

# The Montague Reporter

Year 24 – No. 26

JUNE 4, 2026

\$2

editor@montaguereporter.org

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

montaguereporter.org

## SPORTS

### Tech's Eagles Flying Far Into State Playoffs



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Franklin Tech's Brayleigh Burgh delivers a pitch to a Rising Tide batter during last Sunday's MIAA 5 Round of 32 state tournament game. The Eagles rose to the occasion with a 5-4 home win over the Herons. Following a 4-2 win over West Boylston on Tuesday, the team advances to the quarterfinals, and travel to Maynard this Saturday afternoon to face Maynard High School.

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – The MIAA playoffs were in full swing on Sunday as the Turners Falls High School and Franklin Tech softball and baseball teams all competed in the Division 5 Round of 32 brackets. Three games were played in Turners – Franklin Tech baseball and softball, and TFHS softball – while the Thunder baseballers went on the road to play West Boylston.

Having all four teams in action at the same time made coverage a little difficult. I visited both softball fields to converse with the regulars before heading to Tech for baseball. I was pleased to learn the Turners softball game would be broadcast on Bear Country, allowing me to listen remotely while at Tech.

After Sunday's games both Tech teams advanced to the Sweet

Sixteen, but the baseball team was eliminated on Wednesday, leaving only the Softball Eagles in the hunt.

Last Saturday, Dustin Reade represented Tech's hybrid track team in the Division 6 track and field championship at Westfield State. He came in 25th in javelin with the throw of 125 feet, 10 inches.

#### Softball

FCTS 5 – Rising Tide 4

On Sunday afternoon the 12th-seeded Eagles edged out the #21 Rising Tide Herons of Plymouth in a seventh-inning comeback win.

When I arrived the score was 1-1, after one inning. The first thing I noticed was the amount of people there. There are usually 15 or 20 people sitting with me behind the backstop, but on Sunday the fans were lined up and down

see SPORTS page A8

## GILL SELECTBOARD

### Finance Team Takes Great Pains to Avoid Tax Override

By MIKE JACKSON

The second "half" of Gill's annual town meeting will be held next Monday, and as it is the half in which Gill voters are expected to vote the budget for the coming year, town officials are working down to the wire to finalize the figures.

The selectboard met jointly with the finance committee for an hour and a half on Monday, and planned to squeeze in a final joint session on Thursday.

On Monday, they reviewed two very slightly different budgets, which essentially differed on how the annual loan payment on a new fire department truck should be covered: either by pulling money from the town's stabilization fund,

see GILL page A6

## MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

### Eyes in the Sky: Regional Drone Commander Urges Board To Adopt Pact

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard had a full agenda on Monday after taking the previous week off in observance of Memorial Day. The board reviewed the process for aggregating electric power, as approved by the recent annual town meeting; held a hearing on an ongoing round of federal block grants; and approved a range of public events in Turners Falls. It also reviewed an agreement between Montague and Greenfield over the shared use of drones.

The meeting began with the board's annual reorganization following the spring election. Rich Kuklewicz was elected as chair, Marina Goldman as vice chair, and new member Nate Card as clerk.

Police chief Jason Haskins came to the front table to explain the complexities of intermunicipal drone-sharing agreements. Montague is already a member of the Franklin County Regional Special Response Team (FCRSRT), he said, which uses BRINC LEMUR 2 and DJI Avata interior drones owned by the Greenfield police department.

Haskins, who formerly worked in the Greenfield department, added that he was the FCRSRT's drone commander and crisis negotiations team commander, and that "those roles came with" him when he was

see MONTAGUE page A7

### Church Again Authorized To Illuminate Seventh Street

By JEFF SINGLETON

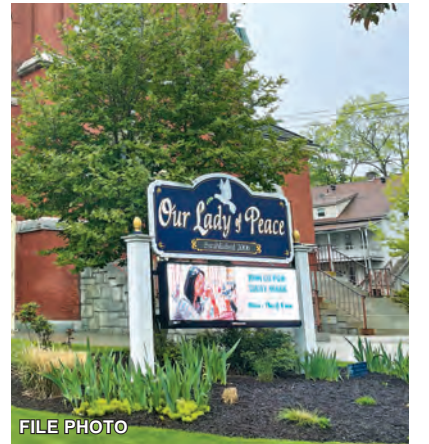
TURNERS FALLS – The controversial sign in front of Our Lady of Peace Church on Seventh Street is turning back on after a three-week pause, but with certain restrictions imposed by the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) at its meeting Wednesday night.

The sign, which announces a wide range of events in Montague including free meals at the church, gatherings at the Gill-Montague senior center, and forums at Greenfield Savings Bank, had been shut down since May 13 in response to neighborhood complaints – and an official finding by building inspector Bill Ketchen – that it was too bright on cloudy days and in the evening, and that it was "flashing" in violation of both the town's zoning by-laws and a variance the church was awarded in December 2024.

Josh Lively, chair of the ZBA,

began the meeting by reviewing the history of the sign controversy and describing recent visits to the site by ZBA members to evaluate brightness at different times of the

see ILLUMINATE page A6



FILE PHOTO

Montague's zoning board of appeals has found itself mired in a complex and technical discussion about how to regulate the brightness of a sign relative to the ever-changing brightness of the sky.

### Wendell Town Meeting Rejects Dump Truck Debt, Israel Article; Approves All Other Items

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Wendell residents came out on a cold wet morning last Saturday, May 30, for the town's annual town meeting. It featured, near the end of the warrant, a potentially divisive article stating opposition to the apartheid policy of Israel in the war in Gaza, and to the United States's contribution to that war effort.

Citizens voted and approved all but one article of the first 26 articles with little discussion, the exception being Article 23, borrowing \$140,000 to purchase a Ford F-550 dump truck. Highway commission chair Phil Delorey said it was possible to use state Chapter 90 mon-

ey for the truck, and that doing so would make it possible to order it in July, have it delivered in the fall, and have it available for the coming winter. Borrowing would require a ballot vote for the debt exclusion, postponing the order, and the truck would not be available for winter.

The article failed to reach the two-thirds majority of votes required to authorize borrowing.

With little discussion voters approved an operating budget of \$4,086,510, and loan payments totaling \$264,243 – including \$71,904 for the new fire department tanker truck, though that cost might come in lower depending on

see WENDELL page A6

## LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

### Officials Propose Gamifying Library Reuse Brainstorms

By GEORGE BRACE

Among other business, Leverett's selectboard discussed a process for determining what to do with the historic Field Library building and held a performance review for the town's new fire chief at its meeting on Tuesday.

At last month's annual town meeting, residents voted for the town to retain ownership of the Field building for two years for the purpose of rehabilitating the deteriorating structure and exploring options for turning it into "a multi-use building that would include space for archival storage of documents and artifacts of Leverett's history."

The article voter approved further said that either any planned uses should be self-sustaining, or residents should be willing to support the building financially beyond maintenance.

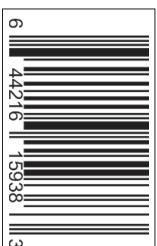
Board member Jed Proujansky said he wanted residents to generate "the broadest possible number of options" for the building's use, and for the process to be as "flat" as possible, avoiding excessive bureaucracy.

He suggested a two-year timeline, with initial ideas being presented at a meeting in six months, and individuals or groups with similar proposals then joining together to develop those ideas the selectboard

see LEVERETT page A5

#### Every Fig Must Find Its Fig Tree

Too Bright on Cloudy Days.....A1	Started With a Spritz.....B1
More Daunting Than Imaginable.....A2	Strange and Faceless.....B2
Stuck on Your Way Out.....A3	Wherever It Was Headed.....B3
Distracted By Other Things.....A4	Lapping at Its Stone Steps.....B4
Conscious of Our Time.....A5	Aparecido Como Campeon.....B5
Sent Back for Revision.....A6	Brownie Points, Cheese Priests.....B6
Tarries Longest at the Brook.....A7	Phantom Ocean, Slant of Light.....B7
Came Out Swinging Immediately.....A8	Ordered to Ride Shotgun.....B8



An official opening was held Saturday for this new playground at the Wendell Free Library. "Much creative talent in Wendell went into the design and construction of this wondrous edifice," writes Pam Richardson, who submitted this photo.

# The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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## Letters to the Editors

### An Uncomfortable 'No'

I find myself in the uncomfortable position of being a library user who is against funding building the new main library. In a world of unlimited resources, I would be completely on board. However, we do not have unlimited resources, and we are fully aware of two other projects that will require significant resources in the next few years: the new Franklin County Technical School, and an addition to the Sheffield Elementary School that is in the early planning stages.

Are we going to fund everything, or do we have priorities?

I have the following reasons for my opposition to library funding. First, any debt we take on is repaid in addition to the steadily increasing cost of town government and school services. As a town meeting member I received a graph showing the impact of projected town expenses for the next 10 years.

The proposed debt for the library and the Tech School are a small part of town and school expenses, but town and school expenses are projected to increase by 2.5% each year, an average of past years' increases according to our town accountant.

If this projection becomes re-

ality, after four years we will be paying 10% more (without compounding) in taxes, plus our debt service, and after eight years we will be paying 20% more (without compounding) before debt service.

These increases most affect people with fixed incomes and people with lower incomes, making it harder to stay in their homes. This reinforces my intent to set priorities on the projects we approve.

Second, Massachusetts has an exceptional library system. I can go into any library in this area and check out a book. I lived in Connecticut for over 30 years before moving here in 2013. I could go to my local library and could request inter-library loans, but I could not take out a book in adjacent towns' libraries.

For a library user, this area is a treasure. In addition to our libraries in Turners Falls, Montague Center, and Millers Falls, we are close to libraries in neighboring towns.

For those reasons, I am making the Tech School replacement and Sheffield my priorities for funding.

**Ella Ingraham**  
Turners Falls

### Lived Through It Once

I am 100% in favor of building a new library here in Turners Falls. I believe, as do others, that we need a new library, and that building one is good for everyone in town.

The proposed location is perfect and if it's not used for a library, capitalist businessmen will put *God knows what* where the proposed library site is now. I believe that just as nature abhors a vacuum, humans like to build things in empty spaces. While the proposed library site is certainly not "empty space," developers likely would see it otherwise.

I'm relatively new here, and I do love the Carnegie library, but it was built at a time when our town had fewer people and when public access was not the issue that it is today. A new public library is an expense that benefits everyone in

town, and the grant we have goes away if we don't use it.

I realize that I can only speak for myself, but I have lived through a new library being built – in Lunenburg, 25 years ago – and the benefit to the community there was almost instant. Public meeting space, opportunity for short classes to be given, small concerts, and after school space for young folks were just a few of the things that the community there got and these benefits were immediate for the residents at the time.

That library today continues to thrive, as well it should, given that libraries can be seen as places where people can gather to share common interests and build community.

**Louis Arnold**  
Turners Falls



Mackenzie Creedon adds details to a customer's arm at Thorntail Tattoo and Arts Collective in Turners Falls. Creedon got her start ten years ago as an apprentice at Montague's first tattoo studio, Charon Arts, which occupied the same upstairs space at 107 Avenue A. When Charon Arts moved elsewhere, she started Thorntail, currently the only enterprise of its kind in our coverage area.

## Commercial Development Relieves Homeowners of Town Tax Burden

After serving for over a decade on the Montague Finance Committee and the Capital Improvements Committee and currently serving as Chair of the Capital Improvements Committee, I have followed this library project through every stage of its development. To my knowledge, I am one of the very few in Montague who has served continuously on both committees throughout the entire discussion.

I understand why many residents are concerned about taxes. Property tax bills have increased significantly in recent years, driven largely by rising residential property values.

But that reality also highlights another challenge facing Montague: our tax base remains heavily dependent on homeowners. Investments that strengthen our downtown, attract visitors, support local businesses, and expand commercial activity help create a healthier balance over the long term.

I also know that a "No" vote does not mean zero future cost.

The proposed library project at 38 Avenue A would cost approximately \$23.7 million, with more than \$11 million already committed through a state construction grant.

Montague taxpayers have contributed to state programs like this for years. This grant allows some of those dollars to come back home. If this project is rejected, that opportunity disappears.

Some have suggested that Montague residents can simply rely on Greenfield's new library. That argument overlooks the broader value a library brings to a community.

Libraries are not just places to borrow books. They are community anchors and economic assets. Greenfield benefits every day from the activity generated by its downtown library. Families visit. Seniors gather. Students study. Community groups meet. Visitors stop for coffee, shopping, and meals before or after using the facility.

Those activities support local businesses, strengthen downtown districts, and help expand the commercial tax base.

Montague deserves the same opportunity.

A modern library at 38 Avenue A would provide a gathering place for residents of all ages. It would create space for children's programs, student learning, public meetings, senior activities, workforce development, technology access, and

community events. At a time when many institutions struggle to bring people together, libraries remain one of the few places where everyone is welcome.

The question before voters is not whether we value our existing library buildings. The question is whether those buildings can meet the community's needs for the next generation.

After years of analysis, the conclusion was clear: they cannot meet those needs without substantial additional investment from local taxpayers.

The choice before us is straightforward. We can invest in a modern facility with nearly half the cost covered by state funding, or we can continue facing growing maintenance, accessibility, and infrastructure costs with local taxpayers carrying the burden alone.

This vote is about more than a library building. It is a decision about whether Montague invests in its future with substantial state support today, or faces those challenges alone tomorrow.

**Gregory Garrison**  
Chair, Montague Capital Improvements Committee

## Build On 38 Avenue A

It seems that the "NO" signs for a new library are misleading in two ways.

The cost to the Town of the new library is *not* \$23.7 million dollars, rather it is \$12.4 million dollars; this is secondary to a \$11.3 million dollar grant from the state. The next potential opportunity for such state assistance will not be for another 20 to 30 years, at which time the property will

no longer be available and construction costs may have albeit doubled.

Is that what we want to leave our children and grandchildren, a debt more daunting than imaginable? Please consider a "YES" vote on June 24. Your children and grandchildren are counting on you.

**Mary Kay Mattiace**  
Turners Falls

### CORRECTION

In last week's *Turners Falls and Vicinity* column, our managing editor referred to the groups that launched the new Air Watch app as the Healthy Air Network and the "Public Health Network of Western Mass." One reader pointed out that it's the Public Health Institute of Western Mass. We apologize! Mr. Jackson has been given just one more chance.

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OP ED

# New Library Myths, and New Library Facts

By ARIEL ELAN

**MONTAGUE** – As a member of Montague’s library building steering committee (LBSC), appointed by the selectboard in January 2025, I hope to address some misinformation. If you have seen or posted a “No” to the new Library sign, please consider:

- **The town’s total cost for a new library will be \$12.4 million.** While the “retail” price tag is \$23.7 million, the \$11.3 million the state will contribute is essentially a half-price offer to create this building and its resources. That total budget includes a \$1 million contingency for unexpected problems or cost increases – money we will work not to spend.

- **A “Yes” vote on June 24 is Montague’s only opportunity to receive state construction funding for our libraries for at least 20 years.** The Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP) of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) is extremely competitive, and highly detailed in its requirements. Our initial application – just to get in the door to compete for planning and design assistance – was 80 pages long.

If grant cycles continue to open up every 7 to 10 years, the town could try again to get in line. But, because the MPLCP staff pours time and expertise into supervising the process – from needs assessment through building – the reality is that the agency will not reconsider a town that turns down a construction award until at least a generation has passed.

- **Montague’s \$11.3 million grant can only be used for the plan that has been researched and developed over the past 5½ years.** No financial help is available for any other plan or design.

A public process of intensive work, by several Montague boards and committees and relevant staff, with the help of our MPLCP evaluators, created the plan before us. Our first grant, awarded in January 2025 for planning and design, required final decisions on the project’s site and scope to be made over the course of that summer. This is why the selectboard appointed the LBSC.

