

The Montague Reporter

Year 24 – No. 18

APRIL 9, 2026

\$2

editor@montaguereporter.org

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

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MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Funds for Shea Upgrade Delivered From Washington

By JEFF SINGLETON with MIKE JACKSON

On Monday night the Montague selectboard was treated to a dramatic reading by chair Matt Lord of the May 2 annual town meeting warrant, which it approved. The board also authorized the use of Peskeompskut Park for the farmers market from May through October and a pagan-influenced celebration in Montague Center on May 3, and discussed developing a clearer policy for disposing of property deemed

as surplus by town departments.

The meeting took place in the wake of a visit that afternoon by US representative Jim McGovern, who was delivering a \$165,000 earmark to fund renovations at the Shea Theater. The visit, which was attended by Lord and fellow selectboard member Marina Goldman as well as town administrator Walter Ramsey, also celebrated an earlier earmark of \$975,000 for streetscape work on Avenue A in Turners Falls, awarded in 2022.

see MONTAGUE page A7



US representative Jim McGovern held a press conference in the lobby of the Shea Theater Monday afternoon highlighting the local delivery of federal funds.

Baystate Nurses Rally Allies Before Strike Authorization

By MIKE JACKSON

GREENFIELD – “I was born in this hospital,” Sara Guidaboni told the crowd gathered outside Baystate Franklin Medical Center (BFMC) on Tuesday afternoon. “My children were born in this hospital. And I think that’s true for a lot of the nurses who work here.... When I say that I care about this community and what happens

here, I really mean it.”

About 200 people including nurses and other hospital staff, members of other unions in the region, and unaffiliated local community members turned out in the brisk weather for an “informational picket” called by the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA), which represents all the registered nurses at the Greenfield hospital.

see NURSES page A5



Unionized nurses and their supporters thronged the High Street entrance.

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

‘Reasonable’ Requests Cut In Budget Compromise

By GEORGE BRACE

Leverett’s selectboard and finance committee held a hearing on Tuesday to review a final draft of the town’s budget for FY’27 and some of the special articles voters will decide on at the annual town meeting on May 2. The selectboard also hired a fourth full-time police officer, among other business.

Fin com chair Phil Carter summarized the proposed budget and noted that it is available on the town website. The “bottom line,” he said, is that the budget would increase by 4.8% to \$8.48 million, and the property tax rate by 5.5% to \$16.57 per \$1,000 in assessed value.

Carter listed a number of department requests that were removed from the final budget – additional hours or funding for staff at the highway, police, and fire departments, the Council on Aging, and the library, as well as \$9,000 in Leverett Elementary School spending

see LEVERETT page A4

STRPB Now On the Verge Of Approving Agreements

By MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Even though eight of the 13 members were present at Tuesday’s meeting of the Six Town Regionalization Planning Board, they decided to postpone an important vote until next Monday in the hopes of full attendance: finalizing the regional agreements to be sent this fall to voters in Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, Montague, Gill, and Warwick, asking them to form a new school district.

“I know we have a quorum,” Gill representative Deb Loomer said, “and I know it’s difficult to meet, but if I was on a selectboard for a town, I might say, ‘So, what was the vote?’”

“I don’t disagree,” said STRPB co-chair Greg Snedeker, who serves on the Gill selectboard. “I think it’s good to have the full board if we’re going to vote the two regional agreements.”

The meeting was set for 6:15 p.m. Monday, via Zoom, and even though two more members joined Tuesday’s conference the board agreed to hold out for more. “It shouldn’t take more than 10 minutes,” Snedeker said.

see VERGE page A8

One Chief to Manage Both Fire Departments



Captain Luke Hartnett, who will be promoted to Turners Falls fire chief after Todd Brunelle retires later this month, will be doing double duty.

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – “A year ago I never would have told you this would happen,” said Luke Hartnett, currently a captain at the Turners Falls fire department, who has been elevated to the job of fire chief to replace Todd Brunelle, who will retire at the end of April.

Hartnett has been working for the Turners department for 14 years and previously served as a captain at the Erving fire department, as well as in fire prevention with the state Department of Conservation

and Recreation, according to an announcement last Friday by the fire district’s prudential committee. He told the Reporter that he has known, and been mentored by, several fire chiefs in the region.

What the announcement did not mention as part of Hartnett’s resume is that he is also currently serving as chief of the Montague Center fire department, having been promoted to that position in June 2025.

While the town’s two fire departments will have the same chief, they will remain separate, see CHIEF page A6

Greenfield Panel Rehashes Region’s Housing Shortfall



Left to right: Franklin Regional Council of Governments program manager Megan Rhodes, Rural Development, Inc. housing director Alyssa LaRose, and Greenfield community and economic director Amy Cabillane at Tuesday’s panel.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

GREENFIELD – Most people who attended the UMass Donahue Institute’s presentation and panel discussion about housing issues in Franklin County at the John W. Olver Transit Center on Tuesday night already understood why it has become more difficult and expensive to live here.

Demand for housing is far outpacing the supply. Building is too expensive. Seniors who want to downsize have nowhere to go.

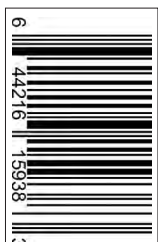
Septic and sewer capacity issues are preventing new homes from being built in rural areas. Accessory dwelling unit regulations are still taking shape. Rents are going up, and so are eviction rates.

“Housing is the crux of our challenges in Franklin County,” Greenfield mayor Virginia Desorgher told the attendees in her opening remarks. “Low supply and mismatched housing types result in unaffordable prices and living situations our residents should not have to tolerate.”

see HOUSING page A6

Bringing Yesterday’s News to an Endless World of Tomorrow

Still Taking Shape.....A1	Largely Burnt-Out Village.....B1
Starts Slipping Away.....A2	Landlord Permission Issues.....B2
Constantly On the Brink.....A3	Thumping at Random Times.....B3
Some Blood on the Floor.....A4	Smoothed By a Warm Iron.....B4
On What’s Left of the Road.....A5	Sliethering Aimlessly.....B5
Loved Ones At Their Worst.....A6	Sand Mandala, Field Organ, River Rat.....B6
Carried Home On a Shutter.....A7	Seed Swap, Free Rock, Waka Flocka.....B7
Maybe Rethink About It.....A8	Waste Is Our Food.....B8



The Montague Reporter

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August 2002

Letters to the Editors



Decouple Mass

The speech Marina Goldman delivered at No Kings Day 3 in Greenfield is a reminder that we need to demand that Massachusetts's leaders use our independent constitutional authority as a sovereign state to protect the rights of our residents.

We are happy that the PROTECT Act has passed in the House and is currently under consideration in the Senate. This Act will place important limits on federal ICE activity in Massachusetts and protect our immigrant communities.

Yet our state leaders can do more. A bill in the House right now, H.4975, would delay the adoption of some of the federal tax changes passed in July 2025 under Trump's so-called "One Big Beautiful Bill" (OB3). The House bill, introduced by Governor Healey, would require wealthy taxpayers and corporations in Massachusetts to forgo some of the favorable tax treatments from OB3 in their state tax returns. It would protect our state's financial stability, preserv-

ing hundreds of millions of dollars in state revenues each year.

The governor has proposed that this change be limited to the 2026 and 2027 tax years, though some of our legislators would like to see a more permanent decoupling of certain provisions of our state's tax code from the federal tax code.

According to testimony before the Joint Committee on Revenue in February, which used analysis from the non-partisan Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the corporate and individual tax breaks in OB3 altogether will provide an average annual federal tax reduction of \$84,800 to the top 1% of Massachusetts households – those with incomes above \$1.1 million a year. By contrast, the lowest-income 20% of Massachusetts households – those with incomes below \$27,100 a year – will see average federal tax cuts of just \$50 each from OB3.

As noted in this testimony, "High-income households and rich corporations do not need a second round of state-level tax cuts lay-

ered on top of the large federal tax cuts they will receive from OB3."

We have an opportunity with the passage of H.4975 to take collective action to protect our state's financial stability for the benefit of our residents.

As co-leader of the State Working Group of Indivisible Montague, I urge you to contact senator Comerford at jo.comerford@masenate.gov and representatives Lindsay Sabadosa at lindsay.sabadosa@mahouse.gov and Susannah Whipps at Susannah.Whipps@mahouse.gov to let them know that you support H.4975 and that you'd like to see it made permanent and passed in this legislative session.

Leigh Rae
Montague Center



Kaitlyn Norwood of Greenfield holds up her first restoration, an 1860s-era clock. "Within the past couple years," she says, "I have found a love for collecting clocks and restoring and repairing them. Big, small, old, and new alike, I'll take a look for free. Being that I'm still new to it and gathering equipment I cannot guarantee anything, but I am willing to try and fix anything you can throw at me!" Got a job for Kadence Clockworks? Email norwoodk288@gmail.com.

A Few Words of GratEGGtude

On Saturday, April 4, hundreds (maybe even thousands!) of children and their family members from throughout Franklin County and beyond flocked to Unity Park to participate in Montague Parks & Recreation's 21st Annual Peter Cottontail's EGGstravaganza.

Children aged four to twelve were given the enviable task of finding over 5,000 candy-filled eggs strewn throughout the park, as well as getting their picture taken with Peter Cottontail.

The EGGstravaganza would not have been possible without the generous support from Green-

field Savings Bank, the Montague Elks, Taylor Greene, Paul Wonsey, and our countless volunteers who spent a lovely day at the park getting ready for the onslaught of little egg hunters.

We would also like to give a special thanks to Peter Cottontail for setting aside time from his busy schedule to be present during the festivities, and we hope to see you all next year!

Jon Dobosz, CPRP
Director of
Parks & Recreation,
Town of Montague

OP ED

Goldman: More Power Than We Are Using

By MARINA GOLDMAN

MONTAGUE CENTER – Let's talk about power.

There are two very different kinds of power in the world right now. There's the power of the people – the kind that builds schools and repairs roads, funds research, and makes sure government answers to the public it serves.

Then there's power over the people – the kind that concentrates wealth and influence at the top, demands loyalty instead of accountability, silences criticism, and keeps ordinary residents out of the room where decisions are made.

History shows us the difference. Power of the people strengthens communities. Power over the people weakens communities.

When the people allow their democracy to be controlled by the Epstein class and mega-corporations, the warning signs are unmistakable: our basic needs pushed aside, our youth endangered, civic institutions

pressured to fall in line, and constant efforts to divide people. We're so busy arguing with each other and just trying to survive that we hardly notice corporate villains stealing our labor, exploiting our communities, and ruining our natural world.

If we want to call the United States a democracy, power must reside with the people – when it starts slipping away, it's our responsibility to take it back.

Now that the balance of power has shifted further at the national level, what tools do states and municipalities have to push back against this lawless administration?

Our state has independent constitutional authority we are not yet using – we can push our attorney general, our governor, and our legislators to do more; we can demand that they protect the legitimacy of our elections and polling stations and work proactively to ensure a peaceful transfer of power. We must insist they collaborate with other states to build interstate agreements to hold the line against authoritarianism. We can join forces

with Vermont, with Connecticut, with New York and New Jersey.

Massachusetts has more power than it is using, and we do, too!

We can protect our neighbors through mutual aid, and final passage of protective legislation. We can protect our state and municipal finances by demanding our legislators pass bills that pay for our schools instead of extending Trump's tax breaks to large corporations and Massachusetts billionaires. We can build independent capacity to take care of our own while bringing in state revenue and keeping it in a state bank.

We can do more. Jump in. Start small. Start anywhere. Call your family and friends who vote in other parts of the state to mobilize across districts, and then work with others to make all our legislators more responsive to their constituents.

Challenge yourself to have political conversations – talk to the gal at the gas pump about gas prices, or your uncle who is concerned about the price of food. Have a con-

versation with someone who might not share your views. Knock on your neighbors' door – invite them to Stone Soup Café on Saturday, or the Brick House Food Pantry on Wednesday. Invite a friend to an Indivisible meeting, or a Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution (FCCPR) meeting.

