whom are Jewish, as an infringement on the right to free speech.

The IHRA definition has been used again and again to characterize criticism of the state of Israel as an example of antisemitism. Nowhere else do our city policies equate critiques of governments or nations with direct harm to individuals or communities. Especially at a time when our own government has assisted the nation of Israel in committing genocide against the people of Palestine, neither the US nor Israel should be immune from critique.

Many anti-zionist Jewish organizers have already been accused of

antisemitism under this definition.

There are many other useful definitions of antisemitism, such as the Jerusalem Declaration. Choosing the IHRA definition over these others reads as a political tool to silence critics of Israel and supporters of Palestine and Palestinian liberation. This is especially shocking as it undermines the people of Montague's vote to join the Apartheid-Free Community network.

I know many of my friends and neighbors in the broader community have reached out, and I felt deeply compelled to do the same. While I do not live in Montague, I am a resident of Easthampton and spend a great deal of time in Montague. I am writing because the decisions of our cities and towns affect one another, and this is no light decision.

Janell Tryon Easthampton

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INCUMBENTS from page A1

boards, and employees for twelve wonderful years," he wrote. "I have met so many fascinating people; people committed to making our little corner of the world a better place."

According to Gill town clerk Doreen Stevens, one resident has "pulled" nomination papers to run for the seat Snedeker is vacating. Stevens said she preferred not to disclose the resident's name, as the papers have not yet been returned.

The annual election in Gill is scheduled for Monday, May 18.

Montague's election is the following day, Tuesday, May 19, and voters in both towns will send representatives to the shared school district.

Matt Lord, who first joined the Montague selectboard after winning a September 2021 special election by a single vote, told the *Reporter* he is not seeking a third term "so that I can read more books, prune more fruit, berry, and nut trees, and spend more time with my feet in the Sawmill River."

Lord, the board's current chair, also cited the birth of his second child during his tenure.

"I think in small town politics it is good to keep fresh blood pumping through the heart of elected office," he wrote this week. "[O]therwise, sclerosis sets in and we lose our capacity to react to new challenges."

Lord said he was proud of his achievements, including with union negotiations and "ensuring our police department holds high standards."

As of Wednesday, Montague town clerk Wendy Bogusz reported that nobody has taken out nomination papers for the selectboard seat. They are available at her office at the town hall

until Thursday, March 26, and must be returned with the signatures of 34 registered voters by Wednesday, April 1 at 5 p.m.

Jim Loynd, who is nearing the end of the term on Erving's selectboard he won in an upset as a write-in candidate in 2023, announced last weekend that he had decided not to run again.

"My reason," he wrote, "is simple: the demands that my full time job and this role combined have put on my time and energy have eliminated any sense of work-life balance. After serving the community in various roles for most of my adult life, I want to focus more on my health, my incredible family, and taking time to enjoy simple things."

Loynd said that what he was "most proud of" was that "while my colleagues and I have disagreed over issues, we always maintained respectful dialogue and thoughtful consideration of opposing views. We need more of that in our country."

An inquiry to the Erving town clerk's office regarding potential candidates did not receive a response as of press time.

According to its bylaws, Erving holds its annual election on the first Monday of May each year, which this year falls on May 4.

Wendell, which holds its annual election the same day, is the only *Montague Reporter* coverage town in which the selectboard incumbent has confirmed he plans to keep his seat.

"I am not a person who generally joins committees," Paul Doud told us, "but this is one thing I can do to help out."

Doud said he felt that the selectboard, which generally meets every two weeks in Wendell,

was no more labor-intensive a commitment than the town's finance committee, planning board, or road commission. As of press time, the town clerk had not replied to an inquiry regarding potential challengers for Doud's seat.

In Leverett, the only town remaining in the state that nominates and votes on elected officials from the floor of its annual town meeting in May, Tom Hankinson reports that he has not yet decided whether to stand for a fifth term on the selectboard.

Hankinson, who was first elected in 2015 after Rich Brazeau stepped down midterm and has run unopposed since, told the *Reporter* that his decision will be based on the outcome of a proposal to build a new multi-use trail from Shutesbury Road to provide public access to a much-used and iconic blueberry patch.

Access to the conservation land became a controversial issue in the last year after residents blocked an older access path that went through their property; voters at a special town meeting in November rejected a proposal to re-establish public access by eminent domain, and a lawsuit is pending in land court.

The proposal to construct a new path is an effort to resolve the issue, but a request to finance the project using the town's Community Preservation Act revenue faces an uncertain future.

"That situation may affect my decision about whether to run for the selectboard," Hankinson told the *Reporter*, though he was unwilling to reveal which outcome would produce which decision on his part.

"I just do not feel comfortable getting into those details right now," he said. 

LIBRARY from page A1

on a waitlist.

The application process began in 2022, and last fall the trustees voted that the town's stated goals for an expanded downtown library would best be met by a new building at Avenue A and Second Street, after various proposals to expand or move the existing Carnegie Library were determined to be insufficient or infeasible.

The department has been working with two outside firms – an owner's project manager and Boston architectural firm Schwartz/Silver – to develop plans, and the final cost estimate considered by the MBLC was approved by the trustees and a library building committee last week.

The remaining 52.4% of the estimated cost, or \$12.42 million, would need to be contributed by the town. A debt exclusion to allow borrowing for the construction will go before the annual town meeting on May 19 and then, if approved, to a special election on June 24.

A community forum, which will include a presentation by town staff on the property tax impact of the project, is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17 at 6 p.m. at the Gill-Montague senior center on Fifth Street. 

ERVING from page A1

pay interest on the town's \$2.5 million settlement with FirstLight Power over the value of the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage project.

FirstLight had appealed the town's real property assessments for 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 before the state Appellate Tax Board (ATB). It was awarded abatements for 2020, 2021, and 2022, but not for 2019. The town owed 8% interest on the abatements accrued from the date of filing the appeal.

In its decision, the ATB found that the fair market value of the Northfield Mountain project between 2019 and 2022 ranged from \$611 million to \$810 million.

Principal assessor Jacquelyn Boyden told the meeting that the assessors' overlay account covered the settlement amount, but not the interest.

In his role as chair of the board of assessors, Hammock said, "If we had lost every case they filed, we would have had to have paid them \$1.4 billion." He noted that several more cases are pending before the ATB.

Hammock also recounted a "part of the history you don't hear often." He said that in 1972, the Erving tax rate was \$33 per thousand dollars of real property value, and the town had \$107,000 in stabilization. "Once the Northfield Mountain project went into production, our tax rate went down," he told the meeting.

Between 1972 and 1997, he explained, the owners were allowed to set the valuation for their property; in 1997 the owners provided a \$70 million valuation for the facility.

That year, electric utilities were deregulated in Massachusetts, and legislation proposed that the state should receive all tax revenue from electricity generation facilities.

According to Hammock, Erving led a movement to reclaim the tax revenues by contacting other cities and towns with generating facilities and jointly pressuring the legislature to amend the bill to allow local taxation.

Under other warrant articles, the meeting authorized a five-year contract to purchase and maintain police department tasers; reaffirmed a vote last spring for \$200,000 to repair to the Erving Elementary School roof and heat pumps, using legally required wording; approved \$280,000 from free cash and \$60,000 from retained wastewater earnings to cover unanticipated health insurance increases; transferred a total of \$170,000 in unspent funds into various capitalization accounts; and authorized \$5,140 to pay bills from the prior fiscal year.

Police Short-Staffed

Meeting before and after the special town meeting, the selectboard accepted resignations from patrol officers Mitchell Waldron and Brandon Garvey.

"I wish them well in their new

positions," member William Bembury said.

Jacob Smith said the town had begun the process to hire replacements.

The board approved a petition by National Grid to move four utility poles on North Street to facilitate the restoration of the North Street bridge. National Grid representative Steven Soucy said two of the poles would be installed temporarily so that cranes could operate "without fear of hitting a live wire."

Asked how long power would be disrupted by the installation, Soucy replied that it could be "a couple of days" but "should be shorter than a day," and that affected residents would be forewarned about any disruption.

According to a memo from town administrator Bryan Smith, "[T]he state is conducting a review of sheriff's offices throughout the Commonwealth." He highlighted the Franklin County sheriff's services to Erving, including outreach work by deputy sheriff Becky Paciorek at the senior and community center and holding people arrested by Erving police until they are arraigned.

Selectboard member James Loynd praised the sheriff's office for its rehabilitation programs for opioid abusers.

The board asked Bryan Smith to prepare letters to local legislators and the governor supporting the sheriff's office's work. 

MONTAGUE REPORTER...

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Montague Reporter business manager Garth Shaneyfelt escaped last week for a ski trip in Sainte-Adèle, Quebec. He brought with him our February 12 edition, which did need some fresh air...

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MONTAGUE from page A1

to the democratic process.”

David Jensen, also of Precinct 2, said he was “of a similar mind,” and asked what was meant by the board “adopting” the definition and “what... this definition is going to be used for.” He also said he did not believe that a “copy of the definition was available in this room” at the time of the vote.

Ariel Elan of Precinct 1 said she was disappointed that selectboard chair Matt Lord, though he voted against the motion, had not allowed public comment during the discussion. She called on the board to revisit the motion.

“After that,” Elan said, “I strongly agree with those who urge that all of us who are deeply concerned, from any perspective, on the Israel-Palestine conflict and the involvement of US taxpayers... take these conversations out of the walls of Montague town government... and back into the town square of community meetings, opinion columns, webinars, and film showings.”

Water Crisis

In the midst of these complaints, the board also heard from a contingent of residents of a trailer park on Laurel Lane who reported that the pipes carrying water to their homes were leaking, forming a “small lake,” and greatly reducing water pressure. A spokeswoman for the group said the owner of the park lives in North Adams and “is not dealing with anything.”