As with all public bodies, meetings of the LBSC and library trustees have been posted on the town calendar, usually with a Zoom option, throughout this process. The trustees and our committee have hosted several public forums, and continue to do so.

News coverage and commentary have been abundant throughout 2025 and 2026 – see [www.tinyurl.com/LBSCmedia](http://www.tinyurl.com/LBSCmedia) for a list.

The project has also made its way through Montague’s public, deep-dive, budgeting process twice. The first time was in 2024, when the final step in applying for the planning and design grant was for the town to set aside \$150,000 as a matching fund. That article received unanimous recommendations from the capital improvements committee, finance committee, and selectboard, and then from the annual town meeting in May 2024.

- **The state will not fund maintenance, repairs, or modest additions to a building that is overall inadequate in multiple ways.** The MPLCP invests in projects that will significantly “level up” a community’s library services and will ensure their availability to residents in all demographic groups, of all ages and abilities, for at least 30 years.

For details, see [www.tinyurl.com/LBSCreasons](http://www.tinyurl.com/LBSCreasons) and click “2023-2024 Standard Grant Round Program Notice.”

This state requirement is why the trustees and the libraries director spent 2023 gathering residents’ longtime and current needs and requests for a main library, then developing this information into a complete program – spaces, holdings, technologies, services, activities, and events – that could meet the MPLCP’s rigorous standards for putting Montague in the “eligible” line.

If following this requirement sounds like “Desire-Led Design,” as the Reporter whimsically headlined John Hanold’s May 28 letter, it is. As another town meeting colleague explains the state’s policy: “The state needs a reality check on what are the problems, the needs, and the library team’s capacity to address them before different interest groups start arguing about how you divide up a set pile of money.”

If a community makes it through these two competitive processes and is offered a construction grant, the MBLC advisors then work with the project planners on ways to make as many costs as possible eligible for state reimbursement.

- **The slogan “Save the Carnegie” implies two different misleading assumptions.** One is that the Carnegie Library building is somehow at risk if a new library is built. It is not. Its historic designation imposes a long-term commitment on any owner or leaseholder to preserve and protect the exterior as-is.

Montague has a successful record of maintaining and transferring town-owned properties to new owners or long-term leaseholders who assume significant responsibilities. Examples include the former Montague Center School, now well-maintained apartments; the 1950s-era former public works garage; the Shea Theater; and the Colle Opera House.

The other false assumption is that expanding the Carnegie to meet current and future needs was not considered by the LBSC and the trustees. In fact, our design and planning grant required feasibility studies both for a new library at 38 Avenue A and for expanding the Carnegie.

The Carnegie’s location is a confined space high on a hillside, sitting on a rocky ledge, with unpredictable groundwater pressure in play. Four initial sketches for altering it came with cost estimates between \$1.5 million and \$5 million more than building new on a flat, clear site. The Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC) then ruled out all but the most expensive Carnegie design, to protect the building’s historic visual appearance. Cost alone took this option off the table.

- **Like all state grants, the \$11.3 million Montague has been offered is mostly state income tax we have already paid.** This is a tax refund in the form of a new resource, and one that is highly competitive to win. If Montague turns down this money, our refund will go to another town or city that is eager to receive it.

See [montaguepubliclibraries.org](http://montaguepubliclibraries.org) for a wealth of other information on the new library proposal and its history.

*Ariel Elan is a member of the library building steering committee (LBSC), the capital improvements committee, the Economic & Industrial Development Corporation (EDIC), and town meeting. The views expressed in this article are her own. She invites respectful questions and interest in talking about the library project at BlessAll77@proton.me.*



## Two More Letters to the Editors

### Cost/Benefit Analysis

Imagine that you’re returning some books. Then get stuck on your way out because of some heavy doors, and you have to wait for someone to help you open those doors. That happened to me with the Carnegie. Luckily someone came relatively quickly, but if someone hadn’t I would’ve been stuck there for a while and missed a bit of school. A new library would not have this problem.

It will cost around \$5 million more to renovate and build an addition to the old Carnegie than to build a new library. This would be \$28.7 million, and we only have to pay \$12.4 million for a new library. Other Letters to the Editor talk more about this.

The Carnegie had programs upstairs a few years ago. Gingerbread

house building, live birds of prey, and even a chocolate fountain. These are just our specific memories, there were many more. Covid restrictions made these programs disappear, and then they never came back due to inaccessibility. The new building can bring these programs back.

The Carnegie has a lot of books and other items that are held in storage because the building doesn’t have enough space made so they can be displayed or accessible without knowing about them beforehand. A new library brings these books out of storage and into circulation again.

Libraries don’t only have books, they often have computers, games or puzzles, even kayaks or ice cream makers, and all have knowledge. People often say that knowledge is

the key to everything. Libraries that are accessible can help provide this.

School libraries are great, but they cannot and do not have what we need. They never have enough books of anything. They are supposed to do too many things with less money and so they fail. Carnegie is also failing, because many of the books they have cannot be seen or found and right now they have only a little more than a school library on display.

The Montague public libraries have answered many questions about the project at [montaguepubliclibraries.org](http://montaguepubliclibraries.org) through “Home,” then “About,” and then “Main Library Building Project.”

A. A., age 11  
I. A., age 13 (no relation)  
Montague

### ‘Yes To Our New Library’

Yes, most of us agree we need a new library. We just differ on how much, when, and at what cost.

Yes, we all love the Carnegie building, but it’d cost \$5 million more to use it. “Save Carnegie” means paying more to get less.

Yes, the new library could be smaller, but it had to be big enough to qualify for this grant that pays for almost half of it.

Yes, we can get a \$23.7 million library for \$12.4 million, thanks to the \$11.3 million state grant we won. For the average homeowner, that’s about \$3 a week.

Yes, we could vote no and give back the \$11.3 million to the state. Then spend more to design a new smaller library. And pay every dollar ourselves.

Yes, it’s uncertain times and prices are going up. Which is exactly why we should do this now, with the grant in hand. In 10 years, who knows what this costs, or if there’s another grant.

Yes, operating costs will be higher. Because the new library will do more. More programs. More space. More services. More for everyone in town.

Yes, it’s an investment, one of the safest a town can make. Libraries return about \$4 in community value for every \$1 spent.

Yes, building this signals that Montague is serious about investing in itself. Grant-makers notice. So do the families deciding whether to move here.

Yes, it’s going to feel awesome to have this new beautiful building downtown. One of the first things people will see when they visit.

Yes, it’s going to be fun watching them build it, and exciting to use it.

Yes, I’m voting for the library on June 24.

Yes, I hope you vote with me.

Jim Katsoulis  
Turners Falls



*Karen Tranb brought our January 29 edition on a trip to New Orleans in March, and made it as far as Penn Station before pulling it out. “Even though I prefer the feel of a real newspaper, I usually read the Montague Reporter online because my paper copy takes about a week to get delivered to Shutesbury by mail,” she explains. “Sometimes I fall behind and bring a few copies to read on the train.”*

### ON THE ROAD

#### PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

### TFAC Announces 2026 Scholarships

**TURNERS FALLS** -- The Turners Falls Athletic Club Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce the following four students, who have been selected to receive our scholarships for their academics and their contribution to sports at Turners Falls High School.

The awards are in the amount of \$2,000 each, payable to the individual student for their second semester at the college of their choice, for a total of \$8,000.

The recipients are Jackson Cogswell, Mario Pareja, Shayly Martin Ovalle, and Yolvin Ovalle Mejia, all of Turners Falls. We would like to congratulate the scholarship

winners and thank all the student athletes who applied; we wish you all the best of luck in the future.

We especially want to thank all of the active TFAC members whose donations make these scholarships possible. With this group we have awarded over \$146,290 to more than 214 students since 1954.

The Turners Falls Athletic Club: Supporting Sports & Academics for the Youth of Turners Falls Since 1934.

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# TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by **MIKE JACKSON**

Here I am, all the way on Page A4! What a wacky week. Here's the behind-the-scenes, how-the-sausage-is-made scoop: We thought we were going to print a smaller edition this week, a 14-pager, as everyone is distracted by other things... but then, far too late on Wednesday for my enjoyment, it turned out that not everything could be squeezed into that much space so we added two pages back on, and absolute chaos ensued. Not everything is where it should be, but if you're reading this, we got another one out.

On the plus side, this meant we could fit **all of the accumulated opinion**, which is coming in fast and furious. Six letters and two op/eds, which are kind of just long letters, truth be told; the topic of six of the letters and one of the op/eds being the same: Montague's upcoming library vote.

Which, of course, is scheduled on a Wednesday! That's going to be a fun one. We're already stocking up on ice packs and athletic tape for that particular deadline push. Whatever the outcome of the vote... the following week is our first summer week off, which is a miracle. (If you're just joining us: the *Reporter* drops down to biweekly publication during July and August each year.)

This library vote, though. I've had a number of people ask me to predict the outcome, and as far as I'm concerned, it's a coin toss. One thing is for sure: if anyone who wants that thing built is thinking the whole project is on rails, that they can sit the vote out, etc., they're in for a shock.

It's going to come down to **mobilization on both sides**. The last time there was a big social war in town, with an election that *actually* served as a referendum on some of the deeper issues Montague has with itself, was back in 2017.

Two differences with that vote nine years ago were that it didn't have a direct material consequence, and that a faction of the opponents of the referendum - which was calling for the Indian "logo" to be restored at Turners Falls High School - said the vote should be boycotted, and then a faction of the boycotters went in and cast blank ballots. The result, in any case, was 1,233 Yes votes and 432 No votes and 238 blank ballots. Even lumping the blanks in with the nos, it was a nearly two-thirds vote to rebuke a 6-3 decision of the school committee to terminate the logo, if nothing else an indication that the views of elected representatives in this town can diverge sharply from their constituents.

While non-binding, the referendum also served the secondary function of getting voters to the polls. Both of Montague's incumbent school

committee members up for reelection happened to have voted against the change, but one - Mike Langknecht, may his memory be a blessing - had only done so because he disagreed with the *process*, so he was tossed out in favor of a candidate many believed would help reverse the decision. (She turned out to have no such intention.)

Gill's incumbent had voted for the change and was also tossed, and in her case replaced with a true activist for its reversal, though he quit a year later after a slate of four candidates endorsed by a "Save the TF Indians" group lost across the board.

As we noticed at that time, every one of these votes - the referendum, the unseating of Langknecht, and the support for each of the four "Save" candidates in 2018 - showed the same distribution of support among Montague's six voting precincts: **3-4-2-6-5-1**, highest to lowest, with the highest voter turnout rates at either end of the spectrum in Precincts 3 and 1.

The previous big social war was 10 years before that, in 2007, well into a years-long push-and-pull over the tough decision to close Montague Center's beloved little elementary school. Residents calling themselves the Organized Taxpayers of Montague collected 900 signatures and placed a **non-binding measure** on the spring ballot opining that the school should close by fall.

That article won 965 to 719. Consulting the *Reporter* archives, we find the highest turnout was in Precincts 3 and 1, and the distribution was **4-3-6-5-2-1**, with Precinct 4 edging out 3 at 85% and 84% - the Hill in Turners Falls - and then on down to Precincts 2 at 49% and 1 at 18%. Montague Center voters didn't want that school closed!

(By way of comparison, in 2016 support for the victor in the US presidential race was concentrated **3-2-6-4-1-5**, though not over 31% anywhere, and opposition to legal cannabis went **3-4-6-2-1-5**, though not over 50% anywhere.)

The proposal for a big new library at 38 Avenue A faces a **number of headwinds**: the sticker shock at any new public buildings, which far outpace inflation; the unexpected landing of a *second*, even larger, debt exclusion later this year for Montague's share of a new quarter-billion-dollar tech school building; and increasingly dire economic news. Nearly all the growth in the US economy can be accounted for by capital spent on a wild data-processing overbuild, and the US-Israeli war on Iran and Lebanon has led to an ongoing stalemate and blockage of much of the world's supply of helium and sulfur, both essential in making chips.... though, as of press time, the Dow is up.

The library also presents itself as an optional

expense in a way that, say, replacing the obsolete draft-tube-style secondary clarifiers at the Clean Water Treatment plant is not, and a new highway garage was not, and health insurance contributions for current and retired town and school staff are not. The case is made on the previous pages that the cost of maintaining the Carnegie as a library could actually end up in the same range as building a new one with this deal, but that's a complicated argument, and therefore a hard one to make to someone who doesn't *trust you*.

And that's what underlies this conflict, and why it has developed into the latest once-in-a-decade social war. First, a lot of people are genuinely feeling stressed out, broke, and **besieged by rising costs**, and in Montague this includes many homeowners, despite the average house now being valued at \$325,000. (Pointing out that someone can sell their home is effectively telling them you don't care if they continue to live here. It's a jam-up caused by too many of our public goods being funded by local property taxes.)

And second, a lot of people don't trust anything out of the mouths of the do-gooder wonks down at town hall. These groups are different, but they do overlap, and right now they are working in coalition, motivated by the prospect of a rare win.

If you only get your news from the *Montague Reporter*, you might think a majority of voters will approve the debt exclusion on June 24. If you only get your news from Facebook you'd think the exact opposite. Now, I consider "I'm voting no because we're heading into an emergency and shouldn't commit so many of our limited resources to a single big building" to be a fine and reasonable position, but to hear it from certain of our neighbors on the Zuck app, the library campaign is a malicious social-engineering conspiracy designed to tip the balance of local power in favor of a parasitic class of downtown apartment-dwellers.

This is the terrain of hyperpolitics, and no argument or accusation is left unflung: *Save the picnic tables!* It's bewildering, but it also mirrors the throw-everything-at-the-wall strategy local environmental activists rely on to block almost any other form of development in this vicinity.

Which, by the way, is connected to the **over-reliance in this vicinity** on residential property tax, collected from a now disproportionately retired pool of homeowners. If you want that new library, you should be out there talking with them...

But first ask yourself why they would *trust you*.

Send your little bits of news to [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org).

OP ED

## A Win for Democratic Engagement

By **HEATHER HUTCHINSON**

**WENDELL** - The Apartheid-Free Community Pledge came before the town of Wendell at the annual town meeting on May 30. A total of 103 Wendell signatories ensured a resolution could be discussed that advocated a commitment to freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people and all people, and to oppose all forms of racism, bigotry, discrimination, and oppression.

The community pledge asked Wendell to join with 15 other municipalities, including Montague, and over 1,200 other communities and groups who have pledged to join others in working to end all support to Israel's apartheid regime, settler colonialism, and military expansion. This renewed public pledge, convened by the American Friends Service Committee (*apartheid-free.org/pledge/*), is locally advocated for by Apartheid-Free Western MA (*apartheidfreewesternma.org*) and

the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice (*traprock.org*).

The people of Wendell, and all the people of the United States, are uniquely positioned to discuss the trajectory and values that we as citizens uphold and hold dear to our hearts as Americans.

Free speech, funding our schools, and funding our healthcare system are top values for many US citizens, yet these values have been under attack through a variety of presidential memorandums, funding cuts, and cancellations, and the US military and ICE spending allocations continue to increase in 2026.

Spending more on jails, police, and the military will not make us safer. Nor does our refusing to call out Israel's crimes against humanity make any community in the US, or in Israel, safer. Investments in punishment, surveillance, and censorship drive inaction through calculated measures to maintain the status quo for those in power.

The status quo fails 99% of the Earth's human population through the tactical weaponization of unprocessed fear and the manufacture of consent, as we falsely believe that by staying quiet, or by giving up our rights, we will be made safe in an unsafe world.