Join the school committee, run for town council, become a town meeting member. Join the singers, the brass band, the puppet makers. Find a community, or organize in the communities you already have.

Start small, but don't hesitate to think big. Our state has more power. Our towns have more power. And you have more power.

Together, we have more power. It's time we pick up the power of the people!

Adapted from a speech given by Marina Goldman at the No Kings Day rally in Greenfield on March 28. Written by Laurie Rhoades, Jennifer Atlee, and Marina Goldman on behalf of Indivisible Montague.

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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

Tuesday's weather was ludicrous. **Snow? Sleet?** What did we do to deserve that?

Weather scientists and the weather press are warning us that a **Super El Niño**, which is Spanish for "Super the Male Child," may develop later this year. This means the Pacific Ocean is likely to get anomalously hot, leading to heavier, wetter weather across the Southwest and Gulf Coast.

On this side of the continent, it would likely decrease the chances of hurricanes hitting the Eastern seaboard, and increase the chance of next winter being dry and mild.

As this newspaper edition was in the throes of production, Montague's public works department was **sweeping the streets** downtown. It's always exciting and noisy, and at least in recent years, it always happens late Wednesday night into the wee hours of Thursday.

This year those of us who've signed up for town alerts received a heads-up it was coming, and I have to say that this made a world of difference. I'm looking forward to seeing the results in the light of day.

I stopped by the Shea Theater last Friday to catch the **world premiere of Baker's Boy**, a short film written and directed by Mo Schweiger and produced by Bella Levavi – together, they write the irregularly-appearing column *True Love Will Find You In the End* for this newspaper under the *nom de guerre* Mandy Mudballs – and cinematographed by Otis Wheeler, who by day cinematographs things like the Erving selectboard meetings we watch on BNCTV (see page A4).

I should have known it would be good, but I was thoroughly entertained and by the end amazed and proud of our cronies. The magical-realist story was set in Greenfield, and just as in *TLWIFYTE* the lines between reality and sly parody were inconsistently drawn, to great effect. I do wonder how it will play in other markets, where some of the best jokes won't land – "No one's going to ever like it as much as this audience," Mo self-effaced – but the film was well-acted, engrossing, and very funny and I hope it gets to travel around.

My excellent weekend continued with the Easter stampede at Unity Park, which was cute as always and left me with a tiny sunburn, and terrific, restorative, friend-filled shows at Looky Here and the Brick House.

It really felt like spring!

Monday morning I pulled up to the Shea Theater for the dog-and-pony show, as (blind item!) one town official called it, and locked my bike up to the metal frame around the building's gas meter in the alley.

I didn't mind that at all, but since we were there to hear trumpeting sounds concerning vast funds to improve that very block of sidewalk and that very building, and since the first person I saw was the Montague town planner, I asked her if there were any plans for a **bike rack at the theater**.

There were, in fact, plans for a bike rack, Maureen told me, and the very next day she emailed me a terse follow-up: "The bike racks in front of the Shea Theater have been installed. See attached photo."



At times like this, I have to stop and wonder whether I'm the beneficiary of some kind of secret Make-A-Wish-Foundation-style charity desire-fulfillment effort. People would tell me if I were terminally ill or something, right?

Now for the **announcements**.

Not too long ago the Franklin County Diaper Bank, which supplied a number of direct-service organizations with diapers, was a tremendous effort of a very small number of volunteers called the Franklin County Diaper Task Force. They were constantly on the brink of exhaustion and burnout, but it seemed like that was resolved when the local United Way took it on as a major program focus.

But what's old is new again:

"The **United Way of The Franklin & Hampshire Region (UWFH) Diaper Bank** distributes nearly 20,000 diapers and wipes each month to local children who need them most. Unfortunately, the ability of the bank to continue serving the local community at

this level is currently being threatened by gaps in federal funding. The anticipated loss of funding that allows UWFH to participate in the Federal Diaper Distribution Demonstration & Research Pilot (DDDRP) means that the Diaper Bank will immediately lose 50% of its monthly capacity (10,000 diapers per month) and \$10,000 in funding for staffing and operations.

"Starting April 15 and running through May 15, 2026, UWFH is running 'The Diaper Deficit' fundraising campaign to help ensure the stable continued operation of the Diaper Bank, even with the uncertainty in federal funding. The monetary donations raised by this campaign will support the Diaper Bank's operations and supplies, providing diapers, pull-ups, and wipes for families living in Franklin and Hampshire counties and the North Quabbin area. Donations can be made through the UWFH website at www.uwf-h.org, or the main donation page at" ... and we will spare you the 54-character randomly generated address and say www.tinyurl.com/Donate4Diaperz. "You may also write a check out to UWFH with 'Diaper Bank' on the memo line, and send it to PO Box 123, Northampton, MA 01061."

Diaper insecurity is terrible – diapers are endless and end up being expensive, and broke parents, of which there are a number among our neighbors, are often driven to "stretch" diapers, which can cause cascading physical and mental health impacts that last years and years after the person in question is no longer a baby. It's never the baby's fault their parents are in that position, and for whatever obscure and excruciatingly stupid reason, diapers can't be bought with SNAP or WIC benefits.

Every free diaper our society can get to these families frees up resources to meet other essential needs. Please consider giving. Better yet, plan a fundraiser... maybe set it up 50/50 between diapers and another cause. Dollar for dollar, it's hard to think of a better-targeted place for giving than making diapers available for those in need.

And if you're (understandably) concerned about the environmental toll of plastic diapers, please work on making cloth diapering affordable and accessible to all parents.

Greenfield reader Jon Magee writes, on behalf of Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution:

"After the big public protests of #NoKings last week, FCCPR invites folks from across the county to come plug into opportunities to build people power against authoritarianism.

FCCPR will host the meeting and a range of other organizations will join. We'll also **plan for a local May Day action** as national movement leaders call for a day of No Work, No School, No Shopping. All are welcome."

Their meeting is this Sunday, April 12 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Guiding Star Grange in Greenfield.



Where **Flipper** played in '83.

Looking for a job? Want to help shape the future of plant-based protein? Check it out:

"On Monday, April 13, MassHire Franklin Hampshire will be at the Greenfield Public Library for an **Employer Spotlight with Greenleaf Foods**. This free-to-attend event will take place from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., and pre-registration is not required. Greenleaf Foods is a leading plant-based food company dedicated to shaping the future of plant-based protein. They have multiple open positions at their Turners Falls facility and are looking to meet with interested job seekers."

If any readers might be interested in the **Western Mass Herbal Symposium**, scheduled for May 9 at the Montague Retreat Center, it looks like applications for full or partial scholarship tickets – which otherwise cost \$89 – are due April 21. Details are available at www.westernmassherbalsymposium.com. You can also volunteer in exchange for a ticket.

Despite all the small-town charmed-life sentiment I shared above, this week has been traumatic. A threat of extreme, mass violence we are powerless to stop and instead must brace to witness... it takes a toll.

As soon as it becomes possible, one of the highest legislative priorities in the US must be the **repeal of the Hague Invasion Act**.

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

OP ED

'Listen to What Is Emerging In This Moment'

By ADRIENNE LAPIERRE

MONTAGUE CENTER – I appreciated Peter Garbus's recent reflection on the No Kings demonstrations and the many ways people in our communities are taking action. The forms of care he names – showing up for neighbors, supporting immigrant families, organizing mutual aid, and staying in conversation with one another – matter. These are not small acts; they are what sustain people when institutions fall short.

I also appreciated his willingness to name what many younger people are seeing: a system that appears deeply entrenched, where wealth and power concentrate upward and accountability remains elusive. That recognition is important.

What comes next invites reflection. Garbus suggests that while younger generations are "not wrong," they may lack the longer

historical perspective that leads many elders to continue placing faith in institutions and familiar forms of political action.

I wonder if this framing risks misunderstanding what is actually being expressed. Many younger people are not disengaging. They are organizing outside the familiar frameworks of what is considered "acceptable" political participation, often with deep commitment and clarity. And they are doing so not out of apathy, but out of a growing sense that the frameworks themselves may be helping to reproduce the very conditions they are meant to challenge – particularly when it comes to economic inequality, militarism at home, and war and other foreign policy interventions overseas.

That sense is not emerging in a vacuum. It is shaped by what people are witnessing in real time. For example, the recent crackdowns on

campus activism around Palestinian solidarity, alongside ongoing immigration enforcement actions that separate families and destabilize communities, have raised difficult questions about how dissent and vulnerability are treated when they intersect with core political and economic interests.

For many, these eruptions of state violence do not feel like exceptions. They feel like ongoing and longstanding patterns of systemic harm, entwined with racial and economic inequalities. And these patterns inform a political lens that questions not just one party or leader, but the system itself.

The critiques that shape this perspective are not new. They reflect and echo longstanding analyses from Black, Indigenous, and other liberatory traditions that have questioned not only the concentration of power, but the role of mainstream political

institutions – including those seen as oppositional – in maintaining it.

In that light, the familiar argument that we must first defend existing institutions from immediate threats, and only afterward push for deeper change, rings hollow. It can feel less like a strategy and more like a cycle many have already lived through without seeing the promised transformation materialize.

For many, the question is no longer which party will act, but whether the structures both parties operate within allow for the kind of change that is needed.

This does not diminish the value of rallies, legislation, or community-based efforts, all of which, as Garbus notes, remain vital. But it may suggest that something more is being asked of us than persistence alone. Perhaps a willingness to re-think where power actually resides and how it is contested.

Many elders have long held these critiques and organized around them. And there are younger people carrying them forward in new ways. The question is not simply whether younger generations will listen to those who came before them, but whether all of us are willing to listen to what is emerging in and from this moment, even when it challenges our assumptions or unsettles our sense of how change is supposed to happen.

If there is a longer view to be taken, perhaps it includes not only evidence of progress, but also an honest reckoning with the limits of the frameworks we have inherited. That kind of reckoning does not make action impossible. But it may change what we understand effective action to be, and what it asks of us.

Adrienne LaPierre is an educator living in Montague Center.

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LEVERETT from page A1

the school committee removed at the fin com's request – to show that the cuts were spread across the board.

Carter said that these were all “very reasonable requests” that would provide a “real benefit to the town,” but explained that the fin com needed to try to keep the tax rate down and retain a buffer under the town's total levy limit set by Proposition 2½.

Fin com member Geoff Allen noted that the final budget was still approximately 2% over the rate of inflation. He said that while this can work for a short time, it would come to a head “fairly soon,” at which point “there will be some blood on the floor.... Real cuts will have to be made because we have no choice.”

Selectboard member Jed Proujansky added that federal cuts were affecting the budget. “I think we're going to be in for some rough years,” he said.

Capital Ideas

The selectboard approved roughly 18 special articles for the town meeting warrant.

Some of the larger financial items included \$600,000 for a new tanker truck for the fire department, \$75,000 for a new school tractor, and \$38,575 in matching funds for a new grader for the highway department, all of which are accounted for in the town's capital plan.

Carter noted that an article transferring \$113,000 from the free cash account into stabilization would fully fund the capital plan for the first time in many years.

A \$9,750 article intended to reconcile a discrepancy between the elementary school's accounting and the town's records sparked some tension between school committee member Tim Shores and Proujansky, who expressed frustration with

the years-old problem. He later apologized to Shores for his tone.

An article for \$5,250 would pay for the town's membership in the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District.

Connection & Calming

Articles that are special but non-financial included a vote to adopt provisions of state law allowing for the creation of a municipal light plant as a step toward building an electrical “microgrid” incorporating solar power and a battery system.

Shores, who also serves on the planning board, said the grid would connect the safety complex, the elementary school, and the library, would be owned by the town, and could be expanded. Public ownership and oversight of electricity generation, he said, could reduce costs and foster renewable power generation in Leverett at its own pace, while protecting against the creation of large “solar farms.”

Energy committee member Richard Nathorst, who has led the effort, added that consolidating connections with Eversource's grid will save money while providing multiple other opportunities to make energy distribution more efficient.

The board reviewed an article seeking a vote on whether or not the town should sell the Field building and decided to change the wording slightly for clarity.