The residents are paying rent to the town, she said, and wonder whether local officials can force the owner to address the problem. She said she had talked with the Turners Falls water department as well as the offices of the selectboard and health department, to no avail.

Lord thanked the residents for “bringing that to our attention.” “I will work to make sure that the responsible party starts to take some action,” he said.

Town administrator Walter Ramsey said Laurel Lane is a private road, and that town staff have been talking with the board of health and town counsel to see if any action may be taken to bring the property “up to code.” He later told the *Reporter* that though the town does not own the property, it has been collecting rent payments from the residents following a tax default.

“This has been, historically, a challenge for a long time,” selectboard member Rich Kuklewicz replied at the meeting, adding that a member of the water department had told him the water supply “needs to be all replaced.”

Farren Panel

Town planner Maureen Pollock reported that the Urban Land Institute, a nonprofit assisting the town in developing a marketing strategy for the former Farren Hospital property in Montague City, will hold a “one-day session” next Tuesday during which “a panel of senior-level land use and real estate professionals” at the Shea Theater will offer the town “candid, unbiased insights” on the project. The consultants are funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership.

Pollock noted that the rezoning of the property passed by Montague town meeting last year has been approved by the state attorney general, and will become effective next Friday.

Before the town can issue a request for proposals, it must first decide whether to divide the property into multiple parcels, and whether to seek one or more developers. Tuesday’s event is intended to inform these decisions.

The day will include a breakfast with town officials, a tour of the property, and meetings with potential developers and neighborhood and regional “stakeholders.” At 6 p.m. the Institute will lead a public discussion at the Shea of the options for redevelopment.

Before the town can issue a request for proposals, it must first decide whether to divide the Farren property into multiple parcels, and whether to seek one or more developers.

The grant requires the planning department to feed the Institute staff, Pollock told the board. She requested \$800 from the town’s community development discretionary fund, some of which she said may also be used for outreach to Montague City residents and to purchase “light refreshments” for the Shea.

The board unanimously approved the transfer from the account, which holds leftover funds from federal community development block grants.

Pollock also gave an update on the town’s progress in rezoning a number of properties that were originally considered part of the Farren project, but had been removed. These included parcels on Masonic Avenue, Rod Shop Road, and along Montague City Road to the north and south of the former Farren lot. She said a neighborhood meeting was held last month at the old Masonic Hall, now privately owned, and that another will be held at the Shea on Tuesday, March 31.

The Social Sphere

The board agreed to endorse an application by the Brick House Community Resource Center for a grant from the United Way. The draft letter of support states that the recent pandemic and new technology have increased social isolation.

“Coming out of the pandemic we have seen an uneven return of local residents to the life and activities of the town,” the letter reads. “New residents have not necessarily engaged in the broader social life of their community as readily as long time residents. Others have settled into smaller social networks, shaped by Covid-era virtual relationships and ‘social bubbles.’ Others remain isolated and alone, particularly in the more rural areas of our town.”

The Brick House proposes to address these problems through a “wide range of health, mental health, creative and social activities” that will encourage residents to “return more robustly to the social sphere.”

Human Resources

In other news, Ramsey shared a massively edited draft of the town’s personnel policy manual, which now reaches 145 pages. “I don’t expect you to read every detail,” he told the board.

The process of developing a new manual, he said, began three years ago with the assistance of the UMass Collins Center for Public Management; more recently an “internal review committee” of town staff edited the document, followed by a “department head review.” The draft was also sent to the four unions representing town staff, which Ramsey said made clear that collective bargaining agreements are “always the fallback” in policy questions.

The main goal of the revision, he said, is not to develop new policies but to “organize and modernize” the document and bring it into alignment with state and federal law. The largest effective change would be to take personnel issues out of the town bylaws and “centralize” them in the selectboard office. An article on the May town meeting warrant, he said, would be required to replace the “largely antiquated” bylaws and delegate the authority to update them to the selectboard.

The board struggled with Ramsey’s request that it review the draft and give feedback at future meetings. Lord said he had worked on a draft several years ago with former town administrator Steve Ellis, but did not know “what it has turned into.”

Kuklewicz said he would need a couple of weeks to “digest it.” “It’s unfortunate it can’t be 10 pages,” he commented.

Selectboard member Marina Goldman suggested that the board “each take a different section,” but Lord noted that the five sections were unequal in length. Board members agreed to review the full document and return with comments in two or three weeks.

Other Business

Ramsey reported on efforts to rein in the town’s health insurance expenses. Montague’s insurer, the Hampshire Group Insurance Trust, had met recently and decided on a plan that would increase premiums by an estimated 12.48% in the coming fiscal year, avoiding a larger increase by pushing costs onto employee co-pays and deductibles.

This increase falls below the rate assumed in Montague’s working draft budget for FY’27, Ramsey said, but the changes in “plan design” would need to be negotiated with the staff unions and the retirement board. He said the town is also “actively” looking at other insurers, including the state Group Insurance Commission and the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Authority.

The board also considered endorsing a letter supporting legislation proposed by state senator Jo Comerford designed to address fiscal pressures caused by enrollment declines in rural school districts.

The letter would pledge the town’s participation in a “Rural and Declining Enrollment Schools Week of Action” next week, and was critical of elements of the state Chapter 70 education aid formula, such as the cap on local contributions which guarantees even wealthy districts some aid.

After lengthy discussion and without a formal vote, the board directed Ramsey and Lord to send a revised version of the letter adding support for regionalization and avoiding some of the wording about the aid formula.

The board’s next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 9.

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Six-Town Regional Agreements Finalized

By MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – After working for nearly two years on the document, the Six-Town Regionalization Planning Board (STRPB) voted 8-0 last Thursday to approve a proposed regional agreement for a new school district encompassing Montague, Gill, Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, and Warwick.

As Warwick voters are widely expected to reject that proposal, having recently quit the Pioneer Valley regional district in order to keep their elementary school open, the planning board has also been working on a five-town version of the agreement.

This alternate agreement was also approved and recommended last Thursday, 9-0, as long as substantive issues are not flagged by lawyers.

STRPB vice chair Greg Snedeker, who has been working for months to revise the documents with the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), said that the biggest change since previous drafts was that the transitional school committee, which would be appointed if voters in all five or six towns opt this fall to form a new district, would serve for two years.

This, he said, was made necessary by the proposed regionalization timeline. The STRPB hopes to schedule the public vote on the agreement to coincide with the primary elections this September; and as the towns hold their spring elections on a range of dates, the regional committee would ultimately be elected on biennial elections in November.

A September 2026 vote to form the district would not allow enough time for a committee to be elected in November 2026, so the selectboard and school committee members in each town would appoint the members to serve until November 2028.

It “kind of makes a lot of sense,” said STRPB chair Alan Genovese, “to have that continuity better.”

“I think you’ll get more interest,” Bernardston rep Jane Dutcher agreed. “Why would you want to sign up to serve for two months?”

A final document, the STRPB’s long-range plan for the transition to the new district, is still under review.

Genovese reported that Gill-Mon-

tague business manager Joanne Blier is seeking quotes for a communications consultant. The consultant would help the STRPB “fram[e] answers to questions” about the proposed region, and advise it in updating its website, www.6towns.org.

“Knowing what’s happening in the school budgets – knowing that we’re seeing more decline in our enrollments – I think people are going to be listening and opening their eyes a little bit more to what our work has revealed,” said Snedeker.

Northfield rep Deb Potee said that the Franklin County Technical School, which hoped to fill 170 seats next year by lottery, had only received 166 applications and is “desperately looking for more students.”

“They were \$800,000 in deficit heading into next year, so they had to make cuts to teachers,” Snedeker added. “It’s hitting all the districts.... It’s not new. The only thing that changed, really, was during COVID we had some of this masked, because we had a lot of federal money coming in to offset budgets.”

“It’s not choice or charter,” said Gill rep Bill Tomb. “It’s babies.”

The STRPB’s next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

CROSSFIRE from page A1

while another sees the same books as “pornography.”

Caught in the crossfire are the librarians.

“We just never imagined we would be in the forefront,” says one, hidden in shadow. “We’re not supposed to necessarily be seen and felt. We’re stewards of the space, stewards of the resources... Now, I think, we’ve moved into the vanguard. We have to be out front telling the story. It’s about us.”

Though *The Librarians* focuses on Texas and Florida, the film makes it clear that “us” includes you. Watching these women – almost all are women – speaking truth to the power of politicians, school boards, and “Moms of Liberty” will make you wonder whether you are doing enough in the shadow of this specter.

The stories are heartfelt, the conflicts face-to-face. The film also features compelling graphics that contrast the innocence of 1950s librarians with today’s book bans enforced by superintendents and even sheriffs. Historical footage of a Nazi book burning seems over the top – until the film cuts to an actual book burning. In Tennessee. In 2022.

“Don’t join the book burners,” President Dwight Eisenhower warned during McCarthyism. But, as Ray Bradbury noted in *Fahrenheit 451*, “There is more than one way to burn a book, and the world



The Librarians’s primary cinematographer, Amy Bench, enters an office.

is full of people running about with lit matches.”

Dozens of school librarians have been fired for refusing to remove books. Some have been threatened. Many are living, one notes, “in a dystopian novel.” But although it paints a stark picture of intolerance, *The Librarians* is a study in heroism.

We watch a Texas teenager speak to her school board: “You have failed at your jobs! Stop the censorship in our district! Wake up to the reality that we are all different and that we should all embrace each other with love, not blatant hate.”

We meet Louisiana’s former Librarian of the Year, Amanda Jones, whose principled stand for LGBTQ books led to accusations of “peddling anal sex to 11-year-olds.” Jones tells a school board meeting, “It would be easy to move this book and placate a few people for the

sake of bypassing drama. It would be easy, but sometimes doing what’s easy is not what’s right.”