While the resolution did not pass in Wendell, the Apartheid-Free Pledge was a success there, as it is globally. Its goal is to bring awareness, education, and discourse about the suffering of the marginalized, the oppressed, and the Palestinian people in particular into the light of day. It pulls back the curtain of deniability on America's entanglement with Israel's regime of apartheid, military occupation, and settler colonialism in Palestine and beyond.

The more Palestine is in the public conversation, the more that cognitive dissonance reveals the true horrors of the livestreamed genocide, and of the role we play in it as US citizens.

The Pledge lays down the foun-

ation of community by uniting us under a basic moral grounding that all people deserve dignity and respect. Those of us who are grounded in this commitment to act on one another's behalf, as a human family, have strengthened our relationships, activated our community, and cultivated a circle of mutual healing.

We welcome the wider community's engagement, and in so doing we have already united with our global community, with Gaza as our moral compass, to work towards peace, justice, and equality for all.

The democratic voting process, the ongoing public discourse, and the required moral check-in call us to free Gaza, to free speech, and to work towards an apartheid-free community, because none of us are free until we are all free. "No peace, no justice."

Heather Hutchinson is a member of Apartheid-Free Western MA. She lives in Leverett.

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

# Three Big Hires Ahead; Cruiser Approved

By KATIE NOLAN

Monday night, the Erving selectboard worked through a light agenda in open meeting, with members Jacob Smith and William Bembury present, then held four executive sessions regarding contract negotiations with union and non-union employees.

Acting as water commissioners, they established the FY'27 water rate at \$5.79 per thousand gallons. The FY'26 rate has been \$5.45 per thousand gallons.

Highway foreman Thomas Duffy and highway superintendent Glenn McCrory presented the plans for paving and accessibility upgrades at Zilinski Field, with an estimated cost of approximately \$48,000. The board approved publishing a request for quotes for the work, which includes adding two van-accessible handicap parking spots and a five-foot-wide path to the bleachers and basketball court and swing set.

The board approved purchasing a new Ford Interceptor police cruiser from McGovern MHQ for \$66,611. Responding to questions from Bembury about the cost of equipping the cruiser, town administrator Bryan Smith said some equipment, such as the radio, radar, and cameras, from the current cruiser will be installed in the new one.

Jacob Smith suggested there might be a budget for additional equipment, because \$75,000 was appropriated for the new cruiser.

The board reviewed policies about vacation leave, overtime pay for call firefighters, and age- and dementia-friendly planning. These policies will be reviewed further at the next selectboard meeting.

Regarding the age- and dementia-friendly planning, Bryan Smith added a section to the policy clarifying that improvements for these populations will be "based on available funding, project scope, safety needs, community priorities, and site-specific conditions."

As requested by Erving Elementary School (EES), the board declared as surplus a cafeteria proofer, a

leaf blower, a tractor mower deck, a weed whacker, a wheelbarrow, a snow blower, and a tractor snow blower, all damaged and already replaced.

The senior center car port, also declared as surplus, will be removed to the highway department for large equipment storage.

The board declared the temporary reading circle sculptures at the library, which have been in place beyond the October 2024 removal date and need maintenance, as surplus. The highway department will dig out the sculptures and bring selected sections to EES for installation there. Other sections will be available to residents for several weeks, or will be recycled or disposed of.

Bembury asked for advance planning about disposal to be included in all future acquisitions.

### Personnel

The board decided to include Bryan Smith and police chief Robert Holst as two of the five members on the preliminary screening committee for the new IT director position. Bembury recommended library director Abigail Baines as a member, and Jacob Smith said he would be willing to serve on the committee. He also recommended finance committee member Ben Fellows as the fifth potential member.

The preliminary screening committee for town treasurer, newly an appointed position, will consist of Bryan Smith, assistant treasurer Jean Pollard, assistant accountant Brandon Pollard, one selectboard member, and one finance committee member. Bembury volunteered to serve on that committee.

The composition of both screening committees will be finalized at the next meeting, which is scheduled for Monday, June 15.

Bryan Smith reported that Kathryn Gaudet has resigned as senior center activities coordinator, and that he had posted the position. The board will review the job description at its next meeting.

### LEVERETT from page A1

agreed were promising. These proposals would be winnowed to two or three at 12 months, and reduced again at 18 months. In two years, the board would choose the approach it felt was "most viable for the town."

Proujansky said this process would be like a "collaborative contest" to come up with the best option, and that if none is found, another vote could be taken on the building's sale.

Selectboard chair Patricia Duffy suggested a "hybrid" process, with two tracks, one being proposals for the building's future use as described by Proujansky, and the other for seeking funding to rehabilitate the structure's "envelope" – "the paint, the roof, the chimney" – which she said should begin immediately to prevent further deterioration.

The Leverett historical commission (LHC) should be involved "all along," she said, but could be asked to assist with the grant aspect in particular.

Board member Tom Hankinson volunteered to be a point person for work on the building's rehabilitation, saying he would contact the LHC about seeking grants but also look into the possibility of private donations from residents. He said he had already spoken with some who may be willing to provide support.

Duffy asked how the board could engage residents and give them a sense of what the process would look like.

Proujansky suggested that the effort be advertised in the town newsletter, on its website, and on the LeverettConnects listserv, encouraging people to work together and setting a date for the initial presentations.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said she would create a template for proposals and make it available to the public.

Resident Richard Nathorst asked if single individuals, as opposed to groups, would be allowed to pitch ideas. The board said they would be, but cautioned him that it would be a lot of work. Nathorst replied that he had experience with such projects, and had an idea that was not yet being discussed.

### Fire Going Smoothly

The selectboard gave new fire chief Mike Visniewski a five-month review of his performance, and decided to extend his contract from one year to three.

Proujansky said he had heard input from members of the fire department, other town employees, and chiefs of other local departments, and had observed a training session Visniewski had led. Most of the responses were "very positive," he said, with the least positive being that the chief's performance was "certainly satisfactory" given his short time in the position.

Duffy said Visniewski had done "all we asked," and that she appreciated his community outreach, his communication with the selectboard, and the "great job" he did with the budget.

Hankinson commented that he saw the department's work "first-hand" on a medical call, and appreciated the response.

The board also signed a contract to buy a new fire truck for \$550,000, with \$50,000 left for outfitting it, as per the town's capital plan. Visniewski said he expected delivery in "a couple months."

Duffy suggested the department

hold a "show-off" day when the truck arrives, which could also include its new, donated, rescue boat, and "maybe a bonfire."

Visniewski said that this was a possibility, commenting that the department could use the new truck's 3,000 gallons of water to put the bonfire out when it was done. He reported that the children of Leverett Elementary School were currently deliberating on a suitable name for the boat.

### Knowledge Is Work

The selectboard established a policy for charging fees for public records requests. McGinnis said she currently treats requests on a case-by-case basis according to how much time she thinks they will involve, but does not charge a fee for requests taking less than one hour, and often does not charge for those taking longer.

Town clerk Lisa Stratford said that having a policy would be a reminder to "be conscious of our time" and to charge when it is warranted.

The board voted to establish a policy of no charge for public record requests requiring less than an hour of work, and \$25 per hour for additional time, at the discretion of the town clerk and town administrator. This fee structure would also apply to record requests to boards, committee members, and other town employees. The fees would go to the town, not the individuals doing the work.

### Other Business

The selectboard approved the Council on Aging's use of grant money to fund special projects for the senior events coordinator to carry out, for up to four hours

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## INVITATION TO BID

### Montague Center Complete Streets 2026

The Town of Montague is accepting sealed bids for Complete Streets Improvements in Montague Center.

Sealed Bids, plainly marked "Montague - Complete Streets Bid," must be received by Monday, June 22, 2026 at 1:00 PM, at which time all bid packages will be publicly opened and read at the Town Hall Annex Meeting Room at 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA, 01376.

MASSDOT PREQUALIFICATION in the Categories of "Highway - Construction" or "Highway - Sidewalk and Curbing" in the single contract limit amount of \$499,682.80 or more is required. Contractors should contact MassDOT Prequalification Program staff at prequal.r109@dot.state.ma.us with questions about prequalification for this project.

A bid conference will be held on Thursday, June 11, 2026 at 10:00 AM beginning at Montague Town Common, Main Street, Montague, MA 01351. Attendance is not mandatory but is strongly encouraged. The IFB is available at [www.montague-ma.gov/BIDS](http://www.montague-ma.gov/BIDS). Registration is required. Written questions can be submitted to the Project Manager, Chris Nolan-Zeller, at [chrishn@montague-ma.gov](mailto:chrishn@montague-ma.gov) until Monday, June 15, 2026 at 1:00 PM.

The Town of Montague reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids, in total or in part, as they deem in their best interest. This solicitation is being undertaken per M.G.L. c. 30, § 39M and work is subject to Prevailing Wage Requirements, a 5% bid bond/deposit, and 100% Labor and Materials Payment Bond and 100% Performance Bond.

## PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

### MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, the Montague Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing at 6:30 p.m. on **Thursday, June 11, 2026** to review the Request to Amend an Order of Conditions, filed by the **US Geological Survey**, to reconsider Special Conditions 3 & 5 under the previously approved Order of Conditions (NOI #2026-03/DEP #229-0270), at **1 Migratory Way (Parcel #08-0-3)** within buffer zone. A hybrid meeting will be held at the Montague Town Hall Annex, 1 Avenue A in Turners Falls, MA. Remote meeting login information and the filing are available for review at [www.montague-ma.gov/calendar](http://www.montague-ma.gov/calendar).

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

### MONTAGUE ZBA #26-08

Notice is hereby given that the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, June 17, 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 at the request of **Lindsey Lively** for side setback reductions from the required 10 ft to 4 ft and 3 ft, in order to construct a storage shed under Sections 5.5.2(b), 5.5.3(b) and 9.2, located at **194 Turnpike Rd (Parcel 22-0-09), in the RESIDENTIAL 1 (RS-1) District**. The filing is available for review at Town Hall.

In-person meeting details and remote meeting login information can be found at [www.montague-ma.gov/calendar](http://www.montague-ma.gov/calendar).

per week, provided she does not exceed 19 hours per week in total, and with the understanding it was not a permanent change.

Tim Shores was appointed to the energy committee. Nathorst, the co-chair of that committee, said Shores has been working with him on the town building microgrid project, and that it made sense to have him on the committee. Nathorst also said that a number of its other members were retiring and more replacements were needed, and that he is actively recruiting for volunteers.

The selectboard appointed Sarah Fortune as a conservation commission agent. Fortune has 10 years of experience in the field.

The selectboard signed a number

of documents, including letters of support for "one-stop" state grant applications for a town center revisioning process and the Dudleyville Road drainage project; a contract for building the stage at the library's nature park; and an agreement allowing the town's affordable housing trust to employ the services of the affordable housing coordinator recently hired by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

Asked after the meeting about the sale of the former Kittredge estate, Duffy and Proujansky said they had only recently heard the news, and were interested to hear about the new owners' plans. "I'm looking forward to welcoming new neighbors," Duffy said.



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**GILL** from page A1

leaving it uncomfortably depleted, or using funds the town receives from Northfield Mount Hermon (NMH) to cover the expense. The town's options are limited because its count of free cash has not yet been officially certified by the state, so it cannot technically use that account to cover costs.

A fourth option, taxing beyond the limit allowed under Proposition 2½ by sending an override question to voters, was considered undesirable as voters are already being asked to approve a debt exclusion this year to borrow money for a new roof for Gill Elementary School. A previous debt exclusion had approved the initial borrowing for the truck.

Selectboard member John Ward said he felt it was "good political capital" to avoid an override this year.

The bottom line was that drawing another \$50,000 out of the stabilization account, rather than applying the NMH funds, would allow for a reduction in next year's tax rate from \$15.88 per thousand dollars in valuation to \$15.66 per thousand.

"Twenty-two cents adds up to a lot," said selectboard chair Charles Garbiel, who has recently announced his

candidacy for the governor of Massachusetts. "You're being increased \$72, if you're an average person."

Finance committee chair Claire Chang suggested removing an article funding the purchase of a new wood chipper. This led to an extensive discussion of why safety mechanisms on newer woodchippers are helpful to workers, who are otherwise at a higher risk of tumbling into one, but the idea was ultimately dismissed because it would not impact the tax rate in any case.

Having all but dismissed the idea of an override, the officials considered squeezing in a special town meeting on June 22 or 29, if the free cash is certified in time, to use some to backfill the stabilization account. All final decisions were expected to be made this Thursday.

At a half-hour-long selectboard meeting before the joint session, the board fielded a string of questions from resident Dan Flagg about why the decade-plus lag in publishing the town's annual reports had not yet been corrected, despite staff time being put to the task. Clerical assistant Nona LaGrenade said she was working on the FY'14, '15, '16, and '17 reports, but that the bottleneck was receiving required information from various boards and committees.

**WENDELL** from page A1

the loan's terms.

Other spending including WRATS paving, IT maintenance, fire department turnout gear, capital expenses, and stowing money in the reserve fund totaled \$102,100. Voters authorized taking \$100,000 from stabilization to offset the tax rate, leaving \$518,659 in that account. The estimated rate will be \$21.60, down slightly from FY'26.

Voters approved a motion to "support legislative initiatives... to increase equitable treatment in regard to PILOT reimbursements, trust funds, and regional representation of the Quabbin Watershed towns."

A resolution in support of "An Act Establishing Medicare for All" in the state legislature was approved.

Discussion of Article 27 began on the Wendell town listserv several days before the meeting, and continued there afterward. The article, brought by a petition signed by 100 citizens, read, after some whereases:

"WE OPPOSE all forms of discrimination and oppression; WE DECLARE ourselves an Apartheid-Free Community, and to that end WE RECOMMEND that the Wendell Selectboard send this resolution to the Legislature and the Governor."

The motion, read by a selectboard member, was "... that the town vote to accept the resolution declaring the town of Wendell to be an Apartheid-Free Community."

Thirteen citizens spoke either in favor or opposed to the motion, all persuasively. Petitioner Anna Gyorgy was first to speak to the motion, saying: "If you want to know where you are going, you have to know where you have been." She said Amnesty International has called Israel's treatment of Palestinians "apartheid," and that five towns in Vermont have passed similar resolutions.

Citizen Stephen Gross said he strongly opposed the motion, asking what it would accomplish and comparing it to the 2025 town meeting resolution supporting trans rights, which was sent back for revision. Gross argued that a statement by such a small town is a drop in the bucket, but would contribute to anti-semitism and is not a proper function of town government.

Citizen Laura Doughty said she believes the Israeli government's actions are making Jewish people everywhere less safe, and that the US government is giving Israel a green light for anything it does. She supported the resolution.

Citizen Sally Alley Muffin Stuffin proposed an amendment to replace the word "Palestinians" in the article, and deleting its reference to Israel.

Court Dorsey said he opposed this amendment, saying in reference to United States and Israel, "I have had some dysfunctional relationships, and they bring out the worst in both parties." Sending Israel money and weapons serves neither country, he said, and although the resolution as originally written means little, it is a step in the right direction.

The amendment failed by voice vote, and the article failed with a hand count vote, 16 for, 29 against.

A reporter from a national outlet, *The Free Press*, stayed in the non-voting section until the Article 27 discussion when she moved to the side of the town hall and began recording video. Citizen Lynn Davis, who said she seldom speaks at town meetings, said her mother had barely escaped the Holocaust, the article increased divisiveness, and the reporter's recording made her feel less safe.

Citizen Pru Smith asked the reporter to stop recording, citing the potential for abuse of the video via AI and online manipulation. Moderator Katie Nolan told the reporter to return to the visitors' section. She instead left the hall.

Constable Anne Diemand went out with her, and later said that she had explained to the reporter in question that people just wanted to be treated respectfully, and that the reporter had accepted that and left.

