

# The Montague Reporter

Year 24 – No. 25

MAY 28, 2026

\$2

editor@montaguereporter.org

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

ANALYSIS

## A Little-Used Tax Break

By MIKE JACKSON and JEFF SINGLETON

**MONTAGUE** – The application deadline for a \$500 property tax exemption for low-income seniors passed in Montague on April 1, and only 10 residents were awarded the exemption, according to data shared by assessor technician Oliver Beane.

“Please note that this exemption is not for all seniors,” Beane told the *Reporter*, “it is for seniors of little means.”

Eligibility for a \$500 discount on property taxes may be of particular interest this year, when Montague’s voters are facing two debt exclusion elections. Last month see **BREAK** page A6

## Up Close, Owls Wow Crowd At Great Hall



WASHBURN PHOTO

Marcia Wilson shows a Eurasian Eagle Owl at Saturday’s event.

By KEN WASHBURN

**TURNERS FALLS** – Last Saturday afternoon more than 175 people packed themselves into the Great Falls Discovery Center’s event hall to learn about and get a close look at live owls as part of the Owls Up Close program, run by Marcia and Mark Wilson of Eyes on Owls, an educational organization based in Dunstable, Massachusetts. Eyes on Owls brings live owls and other raptors to schools, libraries,

nature centers, and museums.

Also present at Owls Up Close were representatives of Rescue Franklin County Wildlife, a group devoted to raising awareness about how anti-coagulant rodenticides impact wildlife, especially raptors.

The program began with a slideshow that delighted spectators, including many children in the audience. Mark Wilson, a former photographer for the *Boston Globe*, is an accomplished wildlife photographer,

see **OWLS** page A7

## SOME GIVE ALL



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

A member of Montague’s Boy Scout Troop 6 lays a wreath at the World War II monument during Monday’s Memorial Day service in Turners Falls. “I want to thank everybody who took the time to show up today,” retired Turners Falls fire chief Todd Brunelle, who served in the US Navy and Air Force Reserve, told the attendees.

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

## Tall Log Pile Hazardous, Board Warned

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard met without a quorum on May 20. Member Adam Feltman had to be away, and member Paul Doud had been re-elected at the May 4 town election, but did not realize he had to be sworn in again for his new term. Still, Doud and chair Laurie DiDonato were able to listen to citizens, and made decisions that can become official once Doud is sworn in.

Wendell conservation agent Mary Thomas told the board of her concern about a large log pile on town-owned land south of the state forest road east of Dirth Road. The pile, she said, was stacked so high that logs were rolling off it, and she feared it could be an attractive nuisance for young bicycle riders who might try to climb the pile.

The log pile was built when tree warden Cliff Dornbusch was looking for a good site for the wood bank. Then-selectboard chair Dan Keller suggested the landing on that site, and gave a three-year time limit for the road crew to store logs there.

Over three years have passed, and a wood bank has been created on a site behind the WRATS.

see **WENDELL** page A8

G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## Committee for Sheffield/Hillcrest Consolidation Effort Forming

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – The regional school committee returned to business Tuesday with a newly elected member, Montague representative Sue Richardson.

The committee’s reorganization, required once a year, was minimal, with no competitive nominations or votes. Jane Oakes and Bill Tomb were unanimously approved to stay on as chair and vice chair, and Wendy Thompson volunteered to take over the assistant secretary duties from Heather Katsoulis.

Katsoulis, who has already been bonded for the role, was kept as assistant treasurer.

The subcommittee roster did not change much either, though two roles departed member Steve Ellis had filled were reassigned: Thompson was named the liaison to the Collaborative for Educational Services, and for the liaison to Montague’s capital improvement and planning committees, Cliff Spatcher was nominated and elected

see **GMRSD** page A7

## Driving Biodiversity With Fire on the Plains



GAGNON PHOTO

The igniter lights a “backfire” on the Montague Plains on Wednesday.

By BEN GAGNON

**MONTAGUE** – With a recent rain soaking the ground, humidity at about 60 percent, a steady westerly breeze, and good air quality, conditions on Wednesday were perfect to burn about 85 acres in the Montague Plains Wildlife Management Area.

A prescribed fire crew of more than 30 people gathered for a briefing on Old Northfield Road to divvy up the tasks, including clearing leaves from fire breaks, monitoring the wind and weather, igniting the fire, watering down the base of pitch pines, and checking adjacent areas for spot fires ignited by errant embers.

“We all come from different places, but we speak the same language when it comes to fire,” said Alex Entrup, prescribed fire and restoration ecologist for MassWildlife and “burn boss” for Wednesday’s project.

About five prescribed burns take place each year on the Montague Plains, the largest remaining example of an inland sandplain barrens in Massachusetts. Management of the area dates back to 1908, when the state paid \$140 for 25 acres “for the purpose of experiment... in forest management.” Today the state owns and manages about 1,800 acres.

“Montague Plains is one of the see **FIRE** page A6

## HS Sports: Eagles Champs!

By MATT ROBINSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Franklin Tech softballers won three “upsets” over the past week, securing two championship belts.

One day after beating the top-ranked McCann Green Hornets in North Adams in the Western Mass tournament last Wednesday, the Eagles got back on the bus and traveled to Dighton, where they knocked off

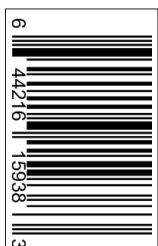
the top-seeded Bristol County Agricultural Chieftains in the Massachusetts Vocational Athletic Directors’ Association (MVADA) statewide vocational tournament.

Tech then upended the Lenox Millionaires at Westfield State University on Saturday to claim their first-ever Western Mass championship, but their work was not done – on Tuesday, they headed back to the see **SPORTS** page A5



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

The Turners Falls Thunder’s Ameliya Galbraith makes the throw to Abby Moffatt at the plate as Pioneer’s Jaelyn Boliskei attempts to score during the PVIAC Western Mass consolation game last Friday at Mullins Field.



Slow News for the Easily Startled			
An Attractive Nuisance.....	A1	In Mad Headlong Flight.....	B1
All That Is Envisioned.....	A2	Like Permafrost Thawing.....	B2
Almost Like Mushrooms.....	A3	Transported Without Incident.....	B3
Withers to a Trickle.....	A4	Culminating in a Gristmill.....	B4
Battled in Full Force.....	A5	Provide the Surrogate Egg.....	B5
To Reach the Forest Floor.....	A6	Mending, Recloaking, Colorcycling.....	B6
To Tickle the Palates.....	A7	Foraging, Fishing, Breathtaking.....	B7
Already Started Falling.....	A8	Submerged in the Icy Fjords.....	B8

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## Letters to the Editors



### Foam-Gathering Help Super Appreciated

They came in cars, trucks and vans. They came with small bits and huge packages. About 300 people from Leverett, Montague, Northfield, and Warwick brought their polystyrene – Styrofoam – during the month of April to their respective transfer stations. By all measures it was a great success!

How much did we keep out of the landfill, waterways and air? Four and a quarter large MiBox containers full! The collected material goes to Gold Circuit Recycling in Agawam, where it gets melted down to be reused in manufacturing.

Thanks to the 21 volunteers across the towns who showed up over three Saturdays to collect and bag the stuff. Thanks to Montague transfer station attendant Dave Withers, who received, bagged and saved the foam in April.

Begun five years ago by Annie

Chappel of Northfield, the effort has spread to the other towns in Franklin County thanks to Solid Waste Management District executive director Jan Ameen and program director Amy Donovan. Thanks to all involved, this year was a big success!

We're all for recycling polystyrene, but it's also powerful to pressure companies to use more sustainable materials in their shipping. Folks can also contact elected officials urging them to limit the use of polystyrene and other plastics. Our state senator Jo Comerford has been a proponent of the environmental bond bill working its way through the State House. Contact her office to learn more.

**Julie Kumble, Kate O'Kane,  
Susan Campbell  
Montague Center**

### Wendell Will Weigh In

This Saturday, May 30, this Pledge comes before Wendell's annual Town Meeting:

*WE AFFIRM our commitment to freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people and all people;*

*WE OPPOSE all forms of racism, bigotry, discrimination, and oppression; and*

*WE DECLARE ourselves an apartheid-free community and to that end,*

*WE PLEDGE to join others in working to end all support to Israel's apartheid regime, settler colonialism, and military occupation.*

We are asked: Why the term Apartheid? Why only Israel "singled out"? Isn't this antisemitic? And why is this relevant for our town?

The Pledge was launched in 2023 by the American Friends Service Committee after many organizations concluded that "Israel's treatment of Palestinians constitutes Apartheid," similar to the severe discrimination and repression faced his-

torically by Black South Africans.

As Israeli Apartheid became a genocide in Gaza, the Pledge was increasingly adopted as a way of opposing Israeli policies. In March 2025, five Vermont towns were the first US municipalities to pass the pledge. That October, Montague became the first in Massachusetts.

As of this May, more than 1,200 various groups have taken the pledge, including 15 municipalities. In late 2025, 104 registered voters in Wendell signed a Citizens' Petition putting the Pledge before the town.

Antisemitic? In fact, Jews have been leading the efforts for ceasefires and a just peace in the Middle East. Jewish Voice for Peace members are active nationwide, and academics and former Israeli officials are speaking out: "Never again" must mean "Never Again for Anyone."

**Anna Gyorgy, Francis Doughty,  
Laura Doughty, Jim Thornley  
Wendell**



Lori Brink, Judi Kolenda, Ann Delano, Meryl Mandell, and Terry Kayne play American Mah Jong at the Leverett Library on Thursday afternoons. They say the old Chinese game is not complicated to learn, and they enjoy playing together for about two hours at a time. Every year new pattern cards for the game are released which set the goals for players. Mandell has started a second Mah Jong group at the Shutesbury Library, too. No experience is required to join – just a willingness to learn something new.

### Desire Led Design; Recommends a 'Return To the Planning Task'

Here's another perspective on the library funding question, offered in the wake of the "tabling" at Montague's polling places on May 19 and the variety of letters on the subject. These thoughts are my own, but I've heard similar reactions from others, and expect others in town may agree with me.

At the outset, understand that I do not advocate for relying on the existing Carnegie building as a main library. The repeated descriptions of its inadequacy are unnecessary and distract attention from the basic concerns that I and others have. When past major capital projects were proposed – the Public Safety Complex, Public Works Garage, and Clean Water Facility upgrades – the "need" was established effectively, and the conversation moved on to the "solution."

Secondly, please know that I am aware of the limited space that the Gill-Montague Senior Center and the Brick House can provide for the needs and aspirations of the seniors and teens of Montague. However, I am not convinced that the proposed library will be the significant breakthrough in services that is forecasted, most recently by the library's director.

An uncomfortable reality, in current days, for Montague and the country at large, is that our hopes are outpacing our resources.

Here again I recall the experiences of the building committees for replacement of the police station and DPW garage. In both cases some desired features were deleted before bonding was proposed, and

although I've heard of similar efforts by the library building committee, their description of them is only a footnote to their list of new features to be included. My perception is that they are starting from a would-like "envisioning" – to use the director's word – and scaling down a little, rather than looking at what Montague can afford.

And that is the bottom line for me: can the design proposed actually provide all that is "envisioned" for \$159 per year, for the average property, and will it take precedence over the \$241 per year for the Tech School, to be presented this fall to the same voters? Will the annual cost increase for added programs – the librarian apparently dedicated to monitoring of teens, more DPW services for more space and longer hours, staff to schedule and staff expanded programs – be considered by voters, when balancing spending with Police, DPW, Clean Water, and existing community programs?

So my perspective is that we need a new library, but not this one. The design is more ambitious than Montague can afford, the capital cost is consequentially too high in view of competing needs, and the annual recurring cost to support it is disturbingly vague. I urge a NO vote on June 24, and a return to the planning task.

**John Hanold  
Turners Falls**

*Editors' note: See Page A4 for a discussion of the process by Montague's current fin com chair.*

### Flags Mark Veterans' Graves

On behalf of the Montague Cemetery Commission, I want to thank the volunteers who placed flags on the graves of our veterans for Memorial Day. Your work honors those who served and helps our community remember them.

Special thanks to the veterans who participated, members of Montague Boy Scout Troop 6, Greenfield Boy Scout Troop 5, and Greenfield Cub Scout Pack 3. We are especially grateful to Norm Emond for his years of dedicated coordination of flag placement in Montague's cemeteries.

**Judith Lorei, Chair  
Montague Cemetery Commission**

### Rhetorical Questions Hotline

*Caller:* Hello, have I reached the Captain Obvious Hotline?

*COH:* Hello, yes indeed.

*Caller:* Do you think the new Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage overlord, Hull Street Energy, can put it over on us, saying that Northfield Mountain makes "clean power" even though they've been grinding up fish and running the river backwards for 50-plus years?

*COH:* Come off it!!! This line is for difficult questions. <click>

**Gary Seldon  
Greenfield**

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# TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

Fresh off the Turners Falls water department work on Third Street, Montague's DPW is gearing up for a major **repavement of Third and Unity** streets and even the beginning of Millers Falls Road as far as Carlisle Ave.

The surface has been milled, driveable but a little scratchy, but the big work and the big closure is coming this next Tuesday, June 2. Only local traffic will be allowed to navigate the closed segment, and the official advisory recommends that cars take Turnpike Road to Montague Street to L Street, or vice versa, and that trucks take Turnpike to Montague City Road to Avenue A.

Baystate Health has sent local patients of Baystate Urology a notice that a Dr. Alexander is retiring, and that "considering this," the conglomerate is therefore **shutting down urology services altogether** in Greenfield and Northampton and two other professionals are leaving.

"For any urology needs after July 1, 2026," patients are encouraged to contact their primary care provider, or else their insurance company to obtain a list of alternatives.

Medical services pulling out of our rural area is always a big deal. After a reader passed us this tip early Wednesday afternoon, I reached out to a Baystate spokesperson at 4:45 p.m. seeking comment, and had received no response as of our final press time late Thursday morning...

In happier Greenfield news, immediately after sending that email I drove over there to catch a **Habitat for Humanity** home dedication on Birch Street. There's not terribly much to say about it in the time I have, other than to join many others – mayors, monks, co-op people, the neighbors – in congratulating Hannah and her son Gabe on their new house. Habitat is a great model, and I always want to see it scale up about 50- or 100-fold.

The Springfield-based Public Health Network of Western Mass, which formed in the '90s "in response to the defunding of public health and safety services brought about by Proposition 2½" and describes itself as a "neutral backbone organization" addressing community health, and the Healthy Air Network, a coalition that started in

2021 to "understand and address the high rates of asthma and the health inequities in Springfield and surrounding areas," has launched an app.

Air Watch – I found it as "**Air Watch Healthy Air Network**" – looks great at first glance. It pulls from the same open-source air quality data as many other apps, but there are additional bells and whistles, including pollen levels, local news and events, and a solid user interface. It's free.



Friends and neighbors encountered this brute along the bike path Wednesday, in its usual vicinity – between the Power Street and Eleventh Street bridges, on the mainland side of the canal.

**It's a snapper!** Don't go near it, and don't bother it, and certainly don't try to redirect or relocate it. It knows what it's doing.

