

The Montague Reporter

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\$2

editor@montaguereporter.org

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

Tech School Trumpets Aircraft Maintenance Shop



ROBERTSON PHOTO

Franklin County Technical School superintendent Richard Martin thanked state officials on Monday for making the school's new hangar possible.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

TURNERS FALLS – Massachusetts Secretary of Education Stephen Zrike and his legislative director successfully landed a plane at the Orange airport on Monday – inside a virtual flight simulator at Franklin County Technical School.

The simulator occupies a small room inside the school's new 12,000-square-foot hangar at the Turners Falls municipal airport, the home of the school's newly certified aviation maintenance technology program. The hangar's construction was completed in January with the help of a \$4.2 million grant from the state's Skills Capital Grant program, which aims to increase vocational schools' capacity to train students for high-demand careers.

"Our kids are asking for it, the demand is there, and our workforce needs it," Zrike, who was appointed as the state's education secretary in February, told the Re-

porter. "We've got to try to continue to find and expand access for young people, whether it's through regional vocational schools like this, or through traditional high schools that are comprehensive, that are offering more and more programming."

The hour-long visit to Turners Falls on Monday – April 13 – was the last stop state education officials made on their whirlwind tour of the region for "413 Day," a multi-pronged effort to highlight state investments in western Massachusetts.

Standing behind a podium flanked by two small planes and a helicopter, Franklin Tech superintendent Richard Martin told the assembly of government officials and scribes that the new aviation program was a decade in the making.

"The reason for the program was really based on a major industry demand, not just locally, but nationally as well," Martin said. "With aviation maintenance see **AIRCRAFT** page A6

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Town Meeting Will Receive Building Debt Projections

By JEFF SINGLETON

Meeting over Zoom on Monday, the Montague selectboard put the finishing touches on preparations for the May 2 annual town meeting, discussed an evaluation of the Clean Water Facility, and approved a variety of grants and grant applications.

The longest discussion involved whether the materials sent to town meeting members should include a document about the tax impact of proposed debt exclusions to fund a new main library in Turners Falls and a new Franklin County Technical School building.

Debt exclusions, which allow municipalities to tax for specified projects above the levy limit set by the state law known as Proposition 2½, must be passed by both town meeting and a townwide vote. The library project is on the agenda for the May 2 town meeting, and the tech school vote will take place in the fall.

Town administrator Walter Ramsey justified putting information about both exclusions in the packet, even though one is not yet up for a vote, by arguing that "in situations like this, the town's role is to not just present the project, but to ensure that the voters have enough

see **MONTAGUE** page A5

G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Hillcrest's End Now Officially On the Table As an Option

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Interim superintendent Tari Thomas told the Gill-Montague school committee Tuesday night that the "calendar of deliverables starts ticking" on May 1 for the proposed Sheffield Elementary expansion, which has been accepted by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) as eligible for matching funds.

The school board is first expected to appoint a building committee to study the feasibility of the project. "There is no planned solution," Thomas said. "Feasibility is going to tell you what your options are."

That committee will consist of two district parents, two non-voting district employees, and three members of the community at large. A general appeal for volunteers is going out, and interested parties are asked to contact Tara see **GMRSD** page A6

Community College Staff Ask for Details on Deficit

By MIKE JACKSON

GREENFIELD – "We want answers, clear answers, about why we have this deficit," Trevor Kearns, an English professor at Greenfield Community College, said on Wednesday as he and a number of colleagues prepared to visit a meeting of the college's Board of Trustees.

"We're the only community col-

lege [in Massachusetts] to have a deficit," he added. "We want the Trustees to pay closer attention to this, and maybe even investigate the series of decisions that led us to this point."

Kearns, still the junior member of his department after 18 years, serves as president of the Greenfield Community College Professional see **COLLEGE** page A7



JACKSON PHOTO

Union members lined the hall outside Wednesday's meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Gill Becomes Eligible For State Housing Grants

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL – Emissaries from Boston, most notably Housing and Livable Communities (HLC) secretary Juana Matias and lieutenant governor Kim Driscoll, announced to a packed town hall in Gill Monday morning that the town has become eligible for a pool of state funding to support new housing.

Gill is one of six western Massachusetts towns – along with Bernardston, Buckland, Deerfield,

Easthampton, and Great Barrington – to be named "Rural and Small Town Housing Choice Communities," a new designation that makes it easier for small towns to access the Housing Choice grant program.

Driscoll and her entourage arrived late, and Matias, Gill town administrator Ray Purington, and state senators Jo Comerford and Susanah Whipps stalled for time.

Matias explained that the designation was created after the state see **HOUSING** page A5

Planning Underway to Fix Drainage on the Hill

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – A small crowd at the Shea Theater heard a presentation Monday afternoon about a project to evaluate potential solutions to stormwater runoff in the Hill neighborhood of Turners Falls. The water has been causing soil erosion and is a major contributor to the town's combined sewer flows, which must be treated at the wastewater plant or else overflow into the Connecticut River.

The "workshop" session was run by the engineering firm Fuss & O'Neill, which has been hired to create a "Green Infrastructure Master Plan" for the town. Last year Montague was awarded \$458,750 under the state's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) pro-

gram to create the plan.

Assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller explained that the firm has been hired "to help us brainstorm some solutions to what stormwater maintenance would look like."

The main presentation was a slide show by the project manager, landscape architect Andy Bohne. "Today is about telling you what we know so far, you telling us about what's happening onsite we may be have missed," he said. The firm will return for a second meeting on Thursday with "different ideas, or concepts, that we may have to help minimize some of the impacts from stormwater."

"Nothing's final," Bohne said. "We want your input. We want you see **DRAINAGE** page A4

High School Sports Week: Teams Slowly Shaping Up

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – This reporter was only able to attend high school sports games two days this week because of illness. Last Friday I went to the Turners/Tech softball game, and on Tuesday I split time between Tech softball and the track meets and tennis match held at Turners.

While I was out, the Turn-

ers baseball team beat Athol by a run and the Franklin Tech Eagles notched their first win of the softball season.

The Tech baseballers and the Turners boys' tennis team, meanwhile, have quietly built perfect records, beating every opponent they have faced so far. Tech is currently 4-0 and have outscored their opponents 36-5 in their last three see **SPORTS** page A8



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Franklin Tech athlete Abby Lenois clears the bar at 4'8" for as Turners Falls High School girls' and Tech boys' track teams hosted the Athol Bears on Tuesday.

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The Montague Reporter

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August 2002

Borrowed Time

World politics is playing out on a scale of billions: a \$5 billion loan from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan; a \$1 billion entry fee to the Board of Peace; \$38 billion lent by JP Morgan and Mitsubishi to Oracle; a \$1 billion Homeland Security contract with Palantir; a \$2 billion World Bank loan to Turkey for an Asia-to-Europe rail link; 8.3 billion people.

At home, we have the scale of millions: \$236 million for a new tech school building; \$24 million

for a library; a \$2.7 million deficit at the community college. It's almost equally incomprehensible.

And on the personal scale: a pizza is over \$20 now? A load of laundry costs \$7.50? *Since when?*

As we brace for the effects of the oil supply shock to reach our shores – literally, as tankers that left the Persian Gulf before the closure of the Strait of Hormuz remain in transit for up to 45 days – Americans are frozen in suspense. It'll be bad, right?



Clockwise from top left: Better Together Dog Rescue shelter manager Amber Richards, founder Jenny Franz, and two of their "perfectly imperfect" resident canines. Better Together helps dogs find homes by offering transportation, foster care, adoption, and community support. Find them at 163 Montague Road in Leverett, the site of the former Dakin Humane Society.

Letters to the Editors



Naughton: 'Is It Likely? I'm Not Convinced'

Your April 9 article about the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board reports that "[t]he STRPB's position is that... starting a new... School District... would be roughly budget neutral... but would create sweeping educational benefits... putting the towns on a more sustainable track in the long run."

One member is quoted as saying, "We're going to have over 90% of the districts in 'hold harmless' in the next couple of years.... We have to... build back enrollments in our districts, because that's the only way you can build financial economies of scale."

The article notes that the STRPB has hired someone to help with "communication strategy." I hope part of that strategy will be to explain how merging the two districts will "build back enrollments," because I don't see how that will happen, which makes any promise of sustainability optimistic at best.

The potential educational benefits of merging GMRSD and PVRSD seem well-established, and it's possible that those benefits would lead to fewer students choosing out or going to charter schools, and/or more students choosing in from other districts. That would be financially beneficial, but choice students don't actually take – or bring – a lot of money with them, and neither they nor charter students affect foundation enrollment.

Foundation enrollment, which determines state school aid, has been declining in both districts, causing them to be "held harmless." A merged district would be held harmless as well – if it was lucky – and it would likely need to increase its enrollment by more than 100 students to get out. Where would those students come from? They could be new stu-

dents moving in to the district, or students who are now choosing non-public options (such as private schools) opting instead for public schooling.

Is this possible? Sure. Is it likely? I'm not convinced.

Under the current educational funding formula, districts in "hold harmless" receive minimal state aid increases every year. In order to maintain a budget that would continue to support the educational benefits, a merged district would almost certainly need to ask the member towns for help. That's what the two districts (and others) are doing now; merging them wouldn't change that reality.

The real solution for the financial crisis in school funding is not merging districts with declining enrollments, it's reforming the state's educational funding formula to adequately fund those districts. It's taken far too long, but finally there seems to be a growing recognition on Beacon Hill that something needs to be done, and our local legislators, educators, and others are working hard to help make that happen.

If it does, it will be a good thing for all of our local districts, as well as others around the state, whether they merge or not. If it doesn't, merging won't help dodge the financial bullet.

This merger proposal has merits, mainly the potential for real educational benefits. It also has challenges. In my opinion, it does not offer a promise of financial sustainability. If I'm wrong, I hope someone from the STRPB will explain why.

Mike Naughton
Millers Falls

Atwood: An Open Treasure Chest for All

It's hard for me to imagine a better investment in our community than a new, expanded and accessible public library, because a public library is that rare and beautiful place that is actually for every single one of us.

Everybody is welcome at a public library, and anybody can find material on any subject they want. That goes for me and you and every one of our neighbors, for now and for the future. It doesn't matter how politics or fashions change, we can each find what we want at a public library. What a treasure!

If you don't currently use the library, you might not know the real value of a place where everybody has access to resources regardless of their politics, age, income, health status, mobility, mood, ancestry, pigmentation, hair length, religion, marital status, etc., and how important it is to have that free public space for those that need it. To one and all, a public library provides free access to technology and education and entertainment, public events, classes, and crafts. It doesn't matter who you are; you are welcome at your public library.

Need a public bathroom? A tax form? Directions? A computer, fax, scan, or photocopy? Tech help? Employment help? Information? Entertainment?

The library can help you get it, free of charge.

Did you know that at our local libraries you can get material delivered from all the other libraries in central and western Massachusetts, for free? If you haven't tried it, please do, and imagine how much easier and more pleasant it would be in a new library with easy parking, indoor and outdoor seat-

ing, and a space that is easy to navigate.

If the main Montague library is able to expand, we'll all get access to quiet gathering spaces, social spaces, and study spaces, space for teens, local art (could be yours, or your neighbor's), local history, and more space to store things for all of us to borrow: not just books and movies and magazines, but also things like games, technological equipment, musical instruments, and potentially sporting and cooking equipment.

One amazing thing about a public library is that it's your public space, and if you advocate for something and demonstrate a need for it, the library will attempt to provide it, because that's what they do: public libraries help people get what they want to make their lives better, for free and regardless of who you are.

Yes, it will cost some to make it a reality, about \$160 per year for the average local homeowner, which seems like a small cost to pay for all the services that will be made available to you and anyone who needs them or wants them.

We have a special opportunity to take advantage of millions of dollars that are temporarily available as funding from our state for this specific valuable project, so if Town Meeting votes in May in favor of sending the vote to all eligible voters in town, we'll all have the chance in June to vote for a town library that serves the entire town.

I encourage everyone to vote in favor of a great Montague Public Library, for you, for your neighbors, and for our entire community.

Matt Atwood
Lake Pleasant

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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

That long, **rolling thunder** Tuesday evening. We need the rain, though not all at once, as the ground is so dry it has forgotten how to soak the water up, and it risks floods.

Brush fires earlier that day, hopping down the Pan Am Southern line and crossing over onto the interstate median. Billowing smoke, traffic detoured through neighborhoods, and what sounds like a lot of work before they were contained.

Building fires this week **displaced residents** in Sunderland and Leverett. Be careful.

Open rehearsals for the **Montague Community Band** will be held at the bandstand at Peskeompskut Park at 7 p.m. on five Mondays: April 27; May 4, 11, and 18; and June 1. Bring your own instrument and learn how to read sheet music ahead of time. The concerts, if you make the cut, continue on Mondays through the summer. The center line of the bandstand points straight at the editor's window at the *Montague Reporter* office, so I'll be listening!

And another sign of spring: **Group rides** from Sadie's Bikes start today and will alternate on Thursdays between gravel routes and mountain bike routes, with a "second, more chill route option" each week for the more chill people.

To get on the mailing list, visit the bike shop on Canal Street or find a QR code at sadiesbikes.com.

Lyn Clark, our cartoonist, board member, and distribution volunteer, writes:

"**Barbara Alfange**, longtime resident of Leverett (and, more recently, of The Arbors at Greenfield) died on April 10 at age 93. Barbara was a bright, interesting woman, and those who knew her will remember her ready wit and gracious, urbane manner. They may also cringe, remembering that she was a Scrabble player to be feared, one who took no prisoners. She was a staunch supporter of the *Montague Reporter* who looked forward every week to a new issue, and in recent years gave generously to our annual Writers' Fund campaign. Those of us fortunate enough to know Barbara will miss her."

Hampshire College is closing. People love to hate but I moved here to work at a company a Hampshire graduate founded, and I notice its other effects – the effects, i.e., of luring young dissidents into the Connecticut River Valley for half a century – all around us. I guess its function is now carried out by other, cheaper, means.

The **nurses at the Greenfield hospital** voted Tuesday to authorize a strike, if their union bargaining committee chooses to schedule one. The vote came in at 98.2% to 1.8%.

On Wednesday night the Greenfield city council approved a resolution in support of the nurses as they negotiate a new contract with the hospital's owner, Baystate Health.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Reader Shelly B. sent in these photographs on Wednesday, with a note:

"I snapped these at the Third Street Community Garden this morning – healthy rows of green garlic sprouting, and the **first blossom** of our little Nanking Cherry that was planted last year during a community garden work day."

A free "**3-on-3 basketball tournament and block party**" is scheduled for the court at Unity Park in Turners Falls on Saturday, May 2, with food and games, a free throw contest, and prizes donated by a number of local businesses.