As the meeting was ending Nolan, a 14-year moderator, shared news she has been considering for a while, and was not a response to Saturday's meeting: she does not plan to run for the position of moderator next May after her current one-year term expires. Nolan's tenure as moderator is exceeded by that of prior moderator, Kathy Becker, at 29 years. At the end of her term, Becker famously said, "Finally, I can have an opinion."



The coat of arms on Wendell's new playground, inspired in part by the official town flag.

**ILLUMINATE** from page A1

day, and under various weather conditions.

Lively said he felt the board members "had come to a general agreement on light levels," but that how to regulate them remained a question. The "flashing" of the sign to a new display every 15 seconds, which had aroused much controversy in May, was barely mentioned at the hearing's continuation because it had clearly violated the 60-second limit set by town bylaws for a Neighborhood Business district.

The church's pastor, Reverend Stanley Aksamit, who had assertively defended the sign's operation in May, was invited to sit with the ZBA members at the front table this time around. Aksamit chose to remain with his supporters in the audience.

"I am here to listen and learn," he said. "There have been a lot of meetings, with all sorts of people."

Nearly all the ensuing discussion focused on the complexities of regulating the brightness levels of a light by using a photo cell to detect the surrounding brightness. Lively had originally stated that he would prefer the installation of such a cell, but other members expressed doubts, pointing to the impact of a spotlight which had been installed on the church property by Eversource.

"I cringe every time I get the bill for that light," said Aksamit.

An official from the Chicopee-based company Sign Dynamics Incorporated, which installed the sign originally, said that a photo cell could be attached to the back of the sign, but that under state law signs in this zoning district would be limited to 2,000 nits of brightness in the day and 200 nits at night.

Stephanie Stroud, who lives across the street from the church, argued that it would be "reasonable" to keep the brightness at the lowest level at all times, but the Sign Dynamics representative said this would often make the postings unreadable during the day.

In the end, the board members voted unanimously to allow the church to turn the sign back on with the 60-second rule kept in place, brightness levels conforming to state law, and certain colors to be avoided.

The board held off on requiring a photo cell, but said that one could be imposed at a future date, and the hearing was technically continued.

**Flexibility**

At the same meeting, the ZBA granted a special permit to Richard Young to reduce the required frontage for a section of a large lot on Franklin Street in Millers Falls by a foot and a half. The permit will allow Young to divide the lot in half for the potential construction of two residences. If he makes any significant changes to his site plan, he will need to come back to the ZBA for a review.

**Nearly all the ensuing discussion focused on the complexities of regulating the brightness levels of a light by using a photo cell to detect the surrounding brightness.**

The board also granted Joe Burek a special permit to allow a frontage reduction of 30 feet, as well as a minimum lot size reduction of 0.2 acres, so he can convert a shed on Lake Pleasant Road into a "workshop for firewood harvesting."

After the meeting, board members were asked to explain the uncertainty surrounding the use of a photo cell to control the brightness of the church's sign. "We're trying to be flexible," Lively responded. "They do a lot for the community."

"It's the house of God," ZBA member Bob Obear explained.



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BRIAN ZAYATZ PHOTO

**MONTAGUE** from page A1

hired as Montague's chief.

The new agreement he was pitching to the board on Monday would be with the Greenfield fire department and Office of Emergency Management, which own a DJI Matrice 350 drone for outdoor use.

"We've used it a ton for missing persons – that's probably the bread-and-butter of it," Haskins said. "We've been using it for mapping the brush fires that have been going on." He emphasized that it would be used for "incident-driven events," and not "surveillance."

It was the board's first review of the agreement. Town administrator Walter Ramsey said he would likely bring it to the next meeting for a vote after a review by the town's law firm.

Haskins then read a list of his accomplishments during the first six months of his tenure. These ranged from "moderniz[ing] systems and record-keeping" to improving "officer accountability and equipment readiness," securing "multiple grants and external funding," and improving department morale, "which is probably, hugely, one of the most important things to me."

The chief noted an audit and reorganization of the evidence room, "more robust cruiser maintenance tracking," the department becoming the home base for the county cadet training program, and funding to restore the school resource officer to Turners Falls High School.

Haskins said he plans to implement a new Taser and firearm training program which uses goggles and "AI" to simulate a variety of situations, including "don't shoot" scenarios. "As you know, there's been some issues with Tasers," he said. "Tasers, however, are a phenomenal tool."

**Land of Opportunity**

Assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller announced that the US Census tract that includes Turners Falls and a portion of Montague City has been made eligible for "updated Opportunity Zone status" by the state Executive Office of Economic Opportunity. He said that the town was unable to take advantage of a previous assignment of this status, which grants developers certain federal tax credits.

Ramsey said there was "no downside" to reapplying for this

status, and pointed out that the former Farren Hospital property is within the zone.

The community development block grant hearing focused on projects funded with federal FY'24 funding, most of which have been completed. The \$938,328 package included funds for the rehabilitation of seven housing units owned by low-income residents, four social service programs, and the repaving of two parking lots in Turners Falls.

The paving projects came in \$54,320 lower than expected, and the selectboard voted to extend the grant timeline until December 31 and re-allocate the leftover funds to housing rehab, which was not included in the town's FY'25 round.

The board also approved a \$603 payment to Berkshire Design Group for overseeing bidding and construction for streetscape work planned on Avenue A in front of Harvey's restaurant and the Dolan & Dolan law firm.

**Electrons In Bulk**

The overview of the municipal aggregation program, in the form of a lengthy presentation by Paul Gromer of Peregrine Energy Group, was one of the longer items in the meeting. Aggregation, Gromer explained, is "a form of group buying for electricity in which a municipality secures an electricity supply contract for its residents as owners."

Residents' electric bills will continue to include the delivery fee charged by the regional electric company, in this case Eversource, but the supply of energy is chosen by the town, with the goal of securing a lower rate, hedging against seasonal fluctuation, and in some cases choosing a "greener" option. All residents are automatically enrolled, though customers may opt out and either return to Eversource's default supply or choose another source.

Gromer showed a chart comparing Eversource's supply price with Greenfield's aggregated price from 2017 to 2025. The latter was generally lower and steadier, and Eversource's price spiked sharply in the winter of 2022-23, which Gromer attributed to the invasion of Ukraine.

The town has hired Peregrine to guide the process, and town meeting has approved seeking a proposal. Next the town must develop a plan with various options and send it to

the state Department of Public Utilities. If approved, Montague would then choose a supplier through a competitive bidding process.

Gromer, whose company will earn one-tenth of a cent per kilowatt-hour of energy purchased under the program, said the launch could be "like a year down the road."

**Other Business**

Parks and recreation director Jon Dobosz requested the selectboard's permission for the use of town property and entertainment licenses for a number of summer events. "Busy summer," he told the board, "which is always a wonderful thing."

The first request was to close part of Second Street and the parking lot near Unity Park next Saturday, June 13 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the opening of the skatepark. The event will include live music and the dedication of a skateboard memorial to the late Jason Page, who was part of the original campaign to create a skatepark in the 1990s.

Dobosz then read a long list of events that will take place in Peskeompskut Park during the summer, including classic family-friendly movies, music events, and a puppet show. "Retro movies seem to work really well for us," he said.

The board approved all requests.

Nolan-Zeller announced that the state Department of Transportation's small bridge program has awarded Montague \$852,102 to repair a bridge crossing Goddard Brook on Swamp Road near Montague Center. He noted that it had seen additional "wear and tear" during the closure of the South Street bridge, which also links the village to Route 63, for reconstruction last year.

Ramsey announced that the lease on the town-owned building at 34 Central Street, which is used as a daycare center by Pioneer Valley Community Action, will expire in August 2027. He said the agency wants to extend the lease, which dates to 1997, and has approached the town to gauge its intentions. He suggested considering a lease term of 10 years, or selling the building.

"I've never been interested in owning too many buildings, so if they're interested, we should have a discussion," said Kuklewicz.

The next selectboard meeting will be held Monday, June 15.



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

*Here's the way it was on June 2, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.*

**Leverett: Affordable Green Energy**

At the regular Leverett select-board meeting on Tuesday, the energy committee put forth two green energy providers, Colonial Power and its national competitor Good Energy, to supply energy to the town of Leverett.

Good Energy works with Mass Energy, a nonprofit striving to make energy more affordable. "All residents of Leverett will be a unit, and will be able to purchase energy in bulk," explained Judith Davidov. Residents could opt in or opt out of the program.

The board also received fair

warning from fire chief Gene Beaubien that the fire department budget is facing a negative balance, and will soon need funds to function properly.

**Gill: Police Cruiser Choices**

On Tuesday the Gill select-board discussed the purchase of a police cruiser, either a Ford Interceptor sedan for \$37,125 or a Ford Interceptor all-wheel-drive utility vehicle for \$38,825.

Selectboard member John Ward voiced concern that the size of Gill did not warrant three cruisers, while board members Greg Snedeker and Randy Crochier felt differently. Retired police officer Fred Chase II argued that when one person is responsible for each cruiser, each vehicle is better maintained.

**20 YEARS AGO**

*Here's the way it was on June 1, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter archive.*

**Railroad Salvage Collapses**

On May 27, a 6:21 p.m. walk-in to the Turners Falls police station reported that part of the Railroad Salvage building had just collapsed into Power Street. By the time selectboard member Pat Allen pulled up to view the dam-

age about an hour later, a second section of the wall had fallen.

Five days earlier, G Street resident Hyrum Huskey had told the selectboard: "It's a pretty dangerous situation. Every time I walk by there, I find the doorways open. You know how kids are. My fear is one of these days we're going to lose a kid."

Barriers had been set up on both ends of Power Street in February when officials feared an imminent collapse.

**140 YEARS AGO**

*Here's the way it was on June 2, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.*

**Turners Falls and Vicinity**

The town was filled with drunk men on Memorial day.

The currant worm is abroad, and his appetite is just as good as ever.

The sufferers from the shakes increase in numbers as the season advances. Geo. W. Carey lost a horse last week.

There are now sixteen families occupying cottages at Lake Pleasant, and they receive a daily mail from Montague.

Some extraordinary strings of trout have been caught this spring, and to hear fishermen tell of taking a hundred in a few hours is quite common.

A state detective got samples of milk from all the milk pedlars some time ago, and we shall some time, perhaps, know who carries longest at the brook.

There will be a 100 yard foot race on Franklin park, Greenfield, for a purse of \$50, June 16, between M. Jackman, of Greenfield, the well known sprint runner, and

William Parker, of Turners Falls, in which Jackman gives Parker four yards handicap.

Wm. Brown (of course that is only a drunk name) paid Justice Dana \$1.00 and costs yesterday for imbibing.

A young daughter of Gottlieb Haigis backed under the feet of a horse driven by young Amos Adams, the other day, and had her leg broken.

It is a wonder that youngsters are not killed in the streets every day. They run around the streets by hundreds, dive in and out among the horses' legs, and are pushed in front of teams by their companions, without the slightest thought or care of danger, and no driver feels safe until he gets out of the streets which are like an ant-heap with sprawling children. In the warm sand of the centre of the street, they find their most congenial play ground.

A citizen of G Street suggests a good way to stop the gab of some of the windbags at town meeting. Let the political parties refuse to pay the poll taxes of such fellows for a few years.

The "patch" is to be henceforth known as the "South End."



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**SPORTS** from page A1

the hill, including a bevy of children from toddlers to high schoolers.

As his players took to the field in the second inning, I asked coach Joe Gamache how things were going. "Well," he replied, "their pitcher's good."

That was evident in the second inning, as the Eagles went down 1-2-3. In the third, the Tide surged. The first four batters got hits and the fifth reached on an error, putting the Lady Birds in a 4-1 hole, but a pop out, a K, and a ground-out retired the side.

In the fourth, the Eagles put up a rally of their own. Charley Knight sliced a one-out base hit and advanced to third on a Breanna Kempf single. Kempf was replaced on base by Ava Worden. The next batter popped out to the catcher, handing Tech two outs with runners on the corners. Sofia Melnik came up to bat and proceeded to get a base hit. As the runners rounded the bases, Melnik raced to second. She beat the throw and both Knight and Worden scored, making it 4-3. Emma Petersen was hit by a pitch, but a strikeout sent the Eagles back to the field.

The game remained 4-3 until the top of the seventh inning, when the Tide's leadoff batter got a hit and advanced on a fielders' choice. With the Tide's insurance run on second and one out, Tech pulled a double play and went to the plate still trailing by a run. Alison George was hit by a pitch and Amelia Rider then hit safely, putting two runners on base with one out.

Then Lindsey Taylor came to the plate, and cracked the ball over everyone's heads, deep into the outfield. All the runners got the green light. They raced around the bases, trailed by Taylor, who never stopped and just beat the throw at home plate. But her run didn't count, because Franklin didn't need it. The two runs she had batted in were all the Eagles needed to advance deeper into the playoffs.

**Holbrook 9 – TFHS 5**

The Turners Falls Blue Thunder, meanwhile, were upended by the visiting Holbrook Bulldogs. I listened to the first few innings on the radio while at Tech, which I found a little confusing, especially when Turners was batting while the Eagles were in the field and vice versa. Luckily, after the Tech game ended Turners was still in the fourth inning.

The Bulls drew first blood to go up 1-0 but in the bottom of the second, leadoff hitter Ivy Lopez cracked the ball over the fence and tied it up.

In the Holbrook third, an RBI and a bases-loaded walk handed the visitors a 3-1 edge. In the bottom of the inning, Madisyn Dietz took a one-out walk and Maddie Haight and Janelle Massey loaded the bases with singles. Autumn Thornton then hit an RBI sacrifice, but the next batter was called out and the Thunder

went back into the field trailing 3-2.

Then the game was delayed. The Bear announcers weren't exactly sure what the circumstances were, but after a significant delay and a few off-field conferences, a person was escorted off the property. By that time the Tech game was wrapping up. As I drove to the high school, though, Holbrook was knocking hit after hit after hit, and when I arrived at the game, it was 9-2.

The game was well-attended, and the blue coats were loud and enthusiastic, never giving up. Neither did the players. In the fifth, a running catch by Lopez and two ground outs kept the score at 9-2. Four Thunder players reached base in the bottom of the inning, but a double play and a grounder prevented any runs. And Turners was down to their last six outs.

The Blue Ladies made one last gasp in the sixth. Abigail Moffatt smacked a one-out base hit, advanced on a wild pitch, and was batted in by Jo-Jo Hayman. Eva Lareau then placed a single and was replaced on first by Autumn DiMare. Addison Talbot knocked in Hayman, and Dietz walked, loading the bases. Haight followed up with a grounder, and Talbot was thrown out at third, allowing DiMare to score.

That was all the damage they could do – going into the seventh, it was a 9-5 game. Three batters hit flies into the outfield in the Holbrook seventh, but each one was tracked down by Lopez. In the last at-bats of the 2026 season, all three batters hit the ball solidly, but the Holbrook outfielders came up with the out each time.

As the Thunder Ladies packed up, there weren't a lot of tears. The upperclasswomen had won two state titles, and the younger girls can look forward to more seasons of competitive play, and more chances for success.



Season's end: A somber Thunder comes together for the post-game handshake at Mullins Field following their 9-5 loss to Holbrook in the Round of 32 tournament game last Sunday.

**FCTS 4 – West Boylston 2**

On Tuesday the Eagles traveled to West Boylston to take on the undefeated Red Lions in the Round of 16. The fifth-seeded Lions were favored on paper, but the Eagles weren't cowed. They came out swinging immediately, scoring a run in the top of the first inning. The Cats tied it up in the second, but Franklin nosed ahead in the third and scored two more in the fourth. Red scored one run in the fifth for a final score of 4-2.