This Saturday they'll hold the eighth "**Good Music Makes Good Neighbors**" porchfest-type festival in Montague Center. Everything on Earth seems to have been scheduled in advance for a handful of May weekends – it'll happen again September into October – and I'm not sure I can make it, even though my absolute favorite local saxophone quartet is on the bill.

Check out [www.montaguemusic.org](http://www.montaguemusic.org) for details including the lineup, the schedule, and their method of encouraging \$20 donations.

At the same time Saturday afternoon, the Música Franklin Fun Fest is scheduled in Unity Park.

My weather-thing, two days out, says there's an 85% chance of rain Saturday – the rain location is the Greenfield Middle School – but it also seems to be putting most of that rain in the morning, and the Fun kicks off at 1 p.m., so who knows.

I'm not seeing any rain contingency plans in the G.M.M.G.N. promotional materials, so I assume it's indoors enough to survive showers.

The local Berniecrats, Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution, made an endorsement this week in the crowded **race for the First Franklin state rep seat** vacated by Natalie Blais. Three of the candidates – Corinne Coryat, Johnathan Creque, and Lora Wondolowski – attended a forum FCCPR hosted on May 12. Their membership's vote came in with 62.9% supporting Wondolowski, a seasoned nonprofit administrator and Greenfield's current city council president.

Coryat, Blais's former aide, has so far announced endorsements from the sheriff and district attorney, so it looks like some honest-to-goodness politics are shaping up.

I was griping to a friend about how many of our neighbors are just now tuning in about the proposed new library, speculating about the process and demanding info after we toiled so long in obscurity to follow it along and kept putting its milestones on A1, above the fold. She reminded me of that classic passage from Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*:

"As you will no doubt be aware, the plans for development of the outlying regions of the Galaxy require the building of a hyperspatial express route through your star system.... There's no point in acting surprised about it. All the planning charts and demolition orders have been on display at your local planning department in Alpha Centauri for 50 of your Earth years, so you've had plenty of time to lodge any formal complaint and it's far too late to start making a fuss about it now... **I'm sorry, but if you can't be bothered to take an interest in local affairs**, that's your own lookout. Energize the demolition beams."

The war started again while I was writing this.

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OP ED

## Signs of Unknown and Unverified Origin

By JOHN LENTZ

**TURNERS FALLS** – I write here because, as I walk, drive and bicycle around our fair town of Montague, I can't help but notice the flush of "Vote No Library" signs that have appeared on my neighbors' lawns, town public property, and in one case, a church lawn, almost like mushrooms.

Skipping over the sometimes-questionable placement of the signs, I find three things that pique my curiosity.

First, these Vote No signs are anonymous. Where did they come from? The Vote Yes signs show that they were paid for by the Vote Yes for a Montague Library Committee, which has a website – [www.yeslibrary.org](http://www.yeslibrary.org) – loaded with facts, figures, and colorful charts showing everything from the possible maximum tax burden to residents (on average \$159 yearly, or \$3 per week) to the benefits of a new downtown library, including more room for the Tools and Things Library and the usefulness of a solar-equipped, highly-insulated building that can act as a public cooling or warming center as needed.

Since there is no committee named on the Vote No signs, I have

asked a few neighbors where those signs came from. Most of the replies have been "from a guy."

The most interesting reply I've heard was from someone in an outlying village who said they heard that the Vote No signs are being paid for by someone in Greenfield who is still disgruntled about that city's process that led to their new library. If that's the case, it is concerning to me that someone from another town entirely is meddling in Montague's town business. It would, however, partly explain why I see the signs on church and public property, since I cannot imagine any of my Montague neighbors being so thoughtless and rude.

Perhaps this letter will help us uncover the mystery?

Now, as to my two other concerns: it's been made abundantly clear in so many public meetings, including Town Meeting and on the Vote Yes website, that, while the actual cost of the proposed new library is \$23.7 million, the burden to the town – that is what we will be taxed on – is half of that number, due to a \$11.3 million grant from the Commonwealth. So, for the Vote No signs to say that it's an unqualified \$23.7 expenditure is, at best, a half-truth, which does not inform "we citizens"

and is actually misleading.

In addition, that tax burden will be partly offset this year by the completion of the debt for the high school, and again in two years by the debt completion for the Safety Complex.

My last concern is also about language on the sign: "Save the Carnegie" is very emotional language. I'm not sure, however, what that means, since the Carnegie Library building is a designated historic structure and, as such, is not going anywhere. But, that historic building has reached the end of its usefulness as our library.

If the sign maker actually wants to save the *function of a library* that is housed in the Carnegie building, that person would do well to visit the website above. If they do, they would discover that at least four different scenarios were looked at to discover what it would take to refurbish that 100-plus-year-old building, in addition to adding on, to bring the library capabilities into the present day and the foreseeable future.

The details are on the website, so I'll just say here that one scenario was rejected by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and two would entail moving the Carnegie 24 feet closer to Avenue A – and would cost \$4.5 to \$5.5 million more than the cost of a totally new building.

In addition, both of these last two scenarios would require the town to seize the residential property directly behind the Carnegie building, along with excavation to flatten the existing grade. (I will note here a particular irony: that residential property currently has a "Vote No, Save the Carnegie" sign on its front lawn, which makes me wonder: how well-informed are my neighbors about the library issue?)

In summary: The Vote No signs are of unknown and unverified origin, and are made up of half truth and fiction. I hope my neighbors will search out the easily obtainable facts about the proposed new library either at one of the upcoming open information sessions (on June 5 in person at the proposed building site at 38 Avenue A, and on June 16 online by Zoom), or at the Vote Yes project website above.

If you really do not want a functioning library in the village of Turners Falls, by all means, vote no. But if you believe that having a functioning library will bring value and increased quality of life to Montague, then vote yes on June 24.

And, regardless of your opinion, talk with your neighbors.

John Lentz lives in Turners Falls.

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## OP ED

## Will the New Library Really Be \$3 a Week?

By **DORINDA BELL-UPP**

**MONTAGUE** – Will the new library really be \$3 a week?

That's the plan!

After the public process defining the scope of the new library, the building committee did their best to control costs during design: eliminating the request for a basement; reducing the building height; opting for steel framing; selecting a cost-effective, lower-risk HVAC system; and identifying that a new build would be more affordable than a renovation of the Carnegie.

(To learn more about that, watch the August 14, 2025 site selection presentation on the library building project website.)

Cost estimators, unaffiliated with the town or with our project managers, provided an estimate for construction costs. The project manager then added in costs for the rest of the project – permitting, insurance, furniture, decor, utility work, etc. – and scaled costs to account for inflation in 2027. This totaled \$23.7 million.

That is the number the project cannot exceed. The state agreed to cover \$11.3 million of this cost, leaving the town with an estimated \$12.4 million to bond, i.e., to borrow over the long term. The state bonding agency then ran that \$12.4 million and determined that with the current bonding rate, there would be \$9.9 million in interest over 30 years, and the town's yearly payment would be around \$760,000 per year.

Using the tax impact calculator, the town accountant found that this would equate to \$49 a year per \$100,000 in a house's value, and deter-

mined that the average single-family homeowner would therefore pay around \$3 a week.

### Variation In Cost

If your home doubles in value, that \$3 will not change at the same rate. The yearly amount of the bond will stay fixed, at \$760,000 or the specific amount when we bond. The amount each taxpayer owes changes over time based on the value of their property relative to other properties in town.

The amount we bond can change before bonding occurs. The amount of the principal – \$12.4 million – and therefore of the interest amount can be reduced by fundraising, by securing additional grants, or by use of stabilization (town savings). This would reduce the amount that we bond, and the overall cost.

### Total Budget Impact

In addition to the \$3 a week for construction, the new library will need an increased budget to operate. Additions would include a 12-hour staff member for the children's desk on nights and Saturdays, an increase in utility costs for a larger, but more efficient building, and 8 additional hours of custodial time.

The public libraries' budget is therefore expected to increase by up to \$50,000 per year, depending on the size of the solar array. In tax impact, that's around \$10 a year, or another \$0.19 a week for the average homeowner.

As a side note, of all the town departments with more than two employees, the public libraries' budget has grown the most conservatively in

the last 15 years. The department has a tight, accurate line-item budget, which the finance committee appreciates.

### Historic Opportunity

It's hard to feel ready to make big investments during complicated financial times. The cost of basic needs is rising, the job market is stagnant, and benefits – especially healthcare – continue to take up a larger portion of available tax revenue.

In this challenging time, this town's public libraries continue to innovate. They're offering more programming to more ages. They've added a food pantry. They're partnering with many other local libraries and with service agencies to meet the community's growing needs. The libraries are investing in our community.

The Carnegie Library was gifted to us 120 years ago. I've heard the argument that another chance to build a library will come around soon, but our last chance at state funding was at the start of the century, and I don't think we can go another 25 years without the ability to add any new books without removing books, with most programming held offsite, and with the tiniest public bathroom in Franklin County.

(If you see me, I'll happily tell you about the long and elaborate process necessary to walk down a spiral staircase with an infant and toddler, and change a diaper on the floor.)

This new library is a good investment.

*Dorinda Bell-Upp is the chair of Montague's finance committee. The views expressed here are her own.*

## OP ED

## FirstLight Will Still 'Export' Connecticut River's Energy To Taunton for 14 Years, Despite New Ownership

By **KARL MEYER**

**FRANKLIN COUNTY**—Incredible! Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage and Turners Falls Hydro-projects sold again. And ironically, Canada's global investment giant PSP Investments announces the sale of its FirstLight Power-branded assets on the 350th anniversary of the Turners Falls Massacre.

It will be months before this latest pass-around monopoly capital sale is finalized with the new owner – Hull Street Energy, LLC, another giant private equity firm we've never heard of, whose tax-sheltered registration is in Wilmington, Delaware – while FirstLight employees are again resold like so many venture capital pawns.

Meanwhile the Connecticut River, its flow diverted into the Turners Falls canal by FirstLight Power to produce electricity, will continue being exported far from this watershed to power the eastern Massachusetts town of Taunton, which has its own river. I didn't know there was so much excess "clean" power from the 62 megawatts generated from full-out operation at Station 1 and Cabot Station that they could deliver it a hundred miles away as "local" power – covering a portion of that distant market's electricity through the year 2040.

A FirstLight press release from January trumpeted: "FirstLight and Taunton Municipal Lighting Plant Extend Power Purchase Agreement for Clean, Massachusetts-Made Hydropower." Their hydro-exports to eastern Massachusetts have been ongoing since 2018. The article noted, "In total, TMLP will receive up to 80 GWh of clean generation from

FirstLight each year through 2040 via its two PPAs – enough energy to support the year-round power demands of over 11,000 Massachusetts homes."

### Those original Vietnam-era licenses expired here on April 30, 2018.

That's quite the sell-away considering 2025 US Census figures showing a total of 34,671 housing units here in Franklin County, homes that also require electricity.

The electricity semantics here are interesting, because the energy from Turners Falls is labeled "carbon-free" even though it is partly generated by re-diverting into the canal the peak-priced flow pulses sent downriver from Northfield Mountain, FirstLight's own, massively fossil- and nuclear-fueled, facility. Profits from the sale of canal energy derive from that "re-peaking" by robbing the mainstem Connecticut River of its natural current a second time. How does that magically make it "clean" energy? And how is it labeled "local" when it's consumed in Taunton?

According to the most recent year's filing by FirstLight to FERC, Northfield Mountain's giant net loss – its largely fossil-fueled energy appetite – erased virtually all of the megawatts produced by the Turners Falls canal hydro operations.

Amazingly, these plants are being sold while Canada-owned FirstLight still lacks the new, signed Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licenses required to contin-

ue their operations. Those original Vietnam-era licenses expired here on April 30, 2018.

But what happens during our more frequent droughts, when our river is so low that Cabot has to reduce generation, or stop operating altogether?

Some states wholly deny the "renewable" label for hydropower electricity produced by re-routing flow out of a river's natural channel. At its core, exporting energy out of this river's watershed is bizarrely unnatural and inefficient, a marketing sleight-of-hand in terms of clear, common sense.

Curiously, this wasn't big FirstLight PR news here on the Connecticut in Franklin County – where their Turners Falls and Northfield federal licenses expired over eight years ago. They've yet to sign new ones, or spend any of the cash required to begin building the long-overdue fish passage infrastructure that would at last actually open upriver habitats on the public's 410-mile-long Connecticut to migrating fish.

What a Bay State embarrassment, for a river long ago recognized as a "National Blueway."

During these same un-relicensed eight years, the company has pulled down hundreds of millions from energy sales via the huge ecosystem depredations visited by Northfield Mountain's operations. It's literally a river killer, yanking ancient natural flows to a dead stop before reversing them for miles, swallowing the eggs and young of hundreds of millions of resident and migratory fish each year.

The Connecticut's famous shad run virtually withers to a trickle here – the fish foiled, exhausted and

blocked in their attempts to head to Vermont and New Hampshire waters upon encountering FirstLight's flow manipulations and diversions. The small percentage that pass the daunting Turners Falls canal diversions and dam then must dodge the massive, out-of-river suction and spit at Northfield Mountain. Eggs and young have no chance of survival once captured in its giant suction.

Formerly, under Northeast Utilities, the public fish viewing at Turners Falls used to open the Wednesday before Mother's Day and stay open through Father's Day, or even a week beyond. This year FirstLight opened May 9, one day before Mother's Day, and will close June 7, a full two weeks before Father's Day. Not even a full month of access and viewing!

**It seems high time they start putting a few of the many millions accrued here to start building the fish lifts, which should have been shovel-ready when the licenses expired.**

These days, camping on the Connecticut at Barton Cove ends on Labor Day. That small benefit was once made available through Columbus Day weekend.

In contrast, Holyoke Gas and Electric's Fishway opened on May 6 and is open to the public through June 21, Father's Day. That fishway center and its lifts present a far more welcoming and dynamic

place to visit the river and see its fish up close. It can be disheartening watching the shad struggling in the Turners windows – pushing forward, only to fall back again. Historically, only about one in 10 succeed. (Of those that make it, six in 10 are able to pass the fish ladders at Vernon, Vermont, 20 miles away, to continue on and spawn upstream.)

FirstLight recently scored some nice local PR for awarding a little \$5,000 grant to the Nolumbeka Project to get three interpretive signs installed on the banks of a Connecticut River largely stilled and diverted at the Turners Falls dam – and starving for flow just another hundred feet downstream. It seems high time they start putting a few of the many millions accrued here for clients of the Delaware tax-sheltered investment company to start building the fish lifts, which should have been shovel-ready when the licenses expired in 2018.

Somehow, the company just never seems agreeable to signing the long-overdue new federal licenses, or to make good on the state and federal capital and operational requirements contained therein. Maybe that's why it's the best time to sell out. Who wouldn't love to keep getting more and more, while doing less and less?

*Karl Meyer spent six years working at the Northfield Mountain Visitors' Center under Northeast Utilities' ownership. He holds an MS in Environmental Science, and remains an intervenor in the FERC relicensing applications for these Connecticut River projects. He is a member of the Society of Environmental Journalists.*

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**SPORTS** from page A1

Berkshires and beat McCann, winning the state vocational crown.