But *The Librarians* is no one-sided diatribe. Filmmaker Kim Snyder also lets “concerned parents” speak. They talk of protecting children being “groomed” for gay lifestyles. They argue that sexuality doesn’t belong in primary grades. Then the firestorm spreads.

“This is a spiritual battle,” one parent says, “not a political battle.” Yet the 850 books on Texas’s target list are saturated with race and gender: *The Handmaid’s Tale*, of course, but also books on *Roe v. Wade* and William Styron’s *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (always a favorite among teens). And along with race and gender come “any other books that might cause discomfort or anguish.” Take your pick.

The specter of fearful minds also haunts our founding principles. “Without freedom of thought,” wrote Benjamin Franklin, “there can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as public liberty.” As these heroes stand firm, we should do more than thank them for their service. We should, as the Texas teen said, “wake up.”

After sitting for three hours waiting to address his school board in Florida, pastor Jeff Cook finally got his chance to defend *Beloved*, *The Color Purple*, and Ta-Nehesi Coates’s *Between the World and Me*, among the many Black history books now banned from Florida schools.

After the meeting, Cook met an opponent outside. Extending an olive branch, he said, “How you doin’ brother?”

And the man replied, “I hate librarians.”

On camera, Cook pauses, sighs. “This can’t be America,” he says. “No, this can’t be America.”



The Week in High School Sports

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – In the past week, the Franklin Tech boys’ basketball Eagles played their final two games of the 2025-26 season in the MIAA playoffs.

Last Thursday, the 45th-seeded Tech boys shot down the 20th-ranked Ruth Batson Academy Green Hawks out in Dorchester. Two days later, they got back on the bus and went to Hull to challenge the number-13 Gold Pirates.

The season may be over for Tech basketball, but the school’s wrestlers grapple on. Ava Eddy, who competed in the 152-pound weight class, finished fourth in the All State Championship rumble, while Dillon Laffond wrestled against other 285-pounders and

also placed fourth.

Both will compete in the New England Interscholastic Wrestling Championship this coming weekend in Providence, Rhode Island.

Basketball

FCTS 52 – RBA 44
Hull 75 – FCTS 53

In Thursday’s battle, Tech finished off the higher-seeded Hawks with a strong fourth-quarter performance, turning a late-game tie into a victory.

The Hawks took a four-point lead after one complete, but the Eagles came pounding back in the second to reverse the spread to 26-22. But Batson chipped away in the third, and going into the final stanza it was anybody’s game, knotted at 36-all. Tech doubled up Green’s

points in the fourth, though, taking the match 52-44 and advancing in the playoffs. Scoring for the team were Landon Benz (15), Nolyn Stafford (13), Hunter Donahue and Mason Bassett (7 each), and Cole Bassett and Brody Hicks (5 each).

The Eagles’ postseason run came to a halt on Saturday in Hull, where they lost to the Pirates in the MIAA Round of 32.

Leading for Tech were Hicks, who sank five 3-pointers and went four-for-four from the foul line, finishing with 27 points, and Stafford, who hit three 3-pointers and ended with 12. Also scoring for the Eagles were Jaxon Silva (6), Mason Bassett (4), Benz (3), and Cole Bassett (1).

The 1-1 postseason leaves Franklin with a very respectable 11-11 season record.

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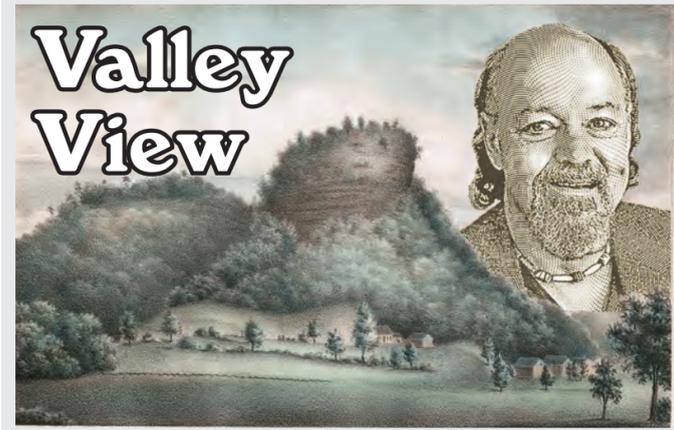
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MIKE JACKSON PHOTO OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER MARCH 5, 2026



Valley View

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Recent visitors to my upper Greenfield Meadows home got my wheels spinning back to my wayward early-college days, when liberty, freedom, and autonomy drenched each refreshing breath of rebellious Amherst air during the 1971-72 school year.

The visitors were my widowed sister-in-law Jan, four years my senior, from Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom, and her brother-in-law Bud, a retired international litigator from Croton-on-Hudson, New York, four years her senior. It just so happens that my home is a convenient midpoint relay station for Jan’s visits to his scenic lower Hudson Valley home near West Point.

Both guests brought to my doorstep vivid memories from that turbulent era of protest and cultural upheaval – he a Sixties Holy Cross grad and Vietnam veteran, she a contemporaneous college dropout with a child who settled in a secluded, mountaintop, back-to-the-Earth alternative community in a place called Lost Nation.

Having participated in many similar interactions over 47 years of marriage, I always look forward to such discussions, which arise like steam from a teapot – some tapping into my soul’s deepest juices, which flood my consciousness through veins of youthful memories that love to bleed.

Bud, a reader, often shares suggested readings – as though I need them – sometimes with a gift book in hand. This visit was such a case. He thought I might enjoy late French historian Marc Bloch’s *Strange Defeat: A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*, which he handed me on his way out the door. “No pressure,” he said. “You can read it, discard it, or pass it on. Your choice.”

Well, I gave it a shot and blew through it in a couple of days. Bloch was critical of his French countrymen for what he perceived as passive resistance to their

German conquerors. The problem with the topic was that I’m no European or World War II historian and thus didn’t connect with many historical references that would be familiar to any French reader.

Long ago I chose to focus on my own place, our verdant slice of the Connecticut Valley, along with my genealogical connections to it and how it all conforms to the larger American narrative. That, in and of itself, presents a lifetime of work, with little time for diversions and distractions.

Bloch’s wartime observations reminded me of those expressed in his fellow countryman and World War I veteran Jean Giono in his *Refusal to Obey*. His criticism of wrongheaded orders from feckless military commanders also brought me back to the writings of the bitter, prolific 19th-century American journalist, author, and Civil War veteran Ambrose Bierce.

But enough of that. The best development from our conversation unfolded after my guests’ departure, coming to me like sweet, inspiring lilac scent through a muggy May window. For some reason, thoughts of the American philosopher Robert Paul Wolff came to mind. Must have been the Sixties vibes that carried me there.

I knew Wolff from my earliest days at UMass Amherst, when he was a new professor and I took a couple of his classes focused on books he had written. The first examined individual sovereignty and other political-philosophical concepts in his best-known book, *In Defense of Anarchism* (1970). Then came his philosophy of higher education itself in *The Ideal of the University* (1969).

Both were fascinating classes that captured my fancy during an otherwise distracted, uneventful first round of college.

Though as a working adult I had discovered and sometimes visited Wolff’s blog, *The Philosopher’s Stone*, I had lost track of it since the COVID crisis and was curious about his thoughts on today’s

ROGER CLARK MILLER WON'T SLOW DOWN!

By WENDY M. LEVY

GUILFORD – Roger Clark Miller, longtime leader of the influential, experimental post-punk band Mission of Burma and currently helming the Boston-based trio Trinary System, recently reflected on the futility of trying to slow down.

Last year, Miller toured to support his album, *Curiosity for Solo Electric Guitar Ensemble*, which required him to play – and schlep – four guitars, three of which are lap-steels on legs. Then there’s the rest of the gear: cables, amps, digital devices, and pedals. Lots and lots of pedals.

Miller told the *Montague Reporter* that after coming off tour and returning to the home in Guilford, Vermont, he has shared since September 2015 with girlfriend Deb McLaughlin, he asked himself, “How can I make my life easy?”

For some people, making one’s life easy would involve paring down. Taking lots of naps. Quitting things. Definitely not adding new things.

For Miller, it meant embarking on a solo career as a singer-songwriter, which he is calling “**Unplugged (from a Band)**.”

Just a man and his guitar.

“Except, you know, because it’s me, there will be distortion,” Miller says. “This is easy! There’s a small pedal board, my guitar, and a light bass amp to get that lower, really good guitar sound...”

This solo endeavor led to a new album, *The Green Man*, recorded at Guilford Sound. It comes out in September on Don Giovanni Records. On April 10, Miller will

play selections from it at the Stone Church in Brattleboro.

But wait. There’s more.

There’s also **Trinary System**, the band Miller formed around 13 years ago with Larry Dersch and Andrew Willis, “after the initial madness of reforming Burma wore off,” notes Miller. “I felt limited by post-punk guitar music. I needed



ROGER CLARK MILLER

FRONT OF THE LINE

By MPRESS BENNU

GREENFIELD – Greetings, Montague – including the five villages of Montague Center, Montague City, Turners Falls, Millers Falls, and Lake Pleasant – Erving, Gill, Leverett, and Wendell. My name is Mpress Bennu and I am the author of this new column, *Front of the Line*.

This column will highlight individuals who support our various communities, whether through community service, entertainment, youth programming, small business, community development, or other means. This is my way of bringing you and many others, whose actions contribute positively and exemplify the best of what Western Mass has to offer, to the “Front of the Line.”

For my first column, I want to take the time to introduce myself. I am from the other side of the bridge – known, respectfully, as Greenfield. I have lived in

Greenfield since February 2020, since my relocation from Springfield.