A proposed article to adopt a state law requiring a 25 m.p.h. speed limit in thickly-settled areas was met with resistance. Among other objections, selectboard chair Patricia Duffy noted that the town's “Complete Streets” grant has prioritized work that should calm traffic in North Leverett, one of the areas of concern.

Highway department superintendent Matt Boucher said he was

unsure how many areas in Leverett qualify for the “thickly settled” designation stipulated by the law.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said she was unsure whether the citizen's petition to create this article will be certified. No vote was taken on the matter.

Other Business

The selectboard appointed Andrew Nepal as the town's fourth full-time police officer. Police chief Scott Minckler said Nepal is fully trained, fully certified, and a “fantastic fit,” and that his appointment will mean the department will be fully staffed for the first time since September 2024.

Nepal has been working part-time on Leverett's force for 18 months, said the chief, while employed full-time at Springfield Technical Community College's police department.

The board approved adjustments to Nepal's starting pay and vacation time to account for his 20 years of experience and the large pay cut he will take in joining Leverett's force. Minckler also noted that he will not need to attend the police academy, which costs the town money and has contributed to turnover in new hires.

The board appointed Adam Wellen as a firefighter. Fire chief Michael Visniewski said Wellen had no prior experience, but “we're going to mold him into a firefighter.”

Gary Gruber received permission for an annual Earth Day cleanup this Saturday, April 11.

The board signed a document saying it will not object to a debt authorization of approximately \$500,000, as requested by the Amherst-Pelham regional school committee for a number of building repairs and improvements to district schools.

Montague Community Television News

You Stand, We Film

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – There is a lot to shout about. Take it to the streets with the Gill Standout every Friday from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. on the Gill side of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, and MCTV will be there too, broadcasting your protest.

We cover many weekly meetings that are a little different than this, but just as important. You can find our recordings of Gill and Montague selectboard meetings, as well as Montague finance committee meetings, in our video archive.

You can find us on Channel 9 or watch our videos on our Vimeo page, which you can find by

clicking the “Videos” tab on our website, Montaguetv.org. There you will find folders directing you to all of the Montague and Gill selectboard meetings, in which you will find the most recent meetings and all of our previous recordings.

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

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

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Endless Picky Budget Details Scrutinized

By MIKE JACKSON

As it has nearly every week since January, the Erving selectboard met jointly Monday with the finance and capital improvements committees to continue to hash out an FY'27 budget for the town. They reviewed, but did not approve, warrants for the annual election on Monday, May 4 and the annual town meeting on Wednesday, May 13.

Much of the joint session was taken up by deliberation over property tax exemptions as well as cost-of-living adjustments for town staff. Principal assessor Diane Sumrall provided a chart indicating various options for expanding exemptions, which could increase the amount of revenue the town waives from roughly \$41,000 in the current year to as much as \$96,000 next year.

Fin com member Dan Hammock said the town had set a \$400 annual exemption for veterans around 1970 and never increased it. “In 1978, I bought a nice used car for \$400,” he said. “In that 56 years, we've given veterans an increase of \$20. Or less – maybe \$12, if it's 3%. I think it's a disgrace if we don't give them as much as we can give them.”

Hammock advocated giving veterans a 100% increase in the exemption, the highest option available.

In the end, the officials agreed to send an article to town meeting that would instead adopt a different, mutually exclusive approach, which would apply a uniform cost-of-living escalator to all property tax exemptions – those for veterans, those for the blind, and those for senior citizens.

Another long discussion involved developing

a formula to significantly increase the water fees in the coming years, from roughly \$2 per thousand gallons to \$8.68 in nine years. No vote was taken, as the finance committee was asked to review the proposal on the table.

The meeting looked over revised budget requests for wastewater treatment and animal control.

Another topic was a proposal to hire a new full-time administrative staff member.

“Why do we need more people around here?” Hammock asked rhetorically. “Why are we having to keep adding staff?”

He ran through major projects on the town's plate – bridge replacements, the planned senior housing project, the International Paper mill. “These are things that take time,” he said, “and to require the staff we have now to put in 60, 70 hours.... From a financial point of view, we need these things.”

Selectboard member Jim Loynd agreed. “I know the burden that's been put on the administrative staff with all the increased regulations,” he said. “We're going to run to a point where bandwidth is extended for so long that it turns to burnout.”

A related issue was where to set cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for non-union staff. The officials agreed to consider 3%, review the budget impact, and check back in. No vote was taken on either the new position or the COLA.

Finally, the officials reviewed the town meeting warrant, a work in progress. The draft they were presented with included roughly 31 unnumbered articles, not counting the two tax exemption articles they had voted to add. “It's

getting longer with every meeting that we all have together,” town administrator Bryan Smith commented.

Police Hire

On the recommendation of police chief Robert Holst, the selectboard voted unanimously to hire Joe Doescher as a full-time patrol officer. According to his application materials Doescher is trilingual in English, Spanish, and German and has received post-secondary education in Puerto Rico, Germany, and – most critically for Erving – the police academy in Holyoke. He worked for the Hatfield police department for five months.

Doescher was hired for a one-year term, pending screening. Holst said he was a “bright, articulate young man” who had made a “very good” impression on the hiring committee, but would need some on-the-job training.

Holst, who is facing a severe staffing shortage following the departure of several officers this winter, said Doescher's field training would overlap with that of another recent hire, and that he plans to staff them on different shifts.

The board also voted to authorize agreements between the town and the Franklin County sheriff's office to provide police coverage during the staffing shortage, as well as animal control services for three years beginning in July.

At the end of the meeting, the board retired into an executive session to discuss collective bargaining. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 13.

Thanks to Bernardston-Northfield Community Television for recording Monday's meeting.

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NURSES from page A1

“The evidence is clear – safe staffing saves lives,” Guidaboni, now a med-surg nurse at BFMC, said to cheers and applause. “But it’s been getting harder to maintain – we’re often working short-staffed, and many shifts we’re not doing just one job.... When wages don’t keep pace with the cost of living, we’re risking losing the very people who make excellent healthcare possible.”

The union and Baystate Health, a nonprofit healthcare system with over 12,000 employees throughout western Massachusetts, settled previous contracts in 2014, 2018, and 2022 after long and contentious negotiations that were punctuated at times by short strikes and management lockouts. The most recent contract expired at the end of December, and since then the nurses in Greenfield have been working under a series of short-term extensions.

Bargaining committee co-chair Marissa Potter, an obstetrics nurse at the hospital, told the *Montague Reporter* MNA submitted 18 formal proposals last fall, and tentative agreements have been reached on eight.

At Tuesday’s rally, union members said they are negotiating for regionally competitive wages in order to slow staff turnover; contract language that protects members who use their sick time; preventing Baystate from filling staffing gap with non-unionized employees from its other facilities; and maintaining safe nurse-to-patient ratios.

A key feature of the agreement reached in 2018 is a set of staffing “grids,” a scheduling system that established guaranteed nurse-to-patient ratios under a variety of conditions. “It really set a precedent for the whole region,” Potter told the *Reporter*, “to have that kind of contract language.”

In 2022, still early in the COVID-19 pandemic, “the tone in the world around healthcare workers was quite different,” Potter said, resulting in a “strong contract” from the nurses’ perspective. Since then, attrition among frontline nurses – who often leave BFMC seeking higher wages – as well as layoffs and turnover among management mean there are new faces on both sides of the bargaining table.

“We’re up against different odds right now,” she said. Wages at BFMC remain 10% to 23% behind the regional average, Potter added, and management has proposed reducing entry-level pay for nursing graduates by 50 cents per hour, “which is not a retention strategy in anyone’s book.”

Next week the nurses in the Greenfield unit will be asked to vote on a strike authorization, which would not schedule a work stoppage but would allow the bar-

gaining committee to bring that possibility to the table.

“Baystate Franklin Medical Center nurses provide quality and compassionate care to all patients in our community, and we remain committed to negotiating in good faith to reach a fair agreement,” Baystate Health spokesperson Heather Duggan said in a written statement when asked for comment. “We recently began mediation with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, and our ongoing bargaining sessions have continued to be productive.”

Potter told the *Reporter* that the union filed an Unfair Labor Practices complaint this week because the company offered to concede on the staffing grid in exchange for the introduction of non-union float nurses.

Tuesday’s public rally was a call for, and a show of, community support for the nurses in advance of the authorization vote. MNA is circulating a petition of local support, and a resolution is expected to go before city council next week in support of the nurses’ “efforts... in securing a fair and equitable union contract” and encouraging Baystate to “negotiate in good faith.”

Precinct 6 councilor Patricia Williams was handed the microphone. “Keep fighting,” she told the nurses. “We will fight with you. Keep fighting. When they back you into the wall, come out fighting – never cave. You will win. If you have to walk, we’ll walk with you.”

On Wednesday night the resolution was approved by a 5-0 vote of the appointments and ordinances committee, on which Williams sits, clearing the way for its introduction to the full council.

Support also came from other workers. “Safe patient ratios save lives, improve health outcomes, and reduce injuries and burnout on the job,” said Aaron Winston, an ICU nurse at Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton and a member of the union’s board of directors. “This is not up for debate.”

“My son was born in this hospital,” Winston added, “and it wasn’t for the expertise and attention of the nurses, the midwives and the pediatricians, both my son and my wife may not have survived that delivery.”

“I’m pretty happy with the amount of people that showed up for us,” Guidaboni told the *Reporter* on Wednesday. “Everybody’s a little frazzled at this point, because it’s been going on for so long and we seem to not really be making progress in the areas that really matter.”

Guidaboni said that for her, this means preserving the staffing grid that limits her to five patients at a time, and keeping the BFMC nursing pool union-only.

“We’re strong going into Tuesday,” she said. “I think everyone is in agreement about what we want.”



NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Riverside Sewers Mapped Out, Will Be Eligible for Lining

By KATE SAVAGE

In a characteristically brief meeting on Monday, the Gill selectboard made plans to use the power of geographic information systems (GIS) to monitor town infrastructure and offered to hire a new employee for the assessor’s office.

Highway superintendent John Miner presented a comprehensive map of Riverside’s sewer system and made a pitch to use ArcGIS software to map more town infrastructure.

The board approved spending \$700 a year for the software, along with \$400 annually for support from RCAP Solutions. The cost will be shared between the town’s highway, sewer, tree, and information technology budgets. Miner said RCAP Solutions would dedicate up to 100 hours in the first year for training and onboarding. “The only thing we would need is an iPad,” he said.

“I love this stuff,” said selectboard member Greg Snedeker. He noted that the technology is a particularly valuable asset when services cross town lines through regionalization agreements. “Just throwing that out there.”

The board also approved Miner’s recommendation to expand the scope

of this year’s road maintenance projects. “Speaking with the contractor, he was looking to try to have me up my figures a little bit, so that while they’re here they can make it worth their while,” said Miner. He also said he wanted to get agreements in place before prices go up in July.

The board approved doing chip seal work on Franklin and Green Hill roads, including a small private section that the highway department relies on for turning its trucks around. The total cost for the expansion is estimated at \$96,800, to be taken from Chapter 90 funding.

“Currently in Chapter 90 we have \$593,800,” said Miner, who said he has been saving up to improve roads in the Riverside neighborhood.

“In other towns they drive on the right side of the road,” said Snedeker. “In Riverside, we drive on what’s left of the road.”

As the board worried about the aging sewer lines beneath those crumbling Riverside streets, Andrew Evans from RCAP Solutions told them the “good news”: “Your lines are good candidates, by and large, for relining.” Rather than digging up and replacing sewer lines, the relining process seals the inside of the pipes with epoxy,

without needing to excavate.

Evans said the technology was “stolen” from Florida, where it is used to shore up house foundations near sinkholes.

Other Business

After months of searching, the board of assessors recommended offering the position of assistant to the assessors to former Gill resident Doreen Kwader.

“It’s been a long time coming,” said selectboard chair Charles Garbiel. There have been no assessor employees since September.