Not bad for a team that began the season 1-9!

**FCTS 4 – BCAHS 3**

The Eagles went into the MVA-DA tournament seeded fourth, and had to travel to eastern Mass on Thursday to challenge the Chieftains, the top dog in the tourney.

Bristol went ahead 2-0 in the second inning, forcing Tech to play catch-up. In the fourth, with the score 3-1, the Eagles scored two runs to tie it up. It remained knotted through seven, sending the game into extra innings. In the eighth, Tech scored the go-ahead run, blanking the Chieftains to notch the win and advance to the championship game.

Emma Petersen and Breanna Kempf scored RBIs in the win.

**TFHS 16 – Pioneer 7**

On Friday night the Turners Falls Softball Thunder had a consolation matchup, and bested the visiting Pioneer Black Panthers. The crowd was relatively small, but they were loud and enthusiastic.

In the first inning Autumn DiMare, who only recently took over catching duties, made a wonderful pickoff throw, keeping the Panthers off the scoreboard. Turners then plated four runs to take the lead. Pioneer loaded the bases in the second but came up empty, and in the bottom of the inning Turners added to their lead. Addison Talbot, the Thunder's ninth batter, sliced the ball down the right-field line for a triple, setting the table for the top of the order.

"Gary [Mullins] always puts a good hitter in the number-nine spot," a member of Turners' 1942 state champion baseball team observed. "Let's hope Dietz can get her home."

She did. Madisyn Dietz clocked a double and was batted in by Autumn Thornton to give Blue a 6-0 lead after two complete.

The Black Cats halved that lead in the fourth, but the Thunder responded with three runs of their own to bring it to 9-3. In the sixth, with the score 10-5, Turners put it away, scoring six more runs. The Panthers did not go down gently, though – they scored two more runs in the seventh for the final score of 16-7.

The Thunder were awarded the #11 spot in the upcoming MIAA Division V tournament. This Sunday they will host the #22 Holbrook Bulldogs.

**FCTS 5 – Lenox 2**

The Lady Birds packed their bags and went down to Westfield on Saturday to play for the Western Mass

championship, again as the underdogs. All the runs in this game came in the first three innings.

Lenox took a 1-0 lead after one inning, Tech tied it in the second, and then scored four more in the third. The Millionairesses got one more run in the bottom of the third and then both teams rode it out, giving Tech their first Western title.

Kempf and Sofia Melnik had RBIs, and the runs were scored by Lindsey Taylor, Ava Worden, Skylei Lapan, and Charley Knight.

**FCTS 12 – McCann 10**

On Tuesday, the underdog Eagles went back to North Adams to face McCann again, this for the small vocational schools state championship. Not every player made the trip, as it was Awards Night at Tech.

I arrived at the field about 20 minutes before first pitch. I was amazed that fewer than 20 people were there. "Oh, they'll be here," McCann's athletic director assured me. "They always get here right before the game begins." Sure enough, by the second inning folks were lining up on the third base side. Because Disanti Field abuts thick woods to the right, no one could sit behind first base, so the fans from both teams sat together.

The AD checked in with me several times during the game, and each time she sang the praises of Franklin coach Joe Gamache. "He's a stand-up guy," she would begin, and then she listed several deeds Coach Gamache had done over the past week to make her life easier, including offering the field at Franklin Tech because Disanti couldn't be played on, and offering to go in on a pizza party.

The Eagles immediately drew first blood. Taylor led off with a base hit. After one out, Sandra Johnson was hit by a pitch and Knight was walked, loading the bases. Kempf batted two runners home, and courtesy runner Worden took her place on base.

Lyla Mickiewicz then batted in a third run and was replaced on first by Lapan, who proceeded to steal second. Melnik's hit was caught for the second out and the Hornet fielder threw the ball to second, trying to pull a double play. It was close, but Lapan was safe. With the ball still at second, Gamache saw the opportunity and sent Worden home, giving Tech a 4-0 zip edge.

McCann came out swatting in their first at-bats. Their first three batters smacked long hits, making the score 4-1 with two runners on base and no outs. The Eagles pulled off a crisp double play, and a strike-out ended the threat. Tech came up empty in the second, but orchestrat-

ed another double play in the bottom of the inning to keep the score at 4-1.

In the third inning Melnik cracked a three-run homer over the fence, and it was a 7-1 game. The inning ended on a comical note. Petersen hit a skyscraper foul. She retreated 20 feet, but the ball came down right on her helmet, making a loud clunking sound. She barely felt it, but she was called out for interference, ending the inning.

McCann narrowed the gap by one in the home third, but Franklin got one back in the fourth off a lead-off triple by Samantha Duncan and a third-base error.

Then came the Hornets' fourth inning. McCann kept hitting the ball directly over second base. They loaded the bases and kept them loaded for most of the inning, sending 13 batters to the plate, scoring eight runs, and taking a 10-8 lead.

In the sixth Tech made it a one-run game. McCann loaded the bases again, but a strikeout kept it at 10-9.

In the seventh inning, with the Eagles down to their last three outs and behind by a run, the girls looked a little desperate. But Coach Gamache reassured them. "It's fine," he would call out. "Everything's fine."

The first two Tech batters reached base, and so did the next two, but each time McCann threw the lead runner out at third, handing the Eagles two outs and no runs. Then Petersen batted a run in, tying it up, and Amelia Rider knocked two more home to restore a 12-10 lead for Tech.

The first batter in the Hornet seventh cracked the ball deep to center, but a wonderful catch gave them one out. The next batter hit the ball solidly for a base hit, and the tying run stepped up to the plate. But the Eagles once again completed a crisp double play, ending the game and earning the state crown.

The Hornets racked up an incredible 17 hits in the loss, but only one double. For Tech, Petersen had a double, Duncan a triple, and Melnik clocked a home run.

Although half the folks were disappointed while the other half were elated, the evening ended on a positive note. The girls from both teams posed for a group picture with their green and navy-blue jerseys interspersed, and after the ceremony the teams enjoyed a pizza party together.

The Eagles now enter the state Division V tournament ranked #12. They will host the #21 seed, the Rising Tide Herons of Plymouth, this Sunday.

**Track & Field**

The Turners girls and Franklin Tech boys competed last week in the Western Mass championship track meets. The girls competed on Friday, which was also prom night at Tech, so they could only send three players instead of the 17 who qualified.

The boys, however, battled in full force over the weekend. Samuel Bodenstein finished 13th in the 100m and 17th in the 200m, William Hutchinson hit a personal record and came 20th in the 400m, and William Thomas was 11th in the 800m.

Ashton Marshall placed 12th in the high jump, Johnny McIntyre and Jacob Thomas tied for 8th in the pole vault, and Dustin Reade placed 9th in the javelin and 11th in the discus. Wyatt Whitman was 27th in the 400m hurdles, and in the 4x400m relay the team of Hutchinson, Sawyer Cadrun, Dyllan Duval, and Jackson Feury and finished 10th.

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## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS MONTAGUE ZBA #26-06 and #26-07

Notice is hereby given that the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, June 3rd, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** VIA ZOOM and IN PERSON at the Montague Town Hall Upstairs conference room, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA to review a Special Permit Request from **Richard Young** for a minimum frontage reduction from the required 75 ft to 73.5 ft, under Sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.3(a) and 9.2 of the Zoning Bylaws located at **12 Franklin Street (Parcel: 29-0-031), in the Neighborhood Business (NB) District.** The filing is available for review at Town Hall.

Notice is hereby given that the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, June 3rd, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** VIA ZOOM and IN PERSON at the Montague Town Hall Upstairs conference room, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA to review a Special Permit Request from **Joe Burek** for a frontage reduction from the required 150 ft to 120 ft, and a lot size reduction from the required 1 acre to .8 acre to construct a 12' x 20' workshop for firewood harvesting operation under Sections 5.5.1, 5.5.3(a) and 9.2 of the Zoning Bylaws located at **Lake Pleasant Road (Parcel: 33-0-26), in the Agricultural Forestry (AF) 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](http://www.montague-ma.gov/calendar).

Joshua Lively, Chairman  
Montague Zoning Board of Appeals

## LEVERETT BOARD OF HEALTH NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Board of Health will hold a public meeting June 1, 2026, at 7:30 PM at the Leverett Town Hall, 9 Montague Road, Leverett, MA to act on a request for variances under Chapter 218 of Leverett Code provisions 218-4 and 218-9. The applicant/owner is the Friends of North Leverett Sawmill, Inc. 77 Jackson Hill Road, Leverett, MA 01054 for work (construction of a new onsite sewage disposal system) at 63 North Leverett Road. Copies of the request, exhibits and plans can be obtained by contacting Foresight Land Services, Inc. 413-499-1560.

## PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE WENDELL CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Wendell Conservation Commission will hold a Public Meeting on a Request for Determination of Applicability submitted by the Department of Conservation and Recreation for a project proposing to complete **maintenance on the Wickett Pond Loop Trail** in Wendell State Forest, including a stream crossing replacement. The trail begins by the Wickett Pond parking lot off of Wickett Pond Road in Wendell. The meeting is to determine whether the project meets the criteria of the MA Wetlands Protection Act, CMR 10.05(5), and the Wendell Wetlands Protection Bylaw.

The meeting will be held virtually via Zoom on **Tuesday, June 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.** To join the meeting please use this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81307558816>

**Boys' Tennis****Dover-Sherborn 5 – TFHS 0**

The Turners Falls hybrid tennis team came into the MIAA Division III brackets as a #40 seed. On Tuesday they traveled east to take on the Dover-Sherborn Raiders, who were ranked #25.

As they boarded the van, I wished the athletes luck. They smiled and accepted my support, but at this point they had nothing more to prove. They'd finished the regular season with a 9-2 record and won the Tri-County Conference title.

In first singles Noah Kolodziej forced a super-tiebreaker in the third set, but dropped his match 6-1, 4-6, 11-9. Everyone else was swept: Mario Pareja in second singles (6-2, 6-3), Vaughn LaValley in third singles (6-0, 6-0), Nethanel

Martin and Daniel Lapinski in first doubles (6-1, 6-2), and Daniel Morales and Connor Glennon in second doubles (6-0, 6-0).

**Baseball****TFHS 6 – St. Mary's 5**

Last Thursday, the Baseball Thunder defeated St. Mary's in Westfield, giving their positive momentum going into the MIAA playoffs. Porter Dubow finished with a double and two RBIs, while Julian Kaiser and Trevor Lyons batted in one run each.

The Thunder enter the Division V tournament as a #23 seed, and travel to West Boylston this Sunday to challenge the #10 Lions. Franklin Tech, the division's #15 seed, will host #18 Monson the same day.



CHIP GORMIE PHOTO

Franklin County Tech senior Lindsey Taylor makes the snag during last Saturday's statewide vocational championship game against the Lenox Millionaires.

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**FIRE** from page A1

most actively managed wildlife areas in the state – there are more than 47 species of greatest conservation need here,” said Caren Caljouw, the prescribed fire program manager for MassWildlife. “There are rare plants, bees, moths, reptiles, songbirds. It’s pretty unique.” Caljouw’s deep knowledge of the Plains came in handy when a local resident worried that the burn would harm the fledglings of redheaded woodpeckers that have attracted birders from far and wide. Getting out her map, Caljouw showed that the burn area was far removed from the area where the exceptionally rare woodpeckers are nesting.

The prescribed burns prevent the woodland from becoming overcrowded with “ladder” vegetation and downed trees that can act as fuel for fires to reach the treetops, resulting in fast-moving, catastrophic fires. The Plains was the site of a 1,200-acre fire in 1937, and a 1,000-acre fire in 1944. Too much under-

story also blocks out sunlight for scrub oak, blueberry bushes, and other low-flowering plants that serve as critical food sources for moths, butterflies, deer, turkeys, and birds.

The burn starts with what’s known as a “backfire,” when the igniter walks along a wide path known as a fire break and uses a drip torch to light a mix of diesel and gas that burns vegetation slowly against the wind. On the opposite side of the burn area, another line of fire moves with the wind toward the backfire, containing the blaze within the prescribed area.

“This is what drives biodiversity,” said Entrup, walking along the edge of the backfire. “Hopefully by doing this we’re sustaining the wildlife habitat and preventing much bigger fires.” Area residents who enjoy walking and birding on the Plains are familiar with the open canopy forest featuring pine and oak spaced far enough apart to allow plenty of sunlight to reach the forest floor.



A firefighter hoses down a prescribed burn Wednesday on the Plains.

Although prescribed burns only started in Massachusetts in the 1980s, indigenous people used fire to sustain habitat and open canopy forests for thousands of years.

“Native Americans knew how to

use fire as a tool all throughout the habitat to promote oak forests and upland birch, and to make it easier to move through the landscape,” said Caljouw. “We’ve been working with different tribes throughout the state for years to promote biodiversity.”

Caljouw has been in the prescribed fire business for 35 years, traveling around the country to lead training and oversee burns. She got her start working with William Patterson III, an emeritus professor at UMass Amherst and a pioneer of fire ecology.

Caljouw can rattle off the names of all the plants and creatures that benefit from the diversified ecosystem on the Plains, including the upland morning glory, the sphynx moth, and the Eastern whip-poor-will, which thrives in open canopy

forests. Listed as a “species of special concern” in Massachusetts, the whip-poor-will population has declined by 60% in recent decades due in part to an increase in the closed canopy forests that result from fire suppression rather than prescribed fire management.

Another unique aspect of the Plains is the endangered frosted elfin butterfly, which only lays its eggs on wild lupine, a low-flowering plant whose hard seeds are germinated only by fire. Wild lupine is known for tall spikes of blue-violet blossoms.

“I’ve always been interested in the restoration of natural areas,” said Caljouw. “Seeing how quickly a landscape responds to fire, I just got hooked. Fire promotes so many more plants and real-ly enhances habitats.”



Left: The fire crew gathers for a briefing Wednesday morning on the Montague Plains. Right: MassWildlife prescribed fire program manager Caren Caljouw reassures a local resident that the operation will not harm the redheaded woodpeckers in the area.

**BREAK** from page A1

town administrator Walter Ramsey and town accountant Angelica Desroches released estimates of the impact each of these would have on the annual property tax owed on the average single-family home: \$159 for Montague’s share of a new library building, and \$241 for its share of a new technical high school building. If both pass, the average residential tax bill will be \$400 higher than if both are voted down.

Some of the public debate about taking on the library debt has focused on the impact \$159 per year would have specifically on retired homeowners receiving a fixed income, who are finding themselves squeezed by the paradox of rising home prices, and therefore tax assessments. A house’s market value can typically only be enjoyed if the senior moves out, and with notably low vacancy rates in the region, this would likely mean leaving the community.

Massachusetts has set out some methods of relief for homeowners in that bind, or others. MGL Chapter 59 Section 5 establishes a dizzying array of local tax exemptions that towns and cities may choose to adopt, as a “local option,” for the relief of the blind, military veterans, bereaved spouses, and the elderly.