Register to play in the first annual Homecourt Classic at www.tinyurl.com/homecourtclassic. You don't have to have a team put together to sign up. There's one bracket for players aged 12 to 17, and another for everyone 18 and older. Registration closes next Friday, April 24, so get on it...

Looks like there's a bunch of stuff happening this weekend in and around the **free store on Fourth Street** in Turners. See our Events Calendar on pages B6 and B7 for details.

This Friday, April 17 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. a **bystander training** for the LUCE Immigrant Justice Network, and a fundraiser for its hotline, will be held at All Souls Church in Greenfield. Registration is requested at bit.ly/FCbystander.

Were you or someone you know **laid off from L.S. Starrett** in Athol last June? Resources for re-employment are available through MassHire, and an information session will be held this Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Athol library.

Local stone carver Tim De Christopher, whose signature rotund stone sculptures you have likely seen in this vicinity, has work in an exhibit opening this week at the Worcester Art Museum. The exhibit, *Repeat After Me*, features eight creators with disabilities, and will run through May 13.

Next Sunday, April 26 the Bombyx Center in Florence is hosting a panel, put together by the David Ruggles Center, about the **Northampton Association**, the utopian community that settled in that neighborhood in the early 1840s.

The Association was contemporary with the Hopedale Community in Milford, which lasted 14 years, and the ridiculous Fruitlands experiment in Harvard, which lasted less than one, as well as the peak of the Shaker village out in Hancock.

The settlers in Florence, motivated by abolitionism to provide an alternative to cotton fabric, grew mulberry bushes to feed silkworms. Silk weaving was already underway in the neighborhood when they arrived but the Association organized it into worker-owned cooperatives, and the community soon swelled to nearly 250.

The panelists are Christopher Clark, Steve Strimer, Tom Goldscheider, and Larisa Demos, tickets are \$5 to \$25, and the event starts at 3:30 p.m.

Residents of **Montague's Precinct 4** are invited to a public meeting at the Gill-Montague senior center at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 30 to discuss the May 2 town meeting with their precinct representatives. Precinct 4 comprises the western section of the Hill and an inland section of downtown Turners above Fifth Street – the *Reporter* offices sit on a block recently transferred into it from Precinct 5.

Sharp-eyed reader Rob Skelton noticed that we spelled judgment "**judgement**" in two separate and unrelated instances last week. It's an accepted spelling, but not the one we prefer.

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

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Tree Advisory Committee Seeks New Member

By DAVID DETMOLD

MONTAGUE – As Arbor Day approaches, the Montague Tree Advisory Committee (MTAC) has an opening for a new member. Since its formation 11 years ago, the committee has helped to plant more than 700 shade and fruit trees along village tree belts, in parks and cemeteries, and on public land throughout the five villages of Montague.

The MTAC wrote grants to support the expansion of the Franklin Tech School's tree nursery in 2016, to secure funding to plant 32 trees in the center of Millers Falls in 2018, and to win approval from the US Forestry Service to plant over 600 trees in Montague in 2019.

For a small town with a limited budget for tree planting, these grants have provided a lifeline to a greener, more resilient future for our village centers and our town as a whole.

Our ongoing collaboration with the Franklin Tech tree nursery ensures an affordable and educational pathway for the maintenance and growth of our municipal tree inventory.

In 2017, the tree committee founded the Montague Wood Bank, the first wood bank in Franklin County. Located on the east side of the transfer station off Sandy Lane, the wood bank provides free cordwood for income-eligible residents by processing, splitting, and stacking municipal shade trees that have come down in winter storms, or succumbed to normal mortality. Volunteers from MTAC have helped split and stack cordwood at the wood bank, and have supported its maintenance with successful grant applications for needed equipment like a wood splitter, chainsaws, and hand tools.

The committee has held educational programs for the public to

learn about the many benefits of municipal shade trees, which include beautifying our business districts, improving residential property values, and reducing the need for air conditioning in private homes as the Earth's climate continues to warm.

Annual Arbor Day plantings in each of the villages welcome volunteers to learn how to plant and care for young trees. Pruning workshops for residents and DPW employees promote the healthy growth of our young trees.

As the emerald ash borer swept through Montague in 2022, the tree committee rallied to extend the lifespan of more than 20 ash trees – including the mature trees fronting the business district on the northwest side of Avenue A between Spinner Park and the Crocker Building – with injections of encapsulated pesticides into the trees' vascular systems.

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Week of April 20
in Montague

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OP ED

Earth Day at Rock Dam

By KARL MEYER

TURNERS FALLS – Two of the Connecticut's critical ecosystem features remain largely hidden today in a three-mile corridor bordered by Montague, Gill, and Greenfield: Peskeomscut, the ancient place name for once-spectacular waterfalls (today's Turners Falls); and Rock Dam, a unique, 190-million-year-old, low and craggy natural falls two miles downstream.

Today Rock Dam is largely bereft of anything resembling natural flow. Its upper left bank oozes red, manganese-laced slime dripping and infiltrating from the adjacent canal. Alternately flow-starved and deluged, Rock Dam remains derelict largely due to operations of the Turners Falls Dam in service to the massive water appetite of the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage station five miles upriver. The Rock Dam is the critical natural spawning site for federally endangered shorthorn sturgeon. Today, a sign there warns it is subject to the pollution from combined sewer outflows.

Every spring for millennia here the surging Connecticut frothed and plunged through its massive, curving cataract and wall-to-wall rock channel downstream in a fevered run to the sea. But just as spectacular were millions of spawning-run fish hidden in those currents, heading upstream against that flow.

But a first dam built in 1798 buried Peskeomscut's falls, stopping flows and diverting currents. Since then successive dams and canal diversions have starved yet more of the river's life. The dam at Turners Falls essentially ended teeming runs of millions of shad and herring, and lesser pulses of sea lamprey and already-dwindling populations of cold-river-loving salmon.

A second crushing blow came in 1849 when a new dam at South Hadley Falls sealed off that ancient migration route 36 miles downriver for the next full century. But by 1955 Holyoke Dam had installed the river's first successful fish passage. By the late 1970s its lifts were passing over a million migrating fish upstream each spring, but hundreds of thousands were then thwarted trying to pass Turners Falls.

Federal legislation mandates fish passage on interstate rivers. So by 1980 fisheries agencies here negotiated a fish passage solution with Northeast Utilities emphasizing a long-extirpated Atlantic salmon run, salmon hatcheries, and the Turners Falls power canal. Their fix included three distinct fish ladders, all serving to divert every migrating fish into the alien habitat of that 2.5-mile canal.

It proved an immediate failure. Just a small percentage of the river's ancient migrants seeking wide-open Vermont and New Hampshire habitats made it past that dam annually.

More recently, negotiations on fish passage required for a new Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license for the Turners Falls hydro and Northfield pump-

ing operations began in 2012. The old licenses expired on April 30, 2018, but those energy assets have continued a cycle of profit takings, then being sold off—passing from Northeast Utilities to Energy Capital Partners, to GDF-Suez, Engie, and lastly, in 2016, to Canada's \$250 billion-plus global powerhouse, Public Sector Pension Investments. They purchased the FirstLight Power labeled assets two years before its licenses were up.

PSP Investments assures clients it always pays the minimum of required taxes. They've done that here. They've clawed back community tax levies that poorer county towns have relied on for decades as the cost of a business that massively impacts local and federal natural resources. And with its battery of DC and Boston lawyers and consultants, FirstLight has continued operating under the old licenses, pocketing Northfield sales topping \$150 million for just the single reported year 2019. This while quietly handing out small community grants that garner outsized PR and quiet pushback from cash-strapped towns.

This April 30 will begin PSP/FirstLight's ninth year of operating with no new licenses, new flows, or a dime spent improving fish passage.

Northfield Mountain is this river's killer. Its massive suction literally reverses miles of flow for hours, sucking untallied hundreds of millions of fish, eggs, and other aquatic creatures through its turbines each year. Nothing survives. Far from renewable or hydropower, Northfield is a massive fossil fuel consumer, run on a buy-low/sell high scheme: it buys up ISO-New England's dirt-cheap, overwhelmingly natural-gas-produced electricity at night to suck up the river, then dumps it back through turbines for peak profits realized far from this Valley.

Last October, FirstLight reported that Northfield consumed 1,127,484,544 gross kilowatt-hours (GKH) of ISO-NE's gas-fueled juice, and reproduced just 840,654,933 GKH of peak-priced electricity, in the year ending September 30. Meanwhile their Turners Falls hydro assets generated 245,112,843 GKH.

Thus Northfield's generating deficit, some 287 million GKH, erased virtually all the actual hydropower produced here, which had been enough to power the 35,000 homes in Franklin County. But even that amount leaves all our town offices, businesses, stop lights, factories, malls, schools, rinks, grocery stores and pot grow houses with no juice. Northfield remains a monument to heedless consumerism, and a dim future for our planet and kids.

We're again in a corporate war over oil. But at noon this Earth Day I'll head down to Rock Dam to honor the Connecticut River on its own terms. If you find your way down its steep, eroding slopes, join me in the quiet, remembering.

Karl Meyer is a member of the Society of Environmental Journalists. He lives in Greenfield.

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Town Meeting Warrant; Vacancy

By KEITH WATERS

The Erving selectboard met on Monday, and also held a joint meeting with the finance committee. The board finalized a 34-article warrant for the annual town meeting, which will take place Wednesday, May 13.

In addition to being able to vote on these matters, Erving residents will have the opportunity to fill many town staff positions – 14, in fact – in the election on Monday, May 4.

One of the questions on the May 4 ballot, in addition to all the roles to be elected, is whether to change the treasurer position from elected to appointed. Supporters of this change believe the role of treasurer has become so complicated that it is not easy for a person without the proper experience to handle all the matters involved.

The boards and town administrator Bryan Smith have drafted the prospective annual budgets up so that the town will be able to pay whoever takes on the role, elected

or appointed.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith disclosed, without naming the staff member, that the board of health clerk has “unfortunately passed away, unexpectedly.” Given the urgent need to fill the position, as they already have more work than they are comfortable with, the members of the board of health are requesting an additional \$20,000 for the role.

The staff role is shared with two other local towns, and in the interim the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) has been providing assistance, which it has not yet billed for. The selectboard and fin com did not decide on the issue, but agreed to address it further. The board of health had already asked the town if it could increase in size from three members to five, and the town has not yet decided on that.

After a review of the 34 warrant articles for the town meeting and some last-minute editing, and after the warrant was approved, fin com chair Debra Smith asked if the group

could celebrate with fireworks. Selectboard member Jim Loynd replied that he thought this year has already had enough fireworks.

After the joint meeting, the selectboard approved a two-year extension of an agreement with Greenfield to administer the Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Services District. This service assists veterans in many matters, including Veterans Affairs healthcare, pensions and compensation, death and burial benefits, and obtaining military records.

The water department needs new meter reading software before September. Bryan Smith and water superintendent Pete Sanders said the current system just barely made it through the last read, and they would like its replacement deployed by August so they can iron out any last-minute issues. The service the town has been looking at is more expensive than expected. The board could not come to an agreement on this, and will address it again at their next meeting on Monday, April 27.

EYES ON MONTAGUE
CALL FOR PHOTOS

RiverCulture is inviting the public to submit photos that capture the wonderfulness of Montague's five villages, its natural beauty and cultural vitality.

Winning photos will be used in the **new RiverCulture website, to be unveiled in June. Deadline 5/4**

Thirty winners will each receive a \$20 gift card to a business or restaurant.

Visit www.riverculture.org for Info and the intake form.

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DRAINAGE from page A1
to throw darts.”

The team, he added, has been working with students and teachers at Sheffield Elementary School for four or five months. They have gone into classrooms discussing “what happens when the rain falls – where does it go?,” he said, and the students are going to construct a rain garden on the school property.

Senior geotechnical engineer Jhon Escobar said soil borings the team had taken on the Hill in the early winter showed an upper layer of sand and gravel, and a lower layer of clay deposited by glacial Lake Hitchcock. Water resource engineer Caitlin Strzegowski discussed the findings of how water moves on top of and below the surface, showing a map of water flows in seven different sections of the neighborhood.

A second map shared by Bohne made it clear that the project area extends well beyond the “top of the Hill,” from the golf course on its west to the edge of High Street in the north, and beyond Millers Falls Road to the Connecticut River on its east. He then showed a series of horrifying photographs of sinkholes and collapsing ravines in various locations.

Several attendees complained they had not seen much publicity about the workshop. One resident, who identified himself only as Neil, asked if the project was using the “hundreds of photographs” the town had taken of the insides of its sewers. Bohne said evaluating the sewer system was not part of the planning project's mandate, but that the firm was “using that information to understand where certain tie-in points happen, and where the overflow or connection points happen.”

Another, Steve Winters, said he lived across the street from the rain garden the Sheffield students plan to build. “I taught some of this stuff at a

community college,” he said. “Water gardens sound terrific – and there's some in Unity Park, by the way – [but] maintenance is expensive, and it's got to be maintained.”

“Absolutely,” said Bohne.

Winter went on to say that most water drains away from the neighborhood, and that “everything's too dry.” He recommended building swales that would “slow the water down” and allow more vegetation to grow.

Dick Messick of High Street, “all the way up north in that Hill neighborhood perimeter,” thanked the engineers for their “hard work,” then commented that the Hill is “really a collection of a number of neighborhoods, and that's part of the challenge you have to deal with, because the physical makeup of them are different.”

For example, Messick said, his section has sidewalks while some others don't.

Messick said he was under the impression that the tree belt between the street and sidewalk is “really town property,” but he had seen many homeowners in the neighborhood plant small gardens in those spaces. He asked if the town could plant in the belts.

Nolan-Zeller said that as he understood it, the status of the tree belt varies on different streets and is “sometimes a bit of a gray area.”

Public works superintendent Sam Urkiel said that the issue “essentially goes back to the registry of deeds, with property layouts and pins and bounds and a bunch of survey stuff.”

For the last half-hour of the workshop, attendees were invited to examine four stations at the front of the theater with placards showing geotechnical information, “existing conditions,” street design, and stormwater infrastructure.

The follow-up session will be held this Thursday at 6 p.m. at the Shea Theater.



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HOUSING from page A1

received feedback that “the standard Housing Choice framework did not always reflect the realities of smaller communities.”

In small towns, she said, “every home matters – a one- or two-home project matters... Making room for one more family matters.”

Comerford said Matias’s office had worked with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), the Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA), and local towns to apply for the title.

“This work was painstaking, and it was long,” she said. “HLC is really on the vanguard of the Healey-Driscoll administration’s commitment to making sure that western and north-central Massachusetts have a fair shot.”

FRCOG livability planner Mariah Kurtz told the Reporter that she and housing and livability program manager Megan Rhodes had worked with the towns on the applications.

The criteria that Gill met include having fewer than 7,000 residents, growing its housing by over 1.5% between 2021 and 2025, and meeting at least nine of a list of 21 “best practices” in planning, zoning, regional collaboration, and affordability supports.