I asked coach Gamache what went right. He spoke about Brayleigh Burgh – "we got a solid pitching performance" – and he spoke about the defense: "Girls turned a double play, made a diving grab, had a great relay to throw a runner out at third, and executed a run-down play to perfection to get another runner out at third." But he also spoke about timely hits. Tech scored their runs on just six singles, from six different batters: Taylor, Burgh, Petersen, Kempf, Knight, and Lyla Mickiewicz.

The win propels the Eagles to the Elite Eight. Their next game is out in Maynard this Saturday, when they'll try to knock off the four-seed Tigers and keep the season alive.

**Baseball****FCTS 15 – Monson 5**

On Sunday, the boys from Franklin Tech broke the Mustangs of Monson in the Division 5 Round of 32. Because it was sprinkling out, the game started 20 minutes early, which helped because I was there for first pitch. Some folks who dribbled in later were a little perturbed they missed the start.

Monson scored in the first inning off a walk, a steal, an error, and an RBI, but Tech turned a double play and a strikeout, limiting the damage to one run. When they came back to the dugout, the coaches could



DAVID HOITT PHOTOS

Franklin Tech pitcher Levi Clark delivers from the mound during last Sunday's Round of 32 home game against the Monson Mustangs. The Eagles advanced on a 15-5 win, but were eliminated Wednesday.

be heard instructing their players on how to improve their fielding. Though they are in the playoffs, the coaches still took the time to reinforce their play.

In the bottom of the inning, the Eagles got the run back. Hunter Donahue led off with a standup double, and Brody Hicks batted him home on a sacrifice. I was across campus at the softball game, but I received periodic updates that the boys were "doing very well."

It took them a while to get there. Both teams scored three in the third to keep it knotted at 4-4, but in the fourth the Eagles let loose, scoring 10 runs. The teams traded final runs in the fifth, and the game was called after that.

The Eagles banded out 15 hits in the win, including doubles by George Gutierrez, Jr., and Wayne Bardwell and a single, a double, and a triple from Donahue. Levi Clark was the starting pitcher, with Braeden Talbot coming in on relief.

The win propelled the Eagles into the Sweet Sixteen round.

**West Boylston 9 – TFHS 1**

Across the state, in West Boylston, the Turners boys lost to the Red Lions, eliminating them from the playoffs and ending their season. The Red Cats scored a run in the first inning and two more in the third. The Thunder came back in the fourth to make it 3-1, but the Boylston boys put four more runs in the bank in the bottom of the inning to put the game out of reach, and then two more to make the final 9-1.

Turners had six hits in the loss, from Kainen Stevens, Julian Kaiser, Liam Kerivan, Ethan Eichorn and Nathaniel Trinke, who hit twice and got the RBI, with Kerivan scoring the run. Kaiser, Stevens, and Davis Burnett all pitched for Blue.

**Georgetown 9 – FCTS 2**

For the Franklin Tech Baseball Eagles, the season came to a close on Wednesday as the second-seeded Georgetown Royals knocked them out of tournament.

The Eagles scored first, but the lead was temporary, as the Royals scored four runs in the bottom of the first. In the sixth, down 8-1, Franklin scored a second run, but the Georges matched even that for a 9-2 final.

Donahue scored both runs for the Eagles, and Nicholas Prasol registered an RBI. Talbot, Mason Bassett, and Joseph Bobala shared pitching duties.



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Amanda Gorman, *The Hill We Climb*

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Above: Canada goose parents give their adorable, fluffy young a workshop on how to sit right on the [expletive] bike path.

BOOK REVIEW

# The Past That Won't Go Away: Al Miller's Reason for Kindness

By RICHARD ANDERSEN

**MONTAGUE** – How a kid from an ordinary American family gets turned into a weapon whose humanity can never be eradicated and whose self-forgiving peace can never be fully realized is the subject for examination in Al Miller's exquisitely rendered, deeply felt, intelligently explored new collection of poems and prose narratives.

The structure of *A Reason for Kindness* is chronological, but because so many depictions of the events come with references to what came before, what is, and what lies ahead, the time in this collection – past, present, and future – often seems to be taking place almost simultaneously.

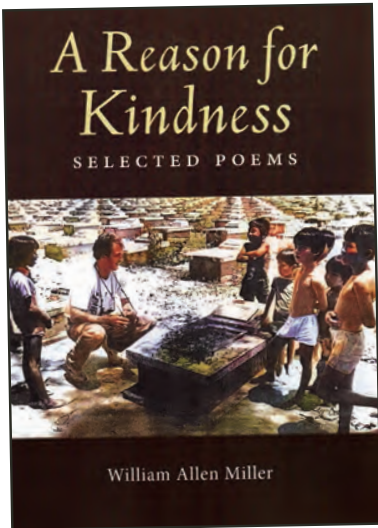
Al's opening poem provides a good example. Describing the farm where he grew up, Al wants to hear "a bobwhite call its name," smell the "scent of sassafras," and hear "bullfrogs talking the daylight down." Feel the picture?

You won't for long.

Once the Demerol wears off, Al rolls over on the plastic-protected mattress, and you look at the reality of the now: a hospital ward filled with no-longer-

youthful young men. You see in their eyes what they see in Al's. And then it hits you: the breaking bones and tearing flesh.

Al asks himself, *am I alive?*

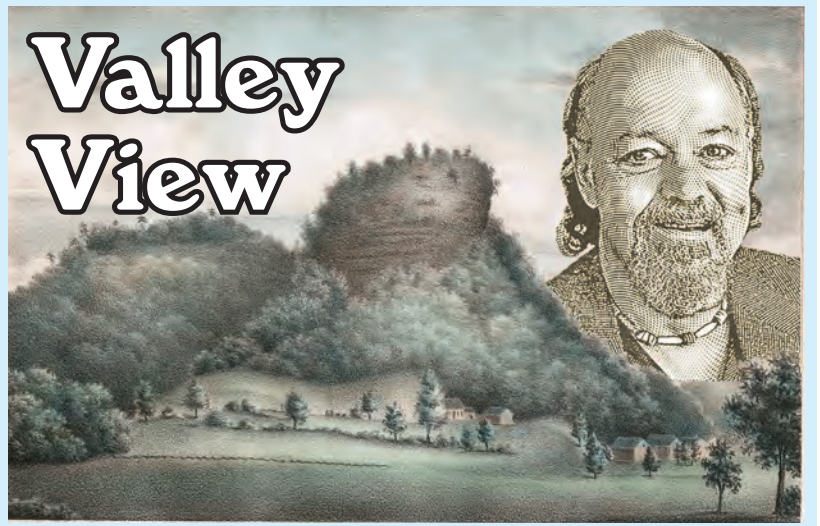


Al was the tenth child in a family of Depression-era farmers in southern Missouri. His eldest sister, unknown to him, died under the wheels of a tractor when she was eight. A cousin who died in the Korean War was never mentioned. Neither was Vietnam, despite Al's older brother having served there.

Al learned in school that America was fighting communism in the jungles of Southeast Asia so he wouldn't have to fight it in the streets of Galesburg. He was 19 when he got drafted in 1968. Until then, he thought the military was a rite of passage for young men who needed a way to prove their masculinity. He wasn't keen on the idea of being shipped to Vietnam, and even thought about dodging the draft in Canada, but imagining what his family would say scared him more than dying in a rice paddy.

Al's family was proud of his meeting his obligation to defend democracy, but boot camp, with its universal

see REASON page B8



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## The Artist's Burial Place

By GARY SANDERSON

**GREENFIELD** – Finally, I think, my search for 19th-century Greenfield folk artist George Washington Mark's grave is in the rearview. And go figure: it was hiding in plain sight.

I stumbled across the answer in the "No. 1" condition listed on Mark's 1873 Franklin County probate court will, published on *Ancestry.com*. When I contacted Forest Hill Cemetery sexton Matthew Lockhart in Charlestown, New Hampshire, he confirmed that Mark is indeed named on a family stone there.

The next day Lockhart took it a helpful step further, emailing me a photo he took of the Mark family stone, erected some years before the artist's July 29, 1879 death. It displays a humble white marble gravestone memorializing the Charlestown family of John Mark and sister wives Hannah and Zerviah Thomas. Below their names is a list of nine children – including "George W."

So, there we have it. Charlestown family etched in stone. G.W. Mark's final resting place presumably pinpointed for posterity.

I had speculated in recent months that Mark's grave was most likely in the Summer Hill Cemetery across the Connecticut River from Charlestown in Springfield, Vermont. My suspicion was based on the fact that in 1866 Mark had erected stones there for graves of his mother, Hannah Thomas, who had died in 1799, and brother William, birth and death dates unknown, who died at 18 months old. One would think his 1866 action suggests that Mark, who most experts agree was born in 1795, remembered the tragic passing of his mother and brother.

Because no 20th-century researchers identified the cemetery where Mark is buried, I assumed that this was the intention of the quirky artisan, who was said to have grown increasingly eccentric as he aged. Plus, according to a

January 31, 1897 *Springfield Republican* feature about his surviving art works, Mark had demanded that "no funeral service would be held over his body." Given that juicy tidbit, I thought it possible that he was cool with resting in an anonymous grave.

Not necessarily so, however, in light of recent discoveries. I guess previous researchers either didn't think it important to identify his gravesite, or intentionally sidestepped a potentially time-consuming effort.

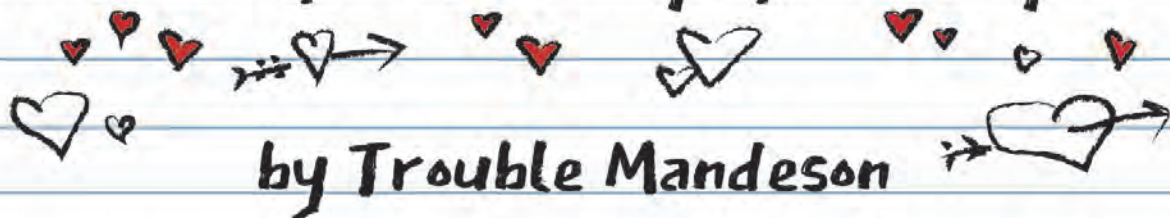
Mark's will clearly spelled out his burial wishes, which are repeated in a December 7, 1876 codicil recorded four days after the unexpected death of its first executor, Wendell T. Davis of Greenfield. The codicil appointed a new executor: Franklin G. Fessenden (1849-1931), a lawyer who came to Greenfield from Fitchburg in 1874 as a recent graduate of Harvard law school.

Fessenden, who would go on to serve as a Franklin Superior Court judge from 1891 to 1922, became the steward of Mark's collected works. After his death, the paintings stayed in his barn before going through the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association in Old Deerfield to a New York City department store that ultimately sold them to collectors.

G.W. Mark was buried in a 700-pound metal coffin which he had purchased some eight years before his death from downtown cabinetmaker and undertaker Joel Lyons. Patrons familiar with Mark's place of business in downtown Greenfield knew this cumbersome casket, which he is said to have used as a table. It was purchased, Mark said, to spare his family the expense, and it was destined by his will – most likely by rail – for Charlestown, New Hampshire's "old burial ground." There he was to be interred by Fessenden and "12 assistants," paid by the estate.

I searched Mark's online probate file and was unable to verify see VALLEY VIEW page B3

## NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE



**GREENFIELD** – Dear Reader, I've just returned from two weeks in Italy and Croatia with my wife, and it's kind of ruined me for American food. Once you've had an Italian antipasto plate with thinly-sliced meats, cheeses, and tomatoes served on an outdoor patio by the Venice canals with straw-hatted gondoliers rowing past, well, it's hard to look at a hot dog or tuna casserole quite the same.

The dishes we ate were bursting with flavor. Seafood was freshly caught; paper-thin slices of prosciutto and mortadella were folded into ribbons of fatty goodness that melted on the tongue; and local farm-sourced *fior di latte*, buffalo mozzarella, was buttery, and tangy when paired with tomato, basil, and olive oil on crusty bread.

Meals there are structured during certain times and in a particular order, and much smaller portions

are eaten. A light breakfast starts around 7 a.m. with a coffee drink and a sweet pastry or croissant. A large lunch is eaten at 1 p.m., after which there's a rest period until the dinner hour. Italians do not drink coffee with milk after 11 a.m., so don't try to order a cappuccino or latte in the afternoon.

The evening meal begins around 6 or 7 p.m. with an *aperitivo*, a pre-dinner cocktail. Alcohol is

served not just in restaurants and cafes, but in gelato shops too. I fell in love with the Aperol Spritz, made from equal parts Prosecco, soda water, and Aperol, a liqueur with a fiery orange color. Every evening meal started with a spritz, and we've already bought the ingredients to make them at home.

Around 8 p.m. the *primo piatto* is served, usually pasta, and then

see HEARTFELT page B4



CATHY GOUGH PHOTO

Fresh homemade pasta with seafood likely caught that morning.

# Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

## ‘WINI’

Meet curious and playful Wini, an indoor kitten who loves hunting bugs and mice. Much to her mother's dismay, Wini adores play fighting, wrestling, and has an occasional nighttime zoomy, though she prefers quiet, affectionate evenings.

Wini is comfortable around children, strangers, and cats, and is housetrained. Her human family hopes to find her a forever home, where she can enjoy endless hours

of sunbathing by a window.

Wini requires spaying within 30 days of adoption. There is no adoption fee. She now lives in Springfield. To adopt this bundle of adventurous joy, find "Available Community Animals" under the "Adopt" menu at [www.dakin-humane.org](http://www.dakin-humane.org). A potential adopter must submit an application, interview and meet the pet, and sign an adoption contract.

## Pancakes, Corn Dogs, and Cholent at the Polish Club

### Is 'Paw Paw Culinary Club' a sign of changing times?

**TURNERS FALLS** – "I made a resolution to myself to never throw another party without food."

Despite being a maxim that every woman has always known, this was the guiding principle that Chris Hinkle discovered at 40 and grew into a monthly food pop-up.

"Paw Paw Culinary Club is a nonprofit which seeks to advance culinary diversity in Franklin County. We do this by throwing parties," Hinkle said, plopping onto my couch after developing the recipe for batched Long Island Iced Teas for the following night's dinner.

Paw Paw Culinary Club originally began in 2024 as a vinyl record night at the Brick & Feather Brewery, one really long block away from its current home at St. Kaz. At the first event, everyone got hungry, so Hinkle, the hero of our story, had the best, most original idea in the history of parties: he ran to Mohawk Grill, the food truck run by the Palestinian-born Franklin County-beloved Ismail Asaad, and purchased an armful of shawarma.

"People need to eat. If there's no food at the party, there's no party," says Hinkle.

In a risky and brave business decision, Hinkle decided right then and there to move his party to a night that already had food: Patch Burger, a Greenfield guy who brings his own grill and who, according to Hinkle, makes the best hamburgers in New England.

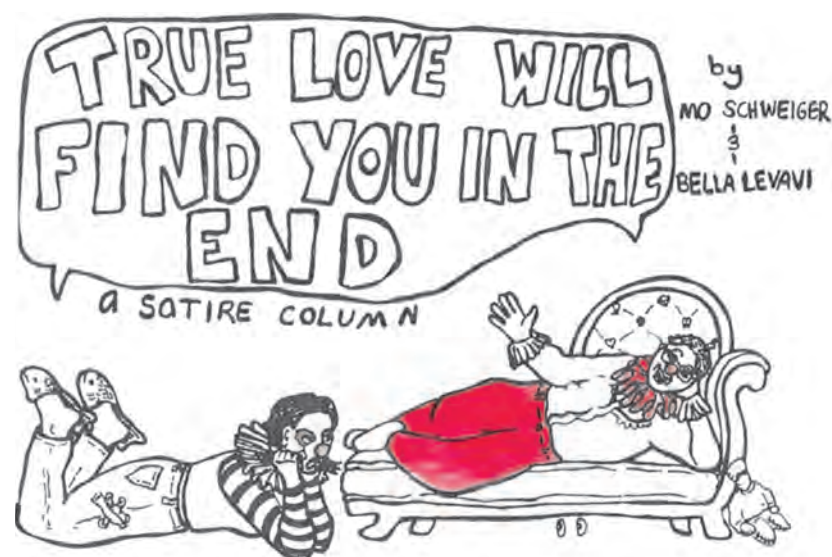
Once the burger-ful summer turned to winter, everything changed: Brick & Feather was only able to serve food in the summertime, because they were vent-less.