The available exemptions must be set by a “local legislative body,” which in Montague is its representative town meeting. In Montague, town meeting has opted into Clause 41C of the law, which in its default state allows homeowners over the age of 70 to subtract \$500 from their bill if they can prove that both their income and assets are beneath certain thresholds.

Town meeting may also increase this exemption to \$1,000 and lower the age to 65, according to a fact sheet issued by the state Department of Local Services.

**High Hurdles**

Beane emphasized the stringency of the means-testing for the “41C senior exemp-

tion.” Material on the town website lists the rules: as of July 1 of the tax year, the owner must be 70, have lived in a house they own for at least five years, and have lived in the state for at least 10 years.

For the past fiscal year, the income limit was \$32,426 a year for a single resident or \$48,639 for a married couple. Additionally, total assets – not including the house, vehicle, clothes, cemetery plots, or furnishings – must be shown to total less than \$45,396, or \$48,639 for a couple.

“Think of this like a snapshot of July 1,” Beane explained. “The applicant must meet all the qualifications on July 1 of the calendar year before the fiscal year.” Applications are due next April 1.

To establish eligibility, a first-time applicant may need to provide the board of assessors with a birth certificate, evidence they live in their house, an income tax return, Social Security statement, bank statements, and documents showing investments or trust funds.

Gill Montague Council on Aging director Roberta Potter, who has periodically invited the assessors to the senior center to explain the details of the program, speculated that the complexity of the exemption and its asset limits, which she called “relatively modest,” may be discouraging applications.

“It’s a good program,” Potter said, “but those asset limits may limit the number of people who apply.”

“It’s not simple,” Beane told the *Reporter*. “We are required to attend a training just to understand it.”

**Untapped Relief?**

While no one we spoke with wanted to estimate the total number of Montague homeowners who *might* be eligible for the \$500 exemption, we can use US Census Bureau data to generate a very rough, ballpark, estimate.

The 2024 American Community Survey estimated that 1,359 of Montague’s residents, or 16%, were aged 70 or over, and that 63%

of its housing units were owner-occupied.

Of the town’s 3,793 households, meanwhile, 1,147 or 30% had an annual income under \$40,000; while 863 or 23% had an income under \$30,000.

A different age metric was used for the “poverty” count. Where we live, the “poverty line” is \$15,650 for a single-person household and \$21,150 for a couple. Of the estimated 1,898 Montague residents aged 65 and over, the ACS estimated that 170, or 9%, were below the poverty line.

Taking these together, we could conservatively guess that 15% of Montague’s over-70 seniors would meet the current 41C income requirement. That would come to 204 potentially income-qualifying residents. If these seniors have the same homeownership rate as the town as a whole – another conservative assumption – the figure comes to 128.

Even if some of these homeowners are disqualified for other reasons – they own stocks, or they moved here from California during the pandemic – the *Montague Reporter* finds it likely that the number of eligible residents is at least an order of magnitude higher than the 10 exemptions awarded for FY’26.

**Local Options**

Each year when it sets the tax “split” – the degree of difference between residential and commercial rates – Montague’s selectboard considers a set of other unrelated exemptions: open space, residential, and small-business. It typically votes against offering these.

Director of assessing Adam Tocci explained at the board’s December 1 hearing that no “open space” in the town would qualify for the discount, and that the “residential” exemption is designed to favor locals in communities where many properties are second or third homes for people who live elsewhere, such as some towns on Cape Cod.

However, Montague may wish to consider adopting other Section 5 exemptions, particularly if the town is facing a growing

population seeking to “age in place,” as many studies predict is happening throughout Franklin County.

Clause 41A, for example, allows income-qualifying seniors to *defer* paying their property tax – the bill accrues 8% interest and comes due if the house is sold or the owner dies. The arrangement is transferrable to a surviving spouse. The total deferral caps out at 25% of the assessed value of the house, presumably to make sure the heirs can cover the liability easily by a sale.

It gets complicated fast – and the state legislature, meanwhile, has been mulling a set of tweaks to the system. This winter the Senate passed a measure extending the period after a homeowner’s death before their deferred taxes come due, and another allowing towns to bump the exemption up to \$1,500.

At their annual town meeting this month, Erving voters approved three articles adjusting the town’s already complex set of exemptions. Clause 17E pegs the asset limit to a cost-of-living inflation measure, and Clause 41D essentially does the same for the income limit. Section “5C½,” meanwhile, increased everyone’s existing exemption by 100%.

Gill voters, meanwhile, tackled their exemption adjustments at a May 23, 2022 town meeting, bumping up the income and asset limits, pegging both to inflation going forward, dropping the age to 65, and doubling the exemption to \$1,000.

Gill board of assessors chair Bill Tomb said the assessors had recommended doubling the exemption because they felt \$500 was “really not very sufficient for anything.” Dori Kwader, recently hired as an assistant to the assessors, said she would not be able to estimate how many residents are awarded the exemption before our press deadline.

Tomb said “very few” residents were affected by the adjustment. “I would say it’s negligible,” he told the *Reporter*, “but it’s available.... We didn’t see a big surge in people applying.”

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**GMRS** from page A1

in *absentia*, pending his acceptance.

A major capital project is indeed on the horizon for Montague, as the scheme to build an addition on Sheffield Elementary, consolidate the Turners Falls elementary school students in that building, and close Hillcrest Elementary is in a sink-or-swim vetting phase under the Massachusetts School Building Association (MSBA).

Interim superintendent Tari Thomas reported to the school committee that Montague town administrator Walter Ramsey has been helping appoint the Sheffield building committee, and that they must nominate two of their Montague members to serve on it by June 10.

Given that three of the six Montague members were absent on Tuesday – Spatcher, Carol Jacobs, and Lorie Adams – this decision was postponed until the next meeting, which falls on June 9.

“Unless somebody wants to indicate their interest at the moment,” Oakes said, but no one stepped forward.

**OWLS** from page A1

and has captured captive and wild birds alike. The Wilsons have been involved in wildlife conservation for decades, and they took many of the slideshow’s owl photos in far-flung locales such as Alaska and Serbia.

Mark, a naturally-skilled educator and performer, used his photos to explain aspects of owl behavior and physiology – one photo of an American Barn Owl, for example, depicted the owl’s usually-hidden ear. Another comical photo displayed a sopping wet owl shielding her chicks from a rainstorm.

Each new photograph brought peals of delight and sometimes owl-like shrieks from the children in the audience. Occasionally, Mark had his audience do their best owl impressions, which included hooting, screeching, and hissing. He kept the younger audience members totally rapt, despite the promise of live owls being moments away. In some photos, where the owls were intentionally hard to see, Mark directed a child from the audience to point them out with a laser pointer.

As Mark spoke, there was an occasional shuffling from the seven large wooden boxes set out in front of the screen, which heightened everyone’s anticipation.

When the slideshow concluded, Marcia Wilson asked all of the children who had been sitting in front of the boxes to move away to a respectful distance and brought out two Eastern Screech Owls, which are common in western Massachusetts. Held aloft on gloved fists, the owls gazed calmly over the packed hall. It was clear that this was routine for them.

Mark invited the audience to try their best Screech Owl trilling noises, but the owls were totally unperturbed. As Marcia took the owls around the room, Mark shared educational facts about the species, as well as anecdotes about the owls they brought and why they live in human custody rather than in the wild.

It is illegal to keep wild birds, including owls, in captivity without a special permit, and owls who live with humans are almost always considered unreleasable due to permanent injury or temperament issues. When Marcia next brought out an American Kestrel, which is not an owl but a falcon, Mark shared that the bird had been discovered living on the streets of Springfield with a homeless man, who had finally turned the bird in to authorities when it was not allowed to accompany him into a shelter.

All 19 of the Wilsons’ birds, 16 of which are owls, are unreleasable. They are not given names,

The committee approved a set of minor changes bringing the district handbooks in line with state policy.

A slew of end-of-year events are planned at the district’s various schools. The Turners Falls High School graduation week begins this Friday at noon, when the senior class members decorate their cars and “drive around” the school, presumably its exterior.

The graduation itself will be held next Friday, June 5 at 6 p.m. in the high school gymnasium. Fifty-two students are walking, up from 40 last year. Eleven members of the class have won John and Abigail Adams Scholarships, and five have earned the State Seal of Biliteracy.

“I just want to recognize that this senior class is super, super special,” student rep Olivia Wolbach commented. “Next year is going to be crazy without them – they bring so much spirit to our school.”

Friday, June 12 is the last full day of classes, though students will return for half-days on June 15, 16, and 17.



The audience was introduced to a barn owl, a rare sight in New England.

and all live in special enclosures in Dunstable, where the Wilsons have resided for years.

Birds that cannot fly are provided with special “handicap” ramps so that they can get around in their cages. Keeping live birds is not cheap. The Wilsons estimate that they spent over \$14,000 on frozen rodents last year.

The care of their owls and other associated costs are subsidized by program fees. Last year, the Wilsons did 250 programs at a hundred or so locations, many of which were at schools, though Eyes on Owls also brings their presentation to bird clubs and even weddings.

Both Marcia and Mark have birdy backgrounds: Marcia’s parents were bird banders who ran a wildlife rehabilitation gig out of her childhood home, and Mark, who has a *National Geographic* cover photograph on his resume, was an early birder who was dubbed “Bird Man” by his junior high classmates. A match made in owl heaven, the Wilsons have been running Eyes on Owls since 1994 and have presented to an estimated 500,000 individuals.

Though most of the birds brought out for show-and-tell on Saturday were native to New England, the star of the show was the final bird: a 10-pound Eurasian Eagle Owl.

Eurasian Eagle Owls are huge, imposing birds with bright orange eyes. The Wilson’s Eurasian Eagle Owl was so big in comparison to their other birds that Marcia had to use a tripod to prop up her arm as

she held it aloft.

Those readers who keep up with national bird news may remember Flaco, the eagle owl who was illegally released from a New York City zoo in 2023 and delighted city-dwellers and photographers for months before fatally striking a window on the Upper West Side. His necropsy showed a considerable amount of rodenticide in his system.

Anticoagulant rodenticides stay in the systems of mice and rats for days before the rodents die. Since the impacted rodents are easily caught, many of them become food for predators such as owls, foxes, and outdoor cats. When the poison is ingested by the predator it causes lack of coordination, internal bleeding, paralysis, and often death.

People such as the Wilsons and Rescue Franklin County Wildlife have been working hard at bringing awareness to this issue, and several anti-rodenticide campaigns are currently gaining steam in Massachusetts.

The presentation concluded with a question-and-answer session. An audience member asked “What can we do to help local owls?” and the Wilsons answered: “Stop using rat poison!”

For more on the Wilsons and their Eyes On Owls program, visit [www.eyesonowls.com](http://www.eyesonowls.com). Readers interested in helping owls by getting involved in a local anti-rodenticide campaign may visit “Rescue Franklin County Wildlife” on Facebook.



# LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on May 26, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

sions, as having a bias in favor of Comcast.

Shhhh!

**Inadequate and Inferior**

A public meeting to discuss “broadband extension proposals for Hardwick and Montague” held at UMass Amherst on Tuesday quickly moved into attack mode, and never quite left it.

Representatives of the Montague and Hardwick broadband committees denounced a proposal by Comcast to extend coaxial broadband service to unserved residents in the towns as inadequate and technically inferior to a proposal by a company called Matrix Design to build fiberoptic cable extension.

They also denounced the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, which is tasked with disbursing state money for broadband exten-

At its May 23 meeting, the Montague selectboard attempted to resolve the controversy over outdoor band music in downtown Turners Falls by altering its current noise regulations, which apply to entertainment license holders. The board voted to reduce the basic decibel level allowed from the current 70 to 65 during the day and evening. However, license holders will be allowed 16 events each year where music can register up to 70 dB, and an additional four to a limit of 75 dB.

The board’s decision last summer to allow Hubie’s Tavern to play music on its patio at the higher level eight times a month has been sharply criticized by many neighborhood residents.

# 20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on May 25, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Turners Falls that has built over 80 homes for low- and moderate-income families in Franklin County in the past few years.

**Tech Students Build Green House**

This year, one lucky family will be able to buy an extremely energy-efficient home, located at 33 Turnpike Road in Turners Falls. Franklin County Technical School students are building the home under the supervision of instructors from Rural Development, Inc. (RDI), a non-profit based in

The house has dry cellulose insulation, made from recycled newspaper; ventilation fans were installed by students in the electrician program; and plumbing students installed the boiler and dual-flush toilets. “Students are not only learning the skills to build a house,” said RDI home ownership program director Ann Perkins, “but also how to build an environmentally friendly house.”

# 140 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on May 26, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

successful, and has secured a large basketful of “speckled beauties” to tickle the palates of the stockholders to-day and to-morrow.

**Turners Falls and Vicinity**

The post office has been thoroughly painted and renovated.

The board of health have engaged Thomas Welcome to collect all the swill of the village, beginning on Friday of this week.

The Turners Falls Cotton Mills are putting in two thousand of the new “Whitin gravity spindles,” which will increase the capacity of the mill considerably.

The work of changing the railroad grade at Cheapside is progressing well, excavations being made at several points, and a huge machine shoveler has attacked one of the heavy embankments.

Landlord Foster of the Farren House is an expert angler and every year he personally catches trout enough to set a toothsome dish before the stockholders of the various companies at their annual meetings. This week he has been quite

The truant officer is wrathful because the school kids are employed at odd times by various parties cleaning cuspidors, etc., while they ought to be at school.

The citizens of this town, of all shades of politics, of every nationality, have, it is believed, come to the conclusion that they have no more use for monthly nuisances, whose whole stock-in-trade is endless parrot-gab, at town or fire district meetings, where questions arise in which tax payers only have an interest. The wind bags must go.

When we have a complete system of sewers, a high-toned water supply and electric lights on every corner, we’ll feel like looking for some one to tread on our coat tails.

There are fewer families to the square mile in Franklin County than in any other part of the State. In fact, comparatively, we live in a wilderness.



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**WENDELL** from page A1

Thomas said the whole log pile should be moved, except the bottom layer, which has turned into habitat and is composting. There is also a brush pile at the site.

Asked whether logs are likely to begin to fall, Thomas said they have already started falling. She said neither Dornbusch nor highway commission chair Phil DeLorey had a clear answer of what can be done with the logs. Moving them to the wood bank is estimated to take four trips with a log truck, and would cost money.

DiDonato said the town can sell the logs at an auction. She suggested talking with wood bank supervisor Sarah Butler, and possibly seeing if the state can help with moving the logs.

DiDonato and Doud agreed to add the subject to the next meeting's agenda, when, with luck and some effort, some of the questions will have answers.

**Emergency Preparation**

Fire chief Matt O'Donnell said that the fire department had no opinion about the log pile. He came to the meeting to discuss CodeRED, the town's emergency noti-

fication system, and stayed for the entire meeting.

O'Donnell said former selectboard member Gillian Budine had taught him how to use the CodeRED system, a form of reverse-911. The system he learned on was breached, and the company switched to a different, more secure program. Now he has to get a new account and learn how to use the new format.

O'Donnell added that at an emergency incident, his first priority is to deal with the incident, so he is not likely to call CodeRED immediately.