“Our Commonwealth is in the middle of a housing crisis,” said Purington, “especially at the two ends of the housing spectrum – there isn’t enough affordable housing and entry-level homes for our young families. There isn’t enough senior housing to meet the needs of

our older residents who want to downsize and remain in their hometown.”

Purington said that while there is not much public land in Gill available for development, the designation may bring funding for a range of approaches. Examples he gave included a feasibility study for siting new buildings, upgrades to the sewer pump station in the Riverside neighborhood, or a “mini-grant” to a homeowner who needs to expand their septic system to accommodate an accessory dwelling unit.

Whipps said the “ripple effect” of senior housing, which the grant program supports, includes opening up houses for younger families to move into, which in turn bolsters local workforce development and public schools.

The press conference was part of “413 Day,” April 13, a media blitz across the western counties by state officials to tout new programs and resources.

“No matter where I am, no matter where the governor is, the number-one issue on people’s minds to us is affordability,” said Driscoll, after having arrived. “And housing is a big piece of that, because we haven’t built enough housing over the last several decades.”

Driscoll said the Housing Choice program is part of an “all-of-the-above” approach to supporting housing growth of different sorts, accessible to different income levels, and that it comes with both preferential access to other state grant programs to support public infrastructure required by growth and “cold, hard cash.”



MONTAGUE from page A1

context to understand the broader implications of that decision.”

The document, which Ramsey prepared with town accountant Angelica Desroches, showed that funding the library would add \$159 annually to the taxes on a median single-family home, and the tech school building would add \$241. It also concludes that approving both projects would “reduce future financial flexibility,” and may negatively impact the town’s bond rating for brief periods over a 24-year repayment schedule.

Selectboard member Rich Kuklewicz, who also serves on the tech school committee, noted that a recent estimate of the cost of the school building project had “come down about \$10 million.” He urged skeptics to attend a presentation at Greenfield Community College on May 12 at which staff, engineers, and the project manager will answer questions.

Town meeting member Ariel Elan questioned including the document in the meeting packet as it had not gone through the “lengthy and very challenging process to get on our warrant,” and said she felt it implied that the tech school is “something that we will have to pay for,” whereas the library is not.

Ramsey told Elan the document had been vetted by the finance committee.

Board member Marina Goldman echoed Elan’s concerns, saying that since the tech school estimate had changed, the comparison was “not only unfair to the library, it is unfair to the tech school.”

In the end the board voted 2 to 0, with Goldman abstaining, to include the document in the packet, with updated numbers on the school building cost and a new paragraph explaining why the information was important. The packet was scheduled to be mailed Tuesday.

A Gold Standard

Another item covered in depth was police chief Jason Haskins’s request that the town seek accreditation of his department by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission, a non-profit or-

ganization.

Haskins said the accreditation would help the department establish “best practices, especially when it comes to the administrative level of policing,” and reduce liability. The department would be required to document its standards and undergo a review every three years, “to make sure you are doing what your policies say you are doing.” While the Montague department is currently “certified” by the commission, Haskins said the higher tier of accreditation was the “gold standard.”

Haskins also linked accreditation with his desire to restructure the department. “I need more administrative personnel,” he told the board. Selectboard member Matt Lord said this might require the approval of the police unions and town meeting as it would involve changes in pay grades.

Ramsey said Haskins’s presentation was only a “broad stroke” explaining the virtues of accreditation to the board, which expressed its approval but did not take a vote.

Haskins also linked accreditation with his desire to restructure the police department. “I need more administrative personnel,” he told the board.

Still wearing their police commissioners’ hats, the board also approved a request to renew an agreement with the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office to train deputies and utilize their services in Montague. Haskins said this relationship preceded his appointment, and that the deputies assist local police with limited arrest powers and no traffic enforcement.

Pollution Control

Clean Water Facility superintendent Chelsey Little came before the board in their role as sewer commissioners.

Little reviewed six requests from sewer users for abatement of

their semiannual bills. The fees are based on water usage, as previously recorded by the water department, and an abatement is generally granted if the superintendent finds a homeowner has remedied a source of leakage since the reading. On Little’s recommendation, the commission granted three abatements and rejected three.

The board then heard a report from a “compliance inspection” by the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). Little noted that the inspection had taken place last May, but the report was only issued recently. “I wish I had that long to do my reports for them,” she said. “That’s all I’m going to say about that.”

MassDEP found one discharge from the plant in 2025 had exceeded the treatment plant’s licensed limits, and requested evidence of compliance within 60 days. It also found that the plant’s operations and maintenance manual had not been updated since 1982.

Nevertheless, it found the facility’s general condition “satisfactory,” which according to Little is “the best outcome” the agency offers. She said that rather than hire a consulting firm to update the manual she would enjoy updating it “in-house,” meaning by herself.

Curbs & Stoplights

The selectboard awarded a \$399,000 contract to the construction company H.M. Nunes & Sons for work on a section of the Avenue A streetscape. The request was made by Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA), which oversees the streetscape work for the town as it is funded by federal community development block grants.

McHugh said the work will take place from Fourth Street to Fifth Street on the northwest side of the avenue, and will include sidewalk and planter upgrades as well as an access ramp for businesses on the corner of Fifth Street.

The board authorized assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller to apply for a technical assistance grant from the state Federal

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

MONTAGUE ZBA #26-03

Notice is hereby given that the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, April 22, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** VIA ZOOM and IN PERSON at the Montague Town Hall Annex conference room, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA to review a Special Permit Request from **St. Stanislaus BM Society** for a front setback reduction from the required 15 ft to 10 ft, in order to construct a walk-in refrigeration unit under Sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.3(b) and 9.2 of the Zoning Bylaws located at **6 K Street (Parcel: 04-0-0268), in the Neighborhood Business (NB) District.** The filing is available for review at Town Hall.

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

Joshua Lively, Chairman
Montague Zoning Board of Appeals

INVITATION FOR BIDS

Unity Park Playground Improvements Project

The Town of Montague is accepting sealed bids for the replacement of pour-in-place rubber surfacing, and the purchase and installation of a new tube slide to replace an existing piece of equipment at Unity Park in Turners Falls, MA.

Sealed Bids must be received by Tues. May 5, 2026 at 1:00 p.m., at which time all bid packages will be opened and read at the Town Hall Annex Meeting Room at 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA, 01376.

A bid conference will be held on Thurs. April 23, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. at Unity Park, 56 First St., Turners Falls, MA 01376. Attendance is not mandatory but is strongly encouraged. The IFB is available at www.montague-ma.gov/BIDS. Registration is required. Written questions can be submitted to the Project Manager, Chris Nolan-Zeller, at chrisn@montague-ma.gov until Mon. April 27, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

The Town of Montague reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, in total or in part, as they deem in their best interest. This solicitation is being undertaken per M.G.L. c. 30, § 39M and work is subject to Prevailing Wage Requirements.

Funds and Infrastructure Office for design and engineering to improve the two traffic signals on Avenue A. The state has a \$2.5 million “pot of money” for the program, which directs funds to small and underfunded rural communities, and there is a relatively simple application.

Kuklewicz, who has served as the town’s alternate inspector of wires, said the control systems and lighting at the two intersections are “pretty aged.”

Other Business

Ramsey announced that the state had awarded Montague two grants under the MassHousing Neighborhood Stabilization Program. One will help fund the six units being developed by Habitat for Humanity on First Street, and the other a house on Unity Street that is being reconditioned by Rural Development, Inc., an adjunct of the FCRHRA.

The selectboard approved an agreement with FirstLight Power to use the company’s property on

First Street for an indigenous dye and print workshop with Elizabeth James Perry, a member of the Aquinnah Wampanoag tribe, on May 30. The event is being paid for by the Montague Cultural Council and the Turners Falls Cultural District is “chipping in,” said RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto.

The board also approved a request from the Country Cremee to use the sidewalk on Avenue A and Second Street for tables and chairs. At the end of the meeting, under “topics not anticipated” the board approved a common victualler’s license for the Two Ghosts Vinyl Café, which requires the license to serve non-alcoholic beverages. The café opened on Wednesday.

The board appointed Joseph Niedbala as an alternate member of the zoning board of appeals, and Goldman as the selectboard representative to negotiate a contract renewal with Little.

The next selectboard meeting will be held Monday, April 27.



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LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was on April 14, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Fire Budget Vote

How many firefighters does a department need?

That's an increasingly contentious question in Turners Falls. Now there are eight career firefighters, a chief and deputy chief, and 12 volunteers.

"We strive to have our call force at 30 people," said fire chief Bob Escott. "But we simply have

less people to draw from. We operate with two firefighters on duty.... When we go out on a call, there's nobody left at the station. Off-duty guys are called in to cover," he explained, leading to more overtime pay.

"In 1984, when I first became a full-time firefighter, we did around 150 calls that entire year," Escott said. The department now handles about 1,200 a year, roughly half of which are medical calls. Three years ago the department added ambulance service to avoid long waits for an ambulance to arrive.

20 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on April 13, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Selectboard Member Seeks 13th Term

Running for his 13th consecutive three-year term on the Wendell selectboard, Ted Lewis faces no formal opponent in the May 1 election but apathy.

"I want people to get out and vote," Lewis said. "Even if they don't agree with me, I want them to vote. That's what people are losing their life for, the right to vote. If you don't like what I've done, write

somebody in.... If I get beat, that's the voters' wish. But when only 20 to 25% of the people turn out to the ballot box, that's terrible."

Teens Tackle Nativism

On Tuesday, 300 high school students and educators gathered for a day-long conference at the Great Falls Middle School titled "Youth Take Action to Make a Difference."

A major theme dealt with a question involving racism: Are we a country of immigrants made strong by the talents and strengths of its growing ethnic diversity, or are we a protectionist society?

140 YEARS AGO

Here's the way it was on April 14, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

Musk rats have been shot in numbers during the rise of water in the river.

The latest strike among us was the river, which struck for a rise, and got it, too.

The land surrounding Barton's cove is covered with logs, thrown up by the recent high water in the river.

"April Fool" runs all through the month. We are continually fooled by a pleasant day, now and then, into thinking we may have some nice weather.

Good time of year now to clean up the front and back yards and get rid of the unsightly heaps of coal ashes that have accumulated during the winter months.

Paddy Ryan, the famous prize fighter, will appear at Colle's opera house to-morrow night, as the leading actor in the Irish play "Terry the Fox," introducing some artistic work with the fists.

J.F. Bartlett and M. O'Keefe have bought pipe and will connect their buildings with John LaPoint's aqueduct pipe on Fifth

street. The village water supply has not reached those places for six months.

The John Russell Cutlery Company are making arrangements to manufacture water gas for illuminating their works, in place of petroleum gas, such as they now use. The change will give them a much better gas, at a lower price.

The Turners Falls division of the ancient order of Hibernians have bought the valuable building lot on the corner of Fourth street and avenue A, below F.I. Webster's lot, and will build a big block some time in the future.

Did Dr. Coy have other than an iron and whalebone constitution, bound together with superb nerves, he would be poorly able to stand the punishment of the hard work he has to go through this spring. His patients scattered all over the county, with plenty at home, he is called at all hours of the day and night to make most fatiguing journeys, with never a chance to rest. Dr. Coy is a big hearted slave to his profession.

John Engle, a lad of 18, had a finger taken off in machinery in one of the mills, the other day.

Mrs. Jennie Parks has secured a divorce from her husband, Fred Parks, for desertion.



AIRCRAFT from page A1

technology, there's been a huge departure in the field since World War II — they have all retired."

Aviation instructor Michael McIntyre pressed buttons on a touchscreen tablet to simulate low visibility and adverse weather conditions for the flight piloted by Zrike and his legislative director, Stephen Coakley. As they wrestled with the controls, onlookers joked about an emergency landing on the Quabbin Reservoir à la Captain "Sully" Sullenberger's 2009 landing on the Hudson River in New York.

The mechanical aspects of the flight simulator — hydraulic arms which tilt and shake trainees in the cockpit — were disengaged for the purposes of the demonstration, so McIntyre was able to reach in and help the education officials as needed. A pilot, airplane mechanic, and western Massachusetts resident of over 20 years, McIntyre joined Franklin Tech's staff in 2024 to help launch the aviation program.

"We've really kind of seen what's worked, what hasn't worked, and where we want to go with it," McIntyre said. "The vision that Rick [Martin] has had since before any of us came on board — I'm helping implement that, and trying to move that in the right direction."

Earlier this year Franklin Tech received approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to offer "Airframe" technician accreditation to its students, one of two certificates needed to become a



Press conference attendees, including Franklin County Technical School superintendent Richard Martin (right), gave and snap photos as Massachusetts Executive Office of Education legislative director Stephen Coakley and education secretary Stephen Zrike come in for a simulated landing.

licensed aircraft mechanic. The second, "Powerplant," is focused on engine maintenance, and McIntyre said he expects the school to be approved for it next year.

"Down the road, who knows what we end up doing with the avionics?" Martin said. "Who knows what we can do with some of the higher technologies, with energy efficiency? There are actually electric airplanes out there, folks. I wouldn't want to run out of battery power and be up in one of those things."

Fewer than 20 students, all freshmen and sophomores, are enrolled in aviation maintenance, and they are currently completing their classroom requirements before they can begin physically working on planes and logging FAA-certi-

fied training hours. In accordance with the FAA's guidelines, the program will be capped at 16 students from each grade level.

Erica Malonado, another instructor hired recently for the program, said she expects its enrollment to increase quickly now that the school is securing FAA accreditation, and for more girls to enroll.

"Women excel a lot in this field, because their attention to detail is so high," Malonado said. "Everything is crucial. Safety is so crucial, and girls are more detail-oriented than guys, especially at this age level — their maturity level is a little bit higher."

The new hangar was built on land owned by the Turners Falls municipal airport, which is conveniently adjacent to the vocational school. Montague town administrator Walter Ramsey told the Reporter he hopes the partnership will foster a mutually beneficial dynamic.

"It's a great opportunity, not only for the education of students, but for potential economic development spin-offs that will help sustain the Turners Falls Airport," Ramsey said. "There's opportunities for high school students to learn, but also people of all ages can come in and learn on the flight simulator.... I'm excited to see what happens."



The tech school's hangar at the municipal airport.

GMRSD from page A1

McCarthy at tara.mccarthy@gmrds.org.

The building committee may recommend moving the pre-kindergarten through first grade students, currently at Hillcrest Elementary, into an expanded Sheffield and disposing of the aging Hillcrest. The school board was asked on Tuesday to vote on submitting a statement of interest in the closure to MSBA, and to authorize Thomas and chair Jane Oakes to start the closure paperwork.

"We understand that the MSBA does not look favorably upon applications to restore and maintain, for the long term, two schools when there could be one," said Montague member Steve Ellis.