Board of assessors chair Bill Tomb thanked his colleagues Robert Whittier and Pamela Lester, who he said continue to be active on the board, despite their decisions not to run again for the office.

The selectboard agreed to sign a letter in support of a Massachusetts Senate bill which would allow all six of the towns considering school regionalization to hold special town elections.

An information session about the Gill Elementary roof project will take place this Saturday at 9:30 a.m. at the school. “Hopefully it won’t be raining so they won’t get leaked on,” Garbiel joked.

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PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 138, Mass. General Laws, as amended, the Inhabitants of the Town of Montague are hereby notified that El Nopalito Restaurant, LLC d/b/a El Nopalito, with Jahmes Campos Peters as Manager, has applied for an alteration to their liquor license in the form of an extension to their outside patio. Location of the premises: 196 Turners Falls Road, Montague, MA 01351. Description of the premises: Consisting of a free-standing one-story building with kitchen, prep and dining area and walk-in cooler. Ingress and egress on east, south and north sides of building. NEW PROPOSED EXPANSION: outdoor open-air patio, enclosed on all sides by 3 ft high raised garden beds or a 6 ft high wood panel fence with 32 seats, approximately 281 sq ft. and an ingress and egress on the south side of the patio. The floor plan is available in the Selectboard’s Office.

Date and place of hearing: Monday, April 27, 2026, at 6:30 p.m., via Zoom. Link is available on Town’s website calendar.
www.montague-ma.gov/d/13985/Selectboard-Meeting

Montague License Commissioners

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

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MONTAGUE from page A1

The streetscape project was completed last year, after the selectboard rejected a proposal by a contractor to remove ash trees from the planters between Third and Second streets.

The Shea funds, which come from an earmark originating in the federal Department of Agriculture, will be used to bankroll a variety of renovations at the theater, including sound and lighting improvements, HVAC upgrades, safety improvements to the fly system, and an accessible lift to the stage from outside the building.

As McGovern and his aides toured the theater Monday afternoon with town officials, Shea Theater Arts Center (STAC) director Linda Tardiff told him the upgrades would allow the venue to “stay competitive, both in our offerings and also our ability to welcome artists into the area.”

Tardiff told McGovern concerts at the Shea sometimes attract audience members from as far as Connecticut and Rhode Island. When he asked if the town had “any way of quantifying” how many of those visitors purchase meals or other services locally, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce director Jessye Dean said her organization has been using geofencing software, Placer.ai, to help local towns and agencies measure trends in foot traffic.

“Overnight visitation [to Franklin County] has increased by 67% in the last fiscal year,” she added.

Reading prepared comments in front of cameras, McGovern called the Shea an “economic engine for Montague’s revitalization.... A community is strengthened by the arts, and to have a performance venue right here makes all the difference in the world.”

“We’re going to have to keep fighting to deliver results like this,” he said. “Massachusetts is already feeling the squeeze from federal cuts, so we have to work harder than ever at the local level to bring resources home.”

Ramsey recapped the ongoing streetscape project, saying the earmark had brought it to “almost 75, 80% completion,” and Lord thanked McGovern for what he called his “understanding of the community’s commitment to this space here, the Shea Theater, and also the work that we’re doing in our commercial district.”

“With all the other stuff that’s going on in the world,” McGovern said, “at least today we can celebrate a little bit.”

Whether the renovations would fall under the state procurement law, Chapter 30B, which would require a bidding process and oversight by the town, is unclear. STAC, the private non-profit that occupies and manages the town-owned theater, is listed as the recipient of the earmark.

At Monday’s selectboard meeting Ramsey, who serves as Montague’s chief procurement officer, expressed the belief that elements of the project would in fact require his oversight because they fund permanent improvements to a town building.

Annual Town Meeting

A highlight of Monday night’s meeting was a dramatic reading of the annual town meeting warrant by Lord, which took over 10 minutes, followed by a vote to post it.

The warrant contains 33 arti-



Clockwise from center: McGovern schmoozed post-press conference with Montague town administrator Walter Ramsey, selectboard members Matt Lord and Marina Goldman, and a member of the Greenfield press.

cles, including operating budgets for the town, Clean Water Facility, and municipal airport; assessments for the Gill-Montague regional and Franklin County Technical school districts; an appropriation for a new library in Turners Falls; a major revision of personnel policies; and giving the selectboard power to negotiate an aggregation deal for the purchase of electricity by residents.

It was accompanied on Monday by a document labeled “Background,” which described each article. Asked if this would replace the list of “motions” that has traditionally been sent to town meeting, which has included funding sources and recommendations by key committees on each article, Ramsey suggested that listing all funding sources would make the document “wordy,” as there are multiple sources for many articles.

He said that the committee recommendations, on the other hand, “will be provided.”

Revising Policy

In a related development the board approved a revised “Personnel Policies” manual, which had been introduced at a March 2 meeting. Ramsey said he wanted to include a link to the document in the town meeting materials. He said it had been reviewed and edited by town attorneys to be consistent with state law and union agreements, and wondered if the board had been able to further review the formidable 146-page document.

Following a long silence, board member Rich Kuklewicz said he had read it, but “it’s hard to complete it.”

“I think we should buckle down and read more of it,” said Lord, noting that the document was “definitely not perfect.” He voted, however, to issue the current version in order to inform the town meeting decision on revising the personnel bylaw.

The board also discussed an initial draft of a revised surplus disposal policy, introduced by assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller. The policy applies to supplies and equipment with a net value of under \$10,000, since items over that threshold are regulated under Chapter 30B. The policy indicates how a variety of items are to be evaluated, the oversight role of the chief procurement officer, and the bidding process.

Nolan-Zeller said the policy needs to be updated because it currently requires sealed bids, which “does not allow for online tools like Municibid, which are becoming increasingly popular.” He said

that allowing them was the biggest change in the policies. Another change, he said, would update the procedure for a scenario in which multiple non-profit organizations express interest in an item. Rather than drawing a winner from a container, the offer would be accepted on a first-come, first served.

Another addition was a section allowing department heads to “solicit interest from other departments before asking the chief procurement officer to declare an item as surplus.”

“It’s a classic small-town municipal problem,” Lord said. “‘Oh yeah this thing’s worth nothing – let’s put it out behind the thing,’ and then your buddies can come and pick it up and take the \$5,000 piece of equipment away for nothing...”

Lord clarified that he did not believe the town’s current employees would do such a thing, but said the goal should be to design policies that would create disincentives “so that nobody could even try and think about doing that” in the future. The board did not take a vote on the draft.

Other Business

The board voted to approve a request by the law firm Sullivan, Hayes & Quinn, LLC, which used to represent Montague in labor negotiations, to represent Greenfield in developing an agreement between the two towns for the shared use of police drones. Ramsey said that Montague’s legal firm, KP Law, had reviewed the request and found “little to no risk to the town.”

The board approved a request from RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto and resident Will Quale for use of the Montague Center town common for a May Day parade and celebration on Sunday, May 3. LoManto said the event has been held for 37 or 38 years. Quale said the organizers had not heard complaints about the pagan nature of the celebration, which involves circling a May Pole and Morris dancing, from the neighborhood’s church.

A request for the use of Peskeompskut Park on Saturdays from May 2 to October 31 for the town farmers market was also approved by the board, as was the use of the sidewalk on 106 and 112 Avenue A by the Upper Bend cafe and Avenue A Market for sidewalk dining.

The board retired into an executive session to discuss litigation strategy involving Laurel Realty Trust, which owns a trailer park on Laurel Lane in Turners Falls.

The selectboard’s next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 13.

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

Here’s the way it was on April 7, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

How to Dissolve

“It’s become quite obvious, locally, that a number of cemeteries have come to the same end that we have,” Bob Perry told the Gill selectboard Monday night. “The volunteerism isn’t there, the family interest in historic family burial plots is not there, and the administration that is currently in place – as the youngest member at 66, and people in their 70s – it’s just too much.”

Perry is the president of the Riverside Cemetery Association, stewards of the large private cemetery on Main Road. Last week, the

Association’s executive committee gave Perry the go-ahead to announce that they plan to dissolve and to ask the town to take over ownership of the burial ground as well as crypt keys, maps, deeds, and records dating back to 1883.

“A search of the records didn’t show how to dissolve,” he said.

Gloria Steinem Buzz

Writer, activist, and renowned feminist Gloria Steinem spent March 29 at Northfield Mount Hermon School, talking with students and faculty before delivering an address to the entire school community. “My assignment,” she said, includes “helping students to understand that being a feminist is everyone’s job.”

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on April 6, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

**Teens Raise Money
For Skate Park**

The town of Montague came together last night in a rare way as three dozen teenagers met with the selectboard, police, parks and recreation, parents, and downtown residents to work to reopen the skate park. Jon Dobosz, director of parks and recreation, estimated repair costs at \$7,875. But, teen Justin Smith said, “Not all of the money would come from taxpayers. Some has been earned by kids.”

The adults looked doubtful

until Brick House director Nancy Edmond told them, “We have \$6,650 raised by the kids in one month. How very proud I am of all of them.”

Gill’s Noise Bylaw

On Monday the Gill selectboard revisited the idea of enacting a noise bylaw due to numerous complaints from West Gill Road residents who have called town hall and police for more than a year about incidents of noise from “souped-up” ATVs. “I don’t think this is something you should have to pass a law on,” said selectboard chair Phil Maddern. “It should be common courtesy.”

140 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on April 7, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

Everybody is suffering from cold.

The Fitchburg R.R. Co. have just raised the employes wages ten per cent.

On Thursday last, George Stone, a stone mason, fell into the sewer and broke his leg.

George Gemmell has a very fine tenement to rent at Montague City. No prettier place could be found anywhere.

Ida, youngest daughter of Landlord Foster of the Farren house, has entered Moody’s Seminary at Northfield for a course of study.

Gov. Robinson having signed the anti-tobacco bill, it is now unlawful to sell the weed in any form to a person under 16 years of age.

The water in the Connecticut river for a few days last week was the highest it has been for many

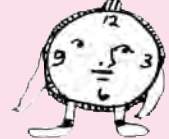
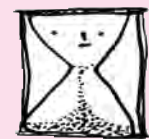
years. The bridge road was overflowed to such an extent as to be impassible.

Knowlton, the pitcher of the Athol base ball club last year, has contracted with the Newark, of Newark, N.J., for the season, and played his first game with them Thursday, striking out 18 men.

“Farce Day” it should be called. Nobody fasts or prays, but the saloons just lay things out for a big drunk, everybody gets up entertainments, dances are arranged and a good time generally is planned. Fast day as a religious holy day is a fraud.

Grocer James A. Gunn’s horse fell into a cess pool the other day, and nothing but the timely assistance of strong men saved the animal’s life.

William Booker, while visiting a saloon Wednesday night, stepped on a wet place on the floor with his game leg, lost his balance and broke the deformed limb. He was carried home on a shutter and attended by Dr. Best.



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VERGE from page A1

The STRPB was formed by the towns in 2019 to study the feasibility of a new district, and voted to support the idea in January 2024 after five years of study. For over two years its members have been hashing out the text of the six-town agreement with officials – and attorneys – at the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

As Warwick seceded from the Pioneer Valley district to preserve its elementary school, it is widely believed that voters there are unlikely to support rejoining the Pioneer towns. The STRPB has therefore been working on a parallel five-town agreement, and on Monday members will vote to endorse both versions.

The board discussed the challenges ahead. Educator layoffs and tax override votes are proposed around the county this year, and STRPB members point to long-term demographic decline, not state funding formulas, as the root cause. “The time that it’s taken,” Northfield rep Deb Potee commented, “it seems like it’s now on our side.”

The STRPB’s position is that dissolving the Gill-Montague and Pioneer Valley districts and starting a new Great River Regional School District (GRRSD) would be roughly budget-neutral initially, but would create sweeping educational benefits by combining middle and high school classes into larger cohorts, putting the towns on a more sustainable track in the long run.

“It’s a statewide problem,” Snedeker said. “We’re going to have over 90% of the districts in ‘hold harmless’ in the next couple of years... We have to do something to build back enrollment in our districts, because that’s the only way you can build financial economies of scale.”