Town coordinator Kelly Tyler said only 119 people in town are signed up for the notifications. Some residents want only emergency warnings, and not reminders of town meetings or other less pressing calls, but Tyler said citizens cannot make individual changes to what is sent to them.

Residents can sign up on the town website, and can select whether to be notified by phone, text, email, or all of them.

Three residents representing a town resiliency group, Erin Kassis, Clarence Richardson, and Esmeralda Rodriguez, came to the meeting to ask what Wendell has in place already to help people prepare for

natural and unnatural disasters, bad weather, and disruptions in electricity supply, road access, or food access.

Together with the selectboard members they mentioned Good Neighbors, which provides more than just food; and the community garden, which provides residents with excellent summer produce but not pasta, meat, oranges, sugar, or flour. CodeRED gets emergency information out to residents.

As a concern, O'Donnell mentioned that the extended drought was still impacting outdoor burning, even after winter snow and a wet spring, and DiDonato mentioned the dry hydrant to be built at McAvoy's Pond, replacing the one at Bowens Pond.

The town hall is a potential emergency shelter. Town buildings have generators, all of which are aging, and there are cots in the meeting room closet at the town office building.

Richardson asked who maintains the generators. O'Donnell suggested the group contact Wendell's emergency management director, Lonny Ricketts, and New Salem's, former fire chief Joe Cuneo.

**Other Business**

Brian McHugh, director of community development at the Franklin Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, asked the selectboard for permission to extend the current housing rehab loan program until the end of 2026.

McHugh said the current round of community development block grant money was slated for 16 projects aimed at bringing houses up to code. So far, he said, 13 projects had been completed, and another four were close to completion. The fund has \$67,000 remaining, enough for one or two more projects.

The selectboard appointed Axis Dade to the kitchen committee.



HEINEMANN PHOTO

The pile of logs has become hard to stop.

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features@montaguereporter.org

OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

MAY 28, 2026



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

## MAY PASSAGE

By DAVID BRULE

**THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE** – It seems to me like we wait all year for that perfect day. Maybe there’ll be only one in each season.

There’s the best day of the first snowfall, and the best day in autumn where the glory of all New England is spread across the landscape just for your pleasure. Or maybe it’s that one special summer morning when everything is in balance: the lawn is mowed, smelling sweetly of fresh cut grass, last night’s campfire still warm to the touch, the memory of the ribs and trout grilled to perfection, when the fireflies danced and the ice cubes of the gin and tonic tinkled in the chilled glass.

Well, this day in May – the 17th, to be exact – has got to be the best day of spring.

You know that it will only be exactly like this on one day, today. So make the most of it.

On this day the lilacs are on the point of blooming, as they have here every spring since great-grandfather planted them in the 1880s so long ago.

The woods are alive with the sound of music – bird music, that is. The spring songs of the wood warblers that are moving through, branch by branch heading north. Parula, black-throated green, Blackburnian, magnolia warblers on their way to their summer homes, some in the spruce forests, some in northern gardens and woodland margins.

*Passing through, passing through  
Sometimes yellow, sometimes  
blue,  
Sure am glad I ran into you,  
All on the same path and only  
passing through...*

Adapted slightly from a traditional song sung by Pete Seeger,

Cisco Houston, and others, it applies to these ephemeral migrants too.

Some of them will stay as the wave moves on, dropping out to spend the summer with us: the redstart, the yellow warbler, the chestnut-sided, the yellow throat, the lilting waterthrush.

Our virtuoso wood thrush has come back to his home territory. He greets the sun every morning, singing the praises of all creation. This ethereal voice brings in the close of day too as the sun goes down at dusk time.

Phoebe is on her shelf nest under the eaves, safe and secluded, already quietly incubating. She made her nest back around Patriots’ Day, just as the marathoners were getting ready to run to Boston. She went about building her nest of soft grasses and moss, far from the throngs in the city.

Then phoebe and her mate left on a short vacation, only to come back a week later to get serious about raising a family.

These modest New England birds, dressed in puritan gray, lead quiet lives mostly unnoticed by many of us. Except when we occasionally hear the phoebe call his own name, or when he appears on the tip of a garden hoe, wagging his tail and snatching a pesky bug in midair.

On a day like this – really only one of a kind before the three-day rains come to change it all – the chimney swifts, just returned, streak through the sparkling morning air, shrieking in mad headlong flight. They’ve taken up their traditional homes in the chimneys up in the village.

In the peace of an early Sunday morning, this is the one we’ve been waiting for, where blue sky and the whole perfect day of a spring full of promise stretches

see **WEST ALONG** page B3



Wood thrush (*Hyllocichla mustelina*).

*Above: Born over the last three months at Sunrise Valley Farm in Gill, more than a dozen Jersey calves, and one black-and-white Holstein, probably do not yet know that some of them will eventually join the 80 cows who are already the source of the milk, yogurt, and cheese curd sold at Peila’s Creamery.*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

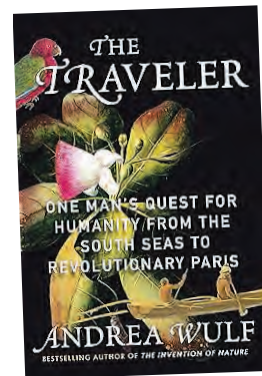
# CLAIRE’S SUMMER READS

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

**LEVERETT** – The Gershwin song claims “the living is easy” in summer. In fact, it’s often hectic. The kids are out of school and there’s yardwork to do, and house repairs to sort before winter. When we do relax from daily tasks, a book, either fiction or non-fiction, is a magic carpet that spirits us far away.

In *The Traveler: One Man’s Quest for Humanity from the South Seas to Revolutionary Paris* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2026), Andrea Wulf takes readers to 18th-century Germany, Russia, and England, then on to Antarctica, the islands of the South Pacific, and New Zealand. The traveler at its heart is George Forster, born in 1754 near Gdansk, the son of a narcissistic bully.

George’s father’s rebarbative personality deterred potential employers, so he set George to translating books that he then published as his own work. This won him an assignment to inspect German immigrants living in Russia, so he transported 10-year-old George to the Volga, an impoverished region dominated by horse-riding nomads. Next he moved the family to England, where eventually he got himself and George hired as naturalists on Captain James Cook’s second voyage.



Cook aimed to discover a hypothetical southern continent, equivalent to the large land masses of the northern hemisphere. For three years he circumnavigated Antarctica and the southern tropics – journeys that Andrea Wulf describes in vivid detail. The voyagers discovered many islands and innumerable species of plants and birds, but no continent.

Most significantly, George met the peoples of New Zealand, Vanuatu, Tahiti, and other islands, experiences that convinced him that “Man is neither good nor evil by nature; but the circumstances into which fate places him, from his very earliest beginnings, can make anything of him.” He never veered from this position. He later held several university appointments, and wrote copiously on the discoveries in the southern hemisphere and his convictions about human nature.

His downfall was his enthusiasm for the French Revolution. In 1794 he died of illness in Paris during the Reign of Terror. Wulf’s well-researched and lucid book shows him as an immensely intelligent, kindly, and appealing character, benighted by both his father and his wife, who shared many characteristics.

Maggie O’Farrell’s latest novel *Land* (Knopf, 2026) also centers on father-and-son geographers: Tomás and Liam, who are

see **READS** page B8



## DIVERSIONS

# A Peaceful Morning Bike Ride Along Leverett’s Sawmill River

By RAY DIDONATO

**LEVERETT** – I’m not usually an early riser. But recently, my circadian rhythm was disrupted by a weeklong cycling trip in Greece – perhaps the stuff of a future article – and I found myself awake at five-thirty on a Sunday morning.

By seven o’clock, my wife Laurie and I were motivated to take an early morning bike ride through Shutesbury’s Lake Wyola area to North Leverett Road. Our destination: the historic North Leverett Sawmill.

Songbirds broke the otherwise quiet air of the morning, mostly silent save for the sound of water as the Sawmill River flowed beside us. A benefit of cycling this early in the morning on a weekend, aside from the pleasant birdsongs, is that traffic is at a minimum.

We passed the historic Moore’s Corner area of Leverett, where the Leverett Co-Op slumbered ahead of



DIDONATO PHOTO

The cascading waterfall adjacent to the North Leverett Sawmill.

its opening time.

At the intersection of North Leverett Road and Cave Hill Road, we slowed our bikes and parked in the newly-developed interpretive area alongside the North Leverett Saw-

mill and juxtaposed with the North Leverett Baptist Church, the buildings forming a quaint intersection.

A 2025 *Montague Reporter* article (*North Leverett Sawmill Restoration Half-Funded*, June 5, 2025)

see **DIVERSIONS** page B4

# Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

## 'APPA'

Meet Appa, a young Great Pyrenees/German Shepherd dog mix, living in Northampton. Appa is gentle, sweet, playful, protective, and smart. He is good with children, cats, is houstrained, neutered, and up to date with shots.

Appa knows sit, lay down, place, and stay. He will need an experienced dog owner for leash training.

Appa would make a great pet for someone with a fenced in yard and time to spend indoors with him.

There is no adoption fee. To adopt Appa, find "Available Community Animals" under the "Adopt" menu at [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org). A potential adopter must submit an application, interview and meet the pet, and sign an adoption contract.

## Senior Center Activities JUNE 1 THROUGH 5

### 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 6/1

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
1 p.m. Kitchen Club  
Tuesday 6/2  
9 a.m. Chair Yoga  
10 a.m. Chair Massage by Appointment  
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday  
3 p.m. Tai Chi  
4:30 p.m. Office Hours with Selectboard Member Marina Goldman

#### Wednesday 6/3

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

#### Thursday 6/4

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

#### Friday 6/5

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

### 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 June 16. Luncheons are

held on the fourth Friday of each month at town hall.

For more information, contact (413) 548-1022 or [coa@leverett.ma.us](mailto:coa@leverett.ma.us), or check the town newsletter or the LeverettConnects listserv.

### 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 6/1

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

#### Tuesday 6/2

8:15 a.m. Nail Clinic  
8:30 a.m. Nurse  
9 a.m. Stretch and Balance  
10 a.m. Line Dancing  
11 a.m. Social Stringer

#### Wednesday 6/3

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

#### Thursday 6/4

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

#### Friday 6/5

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

### WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is June 3. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments.

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

## REVIEW

# The Second Annual Crankie Fest

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – I saw a crankie show at this craft store called the Looky Here in Greenfield. It was like a slide show that involved a lobster on the screen for people to see. That was an all right event, so I decided to check what they called Crankie Fest, which was being held at the Energy Park in Greenfield on May 16 during Greenfield's Bee Fest. It was put on by Free Pile Productions.

The festival consisted of multiple slide screens people told stories from. This is what I would expect a festival of this kind of show to be like. They told people that it was the second annual one.

One performance was by Madison J. Cripps. It was part of a show called *Earl the Pearl Rules the World*. It was interesting, to say the least, involving a man in a pirate costume holding a fishing pole with a puppet on it. He put the puppet in a boat, and acted like it was actually in water. It was a unique sight to watch, and people found it to be funny. It wasn't exactly a slide show, though there was also a slide show telling the story that was going on. The pirate also sang, which people really liked.

Another story was by Estelle Solomon. The screen was big, and it had goats on it, and it showed the activity of the goats. The narrator made the words sound like they were poetry instead of a story. It had background

music as well. It sounded like they were talking about a goat on a farm, and the story did make sense. It was a weird story, and people enjoyed it.

A third story was about a character called the Lorax having a conversation with another creature. It sounded like a fable that rhymed, and the narrator was dressed like a clown. A fair share of it sounded like something Dr. Seuss would have written. It got a large amount of applause.

Another story was told by a person named Mo to a song by Daniel Johnston. Mo had crafted the crankie and also sang the song. Their singing was all right, and the images weren't bad-looking, but I didn't get what the song was about.

Two people, Eric and Ines Bass, did a crankie called "Big Pig Jig." Eric played the guitar. The narration sounded like part folk song, part comedy. Like Estelle's story, it appeared to be set on a farm. This one apparently involved beer and a pig.

It was an enjoyable story to watch and hear. They also did a second crankie during the event, as did the person dressed like a clown.

Madison J. Cripps was my favorite act of the show. I particularly liked the story, and how the man was dressed as a pirate. My second favorite was "Big Pig Jig." I liked how the two people narrated and played the guitar.

## DIY Bodywork For All

*simple tips for self-care monthly*

By JAMIE SIMPSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – My cramped, overnight flight from Bogotá, Colombia, landed me at Boston's Logan Airport early last week.

The trip was partly a respite from US national politics, and partly to see a good Colombian friend, who, after several years of living and working here, agonized over his safety after the 2024 election before self-deporting early last year.

His abrupt departure left me with what I expect was a fraction of the trauma so many must have felt, and likely still feel: forcible separation from loved ones, abuse, detention, deportation.

What does any of this have to do with bodywork, you might well ask? I'll tell you.

Of all the amazing things about my week in Colombia – seeing my friend, practicing Spanish, swooning over *ajiaca*, a rich chicken soup and a signature dish of Bogotá – the one that resonated the most was an unexpected and profound session with a Tantra practitioner.

For many Westerners, the word Tantra often conjures images of lurid sex, which says more about our own misinformed ignorance than it does of this centuries-old sacred art, which flowered within Hindu and Buddhist traditions in India and South Asia and has influenced many spiritual traditions.

My healing Tantra work left a lasting impression. While one session certainly doesn't make me an expert, nor can a short column even begin to plumb its depths, I'll do my best to share my newfound understanding. (I won't delve too much into the particulars, which may make some readers uncomfortable, but rather stick to generalities and share my impressions of the experience.)

Tantra honors sexuality as an essential part of our divine human

experience, rather than suppressing or ignoring it as many religions do. As Western capitalism has distorted and damaged our relationship to food, so too has it commodified sex for profit, poisoning our relationship with its sacred nature. Tantra seeks to heal that rift – one of the meanings of this Sanskrit word is to "transform poison into nectar."

Trauma, remembered or subconscious, sexual or otherwise, lives in our bodies. It inevitably shapes who we are, how we think, and many of our reactions. Left unaddressed, such trauma can cause increasing physical, emotional, and psychic issues and blockages, and prompt maladaptive coping strategies.

My 80-minute session was founded on communication and consent, cornerstones of trust for any human interaction. The music, lighting, and setting all facilitated relaxation, and the experience deepened further as I was guided through conscious breathwork.

Much like any other "traditional" massage, my practitioner worked on the whole body, with a gentle touch. They also used a technique I had not experienced before: using their breath, as though cooling hot soup, along with a lot of circular movements.

I could feel my tension melting more and more, like permafrost thawing, cracking, and dissipating, and when it was time to turn over, my limbs felt heavy and moved grudgingly.

At the end of the session, I was given ample quiet space to simply breathe and feel what I felt, which turned out to be a sense of wholeness, of alignment I have rarely felt before. And a deep, deep calm, along with a sense of acceptance of all of the physical sensations, thoughts, and emotions that floated in and out of my awareness. All the things that our consumer culture, whose profits

depend on our feeling incomplete and unloved, undermines.