"There's a long history," Oakes reflected. "Small schools, as they get older... I went to the Montague City school. Nobody even remembers that one."

Gill member Bill Tomb recounted the "trauma" incurred by the decision to close the Montague Center elementary school in the mid-2000s.

The vote came in 8 to 0 in favor of closing Hillcrest, if the feasibility committee recommends it.

Cultural Front

Music teacher Alyssa Comeau was approved to lead a one-day expedition of 32 students and 14 adults, by chartered bus, to the von Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe, Vermont. The department staged *The Sound of Music* in the fall, and Comeau said the production led to "a lot of conversations about things that were in the show." The von Trapps, the singing family whose story inspired the musical, fled Europe during the rise of the Third Reich.

This Saturday, the state champion Turners Falls girls' softball team will be honored at a New England Revolution soccer game at Gillette Stadium, and on

Saturday, May 9, the school's music department will perform at a WooSox game in Worcester.

"The pep band is going to get there early and we're going to get to play as people are entering," Comeau said, "and then the choir's going to sing the national anthem."

Other Business

Business manager Joanne Blier reported that for the seventh year in a row, the district had been audited with no findings. Thomas said she had never seen a district with as many perfect audits.

"It took us a few years to get there, but we got there, and we're holding strong," Blier said.

The school committee unanimously approved the acceptance of "1,200 board-feet of rough-cut hardwood," donated to the district's woodshop by the Team J Sawmill of South Deerfield, along with the labor of its delivery.

Thomas estimated the value of the gift at anywhere from \$3,000 to \$10,000.

Tomb commented that although he had not worked as a lumber inspector since 2011, and was out of date on prices, the wood must be very high-grade at that value.

The Sheffield Elementary healthy snacks program is not fully funded for FY'26, and the district is seeking community or business sponsorship to close the gap.

Student representative Olivia Wolbach reported that high school students recently read to students at Gill Elementary, the eighth-grade class just finished a clothing drive, and the seniors are playing Assassin.

The school committee approved a warrant for the May 19 elections, in which two incumbents and one new candidate are on the ballot for three seats.

The committee's next meeting will be held Tuesday, May 12.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Battery Law Towel Thrown In

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Two members of the group No Assault and Batteries (NAB), Laurel Facey and Court Dorsey, attended the Wendell selectboard's April 8 meeting to discuss the large-scale battery bylaw their group had initiated, which was passed at the town's May 1, 2024 special town meeting. The Massachusetts attorney general rejected the bylaw, and ruled this year against Wendell's appeal of her rejection.

Facey and Dorsey reported that NAB has stopped meeting, and agreed that the town should drop the effort to continue appealing. Dorsey said many small western Massachusetts towns are facing similar issues, as wealthy companies are trying to site large solar and battery installations where land is relatively inexpensive, and where population and electricity use are low.

Dorsey said there are places already cleared and degraded where such installations would be more appropriate. He added that Wendell's effort was noticed nationwide, and the effort to locate appropriately solar, battery, and other similar technologies is not over.

Facey, separately, resigned from the agriculture commission.

New Salem resident Simone Bodmer-Turner and Franklin Land Trust land conservation specialist Liam Cregan came to the meeting to get the selectboard's approval of a conservation restriction (CR) on 28 acres Bodmer-Turner owns in Wendell.

The CR would allow agriculture and sculpture on the property, at the corner of Jennison and New Salem roads, but no additional impervious structures. Wendell's former open space committee chair Dan Leahy came to the meeting and offered his support for the proposal.

The board members approved the CR, but their signatures had to be witnessed by a notary, so they delayed signing until they could schedule time with

town clerk Anna Wetherby.

Highway commission chair Phil Delorey discussed the \$344,000 grant Wendell and Erving were awarded for completing repair of the Farley bridge, which connects the two towns. The money has to be spent by June 30, but as of the meeting, the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) had not yet returned the engineering plans.

The project received another \$250,000 grant with no time restriction to make up deficits in the repair. Gill Engineering, the firm that created the repair plan, wants an additional \$6,100 for the extra work done in creating the full design.

Contractor Warner Brothers cannot start until MassDOT approves the plan, and must have 75% of the work done by the end of June.

Stephen Broll came to the meeting to accept, unpaid, an appointed position as facilities manager, a position recently vacated when Frank McGuinn resigned. Broll talked about his familiarity with town buildings, having spent time with former selectboard chair Dan Keller on the roof of the highway barn and fire station, cutting back knotweed around the town office building, and on other projects as they have popped up. He said he might take procurement certification courses along with town coordinator Kelly Tyler.

Treasurer Carolyn Manley suggested a triage of building needs to give the finance committee: buildings needing immediate attention; buildings to keep a close eye on, and others to keep in mind. She added that tax collector Penny Delorey saw mice in the office building.

The selectboard approved an employee pay schedule based on a 4% cost-of-living adjustment through 2031.

Tyler reported that Amerigas had taken its propane tanks, charging for their removal but giving credit for gas still in the tanks, leaving Wendell with a \$263 credit. The town will now get its propane from the Athol-based company Ron's Fuel.

COLLEGE from page A1

Association, the local union affiliated with the Massachusetts Community College Council (MCCC).

On Wednesday afternoon he and about a dozen members of the union lined the halls outside the Trustees' meeting as it began, looking in through a glass-paneled wall and holding signs: "Save GCC"; "Chop From the Top."

In February, the administration had sent a memo out to all staff, headlined "Cost Saving Measures," offering early retirement incentives and options to reduce hours worked per week or months worked per year. Employees were given a month to make their decision.

What comes next, presumably, are layoffs – retrenchments of

members of the professional union and of the campus's other union, an affiliate of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) – and elimination of non-union staff.

According to publicly posted figures, the college's deficit is a recent development. The Board of Trustees drew \$901,762 from reserve funds to balance the FY'25 budget, and then \$1,848,436 to balance the current year's budget. The total operating budget for FY'26 stands at \$27,388,923.

The college is expected to hold a half year's expenses in reserve, and the reserves are depleted to that point. Kearns said Vice President of Administration and Finance Karen Phillips has projected a \$2.7

million deficit for next year.

"I hope that the board makes a different decision about how our reserves are being used," Rosemarie Freeland told the Reporter. "We are concerned for the health of the college, for sure, but the way that they have gone about it creates this air of scarcity – this message that in order to save the college we have to cut positions. For a small college like us, it's not possible. You would be cutting to the bone."

Freeland, who graduated from GCC in 1993 as a single mother of three and went on to study at Smith College, now coordinates the campus's Women's Resource Center as well as its Basic Needs office, and serves as a union representative.

"I work with every single student who comes to my office and has an emergency resource need," she explained. "Enrollments are up, and need is high – I see it in my office constantly, with the economy the way it is currently."

When she received the early retirement offer, Freeland said, "it would have been irresponsible for me to actually consider it, because I can't afford to do that.... I don't have enough years in [the pension system], and as a single person, as a homeowner in Greenfield, I am unable to take that."

Most of the employees who held signs outside Wednesday's meeting declined to speak on record to the press.

"Everyone's been living under fear of losing their jobs this summer," Kearns commented. "We don't know what kind of retaliatory action might be taken against people, especially people who don't have tenure."

One sticking point for the union, according to several sources, was a

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JACKSON PHOTO

"I hope that the Board hears us," Rosemarie Freeland, who coordinates the Women's Resource Center and the Basic Needs office on the campus, said as the Board of Trustees met behind her. "I hope that the Board makes a different decision about how our reserves are being used."

feeling of a lack of transparency about the deficit and the plan to address it. The deadline for staff members to request early retirement was the end of March.

"They know by now," said Kearns.

Notable increases in the FY'26 budget included \$352,136 for IT department software and wireless, \$250,000 for a website overhaul, and a \$337,854 payroll increase for adjunct staff. Kearns said he believes a building feasibility study, to the tune of a half million dollars, is still under consideration.

Though meetings of the Board of Trustees are open to the public, the plan to balance the budget was not on the day's agenda, and only a few union members sat in on the meeting itself. Several watched a Zoom livestream from the hall immediately outside.

"We recognize the deep concerns our faculty and staff have regarding these financial challenges," GCC President Michelle Schutt wrote when asked for comment. "We are working openly and responsibly to navigate this shortfall while protecting as many roles as possible."

"GCC remains fully committed to its mission of providing a stable, supportive environment for our students, and we will continue to as-

sess all cost-saving measures with their success as our primary goal."

"I'm here because I want to support my colleagues," Anne Wiley, professor emerita of Psychology and Gender and Women's Studies, told the Reporter on Wednesday. "I began here a long time ago, 48 years ago, teaching early childhood development, and I have lived in this community the entire 48 years."

"Franklin County is near and dear to my heart. And what happens on campus, inside, impacts what's going to happen in the community. The community and the college are very much entwined."

Wiley said she stepped down to part-time teaching for 12 years, and is now only doing a "teeny bit of work," teaching cybersecurity at the Northfield senior center under a grant administered by the college.

"I was budget chair a long time ago in the Gill-Montague school system," Wiley said. "I know budgets are hard, and I know it is primarily staff that make up most of the budget.... I hope the trustees are getting a sense that it is the community and the college – that we're in this together. [But] we seem to have a somewhat top-heavy administration, a lot of whom are new, and I think that creates some tension."



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SPORTS from page A1

outings, and the Turners boys are 3-0 and have won 12 out of 15 sets.

Softball

TFHS 9 – FCTS 2

Greenfield 7 – FCTS 5

I've seen the Thunder and the Eagles several times this season, and their hitting and fielding has significantly improved since the first games and scrimmages. In last Friday's battle, both teams hit the ball well, but some fantastic defensive plays stopped rallies in their track.

There was a sizable crowd at the game and folks from both sides took time to visit with me, asking what inning we were in or what the score was, or just stopping by to schmooze.

In the top of the first, Autumn Thornton drew a one-out walk and was replaced on first by Autumn DiMare. After a steal, an out, and another walk, Maddie Haight came to the plate and batted DiMare in to give the Thunder an early lead. A throw to third ended the side.

In the bottom of the first, leadoff

batter Lindsey Taylor cracked a long triple. A strikeout kept her on third, and after a wild pitch she attempted to steal home. The throw and tag were in time, giving Tech two outs and no runs. The next batter shot the ball deep into center field, but a great catch retired the side.

Turners scored three more runs in the second, putting the Eagles in a 4-zip hole. They got a run back in the third when Taylor batted in Ava Worden, but a pickoff at third, a high pop to center field, and a strikeout courtesy of Thornton limited Tech to one run.

Turners got that run back in the fourth after Madisyn Dietz placed a grounder between two infielders. She got the green light to steal, and on the next pitch she raced toward second and just barely beat the throw. Tech pitcher Brayleigh Burgh threw two consecutive Ks, but a wild pitch got Dietz to third. Then, with two outs, the pitch sailed over the catcher's head, and Dietz raced home to give Turners a 5-1 edge.

The Thunder never let up, scoring three more runs before Frank-

lin notched their second. In the home sixth Charley Knight drove in Burgh, but in the top of the seventh, Turners took advantage of some mental mistakes to increase the lead to 9-2.

Tech did not throw in the towel. In their last at-bats, Samantha Duncan cracked the ball deep into the outfield, though a great catch robbed her of the hit. Tech then got two runners on base, but the game ended on a ground out.

I returned to Tech on Tuesday and watched the first two innings of the Greenfield game before heading to the track meet and tennis match.

Greenfield went down one-two-three in the first, and when the Eagles came up to bat, Taylor placed a base hit and proceeded to steal second. She was batted in by Burgh, and then Knight hit safely, putting runners on first and second. They advanced on a passed ball, and a sacrifice gave Tech a 2-nil lead.

Both teams went down in order in the second inning, and when I left Tech was still leading by two runs. The Eagles went on to increase their lead to 5-0 but in the last two innings the visitors scored seven runs – only four of which were earned – to take the game.

Girls' Tennis

Mohawk 3 – TFHS 2

The girls were in full swing when I arrived at the tennis match. Turners was leading on the first singles and second doubles courts, but was behind in second doubles, and the other two contests were too close to call.

As I watched the matches while keeping one eye on the field events, I noticed that some of the starters weren't competing. I asked why, and received a couple different answers. One said she had just played against Greenfield on Monday and was resting, while another said it was because the Turners team is so large, and she wanted to let some of



Turners Falls sophomore Jakhia Williams sprints to a 100-meter first-place finish in 13.7 seconds during Tuesday's track meet against the Athol Bears.

the other girls play.

Olivia Wolbach went on to win first singles 6-1, 6-1 and Olivia Cody and Layla Hammond won the second doubles match 6-4, 6-4. Unfortunately for the home team, Mohawk took the other three matches to beat the Thunder 3 to 2.

Boys' Track and Field

FCTS 118 – Athol 24

The Franklin Tech boys fell behind early in Tuesday's track meet. Athol won the shot put, discus, and javelin, though Tech kept it close, gaining points for second- and third-place finishes.

Athol also took first in the triple jump, but Maxon Brunette won the long jump, Wyatt Whitman the high jump, and Jacob Thomas the pole vault, and at the conclusion of the field events Franklin was leading by a healthy 20 points.

In the track events, it was no

contest. Tech won all 10 events, outpacing Athol 77-3 to take the meet 118-24.

Girls' Track and Field

TFHS 102 – Athol 31

In the girls' meet, Turners placed first in 14 of 15 events.

For the field events, Mara Gray took gold in the shot put and javelin, Anya Livingstone in the discus, Arianna Chaterton in the long jump, Laura Fuess in the triple jump, and Abby Lenois in the high jump.

In track, Fuess also won the 100-meter high and 400-meter low hurdles. Jakhia Williams won the 100-meter, Amber Marcy the 400-meter, and Izzy Allen the 800-meter. Molly Howe came in first in the mile, and Zoe Morrison in the two-mile, and both relay teams broke the tape to give the Thunder a resounding victory.



DAVID HOIT PHOTO

Franklin County Technical School's Sofia Melnik fields the throw to second base as Turners Falls's Maddie Haight slides in safe during the crosstown contest held at Franklin Tech last Friday, April 10.