In Springfield, I was involved in various community events and celebrations including but not limited to the Annual Caribbean Carnival and Parade Celebration and the very well-known Stone Soul Festival. While working in the community I noticed there wasn’t a youth presence in the front line of these festivals, so I took it upon myself to create a platform where they could show their talents, whether through song, dance, or spoken word.

That was how my first company, U.N.I.T.Y. (Uniting Nations in Today’s Youth), was born. I will never forget their faces when I announced to them that they would be able to participate in the parade in their own youth section. I became a mentor and teacher, instilling in them positive values that would carry them into their adult lives. Every last one of them graduated high

see **MILLER** page B4

see **FRONT** page B2

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

'MAMA'

Have you ever heard a mourning dove coo? How would you like to wake up to that sound every day, even in the winter? If you answered yes, then a gentle dove like Mama could be the perfect companion.

Meet the sweet and social dove, Mama. She is known to be a very friendly bird who will allow calm pats, and loves a large water dish in her enclosure so she can relax by giving herself a nice bath.

Doves are very social birds who thrive in the company of their friends and need out-of-cage time every day to exercise and socialize

with you. Got a single at home that needs a friend? Doves are relatively easy to introduce to one another, as long as there is sufficient space.

The adoption fee for one dove is \$10, and each additional dove adopted at the same time has a discounted adoption fee of \$5.

As most of Dakin's small animals are in foster care, if you're ready to adopt now and want to start the process, call (413) 781-4000 ext. 1 or email springfield@dakinhumane.org. If you already have a cage, please send a picture of it when you inquire.

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school, some went to college, and all are in careers.

My next phase in community work came when I started working at the Lighthouse Clubhouse in Springfield, where I was hired to develop a pilot program for individuals diagnosed with mental health challenges – specifically, young adults between the ages of 18 and 25, who age out of youth services into adult services with little or no support.

A number of these young adults were homeless, self-harmers, and high school dropouts, and some were already struggling with drug addiction. The system was overwhelmed and struggling to find a way to help these young people get back on track to leading successful and independent lives.

I worked with them and developed personal relationships, not dealing with them as numbers or clients but as young people from various backgrounds in need of mentorship. They responded positively to this approach, and were able to turn their backstories into success stories. I witnessed these young people go back to school for their GEDs, start working, and in some cases start families; some got clean, and some became permanently housed. None were lost in the system.

In 2020, after the birth of my daughter, I moved to Greenfield. At first, I felt like a fish out of water, because what was there for me to create or change in a city I knew very little about?

After time, I found my way. I



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Columnist Mpress Bennu at her local access TV show, Moving Mountains Media.

attended Greenfield Community College for Business and Entrepreneurship, and after that I was hired by Greenfield Savings Bank as a CRA analyst and community outreach officer. I also joined the Greenfield Human Rights Commission, and during the same year launched my own business, Moving Mountains Media.

The first event I hosted under my business name was Greenfield's Juneteenth Celebration in 2022. I facilitated, organized, and marketed the annual event for four years, and in 2025 I decided it was time to move on. By that time I was also chair of the Human Rights Commission, president of the Franklin County Rotary Club, and I sat on a number of other boards and commissions. However, I felt like it was time for a change, so I handed my Juneteenth torch over for someone else to take over and resigned from nearly all my board positions.

I didn't know what I was doing or why I was doing it, I just did it knowing that sometimes you have to let go in order to gain something.

So, after letting go, I moved Moving Mountains Media (www.movingmountains-media.org) into its own brick-and-mortar office on Main Street. I started producing my own radio show, which airs live every Friday between the hours of 4 and 6 p.m. on 107.9 FM and wmcb.net. This year I relaunched my television program – Moving Mountains Media is now on Season 3 – and I am beginning this column for the Reporter.

I want to use my platform to highlight all the unique individuals who stand out in our neighborhoods and support our communities. I will be bringing you their personal stories of achievement, and how they overcome challenges in order to achieve their goals.

If you know anyone you would like to refer to me who deserves to be brought to the Front of the Line, please email me at mpressbennu@outlook.com.

My next column will be about Richie Richardson of FAB Fashion in Turners Falls. Richie is a top designer in the Pioneer Valley who has been involved in various fashion shows in and around Western Massachusetts. He has been awarded Proclamations from the City of New York and the Mayor of Springfield, Mass., as well as a Citation for Fashion, Art, and Culture from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Stay tuned!



VALLEY VIEW from page B1

political climate. I knew he'd have something to say about ICE and unconstitutional acts, but soon discovered he had died a little more than a year ago, on January 6, 2025, age 91, at Duke Hospital in Durham, North Carolina.

Readers curious about Wolff will find no shortage of online biographical information about him. He was a giant in the American philosophical community, with prestigious teaching credits at the University of Chicago, Columbia, and Harvard, as well as UMass and others.

It was at Columbia, in 1968, that he gained fame for his controversial support of Vietnam War protestors occupying the university's Low Library. His daring differences with the Columbia administration soon landed him in Amherst, where I became a beneficiary. I think my journalism mentor Howard Ziff alerted me to Wolff and encouraged me to check him out. Both professors arrived at UMass when I did, and I feel fortunate to have met and learned from them.

The timing was right in 1971 for Wolff's UMass

arrival. I have over the years told many people in casual conversation that such a lightning-rod academic would never, in my mind, be hired by our state university today. Had he been writing books like *In Defense of Anarchism* today or during right-wing TV personality Bill O'Reilly's Fox News reign, the "news" entertainer would have been calling for his ouster and sending annoying lackey Jesse Watters to Amherst to harass him and school administrators with bright lights, cameras, and microphones.

I am grateful to have been there for year one of Robert Paul Wolff's 37-year UMass tenure. A stroke of good luck placed me in the right place, at the right time, to meet one of my two most influential profs, all the while enchanted by the scent of liberty and autonomy in the Amherst air.

May he rest in peace... and forever challenge authority, wherever he may be.

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



Senior Center Activities MARCH 9 THROUGH 13

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 3/9

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

Tuesday 3/10

9 a.m. Stretch & Balance
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer
11:30 a.m. Gift Package Making
1 p.m. Friends' Meeting

Wednesday 3/11

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

Thursday 3/12

9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow
1 p.m. Wreath Making
1 p.m. Frances Perkins:
A Woman At Work

Friday 3/13

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

12 p.m. Pot Luck

1:30 p.m. CoA Meeting
3 p.m. Beginner Yoga

Tuesday 3/10

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

Wednesday 3/11

Foot Clinic by Appointment
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 3/12

1 p.m. Pitch

Friday 3/13

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tax Return Prep by appointment only

All classes cancelled today

LEVERETT

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

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 3/9

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

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LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on March 3, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Canadian Firm To Purchase FirstLight

Under a deal announced last Thursday, the global utility giant Engie, headquartered in France, will sell the Northfield Mountain pumped storage facility, the Turners Falls dam and power canal, the century-old Cabot Station, and extensive riverfront property – assets

known collectively as FirstLight Power Resources – to Canada's Public Sector Pension Investment Board (PSP Investments), which invests a number of government pension funds.

The sale is pending, subject to approval by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Engie, formerly known as GDF Suez, has been seeking to sell off North American power plants and shift toward energy services, stating its plan is to reduce both its debt burden and its carbon footprint.

20 YEARS AGO

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

Local Man Deported To Guatemala

Carlos Ovalle, arrested here in late January on a "fugitive alien" warrant, was not considered by federal officials to be a "coyote" – or trafficker in illegal immigrants – contrary to reports by local law enforcement officials and news media.

"We acted simply because he was a fugitive alien," said US Immigration and Customs Enforcement public affairs officer Paula Grenier, adding that she does not know where the rumor of his being a human smuggler got started. Ovalle was deported from the United States on February 23, she said, and is now back in Guatemala.

The arrest has sent shock waves through the Latino community in Turners Falls. One woman said she was now afraid to go out except on essential errands. She recounted a rumor that if ICE picks you up they'll tear up your papers, or claim that you aren't really who you claim to be.

"If they could take a man away from his wife and children, they can

take me away from my husband and children," she said. "And who knows what happens to you afterward."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ovalle still lives in a small apartment, trying to decide what her next move will be. Her six small children, according to sources downtown, are doing as well as can be expected after having their father suddenly disappear.

MPD Adopts Tasers

The "Taser," developed for police use in 1998, has become an increasingly popular "non-lethal" alternative for police officers nationwide. The Montague police department recently purchased three X-26 models of the handheld devices. In addition to firing two probes from a distance of up to 25 feet, this model is capable of a "drive stun," a weaker option administered at close range.

In Montague, the X-26 has been fully deployed once and the secondary drive stun has been used twice.

Joshua Rubenstein, director of the Northeast Region of Amnesty International, is concerned about the use of Tasers. "There have been a handful of cases where a coroner has confirmed a relationship to Tasers in the cause of death," he said.

140 YEARS AGO

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

Turners Falls and Vicinity

The town meeting wrangle is over and we hope everybody is happy again.

Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Gilmore celebrated their golden wedding on Monday evening. They were given gold coin to the amount of \$50, and other articles of value.

The famous old hotel at Coleraine City, kept by General O.M. Gaines, was burned to the ground this morning.

The queer looking engine which went over the Fitchburg railroad several months ago, for the purpose of trial as a smoke and cinder-burn engine through the tunnel, did not fill the bill, but the engines now use coke in going through with

comparative success.

It is now unlawful to sell or give a boy under sixteen years of age, tobacco in any form. It is to be hoped that it will stop the everlasting puffing of tobacco by youngsters – a habit that stupifies a growing lad, and takes the ambition out of every fibre of his body. It is a sad pity that such a law became a necessity. Parents and all others who have a thought for the average bright boy's future prospects should do all in their power to have the law enforced. Not long ago we heard a parent speak with pride of his four-year-old child's accomplishment of smoking a clay pipe.