Though this was my first Tantra massage session, it won't be my last. In some ways it feels like the missing piece, a bridge to a fuller awareness and acceptance of all of who we are. And there is much more to the tradition than massage. For all of the dehumanizing images, misinformation, and disinformation about human sexuality and Tantra on the internet, there is also much good, sincere, and well-informed content freely available to those who are interested.

In our culture, where many of us struggle to find a healthy balance in sexuality, or even to think and talk about the subject in a loving, self-affirming way, Tantra feels like an essential ingredient of a holistic approach to wellbeing. I look forward to shedding and reorienting some of the toxic ways we relate to a sacred aspect of ourselves, one that in its pure form is intrinsically nurturing, rather than cheapened and coarsened for corporate gain. It is a beautiful and mysterious part of the human journey and it is, after all, how we entered into this life.

The reason I see this as part of a "DIY" approach to self-care is not to share specific techniques or knowledge, but rather as a call to explore avenues that may be unfamiliar yet supportive, equipped with both healthy skepticism as well as trust in our own intuition. For me Tantra was such an experience. For you it may be something else, something you've yet to discover.

The "goal," if there is one, is to find ways to fully realize our entire selves, and see through new eyes.

*Jamie Simpson is a Licensed Massage Therapist (LMT), registered yoga teacher, and certified Roll Model Method practitioner, as well as an occasional writer. Email [bodywork@montagureporter.org](mailto:bodywork@montagureporter.org).*

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**WEST ALONG** from page B1  
out before us. What will we make of this day given us? Probably just sit back and let it flow and roll on.

By May 20, the warbler wave was just that: all movement and the expanding rolling crest flowing north, leaving us with stragglers and summer residents who stayed behind. Indeed this is where the *just passing through* metaphor comes in.

The woods grow more silent as our summer birds settle in.

Those deep French purple lilacs are blooming this morning, wafting their delicate perfume, in lingering echoes of the 19th century. In the late evening, they send their ancient scent up through the wide-open bedroom windows upstairs. The fluting of the evening wood thrush and the tireless, eccentric mimicry of the catbird reach us just at bedtime.

That endlessly repeating cabird voice will waken us at 4 a.m. when the daybreak chorus resumes, welcoming in another day.

But everything passes, everything changes, and by this long weekend, we've had just about enough with wet weather, with three days of needed rain. Not the way May is supposed to be, but we'll take it.

I sit here in the modest writ-

er's workshop that I share with the woodpile, listening to the birds and the soft sound of rain falling on millions of leaves.

Maybe I'll get up and go down the path to see how my crop of maple-leaf viburnum is doing. These delicate shrubs I did not plant, nor will I harvest anything from them. I did, however, make it easier for them to grow and flower by trimming back the maple saplings that were crowding them out. So I guess I can claim them as mine, as if they were in my garden.

I'm not good at growing anything else; I get too distracted and I lose interest. Don't put me in charge of the tomatoes! But viburnums? I'm good at them. They grow wild, like me, and don't need nurturing.

Their modest crowns of flowers will turn into dark purple fruit clusters by and by, maybe to feed a warbler family on their way south in the fall. For the moment, their green, fresh leaves are glistening with the rain of May, and their roots drink deep.

Meanwhile the wood thrush sings in the rain shower, happy to be on home ground for a bit, during this brief fleeting season some call spring, passing through into summer.



**Montague Community Television News**

**Board-Joiners Sought**

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

**TURNERS FALLS** – Are you looking for a way to get involved with your community? You should consider joining the MCTV board! We are a fun group that meets once a month, eats pizza, and collectively coordinates the business of running our non-profit community television station.

You don't need any board experience to join, but it would be a big help if you were interested in taking notes, as we are in need of a new "clerk"! Please reach out to us by emailing a letter of interest to [infomontaguetv@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguetv@gmail.com), calling us up at (413) 863-9200, or stopping by the station at 34 Second Street to talk with Dean or

Deirdre, Mondays through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. And if you see us out there filming, say hi!

You can find all of MCTV's videos online. Our Vimeo page is easily found linked through our website, [MontagueTV.org](http://MontagueTV.org), by clicking the "Videos" tab. You can also find folders there directing you to all of our recorded Montague and Gill selectboard meetings.

If there is a particular video you would like to find, locate the small black magnifying glass below the title "Montague Community Television's Videos" and click there. If you try to search for an MCTV video in the search bar at the top of the screen, you will search "all of Vimeo," and you will have a harder time. Hope this helps!

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG**

**Running Plates; Glaring Lights; Possible Drone Reconnaissance; Uncooperative Patient; Tempting Turkey; Canvassing For Cameras**

**Monday, 5/18**

8:37 a.m. Officer conducting a vehicle stop on Turnpike Road. Registered owner showing status suspended. Registered owner is not operating vehicle.

8:50 a.m. Caller states that her client's husband will walk while she is getting her hair done; he usually comes back in 10 minutes, but it's been an hour, and he hasn't returned. Officer located party by Cumby's and is giving him a ride back to Avenue A and his wife.

12:09 p.m. Officer conducting a vehicle stop on Millers Falls Road. Registered owner showing status suspended. Confirmed registered owner is not operating.

12:28 p.m. Officer conducting a vehicle stop on Millers Falls Road. Operator cited for unregistered motor vehicle, uninsured motor vehicle, and operating after suspension/revocation.

12:31 p.m. Caller would like to report vandalism at the cemetery on Millers Falls Road; a stone with the word "dyke" was pushed over. Would like to speak to an officer. Officer contacted caller, who found this suspicious and wanted it documented in case there were further problems. Report taken.

5:06 p.m. Caller reports that threatening flyers have been put on multiple vehicles in the parking lot at Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research on Migratory Way. Report taken; advised caller of options.

**Tuesday, 5/19**

7:13 a.m. Voting day.

1:15 p.m. Caller from Avenue A reports there is a yellow Jeep parked in front of the salon with a dog inside; the windows are down, but the dog has been left for at

least 15 minutes. Officer advises the dog owner is in the salon and can see the dog from inside; the dog has water in the vehicle and all the windows are down. Does not appear to be in distress at this time.

8:47 p.m. Caller from Third Street states her neighbor was outside drinking a soda; when she went upstairs, she stole her cat carrier and refuses to give it back. Officer states property was returned to rightful owner.

9:37 p.m. Caller states that a tenant from Hillcrest Homes has spotlights that are shining in his bedroom window and keeping him up. Officer states the lights are lighting up her walkway, are not aimed directly at the caller's place, and are not unreasonable.

Caller called back stating he watched the cruiser drive by and would like to speak to an officer; called again asking for the officer to just come to his home. Caller unhappy that a resolution couldn't be reached; stated he would be contacting a supervisor tomorrow to resolve the issue. Investigated.

**Wednesday, 5/20**

8:45 a.m. Passerby reporting two-car accident at the intersection of Seventh and L streets. Officer requesting fire and ambulance for airbag deployment. One vehicle towed; operator of other vehicle issued a written warning. Report taken.

9:28 a.m. Caller states that a dark-colored SUV was dumping trash on a side road off Lake Pleasant Road. No issues: bags have trash stickers on them.

10:11 a.m. Walk-in requesting to speak with a sergeant regarding a complaint he made yesterday. Caller was advised that a solution is being worked on, and it may take several days to resolve.

1:54 p.m. Caller concerned about all the traffic on East Chestnut Hill Road due to a road detour on North Leverett Road. Sections of this area are very narrow, and there have been several near-accidents. Officer requesting call from Leverett PD; the road is closed, but no one is handling traffic. Leverett DPW supervisor advised MPD sergeant that the work being done will last until the end of this week. They may be able to open up one lane for heavy vehicles as needed.

4:32 p.m. Caller is in an 18-wheeler on Montague City Road and needs some direction as he needs to turn around to get to Hillside Plastics. Services rendered.

6:08 p.m. 911 caller states she was watching boys on bikes yelling at a female in the gravel parking lot

on First Street; one of the boys slapped her, and they all rode away. Officer going to speak to victim's mother; second officer checking other locations for the other three boys. Involved party's mother called with her son to give his side of the story. Parties into station; involved party read Miranda rights by card. Investigated.

7:42 p.m. Caller from West Street states he hired someone to paint for him; the male has come back today without permission and is doing work there without permission; would like him removed. Unable to locate.

8:12 p.m. Caller would like to report threats to attack or hurt an individual if he goes to the skate park. Report taken.

**Thursday, 5/21**

9:04 a.m. School resource officer was notified that yesterday around 2:50 p.m., a vehicle was witnessed throwing a large amount of trash along the side of Millers Falls Road. A second vehicle may have been involved as well. SRO will be following up on this.

9:29 a.m. Caller from Davis Street states that overnight someone came onto his property and stole a gas can from the back porch that had a few gallons of gas in it. Another two-gallon jug filled with hydraulic fluid was also taken. Caller states that there has been a drone flying low in his yard at night as well. Caller to get better cameras to oversee property. Sand bag found on property was delivered to the wrong address.

10 a.m. Parks and recreation director reporting vandalism overnight to the portable toilet located on the Unity Park property. There is some surveillance footage of the individuals that did it. Report taken.

1:20 p.m. Shelburne Control requesting MPD respond to Avenue A for an uncooperative patient. Patient declining all medical attention. AMR requesting police to convince patient to go to hospital or he would be removed. PD advised that they would not forcibly remove the patient for simply declining medical attention. PD advised AMR to conference with medical control first. On-call doctor advised that the patient should be transported. PD units stood by for security purposes for medical staff and fire department. Patient was then transported without incident.

4:17 p.m. Caller from Gunn Road reporting an issue with coyotes in the area and a dead turkey on his lawn. Advised of options.

**Friday, 5/22**

12:13 p.m. Employee from

Sheffieldly Elementary School reporting that recently an older male has been showing up around 11:30 a.m. and sitting at the picnic table located in the Little League field area. He arrives on an e-bike and smokes cigarettes, and appears to be watching the kids while they are outside for recess. Contact made with involved male, who stated he was the man the school was calling about. Advised of complaint.

2:47 p.m. Caller states that a male and female are screaming loudly at each other in the parking lot across from the old Farn Hospital; sounds aggressive. Parties that may have been arguing were no longer there upon officer's arrival. There was a female there with a flat tire. No disturbance.

7:42 p.m. Caller reporting damage to her vehicle; states her roommate is claiming someone struck the vehicle while the caller was out of state. Officer observed damage to vehicle and spoke with the caller and the roommate. Canvassed the area for cameras. Only one house with cameras in the area, and they did not point towards the road.

11:34 p.m. Officers assisting Erving PD with a recent breaking-and-entering in their town.

**Saturday, 5/23**

10:58 a.m. Caller from Old Greenfield Road states that he is a victim of ongoing harassment by his mother. Advised of options.

12:59 p.m. Caller states that someone rear-ended him at the intersection of Federal Street and North Leverett Road. No injuries or fluids. Both vehicles driveable. Report taken.

9:23 p.m. Caller from Chestnut Street reports that a black bear was going through trash barrels in the neighborhood, but left towards the woods.

**Sunday, 5/24**

3:41 a.m. Caller states that after a period of hospitalization earlier this month, he arrived back home to find his mailbox open and money that his father had sent him stolen. Advised of options.

3:20 p.m. Caller from Kingsley Avenue heard a female yelling "Please let me go, you are hurting me." Male half left on foot. Female reports verbal argument only. Officer located male who also reports that it was a verbal argument and that he left to cool off.

6:06 p.m. Report of loud music in the second-floor apartment at the corner of K and Fifth Streets. Resident stopped music when officers pulled up, and would not answer the door.



Ashton Ryan, with help from his mom Caitlin, reaches out to touch a shortnose sturgeon held by USGS emeritus research biologist Micah Kieffer at the World Fish Migration Day celebration in Hinsdale, New Hampshire last Saturday. Ashton's dad, Kory Ryan, is a Turners Falls High School graduate. Kieffer brought the sturgeon up from the Conte Fish Lab in Turners to help educate the public about the importance of migratory fish and healthy rivers.

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DIVERSIONS from page B1

covered in excellent detail the efforts by the Friends of the North Leverett Sawmill (FONLS) to raise money for the restoration and stewardship of this area.

An interpretive sign details the history of the sawmill, which has changed hands several times since it was built in the 1770s by Captain Joseph Slarrow. The sign also depicts a map of the river and shows the locations of 13 sawmills which operated along a 734-foot drop in the Sawmill River, beginning with the Slab City Sawmill, which was located just below Lake Wyola, and culminating in a gristmill owned by Billings & Brown.

The North Leverett Sawmill, also known as Slarrow's Mill after its original founder, is situated somewhat in the middle stretch of this network of sawmills.

According to the FONLS, Slarrow was tasked with forming a militia in Leverett during the Revolutionary War. His compatriot, Major Richard Montague, a founder of Leverett, joined General George Washington's Army in Cambridge. Montague later purchased the sawmill from Slarrow for £2,500 in 1779, part of 47 acres of land, according to the archives of the Leverett Family Museum.

Known for its ability to process long logs, the sawmill was used to produce keels for Navy vessels in World War II.

On a platform jutting out of a bank of the



DIDONATO PHOTOS



Left: The North Leverett Sawmill building, currently being rehabilitated by the Friends of the North Leverett Sawmill. Right: The Sawmill River, as viewed from a platform in the Heritage Park, with its gently flowing, tannic waters.

river and overlooking a sugar shack, another interpretive sign describes the perennial ritual of sugar-making. Nearby, another details an effort to bring more native pollinator species to the small riverside park known as the Heritage Park, as evidenced by a small pollinator garden.

The platform also allows a beautiful view of the Sawmill River and the upstream waterfall that flows past the sawmill itself.

We were also surprised to find a sign de-

scribing a map of a 0.5-mile trail which can be hiked - being cautious of a few hazards such as slippery rocks, rushing water, and poison ivy - downstream of the park, which has its own interpretive placards. We didn't have time to hike it that morning, but plan to return for a future visit.

After taking in the beauty of the old historic mill, the cascading waterfall, and the tannic sawmill river, we continued on our bike ride, up Cave Hill Road and northeast on back

roads where we passed other small falls, as the Sawmill flows away from North Leverett Road for a stretch, and then back past the Co-Op, now rising for the day.

We didn't have time to stop for coffee as we had a pickleball game to get to, but we were happy to have found a pretty and peaceful Sunday morning bike ride, making us feel yet again fortunate to live in the beautiful Connecticut River Valley.



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Above: A thylacine wheatpasted on the side of the Standard Hotel in Melbourne, Australia.



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# Gone Today, Here Tomorrow...

By JOSH WATSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – In June 1939, *The New York Times* reported that the government of Tasmania, the wild and remote island state off the south coast of Australia, had sponsored a wide effort to census the last of the wild Tasmanian Tigers. The “tigers,” not tigers at all but carnivorous marsupials known as thylacines, were the descendants and only survivors of the genus *Thylacinus*, and for thousands of years had been Tasmania’s indigenous apex predator.

“The final object,” the *Times* wrote, “is to preserve the animal from extinction, for it has now become so rare that many zoos have been trying for years to obtain a specimen.”