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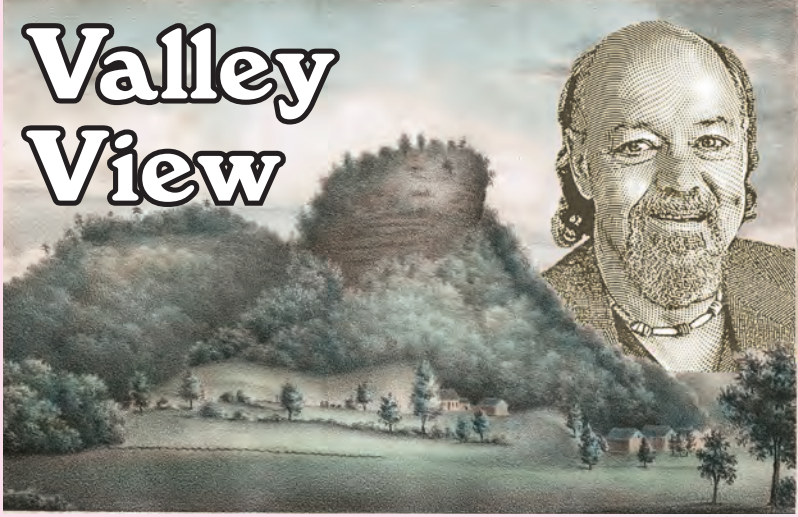
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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

APRIL 16, 2026

Valley View



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More Clues on Mr. Mark

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Quirky 19th-century Greenfield folk artist George Washington Mark came skipping back into my view recently, foot-free, like a flat stone skipped across a glassy summer pond.

Mark first appeared in an email message accompanied by a photo of one of his paintings, titled *Sunrise*. Then, a coincidental week later, an unrelated snail-mail package arrived at my doorstep from a Keene, New Hampshire return address that immediately caught my attention. The name on it was Terence Mark, pushing 90 at 87 years old.

At first, reading that return address in the upper lefthand corner of the large, padded envelope, I incorrectly associated it with the emailer, whose name I couldn't remember. Curious about this cyberspace stranger, where he lived, and how he had found my December 2023 *Reporter* column about the peculiar G.W. Mark, I had responded promptly with a few questions that to this day remain unanswered.

Perhaps, I surmised, this package was his response to my email queries.

I sliced open the envelope with a knife, sat down with it in my comfy leather recliner and immediately dug in, quickly reading through the neat, four-page, hand-

written letter inside. As it turned out, Terence Mark, a genealogy hobbyist with the same surname as the Greenfield folk artist, had for decades unsuccessfully attempted to connect to the artist. Perhaps I could help, he hoped, concluding his letter with a telephone number written below his signature.

At about 10 a.m., after breezing through all the material he had sent, mostly copies of personal genealogical information he had assembled over the years, I called his phone number. The call went to his answering machine, but he answered as I was leaving a short message.

What followed was an entertaining hour-long chat, during which I ascertained that he *was not* the sender of the week-old email query. There were simply two different, rapid-fire respondents to my same months-old local column. After sharing that reality with him, he was curious who the other fella was. So, I went to my email, found the message, and shared the sender's name, which I will not print, before resuming our captivating discussion.

(Why my hesitancy to out the emailer? Simple etiquette. I didn't want to even tiptoe past confidentiality issues.)

Speaking to Terence Mark, see **VALLEY VIEW** page B4



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Greenfield artist G.W. Mark's mid-19th century painting *Sunrise*.

Above: The view from the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge at 6:10 a.m. Wednesday.

Ainsworth On The Road: The Phyllis Predicament

By CHIP AINSWORTH

NORTHFIELD – Last autumn my Florida friend Val Rutledge called and asked if I'd go to central Maine and drive her 83-year-old friend Phyllis from her farmhouse to her house in Stratford, Connecticut. "You're the only person I trust," she said.

That's because Phyllis has money, or so Val said.

Phyllis's grandfather was an architect who helped design the Brooklyn Bridge. When he retired he bought a farm 20 miles west of Augusta in Fayette.

She and her son Roger vacationed there each summer. Roger eventually moved up and lived year-round on the farm. Phyllis, meanwhile, stayed in her Cape-style house on the Housatonic River.

Four years ago this summer, Phyllis got a call from the Fayette police telling her that Roger had died. He was 62. She called her friend Jim Watters, who'd retired from the US Postal Service. They rented a truck and drove up to get her son's possessions and they never left. After a few weeks the truck was gone and the rental company charged her \$30,000.

Neither Phyllis nor Jim has a valid driver's license, and a round trip to Augusta for groceries costs



AINSWORTH PHOTO

Simon Lake's 1932 submarine Explorer, on display in Milford, Connecticut.

over \$100. Val convinced Phyllis to return to Stratford and get her birth certificate, have her Lexus towed to the dealership, clean out the refrigerator, and throw out the milk.

When I called her before Thanksgiving, Phyllis started to explain her predicament. "Val already told me," I said.

"I'm a hoarder," she added.

"Val said you're a neat hoarder, it looks like a cluttered antique store."

We agreed on the first week in December because she had a foot doctor's appointment on December 3 in Milford, the next town over. "The doctors up here are horrible," she said. "They don't care about

old people."

I used my credit card to itemize the expenses – gas, tolls, food, hotel rooms, etc. – climbed into an ugly-colored blue Dodge Ram with 32,000 miles on it and drove 250 miles to the Maine Evergreen Hotel in Augusta.

A Snowy Start

When I woke up it was snowing. After coffee and a donut I got in the truck and turned on the ignition and warning lights flashed. The air pressure was low in both front tires.

Augusta was draped in gray, and orange pylons lined both sides of

see **AINSWORTH** page B2

RECIPES

EGGS OF OTHER KINDS

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

LEVERETT – Americans eat around 285 eggs apiece every year. That's hens' eggs, of course. But as you drive along local roads you'll sometimes spot signs advertising duck eggs, and you can find both duck and quail eggs in specialty stores, including some Big Y branches. These other kinds of eggs have some unique features and fun uses of their own.

Duck eggs have pale turquoise shells and are noticeably bigger than hens' eggs, weighing in at around 3 ounces rather than 2 ounces, which is the USDA standard for the "large" hens' eggs commonly used in recipes.

In contrast, quail eggs are tiny, their shells elegantly spattered with dots and splashes of brown. Both quail and duck eggs taste a lot like hens' eggs, though, crucially, the yolks of both are bigger in proportion to the whites, so their flavor is a little "eggier." These close resemblances among different eggs means that they can be used in similar ways, but their size differences offer new options.

see **RECIPES** page B8



HOPLEY PHOTO

Duck eggs, large, and quail eggs, small and speckled.

Pet of the Week



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'PENNY'

Penny for your thoughts? This adventurous youngster is well-traveled, from Maine to Massachusetts. She is quirky, curious, playful, shy, and snuggly. According to her humans, she is both energetic and calm. She loves scoping out birds, squirrels, people, and cars outside the window. If you can't find her, check a window or dark corner, where she sleeps most of the day.

Penny needs rehoming due to human health issues. Her new home

needs to be inviting, with patient owners, as she will be very shy in a new environment and hide for the first few days, eating at night when there is less noise.

Penny will need to be spayed within 30 days of adoption. To apply, find "Available Community Animals" under the "Adopt" menu at www.dakinhumane.org. A potential adopter must submit an application, interview and meet the pet, and sign an adoption contract.

Senior Center Activities

APRIL 20 THROUGH 24

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 4/20

Closed for the holiday

Tuesday 4/21

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

Wednesday 4/22

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

Thursday 4/23

9 a.m. Barre Fusion

10 a.m. Pilates Flow

Friday 4/24

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

Monday 4/20

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Kitchen Club
3 p.m. Beginner Yoga
4 p.m. Spanish Class
6 p.m. Cemetery Commission

Tuesday 4/21

9 a.m. Chair Yoga
11 a.m. Money Matters

12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday

3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 4/22

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

Thursday 4/23

11 a.m. Fiery Hope
Chorus and Lunch
1 p.m. Pitch

Friday 4/24

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

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom.

Foot care clinics are the third Tuesday of each month. The next clinic is April 21.

Luncheons are held on the fourth Friday of each month 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 May 6. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments.

For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

AINSWORTH from page B1

the highway. I was in a strange land but finally found a functional air pump at a Big Apple Mini Mart that charged \$3 a pop. My fingers were numb by the time the dashboard stopped flashing.

I called Phyllis and she suggested waiting a day. "No, let's go for it," I said. Fayette's a typical small town in central Maine with mailboxes tilted by snowplows, old boats and engine parts scattered in yards, and handmade signs advertising fresh eggs for sale.

Snow was accumulating on the winding roads past Marijuanaville and the Kent's Hill School but the vehicle was handling okay. Hayfields were on both sides where the GPS said to stop at a white-framed farmhouse that looked like part of an Andrew Wyeth landscape.

The porch was a few feet from the gravel driveway, and a silo was attached to a weathered red barn out back.

Phyllis was waiting in Jim's new pickup truck that he can't drive until he gets a new license.

We loaded everything into the back – suitcases, food provisions, and boxes of Kleenex and napkins – I know, I know – and were finally on the road.

It had been a while since I'd driven in snow and had to deal with slow drivers and frozen wiper blades, but the Maine Turnpike's plowing crew was keeping up with it and we rolled along at 50 m.p.h.

Phyllis told me to get behind a Mack truck. "Truck drivers are the best drivers in the world," she said. True, except when their tires were kicking slush back onto the windshield.

Whenever I pulled out and passed, Phyllis pressed herself against the seat and exclaimed, "I'm getting nervous!"

The long drive down the Maine Turnpike onto Route 495 in New Hampshire and through Massachusetts onto I-84 into Connecticut to the Merritt Parkway and across the Housatonic River took seven hours, but we kept good company.

Phyllis and Val both came from wealth, and both were attractive women. Val grew up in Fairfield County and married a polo player from the Philadelphia area. "She was waited on hand and foot," laughed Phyllis.

"How'd you meet?" I asked.

"At a 12-step meeting," said Phyllis.

"AA?"

"Women who can't stop loving men," she said.

She was short and slender and had a long plume of gray hair flowing down the back of her winter coat. The only child of an abusive father and weak-kneed mother, she was married at 18 and divorced at 19. "I just wanted to get out of that house," she said. "Getting pregnant wasn't supposed to be part of it."

Shades of *The Shining*

The hotel parking lot was wet and dark and there was a new moon the night we checked into a Homewood Suites by Hilton, but the desk clerk was friendly and efficient and she put us across the hall from each other on the second floor.

We loaded our luggage onto trolleys, got on the elevator, pressed the button, and hoped it wouldn't stop between floors. When the doors opened I looked down the long corridor and imagined two little girls pedaling around the corner on their tricycles. "Looks like *The Shining*," I said, and Phyllis nodded.

"Yeah," she said.

The hotel was on a bluff, and headlights from bumper-to-bumper traffic streamed over the bridge crossing the Housatonic River.

Unlike at economy motels, the walls were thick and the rooms were quiet. The bed was comfortable and the internet service was good. The next morning I opened the drapes and saw helicopters hovering over the giant industrial plant at Sikorsky Aircraft.

Outside my room I paused to eavesdrop on a phone conversation. "Okay, okay. I gotta figure this out... The whole damn thing! I was up at five this morning just to make sure it was right... The problem with the older generation, they think \$20 an hour is a lot!"

My cell phone vibrated. Phyllis was ready to go.

A Good Walk Unspoiled

The untended yard looked like you'd expect the first week in December. The picket fence Val painted years ago was faded and peeled, tree limbs were scattered on the lawn, and styrofoam cups were wedged in the bushes.

"I don't want you inside," said Phyllis. "I'll call when I'm through."

All right, I said, and left for a walk through the city's downtown. Stratford is the home of the Raybestos Brakettes, a women's fastpitch softball team that won 28 national titles. In 1961 their pitcher Joan Joyce struck out Ted Williams at a charity event in her hometown Waterbury. Williams later told a friend she was



AINSWORTH PHOTO

Milford, Connecticut's Jefferson Bridge.

the best pitcher he ever faced.

Back at the hotel I climbed a ledge behind the parking lot and was pleasantly surprised to be on a golf course that was closed for the season. The next four days I got in my steps walking around the 18-hole Blackhawk Country Club, listening to podcasts and watching the helicopters.

'Used to be a Nice Town'

The next day Phyllis asked me to drive her to historic Milford so her favorite podiatrist could treat her aching foot. I walked around the old shipbuilding town founded in 1639 and stopped to admire the Fort Trumbull Cannon that defended the harbor from the British, then crossed the Jefferson Bridge over the Wepawaug River – "First Bridge 1802 Built During the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson as a Part of the Milford-New Haven Turnpike."

Deciding to get out of the cold I stepped inside a bakery for coffee and a scone and looked outside at passersby.

"It's a beautiful town," said a woman next to me. "Used to be," she added. "It's lost its charm."

"How's that?" I asked.

She paused for a moment and decided to give the short version: "Traffic."

Indeed, nearly every driver was ignoring the speed limit and those who weren't were being tailgated.

The long, narrow common was deserted but for a bundled straggler resting on a bench near a Christmas creche. Someone in city hall had apparently decided it was necessary to explain the presence of a Christian tableau on town property by putting a notice next to it: "This display is provided by the Hyatt family and not erected, maintained or sponsored by the city of Milford."

Over at the docks was an odd-looking, rusted grey vessel called the *Explorer* that was built in 1936 by submarine designer Simon Lake. "The *Explorer* was intended for research and salvage and was linked to a mother ship for air and power," said the placard. "It could travel underwater either by propeller or along the ocean floor on sea wheels [and] divers could enter and leave through an escape hatch."

I checked my text messages. "Where are you?" asked Phyllis.

Last-Minute Errands

We drove past the house where Phyllis grew up as an only child in a middle-class neighborhood. On the ride down she'd told me about a traumatic experience that happened in her early teens that made her feel isolated and without friends or role models. Looking at the house on the corner I envisioned her stepping on the school bus by herself and unable to connect with others.

For lunch and dinner we either ordered soups and sandwiches from the Cutspring deli or ate at a dimly lit diner on the other side of town that had seen better days.

The day before we left for Maine I stopped at an M&T Bank to deposit the check Jim wrote out to me. The clerk referred me to the assistant manager, who looked at it and said, "This is made out to Chip Ainsworth. The name on your driver's license says Gordon."

"My nickname," I explained. "Only cops and principals ever called me Gordon," I said, trying to lighten the mood.

I had fractured a front tooth eating a carrot a few days earlier. Dr. Larry Life in East Longmeadow extracted it

see AINSWORTH next page

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AINSWORTH from page B2

but the gumline needed to heal before I could get a flipper, so here I was in a new bank looking like Boris Karloff in *The Haunted Stranger*.

He still refused to deposit it, so I offered to call the Greenfield branch and have a clerk or assistant manager verify my identity.

"You could have someone waiting for your call," he said.

I fumed the rest of the day thinking of clever rejoinders I could have said – but never did say – to him. He was a well-dressed, dapper African-American man with cornrows and attitude, and I was an old, out-of-town white guy. See how it feels, he may have been saying, but I don't have to experience racism or ageism or shit-headism to know how it feels.

In the parking lot I called the Greenfield branch and was told how to deposit it myself at an ATM. Who knew?

Lost and Found

No trip is ever complete until something is lost – a wallet, credit card, debit card, car keys, or in this case my driver's license. It wasn't between or under the seats, nor in the console or glove compartment. I grabbed a flashlight and searched again under the seats and saw what looked like the edge of an ordinary business card on the passenger's side. I unloaded the back seat, pushed the front seat ahead, and *voilà*, there it was.