Weekly payment of wages will be compulsory after July 1. It will mean four drinks a month instead of one, and that will mean discharge of every such drunkard. No employer will stand any such nonsense as four drunks a month.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Unstaffed Books; Snowy Car; Young Caller Very Excited; Cortez the Mover; Skittish Nutmegger; Owner Locked Up

Monday, 2/23

9:02 a.m. Wire reported down on L Street. Turned out to be a line that came down a while ago that supplies power to a street light, and is not in the roadway. Not a hazard. Eversource notified.

1:10 p.m. Possible Social Security phone scam reported. Officer advised.

2:04 p.m. Tree on power lines at Sunset Drive and Oak Street. Turners Falls fire department and Eversource notified.

5:42 p.m. Suspicious auto reported driving back and forth in front of the caller's house. Car was pulling in to a driveway on Letourneau Way, the driver welcomed inside. Not an issue.

7:04 p.m. 911 hangup call. Child on Apple watch.

7:04 p.m. 911 hangup call. Child on Apple watch.

Tuesday, 2/24

7:24 a.m. Bus company reports the gates are stuck down on the Lake Pleasant railroad crossing and they can't get across. Requesting an officer to help. CSX called to fix the gate; bus rerouted.

12:16 p.m. Caller says the Unnameable Books store is unlocked and unstaffed, he just went in and browsed for 30 minutes, and didn't see anyone. When he went out he saw a sign saying it was closed until tomorrow. Owner called, and is on his way.

12:37 p.m. Caller reporting debit card fraud; had called twice about the same issue on previous days. Officer advised.

5:17 p.m. Motor vehicle violation on Millers Falls Road: driving with revoked insurance. Citation issued. Vehicle parked until proof of registration

can be secured.

6 p.m. Caller says loose, uncollared dogs are running about on East Taylor Hill Road. Unable to locate.

6:12 p.m. A laundromat customer on Third Street called to complain about a car in front of the laundromat that she believes was not moved during the snow emergency, and is blocking access to the building. Some snow can be seen on the car and records indicate a parking ticket was issued on February 23, but there is not a parking violation at this time.

7:49 p.m. Caller states his Prius is stuck in a snow bank in the Third Street alley, and he wants officers to help. Advised to call a tow truck or have friends help him. Numbers for Rau's and Koch's provided.

8:16 p.m. Car lockout at the four-way intersection by the public safety complex. Motorist assisted and went back on their way.

11:30 p.m. 911 open line call from K Street, yell of "fire" heard, then disconnected. Male called back to say his two-year-old was playing with the phone, but there was no emergency. No emergency found, but the two-year-old in question was very excited to see a police officer.

Wednesday, 2/25

7:36 a.m. One-car accident at Cross Street and Millers Falls Road. Report taken.

8:35 a.m. 911 call about a car stuck on top of a snow bank on Unity Street, and occupants unable to get out. Vehicle unstuck, driver out, no damages.

10:21 a.m. 911 caller reporting an accident with an oil truck on South Prospect

Street. Airbag deployed, Turners Falls fire department notified. Driver uninjured. Vehicle towed.

4:31 p.m. Driver on Henry Street received a verbal warning for a marked lanes violation.

4:34 p.m. Caller from West Chestnut Hill Road believes she gave information to a scammer going by the company name of the Cortez Moving. No services necessary.

8:35 p.m. Davis Street caller states neighbors have been thumping around for hours and keeping her kids awake. No noise heard, no answer at the door.

Thursday, 2/26

6:41 a.m. Verbal warning issued for speeding on Turnpike Road.

9:00 a.m. 911 pocket dial from South Prospect Street.

11:44 p.m. Caller on Third Street reports that a red truck has been parked behind the building with its lights and hazard flashers for over 20 minutes with the driver possibly sleeping behind the wheel. OUI arrest with open container. Vehicle towed. Driver released on bail and getting a sober ride home.

Friday, 2/27

5:26 p.m. Caller reports that at 10 a.m. this morning she was in Cumberland Farms and a man tried to kidnap her. She walked around the store until he left and then she went home. She is now at the store and the staff told her to call the police. She doesn't have a description of the man, but the store has video footage. Employees are unable to access the video, will call back when they are able to fix the issue.

6:33 p.m. 911 misdial on Carlisle Avenue. No services needed.

8:39 p.m. 911 open call from Bridge Street. No emergency found.

8:56 p.m. Officers heard loud yelling in the area of the Millers Pub. Friend being greeted, no issues at this time.

8:59 p.m. Citation issued for driving an unregistered car on Millers Falls Road. Car towed, courtesy transport provided.

Saturday, 2/28

11:37 a.m. Verbal warning given for a stop sign violation at Crocker Avenue and Montague Street.

1:22 p.m. Caller wants it on record that a suspicious silver Subaru with Connecticut plates was parked at his business on Federal Street when it was closed. He spoke to the driver, who seemed "skittish" and drove off.

2:44 p.m. Multiple calls from the Walnut Street area reporting a sick-looking fox roaming around. Animal control officer notified, but unable to locate the fox.

7:09 p.m. 911 call about a physical fight at the recreation building in Unity Park. Contact made with a group of juveniles, no fighting going on.

Sunday, 2/29

2:01 a.m. Worker at Cumberland Farms reports that a vehicle has been parked at the pump for three hours without anyone around. Officers tried to reach the owner, but their phone is off. At the owner's address a roommate said they will contact AAA to tow the vehicle, as the owner is currently still locked up.

SCENE REPORT

The Millers Meadow Project

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – The Millers Meadow Project is a project to restore the former Wedgewood Gardens trailer park between Colrain Street and the Green River by planting trees. At the time I found out about it, I wanted a change of pace when it came to what I was writing about.

This worked out nicely for me. I learned about the project upon discovering a photo exhibit called Trees! was going to be at the LAVA Center in downtown Greenfield from February until April. An opening reception for the exhibit took place on February 5.

The project's designer, Peter Wackernagel, talked about it at the reception. This exhibit includes site plans, photographs, and 11 informational panels as part of it. You could also win a tree, I believe, at the reception.

Jan Maher, a volunteer at the LAVA Center, told me about the exhibit, and also mentioned a few things to me about the project itself.

"They worked with over a hundred volunteers," she said. "Planted over 600 trees and shrubs."

The area planted as forest was three quarters of an acre. Youth Climate Action of Franklin County was the name of one group that helped with the initial planting. The Connecticut River Conservancy also took part, and is still helping out with the project.

I talked to Rebecca Budd, the restoration program



Over 100 volunteers helped with the first planting phase.

manager at the Conservancy, who said this about Millers Meadow: "We are happy to be a part of it." As for what is coming up, she said, "Connecticut River Conservancy is providing 500 trees to plant in the fall and spring."

I learned from the website of Greening Greenfield, the primary sponsor of the project, that it was funded by the state's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program. You can look up info on the project at www.greeninggreenfieldma.org, and the LAVA Center at 324 Main Street is where you can go if you wish to see the photos and plans connected to the project.

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MILLER from page B1

another band for a different sound.” He already had Binary System, a band he formed in the late 1990s with Dersch. “Larry’s a great drummer,” Miller says. “He can kick my ass on improvisation!”

What was missing was a bass player. But, he did not want a bass player to play bass.

Miller had met guitarist Andrew Willis when Willis engineered Miller’s old group, The Alloy Orchestra. “We hit it off,” says Miller, “and Larry loved him.”

Willis plays bass and microsynths for Trinary System.

The trio began by playing some songs Miller had written when he was in Mission of Burma, but were not right for that band. They also got to know each other by jamming on some covers.

“We played ‘Black Satin,’ a Miles Davis song,” Miller says. “We got a real groove going. We also played Can’s ‘Yoo Doo Right.’ These two led to me writing the song ‘Infinity in a Box,’ which has one bass line for seven minutes.”

Last February Trinary System had a track, “Curse Us,” on the Spooky Tree Records compilation *Mass Eye and Ear*. In September the band released a single, “Resistance (is its Own Reward),” with all income from sales going to Doctors Without Borders, followed on Halloween by *The Hard Machine*, a full-length album on Cuneiform Records.

“This is far-out music. Total ensemble work. An intuitive give-and-take. Lots of improvisation,” says Miller, who adds that the band also learned King Crimson’s “Red,” notorious for being a difficult piece to play.

Learning to play “Red” inspired Miller to write “The Green Wall,” the fifth track on *The Hard Machine*. “It starts out in 5/4, then



The art-rock trio Trinary System – from left to right, Miller, Larry Dersch, and Andrew Willis – plays in Easthampton on Friday, March 20.

it goes into other time signatures,” he says. “It’s dizzying in its complexity!”

With Trinary, “we’re really challenging ourselves,” Miller explains. “Otherwise, why do it?”

Trinary System is embarking on an East Coast tour this year, with local gigs at Marigold Theater in Easthampton on March 20 and Nova Arts in Keene on May 8.

Miller is also one-half of **The Anvil Orchestra**, which plays live scores for silent films. Anvil will perform for two nights in mid-March at the Washington, DC Jewish film festival J x J, providing live accompaniment to Dziga Vertov’s 1929 *Man with a Movie Camera*.

This summer, the 12XU label is putting out *Press Your Hand and the Whole Room Fluctu-*

ates, an album of previously unreleased tracks from Miller’s first band, **Sproton Layer**.

“This was my psych band from high school,” Miller says.

All songs were recorded between 1969 and 1971, and it features Miller and his two brothers, Ben and Larry, who later went on to join the Detroit-based experimental proto-punk band Destroy All Monsters.

“Sproton Layer was complex improv, heavily influenced by Syd Barrett,” Miller reveals. “When you listen to it, you’ll say, ‘Oh! That’s where Roger came from!’”