Lindsay McCarthy, who was hired this spring to help the STRPB with its communication strategy, reported that the Northfield selectboard and fin com, on which she serves, voted

MONTAGUE REPORTER



SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Above, left to right: Mongabay senior editor Erik Hoffman; Boston Institute for Nonprofit Journalism director Jason Pramas; The Shoestring managing editor Brian Zayat; 1st Hampshire state rep Lindsay Sabadosa, with our April 2 edition; Free Press field director Sarah Stone; and our reporter Sarah Robertson. Free Press, which is advocating for public support of local news outlets, brought our colleagues to the State House on Wednesday for a “local news lobby day.”

Left: Montague Center resident Karen Steward brought our March 26 edition with her to visit friends in Phoenix, Arizona. Here she and a soap tree yucca pose in their yard. “Lovely weather in the 80s and the standard gorgeous sunsets, as is usual for this time of year,” she reports.

Going somewhere? Send photos to editor@montaguereporter.org!

ON THE ROAD...

unanimously on Monday against the school budget endorsed by the Pioneer school committee.

“There’s a great deal of energy around this in the town committees,” she said, “and I think we can work with that.”

“We are paying more, and our kids are getting less,” chair Alan Genovese said.

“Right,” said McCarthy. “And I think it takes several times to hear that message before you’ll get people to maybe rethink about it.”



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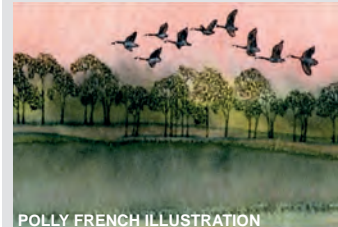


RAY HANDSCHUH PHOTO

features@montaguereporter.org

OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

APRIL 9, 2026



POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

WEST ALONG THE RIVER

METACOM'S WAR COMES TO YOUR BACK YARD, PART II

By DAVID BRULE

PESKEOMPSKUT – In the summer of 1675, some 350 years ago, English settlers in the mid-Connecticut River Valley, from Northampton to Northfield, were uneasy.

The Native uprising had begun in Swansea in June of that year, and a disastrous ambush and attack had just befallen the English settlement of Brookfield on August 2.

The drums of war were sounding closer and closer to this Valley.

In Part I, we described the decision by the settlements of Northampton and Hatfield to disarm the heretofore-friendly Norwotocks, whose village was situated on a bluff located on the western bank of the Connecticut River just above Northampton.

The force led by captains Thomas Lathrop and Richard Beers blundered into an ambush set by the Norwotocks at Hopewell Swamp at the foot of Wequomps (Mount Sugarloaf) on August 25.

In this engagement, the English had lost nine men, and in opening hostilities with these friendly River Indians, the powder keg of war had blown up in their faces. Metacom's War had come to the Valley.

Within a week, the northernmost settlement in this Valley at Squakheag (Northfield), settled just two years earlier in 1673, came under siege by a mixed band of Pocumtuck and Nashaway Nipmuck led by the war sachem Monoco.

On September 3 and 4, a rescue mission led by Captain Beers met with another disastrous ambush. Twenty-one men were killed, and 15 escaped back to Hadley to tell the horrible tale. Major Robert Treat set out on September 6 to

rescue the Northfield settlers.

But the worst disaster of the war to befall the early settlers in our neighborhood came on September 18, when Muddy Brook, located in modern-day South Deerfield, became Bloody Brook.

With the fall of Northfield, the settlement at Pocumtuck, later to be renamed Deerfield, became the northernmost outpost of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. It was now the frontier, much exposed and difficult to defend.

It was attacked on September 12 by several hundred Natives who burned as many buildings as possible, taking horses loaded with beef, corn, and other foodstuffs to a rendezvous point on Pine Hill in the North Meadows.

With this attack, the Massachusetts Bay Colony decided to abandon the largely burnt-out village, and ordered the town evacuated.

But Major Pynchon of Springfield owned a large estate there, according to Deerfield historian George Sheldon, and there were an estimated 3,000 bushels of wheat still standing in the fields. Pynchon sent orders to have the wheat threshed and put in bags, the loads to be driven by a convoy of teamsters to transport the wheat from Deerfield to Hadley.

The task fell to Captain Thomas Lathrop to escort the transfer. He led approximately 75 men on the slow march return trip along the Pocumtuck Path to Hadley.

In a spot just opposite the modern-day location of Frontier Regional High School, the convoy stopped to rest near the shallow Muddy Brook. You can wonder what Lathrop was thinking. Had he learned from recent experiences, he would have been more wary of the potential for another surprise attack.

Just weeks before, he had led his men into an ambush at the foot of Mount Sugarloaf on August 25. And hardly a week later, Captain Beers had led his into a fatal trap at Northfield.

Perhaps Lathrop had confidence in the 60 men under the command of Captain Mosely, who were patrolling the woods in the vicinity.

Lathrop proceeded without due caution, and his lapse in judgement proved fatal. Accounts tell us that the men, letting their guard down, stopped to rest in the sweltering September heat. The clusters of grapes hanging low just for the picking, and the mud being thick

see WEST ALONG page B3

The Week in High School Sports: A Chilly Start to the Spring Season

Above: The annual candy stampede was held Saturday at Unity Park.

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – This week Franklin Tech and Turners Falls High School played their first baseball games of the season, and the hybrid girls' tennis and track teams played their first matches, but the boys' tennis match was postponed due to snow on the court.

In softball, South Hadley defeated Franklin Tech, but lost to Turners under frigid conditions.

Softball

South Hadley 5 – FCTS 2
TFHS 8 – South Hadley 7

Last Friday, April 3, the Franklin Tech Softball Eagles lost to the South Hadley Black Tigers in a defensive battle. It was relatively warm on Friday, but it was only a tease, as a cold front would come into the valley a few days later.

The game had an early start, and when this reporter arrived at the field, Black were on top 1-0 with Tech batting in the bottom of the

see SPORTS page B2



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Turners Falls's Janelle Massey watches a massive home run hit disappear over the outfield fence during the first inning of Tuesday's game against South Hadley High School. The Thunder battled the Tigers and bitterly cold temperatures, achieving an 8-7 home win at Gary Mullins Field.



The Presence of This Energy

By LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE CENTER – Sheryl Sadler-Twyon put me to sleep the first time when she offered a sound bowl presentation at the Montague Center First Congregational Church. The lights dimmed. She invited everyone to settle into a comfortable position. A few people had brought yoga mats and stretched out on the floor of the sanctuary.

Sheryl stroked one of the crystal bowls with a mallet, and the sweet vibrations felt as though they were filling the entire lofty space while also penetrating my mind and body.

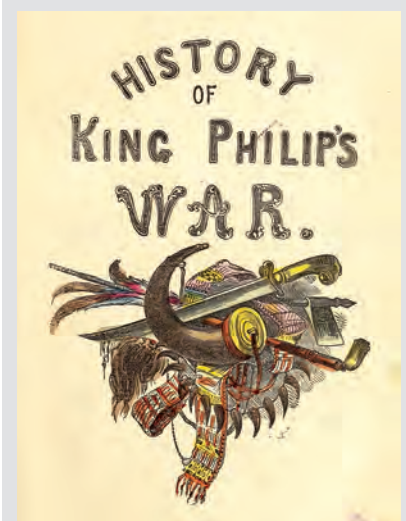
I took a while to get comfortable, and for a moment wondered if I would stay for a whole hour. It seemed like a long time to sit and listen without checking my phone or talking to anyone. And then that consciousness vanished and I drifted into a meditative state that felt close to sleep but contained awareness. I noticed soft regular breathing all around me and silence, except for the bowls. The time simply vanished as Sheryl coaxed comforting harmonies from the bowls and a crystal harp.

see ELDER page B4



WICKS PHOTO

Montague Center resident Sheryl Sadler-Twyon is an ordained Spiritualist minister and a master Reiki practitioner.



The frontispiece of Daniel Strock, Jr.'s 1853 Pictorial History of King Philip's War, an engraving by William Croome.

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

'SAGE'

Meet Sage, an adult German Shepherd-husky mix. Sage's humans describe her as adventurous, gentle, quiet, food-motivated, playful, and affectionate. Sage is good with kids, dogs, and cats, and is housetrained. She is smart, learns commands easily, and needs plenty of outdoor time. She does well off leash in secure settings.

Due to landlord permission issues, Sage needs to be rehomed. She

needs an experienced adopter, as she can be guarded with new dogs. She is located in in Northampton. She needs to be spayed within 30 days of adoption.

The adoption fee is \$100. 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 13 THROUGH 17

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

Monday 4/13

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Pot Luck
3 p.m. Beginner Yoga
4 p.m. Spanish Class

Tuesday 4/14

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

Wednesday 4/15

9 a.m. Veterans' Agent
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
11:45 a.m. Friends' Meeting

12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo

1 p.m. Mobile Food Bank

4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 4/16

10:30 a.m. Ask a Nurse

1 p.m. Pitch

Friday 4/17

9 a.m. Coffee with Chief Haskins

10:15 a.m. Aerobics

11 a.m. Chair Exercise

12 p.m. Pizza Party

2 p.m. Chair Dance

4 p.m. Computer Class

ERVING

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

Monday 4/13

9 a.m. Good For You

10 a.m. Seated Fitness

12 p.m. Pitch

1 p.m. Yoga

Tuesday 4/14

9 a.m. Stretch and Balance

10 a.m. Line Dancing

11 a.m. Social Stringer

1 p.m. Friends' Meeting

Wednesday 4/15

9 a.m. Interval Training

10 a.m. Chair Aerobics

11:30 a.m. Bingo

Thursday 4/16

9 a.m. Barre Fusion

10 a.m. Pilates Flow

12:30 p.m. Tech Help

Friday 4/17

8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Quilting

and Open Sew

LEVERETT

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

Luncheons are the fourth Friday at town hall. For more information, contact (413) 548-1022 or coa@leverett.ma.us, or check the town newsletter or the LeverettConnects listserv.

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is May 6. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments.

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

SPORTS from page B1

second. Emma Petersen led off with a triple and Tech proceeded to load the bases, but some great defensive plays by the visitors kept Franklin off the scoreboard.

Hadley scored again in the fourth and fifth innings, increasing their lead to 5-0. In the home fifth, Amelia Rider reached on a base hit, Lindsey Taylor batted her in, and Sandra Johnson knocked in Taylor before a ground out ended the threat.

Tech got runners on base in the next two innings but Hadley's stingy defense again prevented any more runs from scoring, and Tech took the loss 5-2.

The Black Tigers returned to Turners Falls on Tuesday, this time to face the Thunder. By game time the snow had stopped, but the temperature was a brisk 34 degrees, and with a constant wind and clouds obscuring the sun, it felt much colder.

The Tigers scored in the first inning off a wild pitch and an RBI. In the bottom of the inning, Janelle Massey came to the plate with two outs and socked the ball over the fence, and it was tied.

Black scored two more runs in the third, but Autumn Thornton led off the home third with a triple and Massey sent her home; in the fourth, Abbey Moffett got a base hit and Addison Talbot knocked her home to tie it back up at 3-3.

Kaiya Adams led off the Turners fifth with a triple and scored to put the Thunder ahead for the first time in the game. Powertown was not done yet – two more runs crossed the plate to give Turners a 6-3 lead.

The Tigers went on a tear in the sixth, scoring four runs before Turners could get the third out. Turners went down 1-2-3, so going into the seventh, Powertown was trailing 7-6. Hadley almost added to their lead, but a crisp throw to home plate prevented another score.

By the bottom of the seventh, the temperature had dipped to 32 degrees and most people were ready to call it a night, but the Thunder was not quite ready to throw in the towel. When they tied it up 7-7,



DAVID HOITT PHOTOS

Turners Falls's Ameilya Galbraith (left) makes the play at second for an out against South Hadley's Emily Stark during the Thunder's 8-7 win over the visiting Tigers. The Thunder will face the Eagles, their crosstown rival, at Franklin Tech this Friday at 4 p.m.

there was an interesting reaction from the spectators.