Meanwhile, Phyllis was taking her time the morning we left. She hadn't accomplished much, but the trip had let her relax in a hotel room, soak in a hot bath and sleep in a comfortable bed. When she got in the truck she said she needed food for the ride and told me to stop at the deli. When I expressed my displeasure she piped up. "We've got along so far, let's not start now!"

Chastened, I drove to the deli, but getting to the farm before dark was a losing cause. The final trek off the highway and onto the back roads was a maze of truck headlights and snowbanks, but Jim was outside ready to meet us and help us unload.

He cooks for her and does most of the shopping but continues to pay monthly rent on a second floor apartment near the ocean. We went



The long hallway at the Homewood Suites in Stratford.

there one day after shopping at Walmart – Phyllis was thrilled to be at a Walmart – because he needed something.

"Jim gave me the keys," she said, reaching into her purse and pulling out a key ring with a dozen keys on it. We found the one to get through the front, but getting into the apartment took a while.

Phyllis located what he wanted in the bedroom closet. A collector of historical ephemera, he'd asked her to retrieve a Rheingold beer tray and find a Victorian-era image of a woman posing in silk and gown and staring dreamily away from the camera.

Epilogue

Phyllis texts me occasionally, still unsure of whether she wants to stay in Maine or move back to Stratford. She has no next of kin and hasn't made plans about her estate.

Last month I visited Val at her home in Stuart, Florida and asked if she'd spoken to Phyllis. "She called the other day," said Val. "She went on and on about there's no doctors and she has to go to the dentist and she's not gotten her license and she might get an apartment in Portland.

"I'd be done with it right now if it was me. I never knew this would happen to her. It's terrible to see. She's running out of time."

Indeed, aren't we all?

The names have been changed to protect the innocent.

Chip Ainsworth writes sports for the Recorder and opinion, news, and sometimes stuff like this for the Reporter. He lives in Northfield.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Valuable Input; Wheelies; Brush Fires; Pressure Check; Car Vs. School Bus; Effects of Various Intoxicants Suffered

Monday, 4/6

10:12 a.m. A courteous reminder was issued to a citizen to pick up canine waste observed in the area of the laundromat on Third Street. The citizen's reply was not courteous.

5:03 p.m. Caller reports that he is going to meet someone named Richard at Walgreens to get a check for \$2.5 million for his input in *Reader's Digest*. Caller states he believes this is real, but he has never been involved with *Reader's Digest*. Officer advised caller that this is a scam and that he should not go to Walgreens; since he gave his address out, he was advised to keep an eye out for anything suspicious.

Tuesday, 4/7

10:36 a.m. 911 caller reporting possible domestic incident in progress on Fifth Street. Has heard screaming and banging for 20 minutes. Does not know who is involved. Officer had conversation with male occupant; he advises only he and his brother are home; no arguing. Same observed; quiet upon arrival. Does not appear to be as reported at this time.

3:36 p.m. Walk-in looking to speak with an officer about her hitting a car and not stopping due to her son having a tantrum/anger issues. Party believes she side-swiped a gray sedan in the area of Montague City Road and Greenfield Road. Dispatch did not receive any calls from the other driver. Situation mediated; report taken. Officer checked area where accident occurred; did not find any debris.

6:26 p.m. Caller from Lake Pleasant Road states two ATVs and two dirt bikes are doing wheelies and racing on the roadway. Officer drove length of road and did not see anything.

7:43 p.m. 911 caller from Turners Falls Road states two males entered his home; he went out the back door, flagged down a female, and used her phone to call 911. Caller states that he saw the male parties at the cemetery before they entered his home, and that one of them had a knife. Officers responding, setting up perimeter, requesting K9 unit to assist in clearing home. Medical requested for male party with difficulty breathing and a heart condition.

MSP calling to see if we need assistance; officer requests to have them stay in town to cover any incoming calls. Road closed between Swamp Road and the Bookmill. Home cleared; road reopened. Investigated.

Wednesday, 4/8

3:16 p.m. Walk-in states that a male was acting sus-

picious at the Discovery Center parking lot, possibly throwing what looked like a knife at a tree. Unable to locate.

4:19 p.m. Caller from Kingsley Avenue states that a male is yelling and screaming in the yard. Male could be heard yelling in background. Male took off on an e-bike heading toward downtown. Caller informed officers about ongoing landlord-tenant issues. Advised of options.

Thursday, 4/9

10:53 a.m. Walk-in expressing concern that twice in the last month, a kid on a bike has come from the path from Vladish Avenue to Turnpike Road and ridden straight out into the road without stopping; she has had to slam on her brakes. Dispatch spoke with DPW foreman, who advised that they have just put the crosswalk/stop signs back out in the road in that location now that winter appears to be over. Vehicles should now be stopping at that crosswalk, which should hopefully eliminate the problem.

2:10 p.m. 911 caller from Montague City Road reporting an out-of-control brush fire threatening a structure. Fire has been put out. PD clear; FD remaining.

3:13 p.m. Caller is following a vehicle that is all over the road on Millers Falls Road; three people in the vehicle; smell of pot flowing out. Officer advised.

4:02 p.m. Caller from K Street reports that an intoxicated male won't leave the property; states male is now walking toward T and L Streets. Officer located male party sitting on steps at the church rectory. A 38-year-old Buckland man was arrested on a straight warrant.

4:58 p.m. 911 silent call; caller states her son came home and was yelling at her; she was just trying to work outside on the farm. Verbal dispute between mother and son. Situation handled. Units clear.

9:22 p.m. Caller from Fourth Street concerned that two males are stealing car parts and swapping tires. Officer talked with parties, who stated they were just checking tire pressure.

Friday, 4/10

5:35 a.m. 911 caller reporting a vehicle traveling at a high rate of speed, perhaps 90 m.p.h., on Federal Street heading toward Sunderland. Described as blue Chevy truck; unable to make out plate number due to dim plate lights. Caller transferred to Shelburne Control. Officers advised.

3:47 p.m. 911 report of

two-vehicle accident at the Routes 47/63 crossover. No injuries, smoke, or fluids. Officer advises very minor damage to both vehicles. Report taken.

3:54 p.m. 911 report of two-vehicle accident on Montague City Road. No injuries, smoke, or fluids. Vehicles out of travel lane. Report taken; citation issued to at-fault operator.

7:38 p.m. A 35-year-old Montague woman was arrested on two default warrants.

8:47 p.m. Caller from Meadow Road requesting assistance removing a bat from his home. All officers tied up. Consulted animal control office (ACO) director page, which states to leave a voicemail for the ACO but not to contact them on their cell phone. Caller advises he was able to coax the bat out with a broom. No longer in need of assistance.

9:06 p.m. Caller reports that his vehicle was just struck in the Elks Lodge parking lot; parties threatened him as they were leaving. Caller advises that prior to the accident, the other operator was unsteady on his feet, falling over, and urinated in the parking lot before getting into his vehicle. Officers *en route* to speak with the caller and look into availability of surveillance footage. Units checking area for vehicle; unable to locate. Investigated.

Saturday, 4/11

11:58 a.m. Caller from Randall Road states that a neighbor was yelling and screaming at her boyfriend who just left; was asked by caller and his wife to stop swearing in front of their kids, and the neighbor started yelling at them. Officers spoke with both parties. Situation mediated. Advised parties of civil/criminal options.

3:47 p.m. Multiple 911 reports of vehicle vs. school bus on Montague City Road. One caller reported 13 students and a driver on board the bus. Callers connected to Shelburne Control; all PD units dispatched. Officer requesting Rose Ledge towing; ETA 30 minutes or less. Officer requesting availability of Kuzmeskus to transport bus passengers to Montague PD community room. Shelburne Control advises TFFD has already requested FRTA; ETA 10 minutes. Officer

advises operator of Honda and one child transported to hospital; coach and two students from bus are also being transported. Officer requesting tow for Honda. Officer advises FRTA picked up students *en route* to MPD. Tow companies on scene. Citation issued for speeding and a marked lanes violation.

4:53 p.m. Caller from Court Square reporting that her neighbor is target shooting; expressed concern that it may not be within a legal or safe distance. All units committed at this time. Officer reports unable to locate; no gunshots heard. Male party called stating he is not home, but saw on his camera that an officer had been in the driveway earlier. Caller believes he was within the legal guidelines and would like to speak with an officer regarding his options. Officer spoke with male; criteria not met for criminal harassment; advised of options. Officer did review one call from the past year with the same complaint.

Sunday, 4/12

1:39 a.m. Caller from Avenue A states that a female party who lives in the apartment next to him is currently slamming items in her room and sounds intoxicated. Officer advises quiet upon arrival. Contact made with female party, who was surprised to see the officers and appeared to be sober. Advised of complaint.

3:17 a.m. 911 caller reports that a female party in the Fourth Street alley next to his residence is currently naked; caller reports female stripped in the alleyway and started to chase his father. Female described as in mid-30s and naked. Female currently screaming, yelling, and hitting cars in the parking lot. Contacted Shelburne Control to stage ambulance as precaution. Officer advises female party has smoked meth. Ambulance OK to approach; female not combative. Party removed to hospital. Vehicle towed.

9:20 a.m. Caller from Avenue A reports that the female in the downstairs apartment has been yelling off and on all night. Officers spoke with female, who stated she has been experiencing foot pain. Medical attention declined.

4:07 p.m. Multiple 911 reports of brush fire in Greenfield. Officer on Second Street advises he can see the fire at the top of the hill on the Greenfield side; advises Summit/Canada Hill will be the best access. Greenfield Dispatch advised.

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VALLEY VIEW from page B1
I discovered that he had submitted a copy of the first of my two *Reporter* columns about G.W. Mark to the monthly *McCurdy Family Association Newsletter*, printed in Canada. He thought it might be of interest to the membership because of numerous, recorded genealogical links between the New Hampshire McCurdy and Mark families over the years.

The McCurdy newsletter printed the column in full in its September 2025 issue. Given that fact, Terence Mark opined that it may have been the impetus for the email I received. Perhaps, he speculated, the email respondent was a subscriber, or knew one who had alerted him to the piece. Because the emailer had an obvious French surname, it sounded possible to me. Plus, the timing was right, not to mention the secretive sender's decision to leave my answers unanswered.

I can understand the man's secrecy. His Mark-attributed allegorical painting of a lonely peak penetrating fluffy white clouds was purchased at the sale of an important folk-art aficionado's collection, and likely fetched a steep price. For obvious reasons, private art collectors choose not to publicize the location of their artworks. Hey, if priceless masterworks can be pilfered in the light of day from a famous Paris museum, how safe is valuable art on display in private homes and offices?

Upon reading my mystery man's email and Googling his name, including his middle initial, to see if he was local, my quick online search proved fruitless. No one by his name lived within 50 miles of Montague, suggesting that he likely didn't find

my column on a local newsstand.

His email and color photos immediately spun my cranial wheels back to threads left dangling from my previous G.W. Mark research, which had been unleashed by my discovery of a whimsical oil-on-canvas painting of a spirited hound dog with direct connections to my own upper Greenfield Meadows property.

Salient among my lingering threads of discovery was the unknown burial place of Mark and his 700-pound metal coffin, known to many patrons of his Greenfield shop. He had explained that he didn't want to encumber anyone with burial expenses. What he didn't tell them was that he had no desire to publicize his final resting place, either.

Many mysteries about the Greenfield folk artist will likely never be solved – prominent among them his date of birth and his father's gravesite. It is accepted that G.W. was born in Charlestown, New Hampshire to John and Hannah (Thomas) Mark in 1795, despite conflicting online reports of birth years 1798 and 1799 in neighboring communities. A major stumbling block is that Charlestown is a well-known genealogical "black hole," as an 1840s Town Hall fire destroyed the town's vital records dating back a century to the historically important Fort at No. 4.

It now seems possible that G.W. Mark's mysterious burial place could be within reach with a little detective work. What we know for sure is that, according to his 1879 *Greenfield Gazette and Courier* obituary, he and his cumbersome casket were shipped to Charlestown, presumably, given its weight, by rail.

When I did a little poking around a couple of years ago, I found clues that strongly suggested a certain Springfield, Vermont cemetery as his final resting place. Some 13 years before his death, Mark had purchased gravestones there for his long-dead mother and younger brother, both of whom he had lost in early childhood.

I had planned to dig deeper – no pun intended – for G.W.'s mysterious gravesite, but had procrastinated. The recent email in my inbox was the impetus that nudged me to finally, for the first time, reach out to the Springfield town clerk, who encouraged me to explore her Town Hall burial records at my convenience. Though not certain, she suspected that current policy mandating records for all Vermont burials was in effect in the late 19th century, too. Thus, she speculated that Mark's unmarked grave would be listed if he is buried there, and there would be no need for a metal detector to sniff out his distinctive coffin.

In no rush, I figured I'd wait till the weather warms and coordinate my probe with a trip to a nearby New Hampshire auction house. However, recent developments may speed the visit if I want to get there before Terence Mark does. He closed his four-page, cursive letter with the possibility of he himself exploring the Mark plot in Springfield's oldest burial ground, which is much closer to him than me.

One never knows: maybe we'll go together. I'd like to meet the man.

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



TELEVISION

For All Mankind, Season 5

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI



GREENFIELD – I watched the alternate history show *For All Mankind* through its first three seasons, and enjoyed it. The premise is: What if the Russians landed on the moon first? Which is not too far out there, or a work of fiction, because within that period of history there was a space race between the US and Russia.

This show has basically turned into science fiction. Its fifth season premiered on March 27 on Apple TV. The show has expanded to many generations of people involved in a somewhat different space race.

Some of the earliest people in the story are still around. One is an astronaut named Ed Baldwin, played by Joel Kinnaman, who at this point has a grown adopted daughter and a teenage grandson to his name.

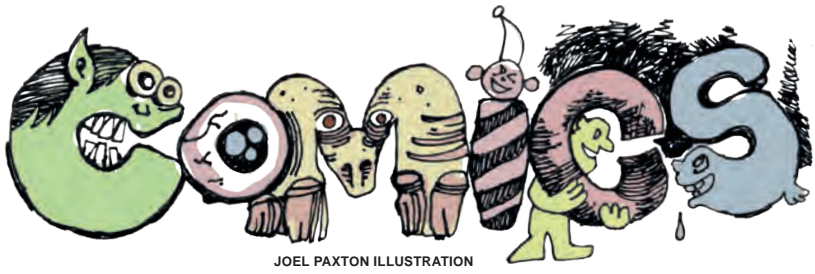
An individual from Season 2 named Aleida, who worked at NASA, is also around. She is now a mining executive at a company that has been involved with the space exploration projects for some time. Her desire to be a part of NASA led to a friendship with a woman named Margo, played by Wrenn Schmidt, who worked in the control room for the first season. That is still going on, along with a huge time jump thing they have done every season.