And finally there’s **b.mez**, a sort-of reconfiguration of *Birdsongs of the Mesozoic*, an experimental quartet Miller co-founded in 1980 and left in 1987. In b.mez, which is all improv, he rejoins original *Birdsongs* mem-

ber Rick Scott and Scott’s newer bandmates Michael Bierylo and Ken Field.

In May 2019, b.mez had the chance to record at Hearstudios in Camden, Maine.

“It was three days of improvised music with a bunch of instruments. I mostly played prepared piano and guitar,” says Miller. “Last fall we listened to the mix and selected tracks.”

The resulting album, *Under Circuitous Skies*, came out last week on Cuneiform.

By now, some readers may have lost count of the number of albums released in the span of 12 months on which Roger Miller has played.

“Come September, with the release of *The Green Man*, I’ll have released four albums in one year. This is the first time in my life I’ve done that,” reports Miller, who adds, “I’m 74 years old! What the fuck?”

Miller acknowledges he may have little choice.

“Every time I sit down,” he says, “I write a song.”

Trinary System plays on Friday, March 20 at Marigold Theater in Easthampton, and Roger Clark Miller’s solo project, Unplugged (from a Band), plays at the Stone Church in Brattleboro, Vermont, on Friday, April 10.

Trinary System’s albums and singles can be found at trinarysystem.bandcamp.com and on the Cuneiform Records website, www.cuneiformrecords.com. Miller’s upcoming solo album, The Green Man, will be available at www.dongiovannirecords.com, and the upcoming Sproton Layer compilation at 12xu.bigcartel.com.

To learn more about Roger Clark Miller, his discography, and his various projects, visit rogerclarkmiller.com.



JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION



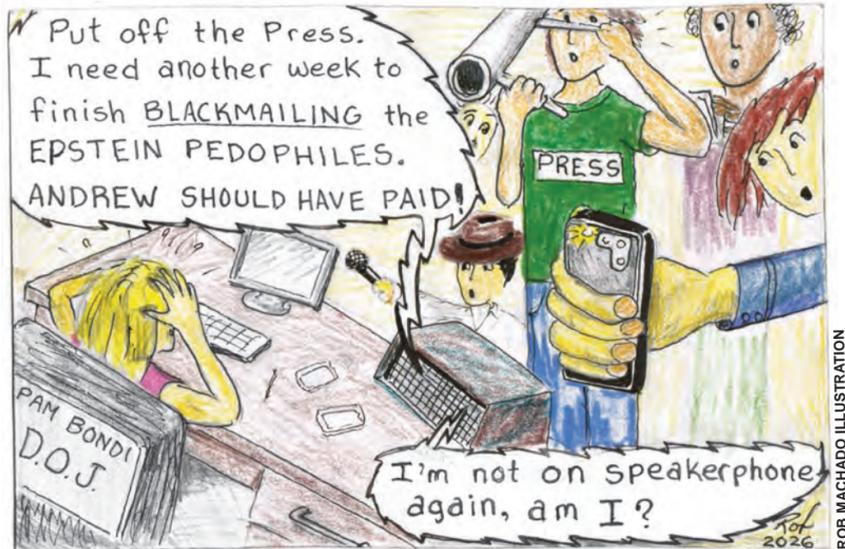
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Política internacional

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

GREENFIELD – En las últimas semanas están ocurriendo acontecimientos políticos en el mundo que acaparan muchos titulares, pero quiero centrarme en los que han ocurrido últimamente en Latinoamérica...

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

México: Una nueva etapa de violencia e incertidumbre.

El pasado 22 de febrero, México vivió uno de los momentos más críticos en su larga lucha contra los cárteles de la droga. El líder del Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG), Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes, conocido como "El Mencho," murió durante una operación del ejército mexicano en el municipio de Tapalpa, en el estado de Jalisco. Su muerte, como resultado de las heridas sufridas durante dicho enfrentamiento con fuerzas de seguridad y mientras era trasladado a la Ciudad de México, fue confirmada por las autoridades federales y representa la baja más significativa de un jefe de cartel desde la caída de Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán.

Oseguera, de 59 años, había dirigido el CJNG durante más de una década, convirtiéndolo en una de las organizaciones criminales más poderosas y violentas del país. Bajo su mando, el cártel expandió su influencia a casi todo el territorio nacional, y diversificó sus operaciones ilícitas, entre las que se incluyen tráfico de drogas, extorsión, secuestro, robo de combustible y lavado de dinero.

Estableció también redes logísticas complejas que iban más allá de las fronteras mexicanas.

La operación que terminó con la vida de El Mencho fue planeada y ejecutada por el ejército mexicano, con la ayuda de inteligencia proveniente de Estados Unidos, aunque sin presencia militar directa del país, según las versiones oficiales. El operativo se centró en Tapalpa, una región montañosa que había servido como refugio para el jefe de la banda y sus principales lugartenientes.

Las fuerzas de seguridad reportaron que, además de Oseguera, murieron otros miembros del cártel y hubo varios arrestos. Se incautaron armas de alto calibre, vehículos blindados y artefactos utilizados por la organización. Las autoridades mexicanas añadieron que la operación representaba un golpe significativo contra una red que había desafiado a la justicia durante años.

La noticia de la muerte de El Mencho originó de inmediato una ola de violencia en múltiples estados mexicanos. En cuestión de horas, miembros del CJNG y grupos afines organizaron ataques coordinados en diversas regiones, incluyendo bloqueos de carreteras, vehículos incendiados, ataques a instalaciones públicas y enfrentamientos con fuerzas de seguridad.

En varios estados como Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Veracruz y Baja California, las autoridades tuvieron que desplegar

unidades del Ejército, la Guardia Nacional y policías estatales para restablecer el orden. Algunos de los actos más visibles de la violencia incluyeron narco-bloqueos – que son barricadas con vehículos en llamas que interrumpen el tránsito – y ataques a estaciones de servicios y bancos, como represalia por la caída de su líder.

Varios informes preliminares hablan de decenas de muertos y heridos entre miembros de las fuerzas de seguridad y presuntos criminales. Las cifras oficiales todavía están siendo confirmadas por las autoridades, pero medios internacionales hablan de ataques coordinados en al menos 20 de los 32 estados de México, un nivel de violencia no visto en años.

Ante la escalada de violencia, el gobierno de la Presidenta Claudia Sheinbaum llamó a la tranquilidad y aseguró que las fuerzas de seguridad estaban tomando medidas para proteger a la población civil. La presidenta también señaló que la operación fue dirigida exclusivamente por autoridades mexicanas, aunque con cooperación de inteligencia extranjera.

En destinos populares como Puerto Vallarta y Guadalajara, hubo cancelaciones de vuelos y cierre temporal de negocios en respuesta a los disturbios. Varias embajadas emitieron alertas de seguridad para ciudadanos extranjeros para que evitasen las zonas donde se habían registrado enfrentamientos.

Los analistas de seguridad creen que, aunque la muerte de El Mencho constituye un golpe simbólico y operativo importante, no garantiza una disminución de la violencia criminal en México. La razón es que organizaciones como el CJNG ya han adoptado estructuras descentralizadas y modelos de operación tipo "franquicia," que permiten a múltiples células operar de forma semi-independiente incluso sin la presencia de una figura central.

Además, los cárteles mexicanos no dependen únicamente de sus líderes visibles: su poder se basa también en las finanzas, redes internacionales y capacidad de adaptación, que no desaparecen con la caída de una sola persona. La ausencia de un sucesor claro podría traducirse en luchas internas por el control del CJNG, así como en conflictos con otros grupos criminales rivales.

El gobierno mexicano ha acercado posiciones con el gobierno estadounidense para intercambiar información y coordinar esfuerzos contra el narcotráfico, sin que ello implique la participación de tropas estadounidenses en territorio mexicano.

Cuba: La crisis del embargo de petróleo.

La crisis de Cuba ha escalado rápidamente desde principios de año tras una serie de medidas adoptadas por la administración del Presidente Donald Trump que, según su gobierno, buscan contrarrestar lo que califica como amenazas a la seguridad nacional vinculadas al gobierno cubano y sus alianzas en la región.

Aunque el embargo cubano es una política estadounidense que viene de 1962, las decisiones más recientes han concentrado la presión económica en un área crítica: el suministro de petróleo y combustible a la isla.

El 29 de enero de 2026, Trump firmó una Orden Ejecutiva, declarando un estado de emergencia nacional respecto a Cuba y creando un espacio para imponer aranceles a terceros países que suministran petróleo a la isla. La medida tiene como objetivo combatir el envío de crudo hacia Cuba, especialmente tras el cese de envíos desde Venezuela debido a decisiones políticas en ese país aliado.

Aunque una decisión de la Corte Suprema de Estados Unidos dejó sin efecto la parte que autorizaba los aranceles, la política del gobierno continuó ejerciendo presión económica sobre La Habana. Algunos analistas políticos creen que Estados Unidos puede prolongar el asedio petrolero sin los aranceles, manteniendo un cerco energético alrededor de la isla.

Cuba importa casi todo su petróleo desde Venezuela y, en menor medida, desde otros proveedores en la región. Con el cierre de los envíos venezolanos por la intervención estadounidense en ese país y la presión sobre otros posibles suministradores, la escasez de combustible se agudizó dramáticamente en enero y febrero de 2026.

La falta de petróleo ha provocado apagones prolongados, cortes de servicios básicos y una paralización casi total del transporte público, incluido el urbano de La Habana. Esto ha tenido un efecto dominó en la vida diaria: hospitales con servicios reducidos, dificultad para la producción y distribución de alimentos, acumulación de basura y restricciones en los servicios públicos.

El impacto ha generado preocupación incluso en organismos multilaterales. La oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos ha advertido que la crisis energética puede poner en riesgo los derechos básicos de la población, como el acceso sostenible a alimentos, salud y agua.