"Extra innings?" one man called. "What are we doing?"

Another countered, "We can stay here all night!"

But it wasn't necessary. With one out and the score tied, Madison Dietz sliced the ball into center field, sending Talbot to third base. Then Thornton came to the plate. She clocked the ball past the pitcher, and Talbot raced home to give Turners the 8-7 walkoff win.

Girls' Tennis

TFHS 3 – Chicopee 2

On Monday, the Turners Falls girls' hybrid tennis team defeated Chicopee in their first home match of the season. It all came down to first doubles, and Turners won that match in extra sets.

I watched the first few matches before heading over to catch the

baseball game. Turners was leading on the first and third singles courts as well as first doubles, but was behind in the other two matches.

Olivia Wolbach went on to win first singles 6-0, 6-0, and Jesi Berry took third singles 6-0, 6-1. In second singles, Gianna Marigliano came back from a 0-6 loss in the first set to win the second 6-4, but she lost the third 4-6.

Keira Feeley and Kenzie Flaxington outlasted their opponents in first doubles 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (9-7). In second doubles, Jo Licata and Viviana Rosa dropped their match 5-7, 3-6.

Track and Field

Frontier 124 – TFHS 21

Monday was supposed to be one of those three-sports afternoons at Turners High School, but because the high jump pits weren't ready, the track team headed to South Deerfield to face the Red Hawks.

Turners took first place in three individual events. Jakhia Williams broke the tape in the 100-meter dash, while Tristan Bliss won the shot put and discus.

Baseball

Greenfield 2 – TFHS 1

FCTS 13 – Easthampton 3

When I arrived at the baseball diamond on Monday, the visiting Greenfield Green Wave was leading 2-0.

Turners got runners on base in the fourth and fifth innings, but couldn't score. In the sixth, Trevor Lyons cracked the ball deep into center field. It cleared the fence to make it 2-1. Blue got a runner on base in the seventh, but were unable to convert, and Greenfield won the game by a run.

On Tuesday the Franklin Tech Eagles decimated Easthampton 13-3. It was pretty cold, and intermittent snow flurries led the regulars to joke about football weather.

Tech got on top early, scoring two runs in the first inning, and after East tied it up in the third they scored four more to take the lead 6-2. Tech padded that lead in the fourth and scored six more runs in the fifth, taking the game by 10.



Franklin Tech pitcher Caleb Begos delivers at the mound as Tech flew past Easthampton High School, 13-3, in Turners Falls on Tuesday.

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WEST ALONG from page B1

and difficult to traverse with the wagons, gave reason for the convoy to halt for a while.

Concealed in close proximity were the Nipmuck war sachems Muttawmp, Matoonas, Sagamore Sam, and One-Eyed John, the Wampanoag war chiefs Anawan, Penchason, and Tatosen, Pocumtuck sachem Sancumachu, and close to one thousand other Natives, all waiting there to strike.

Their sudden assault almost immediately killed 40 soldiers and 17 teamsters, including Lathrop.

Captain Mosely, much hated by the Indians for his cruelty, heard the musket fire and was drawn into the fight. It is reported that the Indians taunted him in English, shouting "Come on, Mosely, come on. You seek Indians! You want Indians! Here's Indians enough for you!"

Mosely had arrived on the scene of the ambush around 10 a.m., and found himself in a battle lasting most of the day. His troop was nearly destroyed until Major Robert Treat arrived with enough men to drive Muttawmp and his coalition from the scene.

By the end of the day, more than 64 settler men had been killed, including all of Lathrop's troops, considered the "Flower of the County of Essex," and 17 Deerfield men. Sheldon reports that the only survivor seems to have been John Stebbins of Deerfield, "the ancestor of all the tribe here."

The common grave in which these men were laid has been reported to be located in the front yard of 286 North Main Street, but the grave marker has been moved or found to be located in several other

places since.

Similarly, about a half-mile distant from that site, a grave with the remains of 96 Native Americans was later found, assumed to be the final resting place of the Natives killed in that fight.

Muddy Brook had become Bloody Brook.

With this series of three disasters in a month's time – the ambush at Hopewell Swamp, the failure of the Beers expedition in Northfield, and the Bloody Brook Massacre – the war had indeed come to the Valley. Metacom's war had the colonists reeling.

And it was only the beginning.

In rapid succession, on October 5 most of Springfield would be burned to the ground, and Hatfield would be attacked on October 19.

By November 1675, the English were to declare war upon the Narragansett Nation, drawing the most formidable Native army into Philip's Rebellion.

By December 19 of that year, the English had perpetrated the Great Swamp Massacre against the Narragansett near Charleston, Rhode Island, which threw the Narragansett into a powerful alliance with the Wampanoag of Philip, and the multiple Nipmuck and Abenaki tribes.

Eventually, more than 52 towns in New England would be attacked and pillaged, and 17 destroyed outright.

With the cold weather of the winter of 1675-76 came some respite for both the Native coalition and the English colonists. Nevertheless, the new year of 1676 opened with a grim and gloomy outlook for the Valley settlers.

To be continued...

**MOVIE REVIEW****Project Hail Mary (2026)**

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I love sci-fi TV shows and movies, so I had a very good interest in seeing the sci-fi movie *Project Hail Mary* with Ryan Gosling in it. This movie premiered at the Garden Cinemas in Greenfield on March 20.

I read a summary of the book the movie is based on, and thought if it follows the book closely, I would like it very much. The book was written by Andy Weir. I also found a spoiler that mentions they added one scene to it. From what I read, I thought it might ruin the movie for me, but it turned out to add to it nicely.

Gosling plays a science teacher, Dr. Ryland Grace. His degree in a major science field comes into play when he is recruited to help with "Project Hail Mary," which is basically a long-shot plan to deal with the Earth's sun dying out.

Dr. Grace ends up in space alone, without a crew, to try and put the plan into action. An unexpected encounter leads him to get help – and company – from an alien he calls Rocky, who is also alone and on the same mission for his planet.

This creature looks to be made of rocks. Rocky is friendly, and his being around comes in handy more than once.

Gosling's character has a major scientific degree, yet is working as a science teacher to children. The question should be asked, how did he end up in space? Let's just say there is a turn in the journey to get the project done that requires him to go into space.

Another turn in the journey to undertake this mission leads Dr. Grace to make a decision that basically amounts to returning the favor for Rocky having had his back. Rocky returns this favor as well, and comes in handy in a way that is big and cool to see on screen. A little bit of a sneak peek about that is that other people get to see how good of a teacher Dr. Grace is with children.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG****Private Eye; Sinkhole; Flood; Lost Hydro Equipment; Foot Chase; Game Plan; Yells For Help; Laser Beam****Monday, 3/30**

8:49 a.m. Caller from I Street states that the upstairs neighbor is continuing to make loud noises described as "thumping" at random times throughout the night. Caller believes the neighbor is making these noises on purpose to bother her. Advised caller to call when disturbance is ongoing and to contact her landlord. Male party in lobby requesting to speak to an officer; would like to know what his neighbor said about him because he believes it's false information. Officer spoke to male, who was advised to contact the landlord and MA Housing.

1:17 p.m. Caller from Scotty's Convenience Store reports that a female customer inside the store believes that she is being followed by a car that is parked across the street. Investigated. Involved vehicle may be a private investigator. No issues.

1:27 p.m. 911 caller from Old Greenfield Road reports her son is yelling at her and preventing her from working peacefully in the home. Peace restored. Both parties were doing spring cleanups around the house and had an argument over who owned things throughout the yard. Both parties agreed to stop yelling and separate for the time being.

5:36 a.m. 911 caller reports that a car horn has been sounding for some time in the Avenue A area. Officer advises nothing seen or heard upon arrival. Called caller back; caller states horn is no longer sounding, but someone was also revving a car engine, and people could be heard yelling, which they are no longer doing. Officer advised.

10:30 a.m. Greenfield PD advising they are en route to G Street to speak with a male suspect from a hit-and-run pedestrian accident. GPD advising suspect may be arrested; requesting Montague officer to respond as well. GPD then advising male walked into their lobby; no need for assistance.

5:16 p.m. Caller from Park Street reports a large sinkhole by the storm drain, around two feet. Contacted DPW; they will take care of the issue in the morning. Advised officers to leave cones for the night.

5:20 p.m. Party in lobby with children to have officers call mother for pickup. Party left children in the lobby unattended to go sit in his car. Officer advised the party that he needs to get a custody exchange or

der in court; advised party that it is not MPD's responsibility to call the ex-wife every time he wants to drop off the children.

11:03 p.m. Caller reporting flooding on Federal and West Main streets in Millers Falls. Officer advises water about five inches deep from Bangs Street to West Main. Rain has stopped; can notify DPW in the morning; will keep an eye on it overnight.

Wednesday, 4/1

6:13 a.m. 911 caller states he hit a deer on Federal Street. Animal took off; damage to vehicle. Caller denies any injuries. Report taken.

8:01 a.m. Passerby reporting a black case lying in the road outside of town hall. Roadway clear on arrival. Case owner called and states that he works for FirstLight and lost the case this morning. Material inside is valuable, but not dangerous. Please call him if the case is turned in.

8:52 a.m. School principal reports that a female has been operating a blue Mercedes in a dangerous and erratic manner while students are being dropped off at Turners Falls High School. She weaves in and out of cars and drives very fast on the property. Involved female was spoken to and advised of the complaint.

1:24 p.m. Store employee from Montague Bookmill reporting more hate speech found in books. Caller reports she found hate speech in the book stacks in the business as well as in their bathroom. She does not know who may have done it or when it happened. Requests incident be logged.

4:12 p.m. Caller found a needle on the ground on Second Street and would like an officer to come pick it up. Officer states that two needles were removed.

8:05 p.m. Caller states that a very intoxicated male with an open container is harassing females in the alley and in front of Turners Falls Pizza House. Officer advised. Foot chase on Fourth Street heading toward L Street. One detained. A 35-year-old Lenox man was arrested on one straight warrant and two default warrants.

10:50 p.m. 911 caller reporting female rolling around on ground and crying; now walking up K Street toward the church. Verbal disturbance between friends. Courtesy transport to Gill provided.

Thursday, 4/2

11:10 a.m. Walk-in reporting random knocks at night on her front door on

Worcester Avenue over the past few years. Family is coming over to install some cameras. Advised to please call us if issue persists.

12:47 p.m. Caller states that she was rear-ended by another vehicle at Avenue A and Third Street while waiting to go through the intersection. Vehicle was a red Honda sedan; unable to get plate number. Report taken.

1:29 p.m. Owner of a Second Street property advises that a white Mustang with no plates or sticker has been parked in the alleyway for quite a long time. Caller inquiring how to get vehicle removed. Officer determined vehicle is not on a public way. Advised caller he may have vehicle towed at his own expense.

3:03 p.m. 911 caller from Turnpike Road states something happened to her car and it stopped working, so she is trapped inside the vehicle. Officer was able to get vehicle opened. Caller will contact AAA to replace the battery.

10:17 p.m. Walk-in reporting money stolen off her card without her permission. Report taken.

Friday, 4/3

5:24 p.m. Caller from Montague Village Store reports being harassed by a store patron. Referred to an officer.

5:30 p.m. DCF requesting assistance removing three children from a residence. Juveniles removed without issue.

Saturday, 4/4

1:26 a.m. 911 call; female and male arguing in back-ground. Female disconnected phone after stating that male called PD. Officer advises male left for night; female advises verbal altercation only. Officer advises he spoke with the male party, who just wanted to vent about events earlier in the evening involving his children and DCF. Male had questions about what to do next. Officer advised him to follow the recommendations and the game plan from DCF.

8:27 a.m. Caller states that there is a bunch of cows loose on Wendell Road. Officer spoke with party who believes the cows are his. He will head out and round them up.

9:13 a.m. 911 caller from Federal Street states that a loose pitbull outside keeps charging at him. Animal control officer notified and responding. ACO securing dog. Officer attempting to locate owner inside. Dog reunited with owner.