Hinkle got a tip on the smoking porch of the Rendezvous from a strange and faceless woman who called herself the Gentrification Fairy: "There is an unused commercial kitchen at St. Kaz, just one really long block away," she whispered in his ear, before returning to her perch on the stoplight at the intersection of Avenue A and Third to look down upon her kingdom.

Hinkle commenced the trip down the really long block, and after puzzling for a moment over how to get into the bar, walked in and asked: "Hey, can I have a party here?"

"They were like 'Wait, who are you?'" Hinkle said.

One year and many gumbo nights later, the party was christened Paw Paw Culinary Club, and scheduled to take place one Friday night each month featuring food cooked by emerging chefs, punks who think it wouldn't be that hard to run a restaurant for a night, and local favorites including the aforementioned Patch Burger.



Hinkle leaves no risk for the chefs: he pays for all of the ingredients, gives the chefs a guarantee of \$275 just for showing up, and then pays all his staff. If there is extra money the chef gets an extra \$125, and anything on top of that is split 60/40 between the Paw Paw 501(c)4, as a cushion for slow nights, and the chef.

Who, you might be asking, is this elusive puppet master?

"I'm Chris Hinkle and I like to party," he says.

Following a pandemic that led to beloved restaurants across San Francisco closing, Hinkle discovered nature, which was then immediately ruined by wildfires. With nothing left for him on the West Coast he decided to move to Turners Falls, where he had one friend.

Hinkle was in a unique position during the pandemic, having had a decade of experience working remotely before the Zoom boom. He worked as a software engineer for several failed startups, including one that reinvented the walkie-talkie in computer form, and another, named "mmhmm," that created an extension that made green-screen backgrounds for Zoom.

"It's the worst name ever for a company, and a product," Hinkle says, explaining that it was designed to be able to be said with food in your mouth. (Unlike "Paw Paw," which you must swallow your bite of organ-meat sliders to say.)

These days, Hinkle, who lives in Northfield with his wife, spends his time working at the bakery Rise Above in order to learn about kitchen workflow problems to inform his next tech venture: creating an app to minimize them.

Hinkle is part of a wave of remote workers who moved to the Valley and purchased homes during the pandemic – unlike me, who many would fairly describe as a "yuppie transplant" but who does not have enough money to buy a house.

"There's the G-word, gentrification: elevating food and focusing on food experiences is part of that," Hinkle admits.

A term that I've heard used to describe what is taking place in Franklin County is "rural gentrification" – wealthy people with remote jobs moving here from cities, straining local infrastructure and pricing people out of their homes, changing the culture of the area.

Though I am but a monthly satire author, my research shows that while the housing crisis here is at a peak right now, it is not the first time something like this has happened. Subcultural migrants in the latter half of the 1900s included

some hoping to connect with the land, some hoping to live communally, and some to practice Vipassana meditation because the hills are cosmically aligned for such a practice. Not to mention people moving here before then to violently colonize the area.

All to say: this cycle has been taking place for a long time, though it is true that houses in Franklin County are currently at least \$100,000 more expensive than they were in 2019.

Hinkle isn't the first to mention rural gentrification when talking about his events. Some criticize the pop-ups for being cost-prohibitive – especially in a club that has historically been for working-class Polish immigrants and their descendants, who reap few benefits from transplants arriving with jobs already on their computers.

Hinkle explains that he hopes his events can add to the culture of Turners Falls, rather than keep anyone out. He has joined the board at St. Kaz, and early on at Paw Paw nights the bar is still full of its regulars, including the 103-year-old palm reader Lee Evers, who recently predicted that I had joined the Y two years ago and who Hinkle reports "loves Patch Burger."

"I've worked hard to keep the Paw Paw and St. Kaz identities separate, so that they can have their own lives," says Hinkle. "I wear different hats because I want both to succeed."

The first time I went to the pop-up, I dragged a card table onto the porch, lit Shabbos candles, and insisted that everyone out there sing prayers in a language they had never heard before. So, from one college-educated yuppie to another, I can say with conviction that I am not the person to determine whether the Paw Paw Culinary Club is meaningfully decreasing the quality of life for people in Turners Falls by contributing to its gentrification.

What I *can* say is that I love to chain-smoke on the porch at these events with my friends who have the exact same background as me just as much as I love to dance with people who tell me they've been hanging out at the Polka Night in this building since they were six. And I commend anyone who has the chutzpah to effectively organize literally anything in Franklin County – especially something that takes a lot of coordination, and that people regularly get excited about.

Even if that means they sell out of the food before I get there.

**TLWFYITE,**  
**Mandy Mudballs**

## Senior Center Activities JUNE 8 THROUGH 12

### 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 6/8

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

#### Tuesday 6/9

9 a.m. Stretch and Balance  
10 a.m. Line Dancing  
11 a.m. Social Stringer  
1 p.m. Friends' Meeting

#### Wednesday 6/10

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

#### Thursday 6/11

9 a.m. Barre Fusion  
10 a.m. Pilates Flow  
1 p.m. GSB Scam Prevention

#### Friday 6/12

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

### LEVERETT

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

### WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is July 1.

Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

### GILL and MONTAGUE

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

#### Monday 6/8

10:15 a.m. Aerobics  
11 a.m. Chair Exercise  
12 p.m. Pot Luck

#### Tuesday 6/9

9 a.m. Chair Yoga  
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday  
4:30 p.m. Office Hours with

Selectboard Member  
Marina Goldman

#### Wednesday 6/10

Foot Clinic by Appointment  
10:15 a.m. Outdoor Yoga  
at the Discovery Center

#### Thursday 6/11

4 p.m. Mat Yoga  
9 a.m. Smashed Pottery  
Mosaic Class

#### Friday 6/12

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

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**VALLEY VIEW** from page B1  
the *Republican's* forbidden-funeral-service claim.

Mark's will also provided \$200 for "improvements" to both of the cemeteries where his parents and siblings lie. In 1879, according to the AI Genie, \$200 was the equivalent of nearly \$6,700 today. Among other cash bequests, his widow received \$600 and George Sheldon's Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Society got \$100.

So, it seems, the mystery of George Washington Mark's gravesite has been solved for posterity.

Or has it?  
Confusing matters, we know that at least two of the 12 people named on that Charlestown stone are not, in fact, buried there. Hannah Thomas and her infant son William are interred across the river in Springfield – both most likely around Hannah's posted 1799 death.

Though the Charlestown monument is without question the most reliable, extant, Mark family register, there is no documentation of burial for any of the 12 names inscribed on the stone, including two Johns, two Williams, and two Marys. Three of the names, though not George W.'s, are accompanied by the years they died – William (1809), Zerviah (1818) and Mary (1828) – strongly suggesting they lie there. The rest remain open to conjecture.

"Record keeping was not great for the cemeteries in the past," explained Lockhart, who photographed the Mark records for me and shared them by email.

As for George W., his will strongly suggests he lies in Charlestown, unless he intentionally threw up a smokescreen. That seems unlikely, even for a peculiar, flashy-dressing folk artist known on the street as an Ichabod Crane lookalike. Perhaps the best way to settle the issue would be to scan the plot with a metal detector. If it goes wild, we'll have our answer. If not, well, maybe a subsequent scan across the river in Springfield would set the record straight.

Which brings us to another Mark matter: that is a quick glance at another recently-discovered mystery, this one concerning the artist's lineage. One would presume that Mark's father came

from similar Scots-Irish ancestry as another John Mark who died in 1832 and is buried at Gilsum, New Hampshire's Centennial Cemetery. There is, however, no evidence of a genealogical link between the two men from a southern New Hampshire landscape saturated with Scots-Irish DNA.

The "John Mark" gravestone in Gilsum identifies him as a "native of Ireland, parish of Ahoghill, county of Antrim," but I could find nothing connecting him and his Charlestown namesake. *Ancestry.com* census records identify Vermont as the birthplace of G.W. Mark's parents, but the citation is weak, and offers not a whiff of family origin. Then an intriguing caveat: G.W. Mark's Greenfield death record identifies his father's birthplace as "Germany."

Hmmm? *Germany*? Where did that come from? Most likely from his widow, a second wife who probably answered questions from the town clerk off the top of her head. The Mark surname could indeed be either Scots-Irish or German, though, and both lineages would have been prevalent in frontier, post-Revolutionary Vermont and New Hampshire.

Scots-Irish immigrants from a circa-1720 migration to New England were among the earliest settlers of inland New Hampshire towns, and became known over time for their military valor in the French & Indian and Revolutionary wars. Then, during the Revolution, came an influx of Redcoat Hessian soldiers from the so-called Northern Campaign, many of whom deserted from the Lake Champlain-Lake George-Hudson Valley battlefield and slipped furtively into nascent settlements on the Vermont/New Hampshire frontier.

Could Mark's father have been such a man? Or, for that matter, a Hessian soldier who served honorably and decided to stay in America? Though the answer may be now be out of reach, one never knows. There may yet be another dangling thread of inquiry worth tugging.

Gary Sanderson lives in Greenfield. Questions and comments at [gary@oldtavernfarm.com](mailto:gary@oldtavernfarm.com).



**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG**

**Hissing Porch Possum; Backwards Cap; Bear and Cubs; Embarrassed Biker; Dog Dragging Run; Hacked Phone**

**Monday, 5/25**

7:20 a.m. Holyoke PD out with a vehicle; would like Montague PD officer to go to an address in our town to see if an individual knows where this vehicle is. Officer made contact with male party and got his number for Holyoke police to contact him. Car was involved in a chase that ended in a crash. Officer states male said he left the keys in the vehicle. Officer bringing male to fill out stolen vehicle form to fax to Holyoke.

11:06 a.m. Caller wanted on record that her "No Library" sign near the intersection of Bangs and Federal streets was stolen. Report taken.

12:01 p.m. Report of assault by a family member. Caller requests to have the incident on record; contacting DCF for further advisement.

**Tuesday, 5/26**

12:01 a.m. Officer conducting vehicle stop on Main Street. Registered owner showing active warrant. Registered owner not in vehicle.

12:48 a.m. Officer out with male going through the trash at Food City. Male moved along.

1:15 a.m. Caller from Greenfield Road states that a pickup truck was pulled to the side of the road and then traveling slowly down the street, possibly going to mailboxes. Investigated. Driver is delivering papers.

11:55 a.m. Detail officer advising of a tractor-trailer unit stuck at the top of Seventh Street at High Street. Area checked; all clear.

4:08 p.m. Caller from Avenue A states that a possum is living on the porch and she would like it removed. Unsure if it has babies, but

it was hissing last night, and she has cats. Referred to another agency.

6:37 p.m. Caller would like officers to check on a baby deer that is lying on the side of Lake Pleasant Road. The mother had crossed the road with another baby; caller unsure if deer is alive or hurt. Officer checked area; deer gone upon arrival.

7:19 p.m. Loose dog on Hillside Road; could be injured. Large, tan, shaggy dog with electric fence collar. Dog reunited with owner.

8:04 p.m. Walk-in reporting threatening/harassment. Report taken.

8:28 p.m. Officer checking on vehicle with no plates in the Third Street public lot. Registration status inactive. Vehicle towed by Byrne's.

**Wednesday, 5/27**  
1:25 p.m. Caller from Montague City Road states that a worker inside the building is playing music very loudly and disturbing her peace. Music has been turned down; no issues.

1:36 p.m. Caller concerned about a tree company doing work on Depot Street with equipment in the road, but no detail or flagger. Per officer, tree company advised of complaint. They will move the truck closer to the curb.

1:55 p.m. Caller states that a male party with a backwards baseball hat has been drinking alcohol in Peskeompskut Park almost every day. Officer made contact with people at the park who said that the male had been there, but left in the direction of Food City. Area checked; unable to locate.

7:57 p.m. Caller was walking her dog near High Street and Crocker Ave-

nue and another dog attacked her dog. She would like to speak to the animal control officer (ACO) tomorrow; her dog seems OK, but shaken up. Caller states attacker dog needed to be fenced in or on a run; was not nice at all. Report taken.

8:36 p.m. Caller reporting a lot of smoke in the Plains area. Referred to another agency.

**Thursday, 5/28**  
12:25 a.m. Caller from Park Street reports that a black bear went through his yard roughly 10 minutes ago. States bear and cubs were headed towards Unity Street. Info passed along to ACO.

9:46 a.m. Caller states that a turtle is stuck in a fence on the bike path near Sadie's Bikes. ACO notified and responding. ACO freed turtle, and it made its way to wherever it was headed.

1:11 p.m. Caller from Grand Avenue states that the next door neighbor has been putting her dog's poop into their trash barrels when she is out walking the dog. It has been happening for months, and the trash company won't pick up their trash if they see the poop bags in there. Officer advised neighbor of complaint; they denied that they were the ones doing it.

1:57 p.m. 911 call from Nouria; employee reporting that a vehicle just crashed into the fence on their property. No injuries reported. Vehicle towed; report taken.

4:11 p.m. 911 caller reporting suspicious activity on Bridge Street. Referred to an officer.

6:24 p.m. Caller reports he is walking in the Plains and two dirtbikes went by him. Per officer, caller advised to contact Environmental Police.

6:50 p.m. Caller from Walnut Street reports that last week she was bitten by a small Yorkie. Wants on record; she is contacting the ACO. Report taken.

**Friday, 5/29**  
4:35 p.m. Walk-in looking to speak to an officer regarding ongoing suspicious activity at a Sunset Drive property. Advised of options.

10:04 p.m. 911 call from Cumberland Farms; employee reports that a male party on a motorcycle by the air machine just urinated on himself, fell over, and then tried to get back onto the bike. Officer advises male party stopped to use the bathroom, was in a rush, and dropped his motorcycle. No signs of impairment.

**Saturday, 5/30**  
7:37 a.m. Caller from

Grand Avenue reports she was confronted by her landlord and another woman renting a room within the residence about something being taken; the involved female pushed her and stated she was lying about it. Caller reports landlord then said that the caller initiated the altercation. Officer returned call and left detailed message for caller.

9:05 a.m. 911 abandoned call from business line at Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center. Confirmed not an emergency; accidental dial while using paging system.

4:38 p.m. Officer checking area for female who was being rude to an employee at Crestview Liquor.

6:17 p.m. Caller from East Main Street would like on record that her neighbor has been playing music too loudly all day. Report taken.

8:25 p.m. Caller from Hillside Road states that she let her dog out and when she went to let her back in, the dog and the dog run were gone. Small brown dog, black collar, should be dragging a run; name is Dixie. Unable to locate.

9:58 p.m. Caller states that she was assaulted by a guy she was seeing on May 2 and would like to file a report. Officer took report.

**Sunday, 5/31**  
6:04 a.m. Officer out on Third Street with a vehicle that has an open door. Nobody around vehicle; doesn't appear to have been gone through. Investigated.

10:33 a.m. Gill PD requesting a K9 track on South Cross Road for past breaking and entering. Services rendered.