Estos hechos han contribuido a un clima de tensión y episodios de violencia que resaltan la complejidad del conflicto.

El 25 de febrero, las autoridades cubanas informaron que cuatro opositores armados murieron y seis resultaron heridos tras un intento de entrada por mar desde Florida. Según La Habana, los individuos intentaron

penetrar las aguas territoriales y abrieron fuego contra un patrullero cubano, que respondió. El gobierno calificó el incidente de terrorismo y señaló que uno de los atacantes fue capturado en tierra firme.

Desde Estados Unidos, funcionarios negaron que el gobierno estadounidense estuviera involucrado directamente en la incursión, y el Secretario de Estado, Marco Rubio, prometió una investigación independiente.

Mientras tanto, las declaraciones de líderes de ambos países han evidenciado un recrudecimiento del discurso político. Por un lado, el Presidente Trump ha sugerido que Estados Unidos podría considerar una "toma amistosa" de Cuba, una expresión que provocó inquietud internacional por su parecido con episodios históricos de intervención.

Por otra parte, el gobierno de Cuba ha denunciado en foros internacionales que las políticas estadounidenses buscan deliberadamente provocar una "catástrofe humanitaria" en la isla y socavar la soberanía cubana, apelando al derecho internacional y a la responsabilidad de los gobiernos ante sus poblaciones.

La presión estadounidense ha provocado diversas respuestas internacionales. En la cumbre de la Comunidad del Caribe (CARICOM) celebrada recientemente en San Cristóbal y Nieves, varios países del Caribe anunciaron paquetes de asistencia humanitaria para Cuba, en un intento de mitigar los efectos de la crisis energética. Sin embargo, también hubo divisiones internas: algunos líderes respaldaron la postura

estadounidense en materia de seguridad regional y otros llamaron al diálogo y a la desescalada.

Además de la asistencia regional, México y Canadá han enviado víveres y apoyo nutricional a La Habana, tratando de evitar sanciones estadounidenses. Estos envíos buscan aliviar las presiones sobre la población civil mientras se elaboran mecanismos diplomáticos para atenuar la crisis.

Expertos en política internacional han señalado que la situación cubana refleja una dinámica de fuerte presión estadounidense destinada a forzar cambios estructurales en un gobierno que Washington considera hostil. Para algunos analistas, el embargo energético forma parte de una estrategia más amplia que incluye sanciones económicas, presión diplomática y esfuerzos por aislar políticamente a La Habana.

Críticos de esta política han expresado que la presión extrema sobre un país ya vulnerable tiende a agravar las condiciones humanitarias sin garantizar resultados políticos claros. Asimismo, varios organismos humanitarios han instado a mantener abiertas las vías para la asistencia internacional y evitar sanciones que puedan violar normas de derecho internacional humanitario.

Mientras tanto, en Cuba, el gobierno ha mantenido su llamada al respeto a la soberanía nacional y ha expresado su disposición a dialogar con Estados Unidos, siempre que este diálogo se base en igualdad y en el respeto mutuo sin condiciones que impliquen interferencia en asuntos internos.

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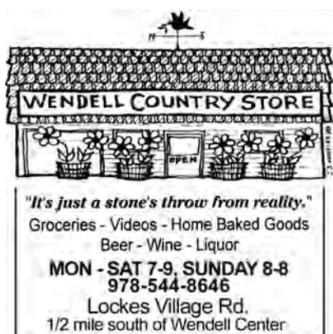
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THURSDAY, MARCH 5

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

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

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

Greenfield Garden Cinemas,
Greenfield: *Lights! Camera!
Greenfield!*, culmination
of GCTV's fast-paced
four-minute film contest.
6:30 p.m. Free.

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

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

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

Sloan Theater, Greenfield
Community College:
GCC Community Chorus
sing madrigals, spirituals,
and music by Rossi, Billings,
and Brahms. 12:15 to
12:45 p.m. By donation.

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls:
*29th Sadie's Bikes Gumball
Machine Takeover*, with
featured artists *Nina Rossi*
and *Bailey Sisson*. Bring
quarters. 5 p.m. No cover.

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

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

St. Kaz, Turners Falls:
St. Kaz Salad Bar. Herb soup,
herb salad, bread basket,
DJs. 6 to 9 p.m. No cover.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

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.

EXHIBITS

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

**Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners
Falls:** *Maps of River History*, artistic
maps by geologist and cartographer
Joe Kopera that reveal hidden
topography of rivers and floodplains.
Through March 28, with a reception
this Saturday, March 7 from 2 to 4 p.m.

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

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.

Artspace, Greenfield: *52nd Annual
Franklin County Teen Art Show*. Through
April 24, with an opening reception this
Friday, March 6 at 5 p.m.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Find Your
Voice, Speak Your Mind*, work by
student artists at the Academy
at Charlemont, through March 30
with a reception this Saturday,
March 7 at noon. *Trees!*, informational
exhibit celebrating tree projects
in Greenfield, through April.

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

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield:
Sixth Annual Photography Exhibit
by New England artists featuring
black-and-white, color, phone,
and camera prints, 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 28, with
a reception this Friday, March 6 at 5 p.m.



The GCC Community Chorus, under director Margery Heins, will preview their April "Spring Mix" concert this Friday at lunchtime at the college's Sloan Theater. The program includes "Chester," a simple yet forceful abolitionist statement by the early American composer William Billings.

Smith College Botanical
Gardens, Northampton: First
day of the *Spring Bulb Show*.
10 a.m. to 4 p.m. By donation.

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

Carnegie Library, Turners
Falls: Reception for *The Ideal
House*, artwork by Ukrainian
youth. 1 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell:
Slab Mug Clay Workshop
for teens. Registration
required. 1 p.m. Free.

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

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

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

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

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

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls:
Arc-A-Paloosa, benefit for
the United Arc, featuring
*Little House Blues, Alex
Casavant With Nick & Joe,
Psychedelic Farmgirls,
The Bromantics*. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton:
*Haunting Titans, Green Street
Fiends, Zar Nuk*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Midnight's, Brattleboro:
*Lizzy, Car Girlfriend,
Faux In Love*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Peter
Bernstein Quartet*. 8 p.m. \$.

Asbestos Farm, Hadley: *Britt,
Dust Witch, Carinae*. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro:
*The Attractors,
The Slackers*. 8 p.m. \$.

Space Ballroom, Hamden CT:
*Dan Deacon, Parlay
Droner*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

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.

CALLS FOR ART

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls:
Two- and three-dimensional art
sought for *Please Touch*, a group
show of participatory art on the theme
of "connection." Artists are encouraged
to provide unique opportunities for the
audience to engage with their work.
See tinyurl.com/waterway-touch for
more info. Deadline is March 20.

Mill District Local Art Gallery, Amherst:
Submissions wanted for *Charmed*,
an invitation to explore charm as
magic, strategy, power, or survival.
Women-identifying and nonbinary
artists within 39 miles of Amherst
may submit two-dimensional works
for display in May and June. Apply at
femmelocale.com. Deadline is April 15.

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SUNDAY, MARCH 8

Finders, Turners Falls: *How to Make a Handbag out of Old Lawn Signs*. Materials provided. Limited space. Contact h_coronatus@disroot.org. 12 p.m. Free.

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

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Genealogy Help* with local expert *Phil Johnson*. 1 to 3 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Premiere screening, *When The Mind's Free*. Experimental film adaptation of a Real Live Theater devised-dance production, following a lesbian couple and their adult daughters as they navigate Alzheimer's disease and addiction. Community gathering to follow. 3 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Documentary screenings, *The Occupation of the American Mind* (2016), about pro-Israel public relations efforts, and *Samidoun: The Steadfast Women of Palestine* (2025), on women navigating life under occupation and patriarchy. Discussion to follow. 3:30 p.m. Free.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Liam Grant, Sam Boston, Anthony Pasquarosa*. 4:30 p.m. By donation.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Stefan Weiner, Corey Laitman, Ciarra Fragale*. 5:30 p.m. By donation.

Great Falls Harvest, Turners Falls: *Norma Dream, beetsblog, Jim Bliss & Andy, Vanessa Brewster & Gordon SB, Desi Lowitt & Joel Seppa, Madden Aleia, Kate Lee*. Elliott Smith covers show to benefit a neighbor facing economic hardship. 6 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, MARCH 9

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Mystery Monday*. Quick puzzles and mysteries. 12 p.m. Free.

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

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

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

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *King Philip's War in Your Backyard, 1675-1676*. 6 p.m. Free.

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

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Nick's Book Group*. Paula Gunn Allen, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*. 3 p.m. Free.



Boston noise-punks *Miracle Blood* come to Easthampton next Saturday, March 14 as part of the inaugural season at a new member-owned venue, *The Heavy Culture Cooperative (THCC)*. Boston hardcore band *Sexless Marriage* and Brattleboro metalheads *Woundlicker* round out the bill.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Matinee movie, *Midnight Run* (1988). 4 p.m. Free.

Montague Center Library, Montague: movie, *The Librarians* (2025). Follow librarians who stand up for everyone's right to read, learn, and think freely. 5 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Writers Read*, featuring a literary and visual art collaboration between *Vitek Kruta* and *Jessica Gorman*. 7 p.m. By donation.

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

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

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

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

Erving Senior and Community Center, Erving: *Frances Perkins: A Woman's Work*, performance by *Jarice Hanson*. 1 p.m. Free.

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

Various locations, Brattleboro: *Brattleboro Luck Crawl*. Enjoy samples from more than 15 of southern Vermont's gastronomic purveyors. 6 p.m. \$.

Slate Library, Gill: Local author reading, *David Detmold*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Libyan Hit Squad, Eat the Graveyard, Squeeze Mohamish*. 7 p.m. No cover.