Thylacines were about 40 to 50 pounds, four feet from the tips of their noses to the ends of their stiff, kangaroo-like tails, and stood a couple of feet at the shoulder. Their transverse stripes and coloring gave them a tigerish look. Both sexes had marsupial pouches which opened to the rear; the female’s pouch held her offspring, while the male’s protected his genitals, which were tucked inside. They were fast on their feet, and at top speed they would begin to bound like kangaroos.

The artist Walton Ford has included thylacines in his enormous watercolor paintings, including the triptych “The Island,” which depicts a swarm of thylacines atop each other, biting sheep and each other. He describes, in a 2009 *New Yorker* article “Man and Beast,” wanting “The Island” to be “a brutal picture of thylacine bloodlust, a blame-the-victim picture, a sort of fever dream of the Tasmanian settler alone in the bush with these animals.”

“This animal scared the hell out of the settlers,” he continued. “The settlers were sheepherders, and they built up this myth of a huge, bipedal, nocturnal vampire-beast that sucked the blood of sheep.”

For more than a hundred years, starting not long after the first English settlers arrived in 1803, shepherds complained thylacines were raiding their herds. Although this was almost certainly not true, by 1888 the Tasmanian government began to offer bounties for dead thylacines.

“Over 2,000 thylacine bounties were paid by the State government during the twenty-one years the scheme was in operation,” writes anthropologist Nicholas Smith in his 2012 *Journal of Australian Studies* paper “The return of the living dead: unsettlement and the Tasmanian Tiger,” “by the time the government bounty scheme ceased in 1909 thylacines had become extremely rare.”

Smith references the historian Robert Paddle from his book *The Last Tasmanian Tiger*, who believes the “accusation of being a sheep killer was initially fabricated” by the Van Diemen Land Company to “cover up the mismanagement of the company’s operations in the northwest of the state.” In reality, Paddle

writes, “the occasional thylacine... took the occasional sheep from the occasional farm.”

Despite having destroyed the population, a regretful, nostalgic Tasmania kept searching. In 1945 Tasmania’s Animal and Birds Protection Board sponsored comprehensive searches up and down the island’s west coast, setting thousands of snares baited with live chickens, opossums, and sheep, but no thylacines were captured. After a number of reported thylacine sightings in the early 1950s, in 1957 Tasmania proposed another



CC PHOTO BY FLICKR USER NCLMAR

Painter Walton Ford’s triptych The Island.

er search. “The International Conservation Union here,” *The New York Times* wrote under a London byline in August 1956, “has been informed that one of the rarest animals in the world, the doglike thylacine, or Tasmanian tiger, ‘undoubtedly still survives.’”

That October, in *The New Yorker*, the writer John Updike included a stanza about thylacines in a poem called “Old Faces of ’56”: “The thylacine, long thought to be extinct / Is not. The ancient dog-like creature, linked / To kangaroos and platypi, still pounces / On his Tasmanian prey, the *Times* announces.”

The sightings continued. The *Times* on November 6, 1960: “Reports of the continued existence of the rare Thylacine or Tasmanian wolf have been received by the Fauna Preservation Society of London. Most wildlife conservationists thought the animal had become extinct.”

Tasmania abandoned its searches in 1964. The thylacine ending, or last of its breed, is thought to have died in its pen at the Hobart zoo on September 7, 1936, a date now commemorated in Tasmania as National Threatened Species Day.

“Timelines get messy with extinction,”

writes historian Dolly Jørgensen, in a 2022 article “Extinction and the End of Futures,” in the journal *History and Theory*. “How can extinction, which is based on the absence of a thing everywhere at this moment, be known with certainty based on past data? Does extinction happen when the last individual dies or when there is no chance of a future?”

Brooke Jarvis writes, in “The Obsessive Search for the Tasmanian Tiger,” published in *The New Yorker* in 2018, that “[m]any scientists believe that even now... more animals

to Indonesia, not seen from 1961 until 2023. The terror skink, found in New Caledonia in 1870, thought extinct sometime after 1876, discovered again in 2000.

The “de-extinction” company Colossal Biosciences is primarily known for recreating the phenotype of the extinct dire wolf by combining extant dire wolf DNA with the DNA of its closest modern relative, the grey wolf. Twin “dire wolves” named Romulus and Remus now live on 2,000 fenced-in acres at an undisclosed location, and at maturity are expected to outweigh mature male grey wolves by at least 20 pounds. Colossal’s founders say they also intend to bring back versions of thylacines and woolly mammoths in efforts to “re-wild” the world, including returning the thylacine to its rightful place as Tasmania’s apex predator.

Colossal has obtained thylacine DNA from a 108-year-old head preserved in ethanol in a Melbourne museum and intends to splice it with the DNA of the fat-tailed dunnart using “clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats,” commonly known as CRISPR, for the genome-editing process. The fat-tailed dunnart is taxonomically similar to thylacines, and would also provide the surrogate egg in which the nascent thylacine would gestate.

Ethical concerns aside, the thylacine may well be an appropriate creature to return to Tasmania, if feasible. The loss of an apex predator ravages an environment, leaving what were once prey animals to overpopulate and disrupt the food chain. Also, what caused the thylacine to go extinct is not a mystery, and may be prevented from happening again.

In 2018, Beth Shapiro, a biology professor at UC Santa Cruz and now Chief Scientific Officer at Colossal, asked the *Wall Street Journal*, “What’s the point of bringing something back if we don’t know why it went extinct? Or if we do know why it went extinct but haven’t fixed the problem? There is no point in bringing the dodo back. Their eggs will be eaten the same way that made them go extinct the first time.”

In her 2022 article, Jørgensen writes,

*Extinction is not a linear phenomenon. It bends and folds back upon itself. The transition between extant and extinct is prolonged and may oscillate back and forth over time. Anticipated future ends motivate conservation in the here and now. These characteristics require rethinking how scholars might conceptualize historical future endings in the Anthropocene. Ends are not ends. Extinction might be the beginning of an end, or the end of a beginning.*

If you have questions, comments, or news tips for our Science Page Editor, please send them to [science@montaguereporter.org](mailto:science@montaguereporter.org).

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### THURSDAY, MAY 28

Erving Senior Center, Erving:  
Sheryl Faye, historical  
performer, portraying  
Amelia Earhart. 6 p.m. Free.

Energy Park, Greenfield: Katie  
Clarke & Larry LeBlanc, R & D,  
Small Change. 6 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield:  
Hilary Price, Ang Buxton,  
Andrea CK, Paul Bennett,  
Christine Benevuto,  
host Joanie Schwartz.  
Comedy. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton:  
SWRM, Haitlin, The World  
Wide Web, Harsh Noise  
Boyfriend. 7 p.m. \$.

Holyoke Media Center,  
Holyoke: Matt Samolis,  
Lean & Variant State,  
Matt Weston, Bonnie Kane's  
Space Anomaly. 7:30 p.m. \$.

### FRIDAY, MAY 29

Music Connection, Turners  
Falls: Paul McCartney  
Listening Party. 5 p.m. Free.

Court Square, Greenfield:  
Arts Walk Vendor Market,  
live music by Lexi Weege.  
5 to 8 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls:  
Dead Man's Waltz, The Band,  
Allman Brothers, Grateful  
Dead tribute. 7 p.m. \$.

Millers Falls Rod & Gun Club,  
Turners Falls: Lakeside Drive.  
Cash only. 7 p.m. \$.

Wendell Meetinghouse,  
Wendell: Reading and  
discussion, A Wendell Path to  
Belonging by Jonathan von  
Ranson. 7 p.m. By donation.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro:  
Major Stars, Mountain  
Movers, Rose Thomas  
Bannister. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: Cazador,  
When The Deadbolt Breaks,  
Afghan Haze. 7 p.m. \$.

Brick House, Turners Falls:  
Erin Morse, Vien Kohl,  
Doomi Soomi, Shane  
"Bray" Kerr. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Parlor Room, Northampton:  
Jillith Fair, Jill Sobule tribute  
with The Nields, Nini Camps,  
Lloyd Cole, Vance Gilbert,  
Winterpills, more. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Simon  
White & Rhythm Inc. 8 p.m. \$.

Last Ditch, Greenfield:  
Pioneer Valley Bad Poetry  
Recitation Contest. Masks  
required. 8 p.m. By donation.

The Drake, Amherst: True  
Jackie, Nanny, Saliba. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro:  
Hudson Freeman, Lots of  
Hands, youbet. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater,  
Easthampton: Arthur  
Buezo, DiTrani Brothers,  
Moon Hollow. 8 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls:  
Anjali Aurora. 9:30 p.m.  
No cover.

### SATURDAY, MAY 30

Peskeompskut Park,  
Turners Falls: Great Falls  
Farmers Market. SNAP  
accepted. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$.

Unity Park, Turners Falls:  
ReCloaking: ReCircling.  
Workshop with Wampanoag  
biologist and artist Elizabeth  
James-Perry. Learn about  
coastal ecology and heritage  
and use natural materials  
to dye and print. Materials  
provided; participants will  
leave with a handcrafted  
piece. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free.

### Leverett Library, Leverett:

Convergence, pastel and acrylic  
paintings by the Friends Who  
Paint group, through June.

ArtSpace, Greenfield: Big Random,  
work by visual arts seminar students  
at GCC. Through Friday, June 5.

### LAVA Center, Greenfield:

Chaos on a Plate Presents The Rainbow  
Arc – Phase 1: Violet, paintings by Donna  
Barrett, June and July with an opening  
reception Saturday, June 13, from 11 a.m.  
to 2 p.m. The Peace Birds Exhibit, artistic  
and community responses to ongoing  
events in Palestine, through July.

### Looky Here, Greenfield:

Trevor Powers, Looky There, risograph-  
printed photographs, plus artists'  
books and a free zine, through May.

### Gallery A3, Amherst:

Sue Curran and GK Khalsa,  
collage and paintings, through  
May. Gesture and Line, paintings  
by Karen Iglehart, in June with a  
reception Thursday, June 4 at 5 p.m.

## EXHIBITS

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls:  
Please Touch, 15 artists present  
participatory artworks. June 5 to  
August 7, with a reception next  
Friday, June 5 from 5 to 8 p.m.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls:  
Nature's Colors. Kate Marion Lapierre  
paints the colors and beauty of  
landscapes and flowers in an abstract  
and expressionistic style, using acrylic  
on canvas or watercolor on paper.  
June 5 to 28, with a reception next  
Sunday, June 7 from 12 to 2 p.m.

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

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett:  
Time Traveler, scanography by  
Marty Klein, and Pieced Together,  
quilts and heads by Susan Boss  
and Mark Brown. Through May.

### Mill District Local Art, North Amherst:

Forty-plus artists show work on the  
theme of Charmed, through June 25.

### Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls:

Shimmer, new-mixed media work by  
Nina Rossi incorporating colorshifting  
glass rhinestones. Opens with a  
reception next Saturday, June 6  
from 3 to 5 p.m. Through July 6.

### Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne:

Q Li Holmes, recent paintings by the  
Ashfield artist; Stay in the Day and  
Have the Long View, mixed media  
by Dale Schwarz. Both through June.

## CALL FOR ART

Ashfield Short Film Festival: Amateurs  
and established filmmakers of any age  
can submit films of up to five minutes,  
with some connection to western  
Massachusetts, via ashfieldfilmfest.org  
by August 15. Awards at the September  
18 and 19 festival include Audience  
Choice, the Youth Award, this year's  
Hollywood Award, and other cash prizes.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Above: The Valley Arabic Music Ensemble will play a noontime set  
at the Montague Common Hall this Saturday – convenient if you're hoping  
to catch both the Good Neighbors porch fest and the Fun Fest at Unity Park!

Franklin County Tech School,  
Turners Falls: Repair and Fix-it  
Day. Small electrical repairs,  
knife and tool sharpening,  
mending, bike maintenance,  
blood pressure checks, more.  
Food and drink for purchase.  
10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free.

Many venues, Montague  
Center: Good Music Makes  
Good Neighbors, porch fest,  
with Connect Four, Valley  
Arabic Music Ensemble,  
Orkestar Banitsa, Nectar,  
Michael Nix, more. Details  
at montaguemusic.org.  
12 to 5 p.m. \$.

Unity Park, Turners Falls:  
Fun Fest presented by Música  
Franklin. Expandable Brass  
Band, The Lost Tribe, John  
Hughes & Stephen Katz;  
crafts, food, activities for all  
ages. 1 to 5 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Savings Bank,  
Turners Falls: Montague parks  
& rec director Jon Dobosz  
shares information about  
the department's summer  
programming, including  
summer camp. Light  
snacks. 1 p.m. Free.

Hutghi's, Westfield: PWRUP,  
The Promised End, Slob Drop,  
The Scrub Ups. Fundraiser  
for Trans Lifeline. 4 p.m. \$.

Unnameable Books, Turners  
Falls: Joe Hall, Marty Cain.  
Readings. 6 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls:  
Cinemastorm double feature:  
The Superman (1978),  
Batman (1989). 8 p.m. Free.

GCTV, Greenfield: Clown  
Showcase by students of  
Red Nose Clown. Limited  
seating; reserve at  
rednosewesternmass  
@gmail.com. 7 p.m. \$.

Incandescent Brewing,  
Bernardston: Emanuel  
Casablanca. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: Lesotho,  
Hauzu, Draiodoir. 7 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst:  
Eddie Japan, The Fawns,  
The Glad Machine. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls:  
Peace & Rhythm DJs.  
9:30 p.m. No cover.

### SUNDAY, MAY 31

Shea Theater, Turners Falls:  
Earth Music Theater  
Live, with Steve Thomas  
and astronaut Cady  
Coleman. 4 p.m. Free.

Feeding Tube Records,  
Florence: The In Out,  
The Eye. 5 p.m. By donation.

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# CALENDAR



## looking forward...

### FRIDAY, JUNE 12

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Moss Boy, Porcelain, Grazer, Bassal*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 13

Pratts Field, Bernardston: *Flutie 5K for Autism*. Kids' race at 10:15 a.m., adults' race at 10:30 a.m. By donation.

Downtown Greenfield: *Franklin County Pride Parade*. 12 p.m. Free.

Energy Park, Greenfield: *Kristen Ford, Parris, Indë, Mz. October Maylay, Rocky Snyder, Zoe Lemos, Star Lane Sox*, more. Franklin County Pride Festival. 1 p.m. Free.

Wendell Town Common, Wendell: *Misfit Prom Parade* begins. 6 p.m. Free.

Brick House, Turners Falls: *babe wait, Jetties, Lou Marie, The Freeps*. Fundraiser for Great Falls Books Through Bars. 7 p.m. \$.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 20

Mount Toby Friends Meetinghouse, Leverett: *Joe Crookston*. 7 p.m. \$.

### SUNDAY, JULY 5

Palladium, Worcester: *Hatebreed, Devourment, Snuffed on Sight, Balmora, Face Yourself*. 4:30 p.m. \$\$.

### WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Twisted Teens*. 8 p.m. \$.

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

Retreat Farm, Brattleboro: *Bread & Puppet Circus*. 4 p.m. \$.