The year is now 2012 for everyone. Some of the things that have happened in the show's storylines are similar to something I saw the *National Geographic Channel* do a while back: political turmoil, which came to a head in an earlier season; people trying to make money mining on Mars; and people building an independent city of sorts on the planet.

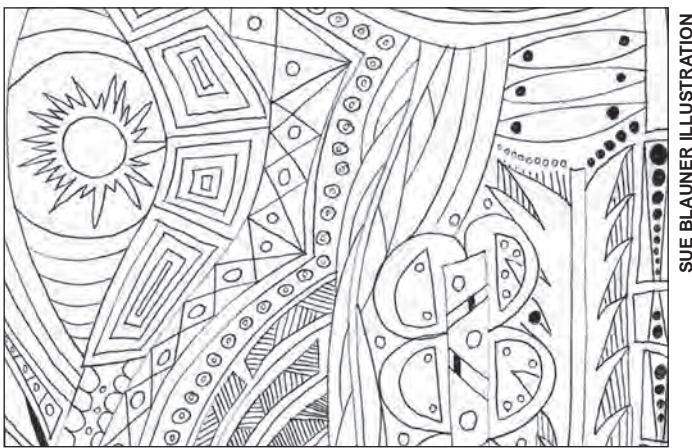
The city, Happy Valley, has its own shopping center, a school for teenagers, and Chinese and Russian people living alongside the Americans. Ed Baldwin's grandson is a normal teenager who is trying to figure himself out. There are a few other families like that in Happy Valley. They wish for independence for the place, but are not having any luck with that.

It appears that this season involves a passing of the torch to this latest generation, which features Ed's grandson. Happy Valley now has a police force looking over its shoulder. History appears to be repeating itself in one area.

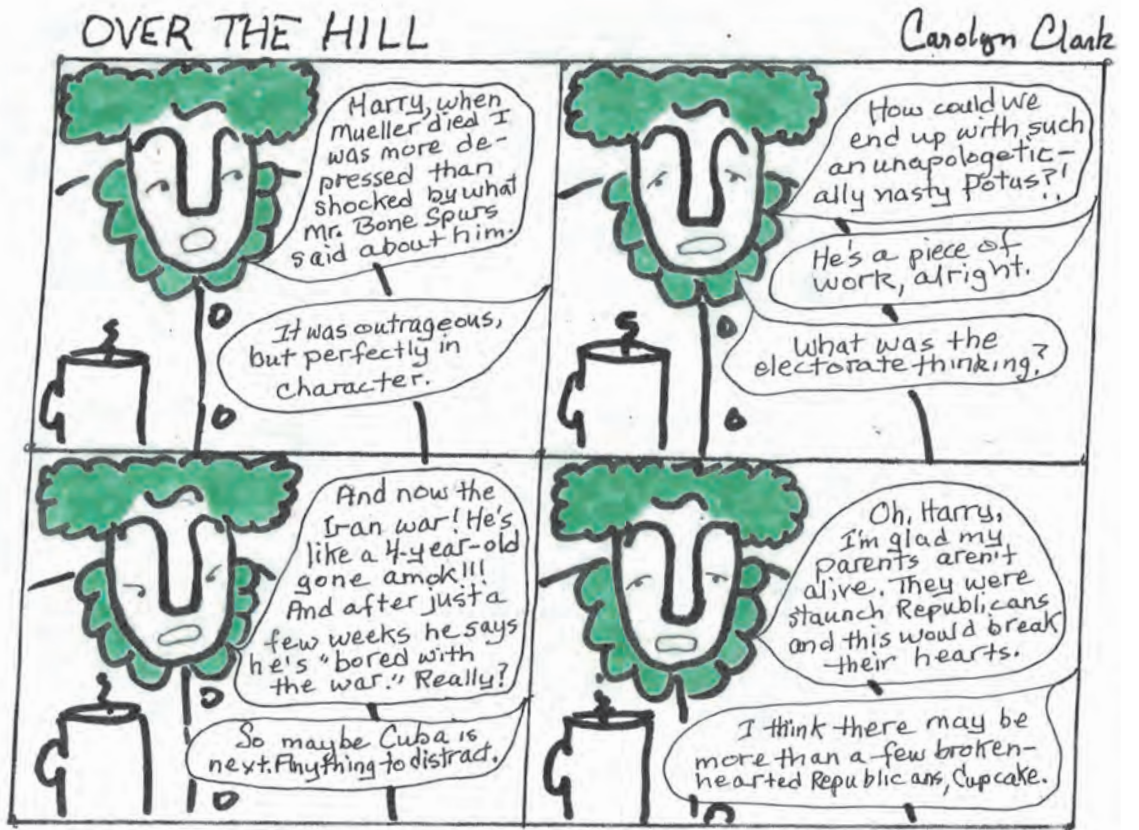
This show still has some cool storylines and elements. I think it should be very interesting to see where all of this goes next.



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THE SPIRIT SHOPPE

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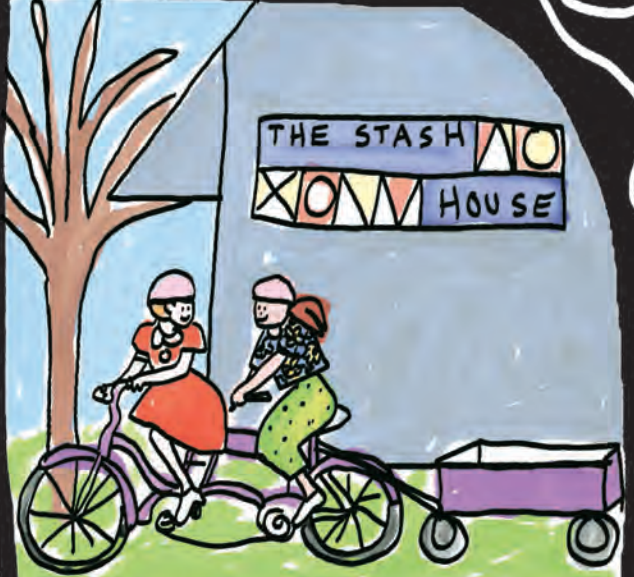
THE LOVELIGHTS REUSE!



CHELLA AND VIOLA LOVELIGHT LIKE TO CREATE ALL THE MAGIC THEY CAN WITH THEIR FAIRY, MERMAID AND GNOME FRIENDS! NOW THEY HAVE BEEN TO THE OPERA IN THE BIG CITY, SO OF COURSE THEY WANT TO CREATE AN OPERA OF THEIR OWN!



"WE NEED CURTAINS FOR THE STAGE," SAID CHELLA, PICTURING THE GRAND SWEEP AS THEY OPENED BEFORE THE CROWD. VIOLA JOTTED THIS DOWN ON HER LIST. "WE WILL GO TO SWANSON'S FABRICS ON AVENUE A!" SAID VIOLA. "AND WE NEED TO PAINT THE SET." "WE CAN GET PAINT AT LOOKY HERE ON CHAPMAN STREET," SAID CHELLA. VIOLA JOTTED THIS DOWN ALSO.



CHELLA AND VIOLA HITCHED A TRAILER TO THEIR TANDEM AND BIKED OVER TO SWANSON'S FABRIC.



"HELLO AND WELCOME TO SWANSON'S!" A CHEERY VOICE CALLED OUT FROM BEHIND A BIG PILE OF FABRIC. "SORRY ABOUT ALL OF THE MESS, WE JUST RECEIVED A HUGE DONATION OF FABRIC AND I'M STILL SORTING THROUGH IT. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN HELP YOU FIND?" "WE ARE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO MAKE A THEATER CURTAIN OUT OF," SAID VIOLA, "SO WE WILL NEED A BIG PIECE OF FABRIC."



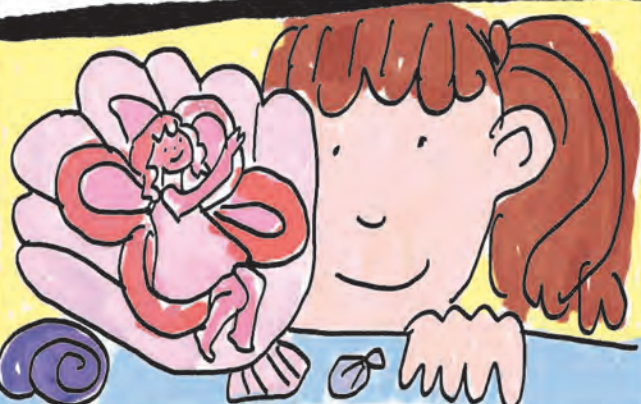
"I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING BIG, BUT I HAVE SEEN A LOT OF SCRAPS OF VELVET. WE COULD HELP YOU PIECE THEM TOGETHER TO MAKE A BIG CURTAIN," SAID THE VOICE FROM THE PILE. "THAT'S A WONDERFUL IDEA!" SAID CHELLA, WHO WAS PETTING THE CAT.



CHELLA AND VIOLA FILLED THEIR TRAILER UP WITH THE COLORFUL VELVET SCRAPS AND PEDALED OVER TO GREENFIELD TO SEE WHAT THEY COULD FIND AT LOOKY HERE.



"WELCOME TO LOOKY HERE," CALLED A VOICE FROM THE BACK. "FEEL FREE TO SHOP OUR THRIFT STORE OF DONATED ART SUPPLIES. EVERYTHING IS PAY WHAT YOU CAN!" CHELLA AND VIOLA DUG THROUGH THE SHELVES, FINDING TREASURE AFTER TREASURE.



THEY EVEN FOUND A LITTLE FAIRY LIVING IN ONE CUBBY FULL OF SEASHELLS, WHO KINDLY DIRECTED THEM TO THE SECTION OF PAINTS READY FOR A SECOND LIFE, AND THEN TO THE DONATION JAR WHERE THEY DROPPED THE LAST OF THEIR MEAGER SAVINGS.



AS THEY WERE BIKING BACK, THEY DECIDED TO STOP AT ONE LAST REUSE STORE, REDISTRO, ON ARCH STREET. "BUT WE RAN OUT OF MONEY," SAID VIOLA, CONFUSED. "AT REDISTRO, EVERYTHING IS FREE!" CHELLA CALLED BACK TO VIOLA. AND IT'S A GOOD THING THEY STOPPED THERE, BECAUSE THEY FOUND THE PERFECT GREEN BALL GOWN FOR THE OPERETTA!

BY BEVERLY KETCH & HANNAH BROOKMAN

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THURSDAY, APRIL 16

First United Methodist Church, Greenfield: *Música Franklin Concert*. 5 p.m. Free.

Terrazza Restaurant, Greenfield: *Power to Persevere*, fundraiser for the Resilience Center of Franklin County. Keynote speaker is retired judge Laurie MacLeod. Buffet dinner, cash bar, musical guests *Two for Jazz* and *Fiery Hope*. See www.givebutter.com/P2P2026 for tickets. 5 p.m. \$.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Spirit Circle* with featured speaker *Moonlight Davis*. 7 p.m. Free.

FRIDAY, APRIL 17

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

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

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

Bombyx Center, Florence: Kabbalat Shabbat service, featuring a cappella group *Magevet*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Seussical The Musical*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *The BreadWinners*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *The Unlucky Shots, Wishbone Zoë, Babe Wait*. 7 p.m. Free.

THCC, Easthampton: *Princess Ghoul, exSecretaries, Rival Galaxies*. 7 p.m. \$.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Bicycle Noise Creation, Nick Bowers, Four Corner Star, Shane Bray Kerr, Marie Carroll*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

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

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *King Kyote*. 8 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Henderson Blues Band*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Asbestos Farm, Hadley: *Vega, Keta Ester, Sexwave, Rusty & the Big Jump*. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Antlers, Töth*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

SATURDAY, APRIL 18

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Book Discussion*. Tracy K. Smith, *Fear Less: Poetry in Perilous Times*. Registration req'd. 10 a.m. Free.

Franklin County Fairgrounds, Greenfield: *Home & Craft Show*. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free.

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: *Kids' Nature Art: May Baskets*. Ages 4 to 10. Materials provided. Register at www.bookeo.com/northfield. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Free.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Bird Scavenger Hunt*. Learn about local species and find birds inside our dioramas and outside. 10:30 a.m. Free.

YMCA, Greenfield: *Healthy Kids Day*. Healthy, fun activities that celebrate kids and families. Ninety bicycles will be given away. Open to all community members. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Friday night at Epsilon Spires, composer and sound designer Lea Bertucci will sample a live master flutist and play a new composition, *The Days Pass Quickly Immersed in the Shadow of Eternity*, over eight surround-sound speakers.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Dungeons & Dragons*. Single-day campaign for ages 16 and up, all XP welcome. Register at northfieldrec.com. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free.

104 Fourth, Turners Falls: *Seed Swap & Fundraiser*, with art and food. Funds support farmers in Gaza and Pequog Farm. 12 to 3 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Ina Peebles*, Celtic harp. 1 p.m. Free.

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

First Churches, Northampton: *Lyracle*, historical music ensemble, playing "music that connects the 17th and 21st centuries." 3 p.m. \$.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Hilltown Ham Hocks*. 5 p.m. No cover.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Seussical The Musical*. 7 p.m. \$.

Mount Toby Friends Meeting, Leverett: *Court Dorsey*. 7 p.m. \$.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Protest Song Open Mic*. Masks required. Benefit for Books Through Bars and the Western Mass Bail Fund. 7 p.m. \$.

Four Phantoms Brewing, Greenfield: *Impulse3*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *A Moondog Tribute*, featuring *Trimbych, Julian Calv & Andrew Schulman, Wolf Girlz*. 7 p.m. \$.

Universalist Church, Orange: *Quabbin Valley Pro Musica*, special guests. Benefit for the 1794 Meetinghouse steeple. 7 p.m. \$.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Jake Shulman-Ment & Abigale Reisman, Ira Temple & Michael Winograd*. "An all-star klezmer evening." 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Lacquerhead, Mzztr, Das Muerte*. 7 p.m. \$.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Sylvie's Okay, Sable Island Pony, Norma Dream*. 8 p.m. \$.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Magnetic Coroner, Diagram A, Primitive Isolation Tactics, Python Pit, Kjostad*. 8 p.m. \$.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Life Abuse, Visceral Filth, PTC*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

EXHIBITS

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls: *Enough: A Collaboration*, visual artists' responses to pieces written in the Paper Trail Creative Writing Workshops exploring what it means to "have enough, do enough, be enough." Through May 23.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *All Our Relations*. Work by Deborah Spears Moorehead, Seaconke Pokanoket Wampanoag, and Robert Peters, Mashpee Wampanoag, focusing on pre-colonization, the 350th anniversary of Metacomb's (King Philip's) War, and the Great Falls Massacre of 1676. Through May.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague Center: *Landscapes* by guest photographer *Ray Brod*, through May.