2:50 p.m. Caller reports that the DPW went to the transfer station to dump trash; while the gates were open, people entered and then refused to leave when asked. Requesting officers respond to speak to the involved parties and to let them out if they didn't find an alternate route. Officer advises no one is in transfer station at this time; parties found a way around the fence.

4:08 p.m. Caller reports that at approximately 1:30 this afternoon she observed black exhaust coming from a Mack truck at the intersection of Routes 47 and 63. Caller expressed concern for the environmental impact. Referred to an officer.

5:56 p.m. Report of suspicious activity on Griswold Street; caller received a notification that someone hacked into her phone. Spoke with caller; referred to other agency.

**Artist Profile: Lilian Ralph Jackman**

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – The holiday Pop-Up Market held in the winter always gives me a nice handful of artists to write about. Lilian Ralph Jackman is one such find. I liked her prints with images of wolves on them. I like wolves to begin with, so I really took to the images.

Jackman started printing while a student at Smith College, where she studied the art of the book under Barry Moser. She later studied at La Taller Sirena in Granada, Nicaragua and with Carl Darrow at Green Leaf Press in Conway, and is currently working with Enrique Flores in Oaxaca, Mexico.

At some point she went from being a printer of text to creating images – for example, *The Mandala Series*, *The Tree of Life*, and *Ivy Escapes In The Night*. She sells the books and prints mostly at her own gallery in Conway, Wilder Hill Gardens. "It was the first time I went to

that craft fair," she told me.  
*Los Motivos Del Lobo: the Motives of*



A woodblock print by Conway illustrator Lilian Ralph Jackman.

*the Wolf* is the name of a book she published I saw at the craft fair. Jackman describes it as a "dual language, illustrated printing of a famous poem by beloved Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario." She translated it with Noel Montoya, and the illustrations are by George Patrick. It is the second version of the book she has printed. Another book she has made is *Queen of the Lake of Awareness: Poetry by Woman Mystics*.

She continues to print at her press in Conway, Wilder Hill Press. "Two current prints I am working on are large relief prints of local workers as part of my *Los Trabajadores (The Workers)* series," she says. "In the future, I plan to return to Oaxaca and the studio of Enrique Flores to collaborate on a book on the theme of the lost sacred feminine illustrated with a series of Aquatint images."

Jackman's press is located in Conway on South Shirkshire Road. Her website, where I found prints of her art, is at [www.wilderpresshill.com](http://www.wilderpresshill.com).

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HEARTFELT from page B1

secundo, a main dish of seafood or meat. Contorno, a salad or vegetable plate, is followed by formaggia e frutta, a cheese and fruit board. Then it's dessert or dolce and the meal is finished off with caffe, usually espresso, and a digestivo, a glass of liqueur like limoncello or



CATHY GOUGH PHOTO

The author cuts into a pizza, the size served for one. Her favorite was topped with fried squash blossoms and ricotta cheese.

grappa to aid in digestion.

It's a lot! We rarely got past the appetizer and first plate, being rather small eaters, but there was always room for gelato. I swooned over a light pear with fig, and on another visit an intense dark chocolate-orange. Hazelnut, lemon, and pistachio are common gelato flavors as Italy produces the highest quality hazelnuts.

One of the most delightful customs in the many cafes is that you must ask for the check yourself, it's not brought to the table, so you can linger as long as you like. One goes inside and lays cash on a plate, where the change soon appears.

Getting around required a simple buongiorno, "good day," or ciao, "goodbye," to be polite, and we managed without speaking any more Italian than that. There were very few Americans, before the summer crowds, so we were mostly surrounded by Italians, with a few French and German speakers.

Another new food adventure was cicchetti, with a soft second course. These are small plates eaten midmorning or with an aperitivo. Meats and cheeses, small sandwiches, and other hand-held food are eaten standing up at a counter. Unlike in the US, no one eats or drinks while walking. Mealtimes are to enjoy company and conversation without rushing.

Leaving Venice, we took a two-



MANDESON PHOTO

This fried-cheese-and-potato pancake called frico, served with a creamy dip, is a regional specialty in Trieste.

hour train ride to Trieste, a port city with a mix of Italians, Slovenians, and Austrians giving it a blend of cultures, foods, and architecture. The huge plaza around the corner from our hotel, the Piazza dell'Unità Italiana, is a historical landmark with the Adriatic Sea lapping at its stone steps and enormous ocean cruisers pulling up to the port for an hour or a day.

We enjoyed the regional specialty, frico, a crispy fried cheese and potato pancake, and many tomato and mozzarella sandwiches. Pizza of course was everywhere, and each person was served their own medium sized pie. My favorite was fried squash blossoms with ricotta.

Since Trieste is a major European seaport influenced by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, we found dishes such as Hungarian

goulash, a beef and vegetable stew served with piles of freshly grated horseradish root, and jota, a soup of beans, bacon, and sauerkraut. We enjoyed tagliatelle pasta with beef bolognese, gnocchi with pork cheeks, and grilled octopus, sea bass, mussels, and shrimp.

Then, of course, there is the coffee in Italy. Coffee beans from the Ottoman Empire entered through Trieste, whose people embraced Viennese cafe traditions and created their own unique coffee culture.

Unlike other Italian cities, Trieste has its own lexicon for coffee drinks: nero is espresso or black coffee, while a capo in B is an espresso macchiato with a splash of milk served in a small glass cup. Pastries were readily available wherever coffee was served, croissants and cream-filled pastries and small fried

sugar-coated donuts or bomboloni.

One morning we found a place serving their version of an American breakfast: scrambled eggs, dry toast, slices of smoked salmon, and a small bowl of guacamole, of all things. I'm not sure if I was more surprised to see guacamole in Italy, or that it was their idea of what Americans eat for breakfast! Served with a large mug of filtered American coffee, it felt homey.

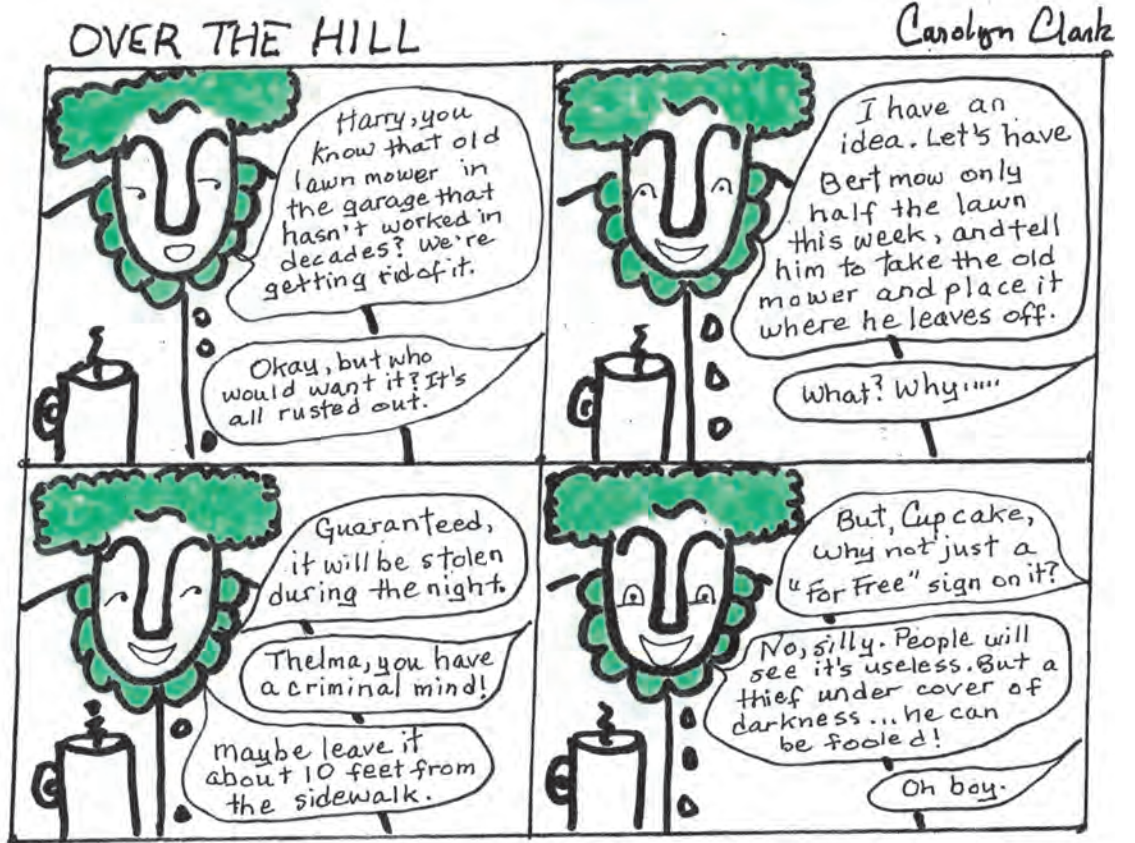
I've gone on too long about Italy and haven't even touched upon the food in Croatia, but I'll leave you with the information that much of the food there was similar to Italy, pizzas and pastas, and certainly, regional dishes that I never even tried.

I did get to see dolphins, I did get to stroll in a Roman colosseum from 27 BC, and my wife and I did get to reunite with our Hungarian friend who drove seven hours to meet us in Pula and spent three nights in the small apartment we rented. Between the food, the friends, and the overall atmosphere, I would say it was a very successful and most delicious trip, and I highly recommend visiting Italy if only for the food.

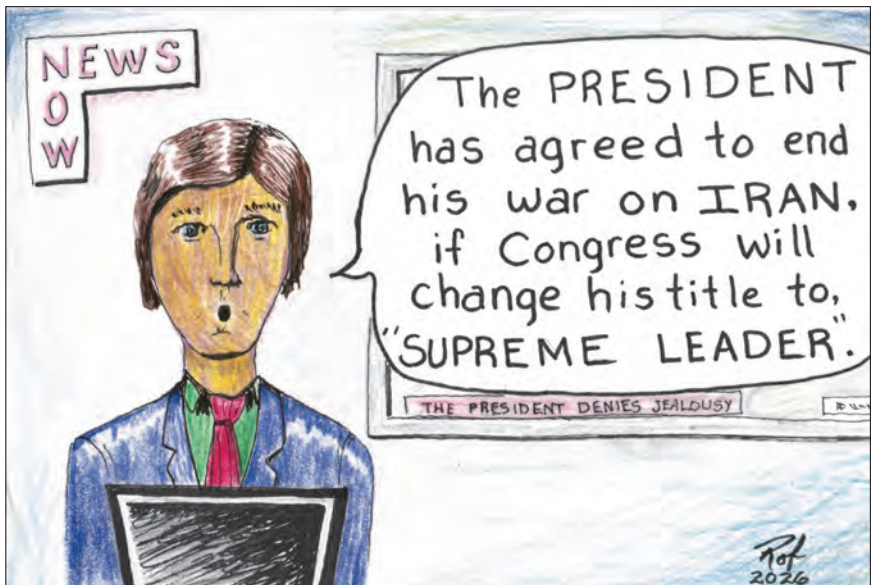
Trouble Mandeson shares a cozy home with her wife and cat. She is mostly retired but keeps busy as a hospice volunteer, writer, reader, artist, cook, and dreamer.



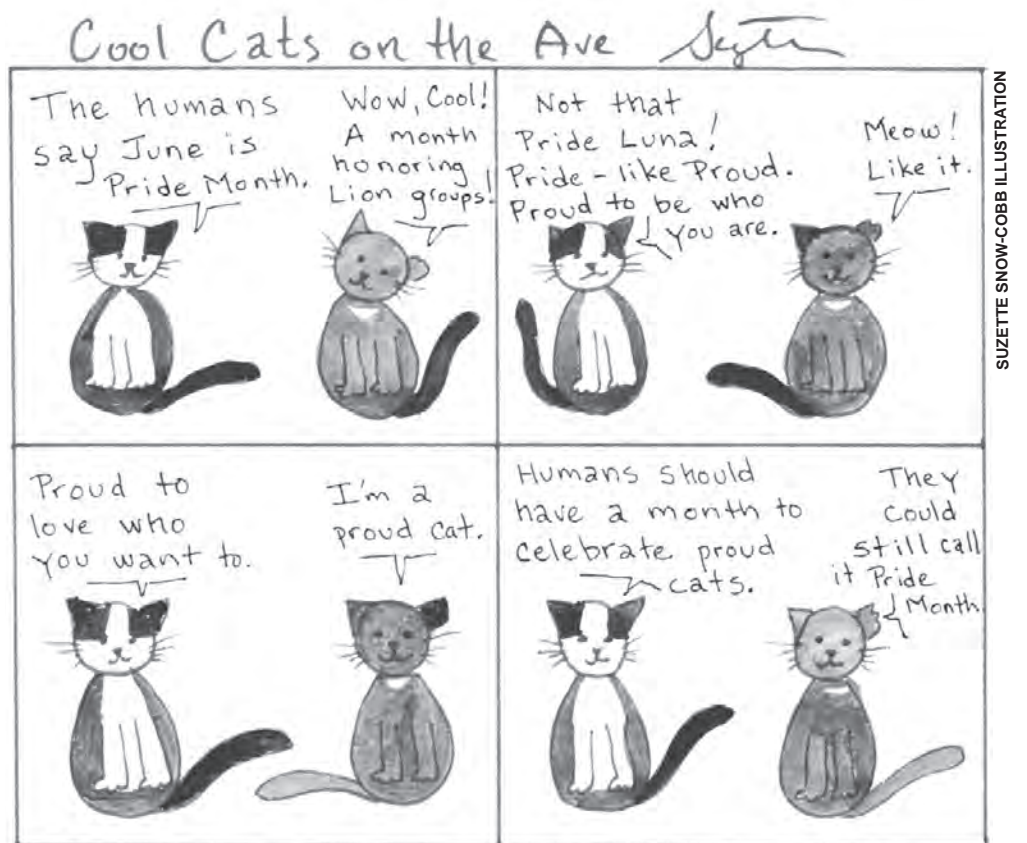
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# Aquí se habla español

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



## ¿Nueva biblioteca para Montague o renovación del pasado? Una comunidad dividida ante una decisión histórica.

Por VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA

**MONTAGUE** – En las comunidades pequeñas, hay pocas decisiones que generen tanta conversación y polémica como aquellas que afectan a los impuestos, a los espacios públicos y a la identidad comunitaria.

En Montague, la propuesta para construir una nueva biblioteca principal ha provocado precisamente esto: debates en reuniones públicas, conversaciones en cafeterías, discusiones en redes sociales, carteles en jardines y opiniones muy diferentes sobre qué necesita realmente la comunidad.

La pregunta parece sencilla: ¿Debe Montague construir una nueva biblioteca?

Sin embargo, detrás de esa pregunta existe una discusión mucho más compleja sobre el presupuesto, la accesibilidad, el patrimonio histórico, los servicios públicos y las prioridades municipales. La controversia ha crecido tanto que ya no se trata únicamente de un edificio. Para muchos residentes, la discusión representa una conversación más amplia sobre cómo Montague imagina su propio futuro.

¿Y qué se propone exactamente en el proyecto?

La propuesta actual contempla construir una nueva biblioteca principal en un terreno vacío situado en 38 Avenue A, en Turners Falls. El edificio tendría aproximadamente 21.000 pies cuadrados y funcionaría como sede principal del sistema bibliotecario local. El diseño contempla espacios infantiles ampliados, salas comunitarias, áreas para adolescentes, salas de estudio, espacios para historia local y nuevas áreas multifuncionales.

Pero la cifra que domina la conversación es otra: 23,7 millones de dólares.