9:59 a.m. 911 caller states she can see flames along the train tracks at the end

of Bangs Street. Transferred to Shelburne Control; PD responding. Fire is a controlled permitted burn; no hazard.

2:24 p.m. 911 caller from Turners Falls Road reporting that a brush fire has started in her backyard. Transferred to Shelburne Control; PD responding.

3:01 p.m. Caller reports that a man who lives on Solar Avenue continues to harass him and follow him when he is at his property on Rod Shop Road. Caller states that the man takes pictures of what he is doing. Officer advised caller to keep putting instances on record and to call back if he needs assistance.

4:39 p.m. 911 caller reporting truck on fire on Federal Street; states it is really close to a garage. Transferred to Shelburne Control; all units en route. Numerous additional 911 calls reporting same. Officer advises equipment and structure are fully involved. Route 63 shut down at Lyman Street. Investigated.

Sunday, 4/5

8:55 a.m. Anonymous caller from H Street reports hearing a female voice yelling for help somewhere in the neighborhood. Officers checked area and spoke to people who were out walking. Unfounded.

10:30 a.m. Anonymous caller from H Street reports that people on the first floor are arguing; they can hear yelling, including possibly someone yelling for help. Contact made with involved female. She was alone in the house and stated she was having an argument over the phone with a family member.

8:06 p.m. 911 callers reporting a guy pulled up in the parking lot of the skate park in a white truck, got out, and started pointing a laser beam at their heads. Officer spoke to truck driver and advised him that it was after hours and he needed to leave or he would be trespassing. The item he had was a red laser pointer. Party moved along without incident.

9:04 p.m. Officer checking on vehicle at skate park. Advised vehicle operator that they are trespassing and told them to move along.

10:58 p.m. 911 caller from South Ferry Road states that someone who may be intoxicated drove into their parked cars. Officer requesting tow for vehicle. A 45-year-old Montague Center woman was arrested and charged with operating under the influence of liquor, over .08%.

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ELDER from page B1

A single ping brought the session to an end; the lights came back up. I left wanting to know more about the healing arts Sheryl is practicing. She's a Master Reiki Practitioner, as well as an ordained Spiritualist minister at the Lake Pleasant National Spiritual Alliance.

She's also a member of the First Congregational Church of Montague, a lifelong resident of Montague Center - she and her husband Jon live in the house that belonged to her grandparents - a good neighbor, and fellow dog lover. She uses Reiki therapy to comfort her dog Saydee during thunderstorms.

We met at her newly-finished studio at the back of her house in a structure that once housed an indoor outhouse, complete with a back door for waste removal. Old and new collide in this cozy space.

On a shelf, she displays a spoon and a baby shoe found in the walls during the renovation. According to an Internet search, "Finding shoes hidden in walls during house renovations is a historic, worldwide superstition, primarily from the 18th and 19th centuries. These worn shoes, often placed near chimneys or doors, were meant to protect inhabitants from evil spirits and bring good luck."

I wondered how many of our old houses contain messages from the past. When my husband and I renovated a shed, we found a note stating that our house was built in 1841. That yellowed strip of paper is now

framed. The shoe and spoon Sheryl found will also be on permanent display in Sheryl's studio, reminding people who come for a Reiki session that they are in a historic location for an ancient form of energy balancing.

To demonstrate the presence of this energy, Sheryl had me stand and raise one arm. She instructed me to resist as she put pressure on my outstretched limb. I'm strong, and she could not force it to move.

Then she asked me to relax and lower my arm. Without touching me, she then ran her hands along the length of my body from head to toe, the direction that energy flows in a body. Afterwards, she tried the exercise again, but this time my arm was weak. I could not resist her pressure. She had altered my energy right then and there. Yes, she brought it back again.

As a practitioner, Sheryl is quick to say that she is not a doctor, doesn't diagnose, and doesn't prescribe. She will, however, share with clients what she senses. It is up to them what they do with the information.

What Reiki can do is open your body to healing energy so that other traditional healing modalities can work better. Before COVID, Bay-state Franklin and Cooley Dickenson Hospital invited Reiki healers to help cancer patients when they came in for chemotherapy. The Cancer Connection in Northampton makes Reiki available, at no cost, to patients and their caregivers.

Reiki is comforting and not invasive in any way. No muscles get

kneaded or stroked. Patients remain fully clothed while the practitioner lightly places their hands on energy points, or hovers above them.

In Sheryl's studio there's a massage table with a head rest, so there's no neck cramping. There's also a small heater to keep the space warm and comfortable.

Sheryl invited me to climb onto the table for a sample session, and I happily accepted. She asked if I minded touching; I said I didn't. Then, in silence, she began her work, starting at my head.

Like the song bowl experience, I sank into a state of deep relaxation. Her touch was gentle and I felt warming in the areas where she placed her hands. My breath slowed and my mind drifted to the power of touch and all the older people I know who may no longer experience touch in their lives. Grandchildren grow, and they no longer cuddle. Spouses, partners and close friends die. Grown children live far away. For some, a trip to the hairdresser or the doctor provides their only source of touch.

When the session ended. I felt like a wrinkled piece of clothing that had just been smoothed by a warm iron. That night I slept for six hours without getting up once, an accomplishment these days.

Sheryl had a long career in banking and retired when her mother needed care. It was one of her mother's caretakers who introduced her to Reiki and set her on this path. She trained at the John



WICKS PHOTO

On display in Sadler-Twyon's home Reiki studio: a crystal singing bowl, and a spoon and baby shoe found in the building's walls.

Harvey Gray Center in Rindge, New Hampshire and began offering sessions at senior centers, care facilities, and now at her studio.

Though according to Sheryl, anyone can learn Reiki, her spiritual background seems like a perfect fit and a lovely melding of old and new.

People interested in giving Reiki a try can check it out at the Bernardston senior center or make an appointment with Sheryl. She offers gift cards - this would be a good Mother's Day present - and discounted packages.

The Cancer Connection in Northampton also offers Reiki for free. It's accessible, less intrusive than massage, and offers profound relaxation, as did the singing bowls.

In addition to being a healer, Sheryl is a born educator who loves talking about Reiki and answering questions. She can be reached at (508) 896-7391 or Sheryl@touchofsakura.com, and you can learn more about Reiki, events, and demonstrations on her website at www.touchofsakura.com.



JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION



Carolyn Clark



SUZETTE SNOW-COBB ILLUSTRATION



ROB MACHADO ILLUSTRATION

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It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.

- William Carlos Williams

edited by Janel Nockleby
Readers are invited to send poems to
the *Montague Reporter* by email at:
poetry@montaguereporter.org
(Please note we are no longer
accepting mailed submissions.)

April's Featured Poet: Bob McNeil

An Empedoclean Dream

Over the centuries, I've been a bird back when
air owned the sweetness of any gourd grown,
a tree while generations grew beneath me,
moss on a mountain noted for titanic magnificence,
a slug slithering aimlessly without a smidgen of sentience,
and a man who dreamt of a world with better humans.
Of those incarnations, I loathed that last transformation the most.

A Belated Blazon of Passion (for Patricia Landrum)

Imagistic sister,
you were dawn-beautiful
and flower-delightful,
sailing sweetly
on New York streets.
Oh, you gold-hued
Queen, clad in velvet midnight
with neon-colored fingernails,
I adored seeing your cinnamon
and yellow jasmine
feather-soft tresses
sway around this town.

Sappho's odes,
Giovanni's Black ire,
Dickinson's indigo ideas,
and Walker's purple truths
resided in your mind,
imagistic sister.
Calliope guided your genius,
and your conceptual comets
blazed and amazed
the horizon in my head.

Employing the skill of a healer,
I wanted to touch you
coo-soothingly,
imagistic sister.
But you died,
leaving unrequited hearts
desiring a caress
that never coalesced.
Housed in the Heaven
of my vision,
you will forever remain
dawn-beautiful
and flower-delightful.

Download an Upward View

Press Esc
When your Thoughtfulness Program
Won't open, or
Press Control, Alt, and Delete
If still stuck
In a rancor-mannered mode.

Log out of demagoguery.
Reboot your benevolence
Anytime intolerance
Attaches itself
With a spam virus's
Tenaciousness.

Wait, then
Log into something humane.
Use your Solicitude App
To ensure it won't happen again.

Archived

Short-term memory loss is similar
to watching TV commercials.
The memories ask for my attention,
only to lose it with the next
round of remembrances.
Other times, that loss of short-term memory
reminds me of movie trailers.
Although the memories are loud
and lavishly bright with self-importance,
they leave no inerascable image.
Sometimes short-term memories
can appear like billboards
across an express train window,
flashing briefly as the locomotive
moves to the next station.
At this station of my life,
I am content just having a long-term
memory of once loving you.

Contributor Notes:

Bob McNeil is a writer, editor, cartoonist, and spoken word artist from Connecticut. Flexible Press published his book composed of essays, illustrations, poems, and stories titled *Compositions on Compassion and Other Emotions*. Proceeds from this work fund the National Alliance to End Homelessness; see www.flexiblepub.com/compositions for more information. Bob will read his work, accompanied by musician Steve Koziol, this Saturday, April 11, from 3 to 4 p.m. at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls.

ILLUSTRATION: THE MASTER OF CLAUDE DE FRANCE, FROM *BOOK OF FLOWER STUDIES*, CA. 1515

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THURSDAY, APRIL 9

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

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Sandra Simonds, Corbett Bresner, Zoe Tuck.* Poetry reading. 6 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Documentary screening, *Most Likely to Succeed* (2015). Light refreshments. 6 p.m. Free.

Element Brewing, Millers Falls: *Trivia Night and Fundraiser.* Support the Millers Falls Library and win an Element gift card. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

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

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

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *DJ Andujar, Funkybottoms* play. In the Lounge. All ages. 8 p.m. No cover.

FRIDAY, APRIL 10

UMass Amherst, Amherst: *Mystical Arts of Tibet.* Monks from Drepung Loseling Monastery create a sand mandala; participants design their own. In the Old Chapel. 9 a.m. Free.

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

Greenfield Common, Greenfield: *Flag Raising Ceremony* for National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Includes a performance by Ja'Duke Theater students and remarks by local officials. 11 a.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Thomas Aquinas Children's Choir Spring Concert.* 4 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Community TV, Greenfield: Reception for *Joel Seppa's* selected works. 5 to 8 p.m. Free.

Looky Here, Greenfield: Reception for *Trevor Powers's* risograph-printed photographs. 6 to 8 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Square Dance with High Strung Strummers; Will Mentor* calling. Jammers welcome. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

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

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Jane Siberry.* 6:30 and 9 p.m. \$.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *The Uncles, Eveline MacDougall.* 7 p.m. By donation.

Visions Video, Northampton: *Sweet Wreath, Estey Field Organ Tone Archive, Rebecca Schrader.* 7 p.m. \$.

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

THCC, Easthampton: *Concrete Ties, Cooked Alive, Price of Fear.* 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Owsley's Owls, Grateful Dead* tribute. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Tony Vacca & Fusion Nomads, Massamba Diop.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

Tillis Performance Hall, UMass Amherst: *Atsuko Okatsuka.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

Vermont Jazz Center, Brattleboro: *Solo Jazz Piano Festival* featuring *Mathis Picard, Rachel Z.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Breadwinners.* 8 p.m. No cover.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Tanya Donnelly & Chris Brokaw, Roger C. Miller.* 8 p.m. \$.

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

Hidden Temple, Florence: *Paul Vidich, Chris Gentes, Glenn Smith, Daniel Winger.* 8 p.m. \$.

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

SATURDAY, APRIL 11

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

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Stop the Bleed First Aid Class.* Registration req'd. 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. \$.

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: *The Reptile Nook* presents *Adaptations.* In the auditorium. 11 a.m. Free.

Holyoke Senior Center, Holyoke: *Flywheel Zine Fest.* 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Ukrainian Easter Egg Workshop.* Registration req'd. 12:30 p.m. Free.