Montague Center Library, Montague: *Captured Glimpses of Sunset in Our Town*, familiar landscapes photographed by Barbara Foley, through May.

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

Leverett Crafts and Arts, Leverett: *Art for the Earth*, forty artists celebrating their love for the Earth in a variety of media, through April 26.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: TREES!, informational exhibit celebrating tree projects in Greenfield; *Elaine VanGelder*, paintings inspired by the patterns of nature. Both through April.

Looky Here, Greenfield: Trevor Powers, Looky There, risograph-printed photographs exploring color and texture of organic and manmade objects; artists' books and a free zine, through May.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: STEAM – Art & Science, art that reflects aspects of science, technology, engineering, and math, through May 17.

Gallery A3, Amherst: Flora & Fauna, artists' books and oil paintings by Nancy Meagher and Laura Holland, through April.

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 next Thursday, April 23.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: Earth and Sky, paintings by Conway watercolorist Mary Walsh Martel, through April.

Oxbow Gallery, Easthampton: Holding Still, recent oil paintings by Turners Falls artist Karen Evans, through April.

CALL FOR ART

RiverCulture, Montague's creative economy program, invites submission of photos that capture the natural beauty and cultural vitality of the town's five villages. Selected images will be used on a new RiverCulture website. Deadline is Monday, May 4. Winners will receive a \$20 gift card to a local business or restaurant. Details on the submission form at tinyurl.com/rcwebpix.

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CALENDAR



looking forward...

SUNDAY, APRIL 19

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Bird Zines*. Design a zine to celebrate ongoing bird migrations. Materials provided. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Wizard's Castle, Montague Center: *Earth Day Party*. Pop-up community acupuncture, 12 to 4 p.m.; bands, DJs, sauna, food, etc., 4 p.m. By donation.

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Tote Bag Workshop*. Bring a clean bag; supplies limited. 1 p.m. Free.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *Seussical The Musical*. 2 p.m. \$.

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

104 Fourth, Turners Falls: *Cycle Tracking Workshop*. Learn uterine anatomy, phases of a menstrual cycle, and how and why to track. 3 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Contra Dance with The Monday Night Session*, caller *Mo Brachfeld*. Fundraiser for Common Hall accessibility. 3 p.m. By donation.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Jetties, Norma Dream*. 4 p.m. By donation.

Born Again Vintage, Northampton: *Sgraffito Kill, Death in Venice, Neponset Monastery, The Stress Balls, Glass Carnage*. Benefit for the Finders Collective. 5:30 p.m. \$.

Montague Retreat Center, Montague: Screening, *Far Out: Life On & After the Commune* (2024). Discussion with former commune residents Sam Lovejoy and poet Verandah Porche. Benefit for the LUCE Immigrant Justice Network. 7:30 p.m. By donation.

MONDAY, APRIL 20

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

TUESDAY, APRIL 21

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Window Decals for Birds*. Design your own window decals inspired by local and migratory birds. Materials provided. Ages 10 and older. 2 p.m. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: Montague selectboard member *Marina Goldman* drop-in office hour, with a library trustee and a library building committee member. 4 to 5 p.m. Free.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Dead Meadow*. 8 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

Olver Transit Center, Greenfield: *Dale Monette* presents photographs in "I See You: Stories of Quabbin Wildlife." Register at www.tinyurl.com/QuabbinWildlife1. 2 p.m. \$.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Matinee movie, *Barry Lyndon* (1975), second half. 4 p.m. Free.

Brick House Annex, Turners Falls: *Main Library Building Project Information Session*. 6 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *GCC Music Department Concert*. 7 p.m. Free.

CC PHOTO BY FLICKR USER THECOMEUPSHOW



As of press time, tickets appear to still be available for the UMass Amherst spring concert, April 25 at the Mullins Center, featuring early-2010s rapper *Waka Flocka Flame* (above) and TikTok singer-songwriter *Malcolm Todd*.

THURSDAY, APRIL 23

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

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *Animal Talk*, presented by Jessica Decoteau of the Reptile Nook. 3:30 p.m. Free.

Hampden Gallery, UMass Amherst: Reception for *Fragile Connections*, exhibit by scientific glass blower *Sally Prasch*. 5 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Comedy Project Workshop*. Contact andrea@thelavacenter.org to participate. 6 p.m. By donation.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Peter Weis*, poetry reading. 6 p.m. Free.

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: *Beaver Pond Wildlife*, presented by naturalist *David Brown*. 6 p.m. Free.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *King Philip's War in Your Backyard: From Wequomps to Peskeompskut*. History talk by *David Brule*. 7 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Comedy Project Open Mic*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Jason Anderson, Cloudbelly*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, APRIL 24

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour: Who Lives in a Tree?* Ages 3 to 6. Story, activities, and crafts. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Clay Play Afternoon*. 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Carnegie Critter Corner*. Petting zoo. 3 p.m. Free.

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Pre-Emption Road*. 6 p.m. No cover.

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

THCC, Easthampton: *Warm, City of Iron*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Murphy's Blues Explosion, Down in the Ground*. 7 p.m. \$.

Next Stage Arts, Putney: *Ablaye Cissoko, Cyrille Brotto*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

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

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Simon White & Rhythm Inc.* 8 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: *The Sinseers, The Altons*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

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LaPlante discusses local economic development initiatives. Snacks provided. 1 p.m. Free.

Brick House, Turners Falls: *AnnE, Mibble, Lizcore, Tiny Nick, Feldspar 00000, Letters of Marque, Sapien Joyride, Sleep Destroyer, Rhubarb Duo, Peach Creek, Muda!*, *Free Rock, Kony762*. 3 p.m. \$.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: *Dew on the Vine*. 5 p.m. No cover.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *The Pandora Consort* performs and discusses music by Hildegard von Bingen. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *bobbie, Saapato, Ian MacPhee, Many Hands*. 7 p.m. \$.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *All Voices Cabaret*. Music, poetry, storytelling, theater, dance. 7 p.m. \$.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Caroline Davis, Matan Rubinstein*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *The Draa Hobbs Jazz Quartet, Hiroya Tsukamoto*. 7 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Best of Valley Voices Story Slam*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Mullins Center, Amherst: *Malcolm Todd, Waka Flocka Flame*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *BASSTHOV3N*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, APRIL 26

All Souls Church, Greenfield: Author talk, *Claiming Earth as Common Ground: The Ecological Crisis Through the Lens of Faith*, by Rabbi *Andrea Cohen-Kiener*. Questions and answers follow. 12:30 p.m. Free.

Wesley United Methodist Church, Hadley: *The Egmont Ensemble*, performing works by Mozart, Dvořák, and Franck. Benefit for the Western Mass Asylum Support Network. 3 p.m. \$.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *All Are Interested In All*, panel discussion on an 1840s worker cooperative in Florence, with *Christopher Clark, Steve Strimer, Tom Goldscheider, and Larisa Demos*. 3:30 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Graham Parker*. 7 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Perennial, Tea Eater*. 8 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, APRIL 27

Visions Video, Northampton: Screening, *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) with live score by *Videopunks*. 7 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Brainwash Victims, Grem, Violent Protest, No Stayer*. 8 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, MAY 3

Green River Church, Greenfield: *Spectre Folk, Nace/Abdou/Flaherty trio, Meginsky/Garbus/Baldwin/Gelineau/Allen quintet, Julie Bodian, barbie.ai*. 2 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, MAY 4

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Secret Chiefs 3, Dust Witch*. 8 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Feminine Aggression, Fugue State, Sleep Destroyer, Cliffrose*. 8 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, MAY 14

Tourists, North Adams: *Glenn Jones, Liam Grant*. 8 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, MAY 16

Canalside Bike Path, Turners Falls: *Commemoration Ceremony: Battle of Great Falls / Wissatinnewag-Peskeompskut*. Remarks by representatives of the Nipmuck and Abenaki communities, ceremonial drumming by the Eastern Medicine Singers. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Steve Wynn, Creative Writing*. 6 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, JUNE 4

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Dylan Scott*. 7 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, JUNE 18

Iron Horse, Northampton: *J Mascis*. 8 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, JULY 21

Tanglewood, Lenox: *"Weird Al" Yankovic*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

THURSDAY, JULY 23

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

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

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

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

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

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

Palladium, Worcester: *Insane Clown Posse*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

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RECIPES from page B1

Duck eggs have denser whites than hen eggs. Combined with the larger yolks, this makes them great for baking. Cakes and desserts made with duck eggs will be a richer yellow, and the whisked whites make a super-stable foam for meringues.

Two chunky duck eggs can be used instead of three hens' eggs in baking recipes or for scrambled eggs and omelets, while bacon-and-egg breakfasts get even heartier if the egg is a duck's.

And while hens' eggs are often used to make Chinese tea eggs, duck eggs are equally traditional. Tea eggs are made from shell-on hard-boiled eggs steeped in a marinade of spiced tea. The shells are cracked before the eggs go in the marinade, so the liquid seeps into the white, leaving it gorgeously flavored and beautifully marbled with brown tracings. Duck eggs' large size makes a good

canvas for these tracings, and their yolks taste more intensely savory.

It would be a waste of the dainty charm of quail eggs to use them in cakes, but like the angel on the Christmas tree, they star on top of things. On salads or appetizers quail eggs look pretty where hen or duck eggs would look clumsy. Teamed with grape tomatoes in a salad, or sitting on a homemade pizza or quiche, they are enticing.

For parties you can offer them with a mayonnaise-based dip or skewer them onto cocktail sticks with olives, radishes, mini-onions, or what you will.

Here you'll find a recipe for spinach tarts topped with quail eggs, followed by the recipes for quail egg and tomato salad and Chinese tea eggs. For dessert there's a recipe for *crème caramel* – known in Spanish as *flan* – enriched by the use of duck eggs.



CRÈME CARAMEL

- 1/4 cups sugar
- 2/3 cup water
- 3 duck eggs, plus 1 yolk
- 6 Tbsp. more sugar
- 2 1/2 cups whole milk
- 1/2 tsp. pure vanilla

To make the caramel, place 6 ramekins or other oven-proof custard cups near the stove so you can quickly pour the caramel into them when it is ready.

Put the 1/4 cups of sugar and the water in a medium-size pan and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Now boil rapidly and watch as the liquid becomes first pale yellow, then deepens in color to first golden then light brown then quickly becomes dark brown.

Move the pan from the heat as soon as it is a medium shade of brown, because it will continue to darken. Quickly pour it into the waiting dishes, dividing it equally. Tilt the dishes



to spread the caramel. Set aside and make the custard.

Turn the oven to 300 degrees and set a shelf in the center. Beat the eggs and yolk together with the other 6 tablespoons of sugar. When blended, beat in about a third of the milk and the vanilla. Mix well, then stir in the remaining milk.

When the caramel has firmed up a bit – about 15 minutes after being poured – gently pour this custard on top. Set the dishes in a baking

pan, and pour cold water into it to come halfway up their sides. Place in the oven and bake for 20 to 30 minutes.

To test for doneness, slide a knife blade into the centers. It should come out clean.

Cool for several hours. Loosen from the dishes by running a knife round the edge, then tipping them onto a bowl or plate so the caramel is on top.

Serves 6.

CHINESE TEA EGGS

In China, tea eggs are eaten as a snack with tea or beer. They are good in lunch boxes.

- 6 duck eggs
- 5 cups water
- 2 Tbsp. loose black tea or 5 teabags
- 2 whole star anise
- 8 black peppercorns
- one 1/2-inch stick cinnamon
- 2 tsp. salt

Wash the eggs and put them in a large saucepan; cover with water, bring to the boil, and simmer for 10 minutes. Quickly remove the eggs to a big bowl of chilled water to cool them quickly to prevent a dark ring forming round the yolk.

Add the tea, star anise, cinnamon,

peppercorns, and salt to the water remaining in the saucepan. Take the eggs and tap them all over with the back of a spoon so the shells crack. Return them to the pan and simmer for 45 minutes, then remove from the heat. Let the eggs cool in the liquid.

Keep in the fridge, still in the shell, until you want to use them. (They are fine for 5 or 6 days.) Shell them and halve them.

Alternately, chop and mix with just enough softened butter to make a sandwich filling. Watercress teams well with tea eggs – and other hard-boiled eggs.

Serves 6 to 12.

QUAIL EGG AND SPINACH TARTS

- 3/4 cup whole-milk Greek yogurt
- 3 to 4 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 hen's egg, plus 1 extra yolk
- 2 cups flour, plus more for dusting
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- one 12-oz. package frozen chopped spinach
- 1 small or medium onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 4 oz. fresh mozzarella
- 8 or 9 quail eggs

In a mixing bowl, combine the yogurt with 2 tablespoons of olive oil, the hen's egg and egg yolk. Add the flour, salt, and baking powder. Stir to form a soft, rather sticky dough.

Tip from the bowl onto a well-floured board. Also flour your hands. Knead the dough 3 or 4 times and shape into a smooth, soft ball. Place in the fridge covered with plastic wrap for 30 minutes, or longer if more convenient.

Put the spinach in a saucepan over low heat and stir until any liquid has evaporated and the spinach is dry. Transfer to a bowl. Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil and gently fry the onion in it for five minutes without browning. Add the minced



HOPLEY PHOTOS

garlic and thyme, cook another minute, then mix into the spinach. Grate the mozzarella and stir into the spinach mixture. Set aside.

Turn the oven to 400 degrees and line a baking pan with parchment. On a floured board divide the dough into 8 or 9 evenly-sized pieces. Shape each into a ball, then roll out to a 4-inch disc. Place

them on the prepared pan. Generously pile on some of the spinach-mozzarella mix, leaving a clear border. Make a hollow in the center of the filling, then crack a quail egg on each one. Bake for 18 to 22 minutes or until the pastry edge is brown and the egg is set.

Makes 8 or 9.

SALAD OF QUAIL EGGS AND GRAPE TOMATOES

- 10 to 12 quail eggs
- 1 butter leaf or Boston lettuce, or 2 or 3 handfuls of baby salad leaves
- 12 to 16 grape tomatoes
- salt to taste
- 6 to 8 kalamata or other black olives



Boil the quail eggs in a pan of water for 3 or 4 minutes, then remove and immediately place them in a bowl of chilled water with ice cubes so they cool without forming grey rings around the yolk.

Wash and dry the salad leaves and tomatoes. Halve the tomatoes, shell the eggs by cutting into the shell with a saw-edged knife, and halve them.

Tear the leaves from the lettuce. Wash the leaves and dry. Spread them onto a flat dish. Set the halved tomatoes on top, season with salt, then add the halved eggs. Dot the olives among the vegetables to highlight their vivid colors.

Serve immediately with a homemade or bottled dressing of your choice.

Serves 4.

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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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