Moose Lodge, Greenfield: *The Outerspace Band*. 7 p.m. \$.

### SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

Tanglewood, Lenox: *Carrie Underwood*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Home Body*. 8 p.m. Free.

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

The Drake, Amherst: *Big D and the Kids Table, Matamoska!*. 8 p.m. \$.

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

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

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

Colonial Theater, Keene: *Randy Travis*. 7 p.m. \$.

### TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

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

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *Will Dailey*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Quarters, Hadley: *Western Mass Electronics*. Bring your own synth, drum machine, sampler, etc. 7 p.m. No cover.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Suicide Forest, Caldon Glover, Altar Call*. 8 p.m. \$.

### MONDAY, JUNE 1

Montague Center Library, Montague: *Foraging with Neill Bovaird of Wolf Tree Programs*. Registration required for workshop. 5 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Fiber Arts & Mending Circle*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Ryan Bingham and The Texas Gentlemen*. 7 p.m. \$.

### TUESDAY, JUNE 2

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Community Resilience Conversation*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

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

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem, Peter Mulvey, Pamela Means*. Fundraiser for the Children's Advocacy Center. 8 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *My New Band Believe, Wendy Eisenberg*. 8 p.m. \$.

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Readers' Choice Book Group*. Jim DeFede, *The Day the World Came to Town: 9/11 in Gander, Newfoundland*. 10 a.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Tech for Seniors: Media Literacy for Everyday Life*. 12:30 p.m. Free.

Montague Center Library, Montague: *Summer Cook Book Club*. Registration required. 6 p.m. Free.

Arts & Industry, Florence: *Stephen Katz, Abdou Sarr, Loudingirra Ozdemir*, more. Fundraiser for Middle East Children's Alliance. 6 p.m. \$.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Jason Mraz, Gregory Page*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Mdou Moctar*, solo. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Rhubarb Duo, Dialog Talk, Rouge, Letters of Marque, Green Forest*. 7 p.m. \$.

Whately Town Hall, Whately: *Cory Pesaturo & Leah Zeger*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

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

### THURSDAY, JUNE 4

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

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Environmental Book Group*. Charles Eisenstein, first half of *Sacred Economics*. 3 p.m. Free.

Energy Park, Greenfield: *Pat & Tex LaMountain, Orlen Gabriel & Avery, Boys of the Landfill*. 6 p.m. Free.

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

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Cancerslug, Grouch*. 8 p.m. \$.



Oregon-based American primitive guitarist Marisa Anderson's collaborations span a breathtaking range from the folksy (Sharon Von Etten, Charlie Parr) to the avant garde (Tashi Dorji, Matmos), but her strong, fluid style shines best in a solo setting. You can catch her next Saturday, June 6 in Keene, touring behind her brand-new album *The Anthology of UnAmerican Folk Music*.

### FRIDAY, JUNE 5

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Brick-by-Brick Walking Tour*. Learn about the brickmakers, builders, and businesses behind the village's block designs. 4 p.m. Free.

Downtown Turners Falls: *First Friday*. Chalk drawing competition with prizes; live music; disco party; stores open late. 4 p.m. Free.

38 Avenue A, Turners Falls: *Imagine Your Library*. Visit the proposed new library site and see potential building spaces. Questions about the project answered. 5 p.m. Free.

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

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Matthew Thornton, Adam Bosse / Brian Gibson / Dakota Gill trio, Sleep Destroyer*. 6:30 p.m. Free.

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

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Awesome Art in Motion*, kids' dance recital. Senior company members only. 7 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Slowpoke Records, Heavy Friends, Liz Durette*, reading by Scott Seward. 7 p.m. \$.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *Brookside Project*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Cold Spring Hollow, Belchertown: *Editrix, Feminine Aggression, PTC, Mummies and Wolves*. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Beneath Purgatory, Ingrate, Neuroviolent*. 7 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Weird Phishes, Radiohead and Phish* combined tribute. 8 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Chad Price, Wain, Infinite Sun*. 9 p.m. \$.

### SUNDAY, JUNE 7

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Awesome Art in Motion*, kids' dance recital. Full company. 2:30 p.m. \$.

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Quabbin Valley Pro Musica*. 4 p.m. \$.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Sunburned Hand of the Man, Cla-Ras*. 4 p.m. By donation.

Greenfield Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: Screening, *Our Hero, Balthazar*, and Q&A with writer and producer Ricky Camilleri. 6:30 p.m. \$.

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

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Melissa Ferrick*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Broommaker, Frogtones, Old Pam*. 8 p.m. No cover.

### MONDAY, JUNE 8

Brick House Community Resource Center, Turners Falls: *MassHealth & Health Connector Assistance*. Health insurance navigator answers questions, helps with applications. Contact [slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org](mailto:slangknecht@brickhousecommunity.org) or (413) 800-2496 for more information. 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Free.

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: *Montague Community Band*. 7 p.m. Free.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Greensky Bluegrass*. 7 p.m. \$.

### TUESDAY, JUNE 9

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Cross-Cultural Playgroup*. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Puzzle Showdown*. Team puzzle race. Registration required. 5 p.m. Free.

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

# Fires, Bathrobe, Hand Injury

**Wednesday, 4/1**  
8:42 a.m. Medical emergency, French King Highway.  
2:14 p.m. Wire down, Barton Cove Road. Eversource notified.  
**Friday, 4/3**  
3:23 p.m. French King Highway caller reported an erratic driver in a black Cadillac.  
4:43 p.m. Property owner reporting subjects riding dirt bikes, South Cross Road.  
**Saturday, 4/4**  
8:03 a.m. Unattended death, West Gill Road.  
1:45 p.m. Assisted Northfield PD with an accident.  
5:50 p.m. Mountain Road caller reporting an unwelcome guest. Referred to state police.  
**Sunday, 4/5**  
6:56 p.m. Caller reporting a suicide threat, French King Bridge. Subject found under bridge, transported to Baystate Franklin.  
**Wednesday, 4/8**  
5:32 p.m. Elm Street caller requested assistance for an allergic reaction.  
7:51 p.m. Medical emergency on River Road.  
10:33 p.m. Medical emergency, Dole Road.  
**Thursday, 4/9**  
2:48 p.m. Large brush fire threatening a barn, Munn's Ferry Road. Had reignited after a previous burn. Extinguished.  
5:25 p.m. River Road caller reported a missing brown dog.  
5:40 p.m. Unattended vehicle near French King Bridge. Area search negative. Vehicle later departed.  
**Friday, 4/10**  
4:24 p.m. Main Road caller requesting help with vehicle lockout. Entry gained.  
4:49 p.m. Caller complained protesters at the Turners Falls-Gill

Bridge were causing a hazard by chatting with drivers.  
5:23 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with a party being harassed.  
**Sunday, 4/12**  
10:48 a.m. French King Highway caller reported brush burning. Confirmed to be permitted.  
7:08 p.m. 911 call, Main Road. Vehicle struck a guardrail and a tree; airbags deployed. Operator transported to Baystate Franklin.  
**Monday, 4/13**  
1:25 p.m. South Cross Road caller reported brush burning. Confirmed to be permitted.  
5:29 p.m. Main Road caller reported two parties fell. One transported to Baystate Franklin; the second refused transport.  
8:11 p.m. Route 10 caller reported a woman walking in traffic. Subject confirmed OK.  
**Tuesday, 4/14**  
12:51 p.m. Loose dog, River Road. Reunited with owner.  
**Wednesday, 4/15**  
11:26 a.m. Fire alarm, Boyle Road. Kitchen staff accidentally set off alarm.  
6:18 p.m. Cove View Lane caller reported a male trespassing in a bathrobe with a guitar. Subject advised to avoid property and was cooperative.  
**Thursday, 4/16**  
1:09 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with teens hopping a fence into a building. Two parties detained. Officer sustained a hand injury.  
4:08 p.m. Barton Road caller reported someone trespassing. Subject later located in the river, taken into protective custody.  
**Friday, 4/17**  
1:21 p.m. Main Road caller reported a missing bulldog. Found by its owner.

8:15 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with a pedestrian struck by a vehicle.  
11:44 p.m. Mountain Road caller requested an officer for a guest refusing to leave.  
**Saturday, 4/18**  
10:50 a.m. Caller reported kayakers on the river. Not in distress.  
**Sunday, 4/19**  
3:17 a.m. French King Highway caller reported a party threatening a clerk.  
10:03 a.m. Mountain Road caller heard an explosion. Determined to be accelerant used for a permitted burn.  
**Tuesday, 4/21**  
1:04 p.m. Assisted with board of health inspection, Main Road.  
4:15 p.m. French King Highway citizen called with concerns about a neighbor's surveillance camera.  
**Thursday, 4/23**  
1:44 p.m. Suspicious Facebook rental ad confirmed as a scam.  
**Saturday, 4/25**  
11:54 a.m. Disabled vehicle, French King Highway. Vehicle had struck a deer outside of town. Towed.  
**Sunday, 4/26**  
2:50 p.m. Franklin Road caller complained about teenagers riding dirt bikes.  
5:19 p.m. Rear-end collision, French King Highway. Female evaluated for back pain; refused transport.  
**Monday, 4/27**  
2:26 a.m. Walnut Street caller reported hearing screaming.  
**Tuesday, 4/28**  
8:26 a.m. Wallet left at farmstand turned in. Owner contacted.  
11:53 a.m. Three cows loose in yard, Ben Hale Road. Farmer notified.  
1:16 p.m. Center Road caller reported missing children. Children found, shortly after, inside house.

READS from page B1

making maps for the English army in Ireland during the years following the potato famine.

Tomás hates working for the English, but has no alternative. When he drinks from a well, it precipitates a crisis about his understanding of the land and the memories it preserves. He returns to cartography anew, but Liam cannot be lured back, pursuing the priesthood instead.

One sister also goes her own way, taking her fiddle to America and making a living there. Another sister, Rose, and the youngest child Eugene are also forced to flee.

O'Farrell handles the epic family tale with enormous skill, moving across history and legend, drawing characters shaped by their country's history yet uniquely themselves. Her portraits are rich, while her handling of history deftly avoids the heavy drag of chronology and excessive detail.

Long recognized as one of Great Britain's stellar writers, the power of *Land* displays O'Farrell's talents as never before – including in *Hamnet* (2020), her prize-winning novel and recent film whose screenplay she co-authored.

Like *Land* and *The Traveler*, Kendra Langford Shaw's *The Pillagers' Guide to Arctic Pianos* (Pantheon, 2026) takes readers to a remote place: the Arctic. Shaw braids the lives of 19th-century homesteaders, including 12-year-old Moose and his family, with those of his 21st-century descendants Finley and Milda Spahr.

Their mother, Viola, ekes livings from both the sea and its shore. But when she dies and crops fail due to environmental changes, the Spahrs turn to finding and selling antique pianos. Now submerged in the icy fjords, the pianos were once required of all homesteading families as a sign they intended to live "mannerly" lives. Among them the homesteaders had shifted 157 pianos 400 hundred miles on dogsleds. All now lie submerged due to accidents and rising sea levels.

This multi-generational novel is Kendra Langford Shaw's debut, and she handles its complexities well. She also powerfully conveys the dire constraints – and odd opportunities – in the far north. Her tone is upbeat, which suggests that the disasters in the lives of the homesteaders and their descendants are simply par for the course – a disquieting effect.

While the catchy title implies her book is about finding pianos, it is about much more. It shows how people can deceive themselves as they work through the slings and arrows of precarious lives in harsh places.

*The Forty-Year Grudge* by Liza Tully (Berkley Mystery, 2026) has none of the historical roots of the previous books. It is detective fiction in the classic mode of a murder that can only have been committed by one of the guests staying at a remote country house – not the classic English mansion, but a 2,300-square-acre

ranch in New Mexico owned by General Joan Battersea.

General Battersea has invited her sorority sisters to celebrate the 40-year anniversary of their graduation. Among them are a psychotherapist, a high school science teacher, an author of silly but wildly successful novels, an MIT professor, and Aubrey Merritt – America's most famous private detective – and her assistant Olivia.

In her first venture into detective fiction, 2025's *The World's Greatest Detective and Her Just Okay Assistant*, Tully had introduced the demanding perfectionist Aubrey and her hapless young assistant. In this novel Olivia's skills are still far from the steely Aubrey's, but she has improved, and helps determine who has written a threatening note to Joan, and who commits murder.

Liza Tully organizes her material well, observes her characters sharply, and describes the desert landscapes vividly. Bookshops and libraries are always well-stocked with detective fiction, including numerous new volumes. Few are as well-written as *The Forty-Year Grudge*, which sings the classic tropes, but with enough wit and skill to keep the reader engaged.

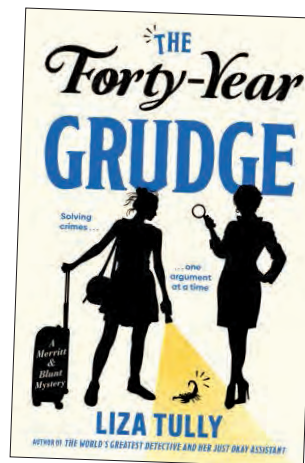
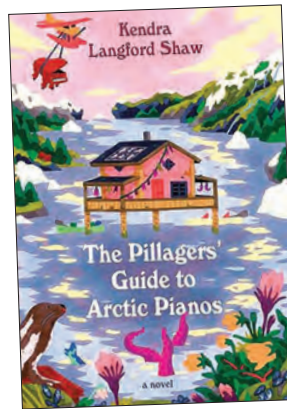
Italy has often been impoverished, so Italians have had to conjure inventive ways to use available food. The result, explains the author of *Gennaro's Hidden Italy* (Interlink Books, 2026): "In Italy there are many products that are produced and consumed almost exclusively within a certain territory and that's what makes Italy's food culture so unique."

Evidence comes from such recipes as Tuna and Pickle Pie, Walnut Lasagne, and Potato-Crust Pizza. Baked goods include a bread stuffed with tomatoes and anchovies, buns filled with apricot jam, and a Fisherman's Loaf studded with olives, capers, and raisins. For dessert there's a summery Watermelon Jelly with chocolate chips and pistachios. And there are lots of inspiring fish and seafood dishes: a seafood couscous from Sicily, for example, and seafood with a home-made wreath-shaped pasta called *lorigghitas*.

A few recipes are oddities. Roasted *lampascione* are hyacinth bulbs; *matassa* is a handmade pasta so long that it seems unending, as shown in the pictures of the author dealing with its coils. Fortunately, he says, you can substitute spaghetti. Indeed, substitutions are common, which makes this book easy to use since it has alternatives to many hard-to-find Italian ingredients.

One appeal of Italian or other Mediterranean food during summer is that we have ample supplies of Mediterranean ingredients such as tomatoes, zucchini, eggplant, herbs, and fruits – all from local growers. *Hidden Italy* provides some new ways of cooking them. It's interesting reading, too, because the author casts light on the recipes by discussing Italian

history and regional differences. You might reasonably think that the world already has more than enough Italian cookbooks, but *Hidden Italy* belies that idea.



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