Leverett Arts and Crafts, Leverett: Reception for *Art for the Earth,* multimedia exhibit featuring 40 artists' work. Qigong, readings, music, dance. 1 to 4 p.m. Free.

Millers River, Athol: *River Rat Race.* 1 p.m. Free.

Guiding Star Grange, Greenfield: *Swedish Dance.* Intro workshop, snacks, open dancing. Live music on five-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Bob McNeil, featured on this month's Poetry Page (see Page B5), gives a reading this Saturday at 3 p.m. at the Great Falls Discovery Center.

string fiddle and nyckelharpa. All welcome. 1:30 p.m. \$.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Bob McNeil,* poetry reading. 3 p.m. Free.

Element Brewing, Millers Falls: *Ted & Tom.* 3 p.m. No cover.

Leverett Arts and Crafts, Leverett: *Multimedia & Dance Performance.* 6 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Open Mic and David Kaynor Festival* with featured performers *Becky Hollingworth, Van Kaynor,* and *Rebecca Weiss.* 6:15 p.m. By donation.

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

Vermont Jazz Center, Brattleboro: *Solo Jazz Piano Festival* featuring *Camila Cortina, Geoffrey Keezer.* 7:30 p.m. \$.

Stage 33, Bellows Falls, Vermont: *Tracy Grammer & Jim Henry* with *Carling Berkhout.* 3 p.m. \$.

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 Metacomet'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 celebrate their love for the Earth in a variety of media. Through April 26, with a reception this Saturday, April 11 at 1 p.m.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *TREES!,* informational exhibit celebrating tree projects in Greenfield; *Elaine VanGelder,* paintings. Both through April.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Trevor Powers.* Risograph-printed photographs exploring the color and texture of organic and manmade objects, plus artists books and a free zine. Opens with a reception this Friday, April 10 at 6 p.m.; through May.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: *STEAM – Art & Science,* art that reflects aspects of science, technology, engineering, and math. Through May 17, with a reception this Sunday, April 12 at noon.

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 Thursday, April 23.

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

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

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

CALL FOR ART

Art for the Soul Gallery in Springfield is taking submissions for an exhibit titled *Out of the Darkness: Positivity for 2026.* All interpretations of the theme are welcome, in any media. Deadline May 1; fee of \$35 for up to three submissions. The show opens on June 13. Details at tinyurl.com/art4soul.

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CALENDAR



looking forward...

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

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

FRIDAY, APRIL 24

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

SATURDAY, APRIL 25

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. \$.

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

MONDAY, APRIL 27

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

SATURDAY, MAY 2

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

FRIDAY, MAY 8

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

FRIDAY, MAY 15

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Charlie Marie, Rosie Porter & Band, DJ Brewfoot*. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *They Are Gutting a Body of Water*. 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, JUNE 7

Colonial Theater, Keene: *Ben Folds*. 7:30 p.m. \$\$.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: *Downtown Boys, Perennial*. 7 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Taj Mahal & The Phantom Blues Band*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

SATURDAY, JULY 25

Pines Theater, Northampton: *Lyle Lovett and His Small Large Band, Hayes Carll*. 6 p.m. \$\$.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Laraaji*, sound bath. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Basement, Amherst: *God's Wisdom, Industry Standard, Outer Body Barbie, Perfect Nails*. 7 p.m. \$.

Latchis Theater, Brattleboro: *Black Rover*, Led Zeppelin tribute; *Wolfman Jack*, Grateful Dead tribute. 7 p.m. \$.

Institute for Musical Arts, Goshen: *Kay Turn Her and the Pages*. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Vacant Eyes, Neonach*. 7 p.m. \$.

All Souls Church, Greenfield: *Fiery Hope, Malgorzata Lach*. Benefit for Stone Soup Café. 7:30 p.m. By donation.

The Drake, Amherst: *Magnolia & Johnson Electric Co*. 8 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Couchboy, Ezra Holloway, Datura*. 8 p.m. By donation.

Haze, Northampton: *People's Princess, Virgo's Moon, Lula Fortune*. 8:30 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Laybrum, Folly of Three, The Case*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, APRIL 12

Fiddleheads Gallery, Northfield: Reception for STEAM exhibit. 12 p.m. Free.

Guiding Star Grange, Greenfield: *No Kings Follow-Up Meeting*. Plug into opportunities to build people power against authoritarianism. 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Free.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Ari Baines, Arda Collins, Elizabeth Zuba, Dara Barrois/Dixon*. Poetry reading. 4 p.m. Free.

Bookends, Florence: *Death In Venice, Angel Bite, GoGo California, Tiger Moth*. 6 p.m. \$.

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

First Congregational Church, Sunderland: *GCC Community Chorus* sing madrigals, spirituals, and music by Rossi, Billings, and Brahms. 7:30 p.m. By donation.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Civil Disobedience*. 7 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, APRIL 13

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Workshop for the *Hill Neighborhood Green Infrastructure Master Plan*. 4:30 p.m. Free.

TUESDAY, APRIL 14

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Needle-Felted Flower Workshop*. 4 p.m. Free.

New Salem Public Library, New Salem: *The Creation of the Quabbin Reservoir: The Death of the Swift River Valley*. History talk by J.R. Greene. 6:30 p.m. Free.

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



Matt Lorenz, a.k.a. *The Suitcase Junket*, is on the bill this Saturday at the Shea Theater for *Sparkletown 3*, a tribute to his sister Kate. He is joined by Zak Trojano, who played with the siblings in the Americana band *Rusty Belle*, and five other acts. Profits go to the Kate Lorenz Community Memorial Fund.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Rong, Connect 4, Vivisectionist, Bl_ank*. 8 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

Gill-Montague Senior Center, Turners Falls: *Mobile Food Bank*. 1 p.m. Free.

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

Montague Center Library, Montague Center: *Local Author Book Launch*. Jennifer Acker. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Jagtime Millionaire, Liam Grant, Wednesday Knudsen*. 7 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Wes Brown*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Poison Ruin, Peace Talks*. 8 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, APRIL 16

Brick House Community Resource Center, Turners Falls: *Community Legal Aid* gives parents and guardians information about the Department of Children and Families. Register with slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: *Northfield Mountain Monthly Hike*. Register at www.bookeo.com/northfield. 1 to 4 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Local Author Book Launch*. Babette Wils. 4 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Protecting Your Personal Information Online*. Registration req'd. 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, cash bar, music by *Two for Jazz* and *Fiery Hope*. See www.givebutter.com/P2P2026 for tickets. 5 p.m. \$.

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

The Drake, Amherst: *Bearly Dead*, Grateful Dead tribute. 8 p.m. \$.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Olivia Block, Lea Bertucci & Norbert Rodenkirchen*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

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 as well as 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.

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. \$.

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

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

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DIY Bodywork For All

simple tips for self-care monthly

By JAMIE SIMPSON

TURNERS FALLS – In his book *Breath*, James Nestor notes that a human can survive for days or weeks without food, several days without water – but only a few minutes without breath.

Full, steady breathing brings oxygen and nutrients into the body with each inhalation while getting rid of waste products like carbon dioxide into the air. In a perfect symbiosis, our exhaled waste is the food of plant life, while their “exhaled” waste is our food.

Regular breathing also helps regulate our nervous system, mood, emotions, energy levels, digestion, immune system, and more.

If breath is so vital, why do so few of us pay attention to it? Why are we so bad at it? And most importantly, how can we breathe better?

One reason we often don’t pay attention to our breathing is because we don’t have to: it’s automatic, which enables us to focus on other important – and sometimes not so important – activities.

But there’s a cost to this automation, especially when combined with the modern maladies of air pollution and poor posture, both of which make breathing harder. And when breathing is harder, everything that breath affects – which is essentially everything – suffers. In fact, chronic patterns of poor breathing and posture reduce our quality of life, and actually shorten our life span.

In addition, the state of constant stress most of us live in keeps our sympathetic nervous system perpetually activated, preparing us to “fight, flight, or freeze” in response to real and imagined dangers. This takes a huge toll on our health as well. Our bodies need time to “rest and digest” – time for quiet, to help the body and mind recover and to regain a sense of balance and calm.

Another reason we often don’t focus on our breathing is because

the industrial age, and even more so the information age, keep us so inundated with stimuli 24/7 that it’s hard to remember we have to make a conscious effort to practice true rest and restorative behaviors.

Another factor in our being “bad at breathing” is evolutionary: as our brain grew in size over millennia, it took real estate from the mouth and sinuses. Hence more and more breathing difficulties, sinus infections, sleep apnea, and so on.

But fret not. Starting and integrating healthy breathing practices into our daily lives isn’t difficult, and the payoff is both immediate and long-lasting.

I talked about posture in my inaugural column last December. Here are some ways to make conscious breathing part of your daily routine.

When you wake, before getting out of bed or checking your phone, pause. Get comfortable, close your eyes, and take a few slow, deep breaths.

Rest a hand on your belly and one on your heart to feel the breath move in your body, and listen to the sounds it makes. If your sinuses are clear, breathe through your nose: this filters, warms, and humidifies the incoming air, all while lengthening each inhalation and exhalation.

Do the same before going to sleep.

This needn’t be another item on your to-do list. You can simply do it while doing other daily routines: maintain good posture and breathe slowly and steadily while you shower, groom at the sink, eat your breakfast, and drive to work.

If you have a smartphone, as most of us do, you can set an alarm to carve out a particular time to breathe with intention at a certain time of day, or just add it to an alarm you already have now.

At an average of 20 breaths per minute, we’ll take in between 700 to 800 million breaths in our lifetime. How good do we want the remaining ones to feel?

A Journey Down Memory Lane Vernal Musings...



By JOAN MOREL

SUNDERLAND – A generational nursery rhyme children lilt, with hand motions:

*A little seed for me to sow,
A little earth to make it grow,
A little hole, a little pat,
A little wish, and that is that.
A little sun, a little shower,
A little while, and then, a flower!*

Tulip bulbs, purchased to support the *Montague Reporter* and planted this past fall, began pushing up a week or two ago, right in time for the vernal equinox. It must have been the warm spell melting snow and ice practically overnight that did the trick. Then a robin, thought to signify the start of spring, hopped across the lawn.

Not a whole lot of cleaning up to do in the garden – just a quick raking to remove bird seed spilled by squirrels, and a bit of trimming a few damaged branches. A little more mulch is called for. Pansies peeked out of their baskets at the market yesterday. Tempting, but a

tad too early. Then into the planter at the *Reporter* office some will go, and others into a hanging pot on my back porch.

Way too many baby spider plants are developing roots in jars of water. Transplanting them into 11 small pots attached to a small arch-shaped metal lattice, plus into a couple of larger pots, will be a project in itself. And then finding places for them! On the front entry table? Friends? Family? More in my indoor garden?

The indoor garden started right when I moved here two years ago. It’s in the corner of the bedroom, edged by short fencing that stretches across the corner and partway along the two walls. Not knowing where to store gardening tools in the apartment, I put a medium-sized planter in the corner and set a rake, spading fork, shovel, gloves, hand clippers, and hand shovel in it. A perfectly good floor lamp from the dumpster curves above the area, lighting the plants with a grow bulb.

Nine types of indoor foliage plants grouped together are thriv-

ing here: ivies, money tree, pothos, fern, spider, croton, peace lily, and a couple of unknowns. Artificial flowers in several decorative bottles add pops of color. Three colorful wooden parrots and a whorl of seashells hang from the ceiling, completing a scene beautiful to see in the morning.

Speaking of the peace lily... that is one ever-expanding old plant. It was a gift from my son and daughter-in-law for Mother’s Day at least 10 years ago. Just a single plant with one white bloom. It began to propagate, crowding itself out of the pot, so into a larger pot it went. And so on.

Now it’s in a one-inch-thick, 18-inch diameter container with a rounded bottom 10 inches deep, a serendipitous find along a roadside a few years back. I removed the glass top from a wrought iron table with curved legs that my Great Uncle George made, and set the whole shebang in there.

Looks great. Seven blossoms every year. It’ll probably outlive me.

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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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