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

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

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

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

Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton: *Hands-on Artmaking Workshops*. Materials provided. 4 to 8 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Square Dance* with musicians *Mary Frasier* and *Peter Seigel, Don Stratton* calling. Jammers welcome. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

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

THCC, Easthampton: *Astral Bitch, Shazbot, The Entire Earth*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

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

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

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

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

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Frenchy and the Punk, Pilgrims, Ghost Painted Sky, DJ Azrael*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

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

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

Northfield Mountain Environmental Center: *Magical Dish Gardens*, art workshop for ages 4 to 10. Materials provided. Limited space, register at www.bookeo.com/northfield. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Pi(e) Day*. Celebrate 3.14 with pie and coffee at the library. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free.

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

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Jimmy Just Quit*. 6 p.m. No cover.

Montague Elks, Turners Falls: *Ragged Blue*. 6:30 p.m. No cover.

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

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *All Cooped Up Concert*, with musicians from the Franklin County Musicians Cooperative, light refreshments. 7 p.m. By donation.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Charlie King, Ben Tousley*. 7 p.m. \$.

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *Little House Blues*. 7 p.m. No cover.

THCC, Easthampton: *Miracle Blood, Sexless Marriage, Woundlicker*. 7 p.m. \$.

Loculus Stodio, Holyoke: *bobbie*, album release show; *Cow Person; beetsblog; DJ Mommy Issues*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Terraces, Sunset Mission*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shelburne Falls Theater, Shelburne Falls: *Pothole Pictures* presents *Waiting for Guffman* (1996). Music at 7 p.m.: *The Frost Heaves & Hales*; movie at 7:30 p.m. \$.

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

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

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Signature Dish, Safety Coffin, Andyhasaband*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Mass Resistor, Ginger Bug*. 9:30 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, MARCH 15

Element Brewing, Millers Falls: *Boys of the Landfill*. 2 p.m. No cover.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *JJ Slater, Safety Coffin, Lexi Weege's Lil Honky Tonk Band*. 8 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, MARCH 16

Dreamhouse, Turners Falls: *New Building, New Business*. Learn what a new Montague main library building would mean for businesses and organizations. 4 p.m. Free.

TUESDAY, MARCH 17

Gill-Montague Senior Center, Turners Falls: *Your Library, Your Voice*. Learn what a new Montague main library building would mean financially for our community. 6:30 p.m. Free.

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Trinary System, Bunnies*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

Great Falls Harvest, Turners Falls: *Shirese, Slowpoke Records*, one more. 8 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, MARCH 29

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. \$.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

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

SATURDAY, APRIL 11

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *The Suitcase Junket, Kris Delmhorst, Caitlin Canty, Zak Trojano, Julia Read, Rear Defrosters, Kate's Constellations*. Tribute to *Kate Lorenz*. 7 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, APRIL 12

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Pallbearer, Knoll, Ordh*. 7 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, MAY 16

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

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10

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

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18

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

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

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

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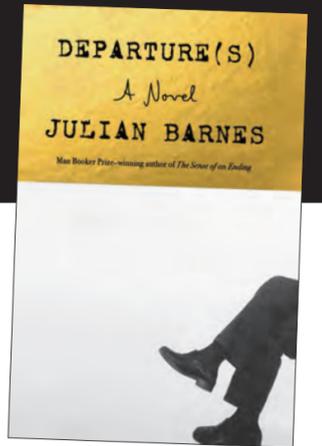
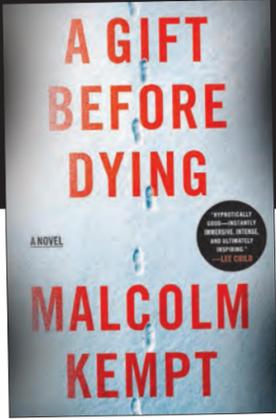
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RECOMMENDATIONS LATE WINTER READS



By CLAIRE HOPLEY

LEVERETT – This winter has been grim: not just snowy but windy, and icily chill. But it's been positively tropical compared to Cape Dorset, in the Nunavik Territory of Canada's north, the setting of Malcolm Kempt's *A Gift Before Dying* (Crown, 2026). There the sun disappears throughout winter; raging winds whip up white-out blizzards; and temperatures always come with minus signs.

This unforgiving climate is a major character in the novel, shaping everything in Cape Dorset, known since 2020 as Kinngait. The town has one of the highest crime rates in North America. Alcoholism and drug addiction are common; guns abound, fights are frequent, kids roam unattended, and ravens stalk loudly on the metal roofs.

At the beginning of Kempt's novel 10-year-old Maliktu is out on the Arctic ice spearing a seal. Meanwhile his 16-year-old older sister Pitseolala has been found hanging in an abandoned house. A suicide, it seems, but policeman Elderick Cole doesn't buy it – he spots she wasn't tall enough to attach the electrical cord round her neck to the beam high above.

A Gift Before Dying traces Cole's efforts to find Pitseolala's murderer, while simultaneously following

Maliktu, who is now left without parents or siblings. His face and body had been seriously burned in a camping accident years ago, so his path through life is dire, even by Cape Dorset standards.

Kempt follows both Maliktu's and Elderick's stories with brusque honesty, noting both the environmental and social conditions that shape their lives. Much of what he has to tell is grim, but it is his devotion to the realities of his dark Arctic setting that makes this debut novel so much more memorable than most police fiction. After reading it our winters don't seem so tough, and they can, of course, be lightened by reading such gripping novels.

Lily B. Meyer's *The End of Romance* (Viking, 2026), is another intriguing novel. It tells of Sylvie, the child of conscientious but emotionally cold parents living in chilly-sounding Marblehead.

Fortunately, Sylvie's Holocaust-survivor grandparents are committed to enjoying everything in their new life in Florida. Their joyousness inspires Sylvie's choices after her disastrous first relationship with a high school classmate Jonah. She had fallen utterly in love with him as a young teen, followed him to Amherst College, and married him when they graduated. He won't let her work and only permits her to orgasm when he wants her to – despite her highly orgasmic sexuality.

Two years later she leaves him and joins a PhD program in philosophy, believing that, of all subjects, philosophy should help with real-life problems. She develops a theory of "that not only marriage but any public or public-inspired performance of

relationships or sexuality – any romance – at once kept women from flourishing and corroded true love."

Sylvie, of course, is not the first literary heroine to swear off marriage: there's Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Jo March of *Little Women*, the women of George Gissing's *The Odd Women*; even Jane Austen's Emma flirts with the idea of staying single.

Based on these characters, readers won't be too shocked when Sylvie decides to marry Robbie. He's kind and singularly hands-off her sexual life, so she has apparently got the best of both worlds: sexual autonomy within a permanent caring relationship. But that's not the end of the tale. Nor is it the end for her best friend Nadia, who has been in thrall to a cruelly manipulative professor.

As she tells Sylvie's story Meyer ponders a range of emotional experience, often through the ideas of the philosophers Sylvie is studying. This usefully broadens the novel's range in ways that quiet potential criticism of Sylvie's anti-romance theories. If not exactly a lovable character, she is an interesting one, presented sympathetically, though not without wry humor.

While *The End of Romance* and *A Gift Before Dying* are their authors' first novels, Julian Barnes says that *Departure(s)* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2026) will be his last. He has pub-

lished translations, essays, criticism, and pseudonymous crime fiction as well as 14 previous literary novels, including *The Sense of an Ending*, which won the 2011 Booker Prize. This successful career as a novelist makes the announcement of its ending the more dramatic, encouraging his admirers to glom onto *Departure(s)* as a valediction.

Departure(s) includes a lot of autobiography. Barnes writes about growing up in London, studying at Oxford, becoming a journalist. He tells of his first marriage, his great distress at his wife's death five weeks after her cancer diagnosis, and of his own more recent diagnosis with a form of rare but treatable blood cancer. "Google that if you wish," he suggests.

Embedded in this is the story of Stephen and Jean. They were his pals at Oxford, where they developed a seemingly happy relationship, but it fell apart. They reappear in the author's later life and, aided by him, get together again, apparently happily. Will their relationship develop differently the second time around?

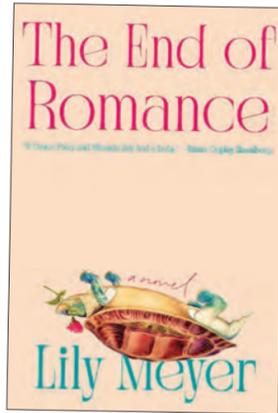
Is their story true? Were Stephen and Jean really old Oxford friends who reappeared in Julian Barnes's life, or is this a fiction tucked into an autobiography? A parable or exemplum, possibly? Though Google establishes the literal truth of autobiographical events such as his

studying Modern Languages at Oxford, is the author's life as presented in *Departure(s)* really true?

Even facts are liable to all sorts of adjustments, omissions, and other fingerings that may make them a form of fiction – texts inevitably shaped by the teller's hand. Jean, his old Oxford friend (though maybe she's invented) shows impatience with Barnes's mixture of fact and fiction. She tells him to stop writing "this hybrid stuff that you do – I think it's a mistake." On another occasion she rejects his advice, snapping "This isn't some scenario you've invented" – though quite likely it is just such a scenario.

Departure(s) is full of scenarios and various bits of hybrid stuff, including not just fictional and factual events but also essays and musings, mostly about departures in the form of deaths. These are the more potent because, as he notes, Barnes's own death cannot be far distant since he turned 80 this January.

The mixture of fictional forms is enticing not least because it comes from the hand of a master, an elegant and accomplished stylist and certainly one of the most talented English novelists of his day. As a valediction, then, it is good-humored, spritely, interesting, and possibly even a masterpiece of the genre – full of wintry themes to ponder on a winter's day.



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