Ese es el coste total estimado del proyecto. Aproximadamente 11,3 millones serían cubiertos mediante fondos estatales procedentes del programa del estado de Massachusetts de construcción bibliotecaria, mientras que el resto recaería sobre Montague mediante financiación municipal. Esto significa que la responsabilidad local sería aproximadamente de 12,4 millones de dólares.

El proyecto llegaría a los votantes el próximo 24 de junio mediante una *debt exclusion*, un mecanismo que permite aumentar temporalmente los impuestos para financiar proyectos específicos. Según las estimaciones oficiales, el impacto aproximado sería de unos 159 dólares adicionales anuales para una vivienda valorada en aproximadamente unos 325.000 dólares.

Este término ha sido uno de los más repetidos durante esta discusión, pero para muchas personas todavía resulta confuso.

En Massachusetts, una *debt exclusion* permite que una comunidad financie proyectos específicos mediante un aumento temporal de impuestos dedicado exclusivamente a pagar esa deuda. Por un lado, los defensores del proyecto enfatizan la palabra *temporal* y argumentan que esto permite construir infraestructura importante sin modificar permanentemente la estructura fiscal municipal.

Por otro lado, los críticos enfatizan otra palabra: *impuestos*. Señalan que, independientemente del mecanismo técnico utilizado, el resultado práctico para muchos propietarios sigue siendo pagar más.

La existencia de interpretaciones tan distintas sobre el mismo mecanismo financiero explica parcialmente por qué la conversación se ha vuelto tan intensa.

### Argumento de quienes apoyan la nueva biblioteca

Los defensores del proyecto insisten en que esta discusión no trata simplemente sobre los libros. Para ellos, las bibliotecas modernas funcionan como: centros comunitarios, espacios educativos, lugares de trabajo remoto, centros tecnológicos, espacios para reuniones públicas y recursos sociales para familias, estudiantes y personas mayores.

Los residentes que apoyan el proyecto argumentan que el edificio Carnegie actual presenta limitaciones físicas difíciles de solucionar: falta de accesibilidad completa, problemas de espacio, dificultades para albergar programas modernos y limitaciones estructurales derivadas de un edificio histórico diseñado hace más de un siglo. La propia documentación del proyecto señala que las limitaciones espaciales se reconocían ya pocos años después de abrir la biblioteca original.

Muchos defensores también enfatizan el aspecto financiero. Su argumento puede resumirse así: Si el estado paga casi la mitad, ¿cuándo volveremos a tener una oportunidad así? Desde su perspectiva, rechazar el proyecto significaría perder más de once millones de dólares en fondos estatales y posiblemente esperar entre cinco y ocho años para volver a optar a financiación similar.

Existe además otro argumento económico local ya que algunos residentes creen que un edificio nuevo en Avenue A podría aumentar la actividad peatonal, atraer visitantes al centro de Turners Falls y reforzar la actividad económica del área. Aunque nadie puede garantizar ese resultado, quienes apoyan el proyecto consideran razonable pensar que una infraestructura pública grande puede generar efectos positivos alrededor.



Y por último, subrayan algo más simple: la biblioteca sirve a toda la comunidad. Durante reuniones públicas, algunos defensores han señalado que, a diferencia de otros proyectos municipales o escolares que benefician poblaciones más específicas, las bibliotecas son utilizadas potencialmente por todas las edades y perfiles económicos.

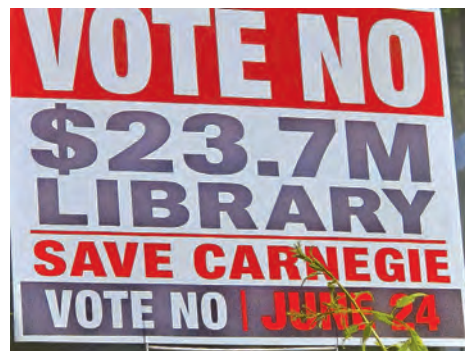
### Argumento de quienes están en contra del proyecto

En cuanto al argumento de quienes se oponen, no significa que estos necesariamente se opongan a las bibliotecas. Muchos comienzan diciendo precisamente eso: “Nos gustan las bibliotecas, pero...”

Y ese “pero” suele estar relacionado con el coste. Aunque el estado cubra aproximadamente 11,3 millones, los opositores observan otra cifra: 12,4 millones de dólares más intereses. Las voces críticas argumentan que, dependiendo de la estructura final de la deuda, el coste real para los contribuyentes puede terminar siendo considerablemente superior a la cifra inicial anunciada. En debates públicos y redes sociales locales, algunos residentes han

expresado preocupación por el coste total acumulado durante décadas de financiación.

Otra preocupación frecuente gira alrededor del tamaño. ¿Necesita realmente una comunidad como Montague, relativamente pequeña, una instalación de 21.000 pies cuadrados? ¿Es ese el tamaño adecuado en la era de la digitalización? ¿Existe una alternativa más pequeña? Estas preguntas aparecen repetidamente entre quienes consideran que el proyecto es excesivamente ambicioso.



También existe preocupación sobre el momento. En este momento, Montague se enfrenta a otras decisiones financieras importantes, incluyendo proyectos escolares y otras inversiones municipales futuras. Algunos residentes se preguntan si este es el momento adecuado para asumir nuevas obligaciones financieras significativas.

Durante reuniones públicas, varios participantes expresaron preocupación sobre cómo múltiples proyectos simultáneos podrían afectar la capacidad financiera del municipio en un futuro.

### El componente emocional: la biblioteca Carnegie

El debate también incluye un componente histórico y emocional. La actual biblioteca Carnegie no es únicamente un edificio municipal. Muchos residentes creen que representa también un patrimonio local, una identidad arquitectónica, la historia comunitaria, y continuidad cultural.

Algunas personas temen que trasladar la biblioteca principal reduzca el papel simbólico de un edificio que ha formado parte de la identidad local durante generaciones. Otros preguntan: ¿Por qué no renovar? ¿Por qué no ampliar? ¿Por qué no adaptar lo que ya existe? Estas preguntas reflejan que la discusión no es solamente económica, sino que es también emocional.

La actual biblioteca principal de Turners Falls pertenece a una tradición histórica particular. A comienzos del siglo XX, el industrial Andrew Carnegie financió miles de bibliotecas públicas con la idea de ampliar el acceso al conocimiento. Para muchas comunidades estadounidenses, los edificios Carnegie representan mucho más que ladrillos y estanterías. Esto explica por qué algunas personas sienten que la discusión no trata simplemente sobre mover servicios de un edificio a otro.

En algunos residentes, existe una preocupación real sobre cómo preservar el significado histórico y cultural del edificio actual.

Aunque la controversia parece reciente, el debate sobre la biblioteca no comenzó este año. Durante muchos años, el sistema bibliotecario de Montague estudió distintas posibilidades para resolver problemas relacionados con espacio, accesibilidad y modernización. Se analizaron múltiples escenarios: renovación de la biblioteca existente, ampliaciones, reutilización de edificios exis-

tentes y construcción nueva.

El proyecto actual es el resultado de años de reuniones, estudios arquitectónicos, revisiones presupuestarias y solicitudes estatales. Este largo proceso demuestra que la propuesta actual es el resultado de una planificación cuidadosa.

Para otros, precisamente tantos años de planificación deberían haber producido una solución menos costosa o más modesta. Esta diferencia de interpretación explica por qué dos personas pueden observar exactamente los mismos documentos y llegar a conclusiones completamente distintas.

### Cuando la política local se vuelve visible

Los carteles distribuidos por jardines y porches quizá sean la prueba más evidente de cuánto ha crecido esta discusión. En muchas decisiones municipales, gran parte de la conversación ocurre dentro de edificios públicos. En este caso está ocurriendo no solamente en los periódicos, también en jardines, escaparates, conversaciones familiares, cafeterías, redes sociales locales, y reuniones vecinales.

Durante las últimas semanas han comenzado a aparecer carteles de apoyo y oposición repartidos por distintos barrios de Montague. Los residentes preguntan públicamente dónde conseguir carteles de “YES” o de oposición, mientras otros muestran sus posiciones frente a sus propias casas. Incluso en reuniones municipales se distribuyeron mensajes pidiendo votos negativos o positivos.

Los carteles que han aparecido como champiñones cumplen una función práctica que es la de mostrar apoyo; pero también producen otra consecuencia: hacen visible el desacuerdo. Se ha convertido en una campaña política popular.

En Montague, eso puede generar algo curioso: una biblioteca termina convirtiéndose en uno de los temas políticos más visibles del año. Los carteles representan algo más profundo ya que cuando una comunidad pequeña llena jardines con mensajes políticos relacionados con una biblioteca, probablemente ya no se está discutiendo solamente una biblioteca.

Se está discutiendo acerca de impuestos, prioridades, identidad comunitaria, confianza institucional y visión de futuro. Los carteles representan una participación democrática saludable y también en otros casos, representan una división incómoda dentro de una comunidad pequeña.

Aunque existe algo difícil de negar y es que pocas decisiones municipales recientes parecen haber generado una movilización pública tan visible.

Y el debate continúa creciendo. Para algunas personas, votar “sí” significa invertir en el futuro. Para otras, votar “no” significa proteger la estabilidad financiera. Para algunos, el proyecto representa progreso. Para otros, representa riesgo.

Lo que parece claro es que esta discusión ya ha conseguido algo: ha obligado a la comunidad a preguntarse qué tipo de pueblo quiere ser.

Y quizá esa pregunta resulte más importante que la biblioteca misma.

*Nota editorial: Este artículo presenta argumentos públicos de distintas posiciones utilizando documentación municipal, prensa local y materiales públicos disponibles. Se anima a los lectores a consultar información oficial antes de formar una opinión definitiva antes de votar.*

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## THURSDAY, JUNE 4

CitySpace, Easthampton:  
*Letters of Marque, Inplainsight, Brownie Points, Irata, Ursa*, many more. 1:30 p.m. \$.

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.

Brewster Court, Northampton: *Dust Witch, Stella Kola*. 6 p.m. Free.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Circle Dance*. All welcome, no partners necessary, instruction in Spanish and English. 7 p.m. By donation.

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

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

## FRIDAY, JUNE 5

CitySpace, Easthampton: *The Lunch Ladies, Rigamortus, Outside Dog, Slow Burning Daydream, Big Destiny, Glass, Sleep Destroyer, Hauzu*, many more. 1:30 p.m. \$.

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.

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls: *Sadie's Bikes Gumball Machine Takeover*, with featured artists *Opertura*. 5 to 8 p.m. Free.

Turners Falls High School, Turners Falls: *Class of 2026 Graduation*. 6 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.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Wendell Pride Dance Party*, with DJ CFerg. All welcome. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *The Snapdragons, Riverside Riot, The Cheese Priests, Dead Man's Clothes*, many more. 6:30 p.m. \$.

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. \$.

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 tribute*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

## SATURDAY, JUNE 6

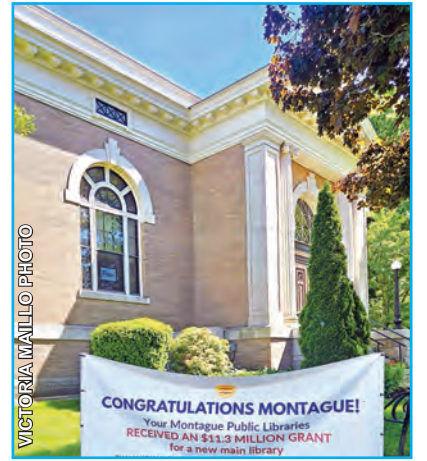
Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: *Great Falls Farmers Market*. SNAP accepted. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Family Fishing Day at Barton Cove*. Activities include fish printing and fly tying. All ages welcome. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Used Book Sale*. 10 a.m. \$.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Meet and Bleat with Cascade's Baby Goats*. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: *Yoga and Hiking*, with Libby Volckening. Yoga beginners welcome. Ages 13 and up. Bring water and dress in layers. Register at [www.tinyurl.com/nmyogahike](http://www.tinyurl.com/nmyogahike). 12 p.m. Free.



Above: The monthly fundraiser sale of used books, DVDs, audiobooks, etc. is Saturday in the Carnegie Library basement, which is accessible unless you use a wheelchair.

Greenfield Savings Bank, Turners Falls: *Montague police chief Jason Haskins* greets families, takes suggestions, discusses enhanced community policing initiatives. Light snacks. 1 p.m. Free.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Experiments in Block Printing* workshop. All skill levels welcome. Register at [www.tinyurl.com/WendellArt](http://www.tinyurl.com/WendellArt). Materials provided. 1 p.m. \$.

New Salem Library, New Salem: *Organizing Your Digital Life* workshop. 4 p.m. Free.

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

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Thursday, Tim Kasher, Old Canes*. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Marisa Anderson, Footings*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Big Yellow Taxi, Joni Mitchell* tribute. 7 p.m. \$.

## EXHIBITS

**Waterway Arts, Turners Falls:** *Please Touch*, participatory works by 15 artists. Opens with a reception this Friday, June 5 from 5 to 8 p.m.; through August 7.

**Discovery Center, Turners Falls:** *Nature's Colors*, landscape and floral paintings in an abstract and expressionistic style by Kate Marion Lapierre. June 5 to 28, with a reception this Sunday, June 7 from 12 to 2 p.m.

**Montague Center Library, Montague:** *The Divine Lives in You*, paintings and upcycled works by Donna Estabrooks, through July.

**Sawmill River Arts, Montague:** *Nature's Magic*, abstract landscapes by TL LaFleur; through July, with a reception next Thursday, June 11 from 1 to 4 p.m. *Cara Finch Trunk Show*, one-day show of whimsical paintings, Saturday, June 13.

**Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett:** *Merry Melange*, creations in diverse media by Mary Schreiber including ceramic, pastel, polymer clay, and found or upcycled materials. Through June, with a reception this Sunday, June 7 from 3 to 5 p.m.

**Leverett Library, Leverett:** *Convergence*, pastel and acrylic paintings by the Friends Who Paint group, through June.

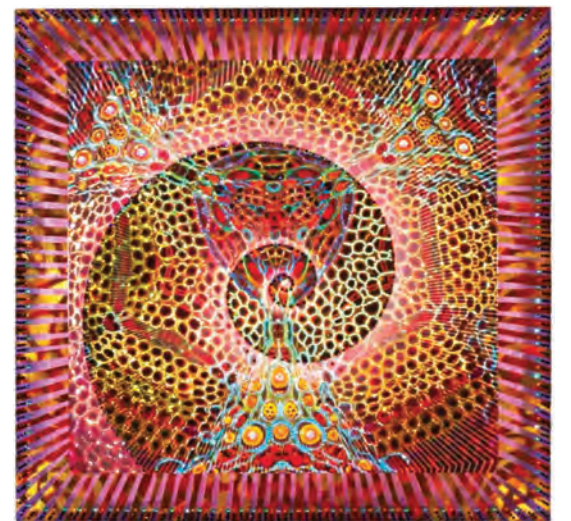
**LAVA Center, Greenfield:** *Chaos on a Plate Presents The Rainbow Arc – Phase 1: Violet*, paintings by Donna Barrett, through July with an opening reception next Saturday, June 13, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. *The Peace Birds Exhibit*, artistic and community responses to ongoing events in Palestine, through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

**Looky Here, Greenfield:** *Emily Holt and Chris Davis*, visiting artists in residence through June and July. Reception Friday, June 26; closing event July 31.

**Gallery A3, Amherst:** *Gesture and Line*, paintings by Karen Iglehart, through June with a reception this Thursday, June 4 at 5 p.m.

**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 this Saturday, June 6 from 3 to 5 p.m.; through July 6.



Mixed-media artist (and Montague Reporter distribution manager) Nina Rossi incorporates colorshifting glass rhinestones in *Shimmer*, her new exhibit at the Shelburne Arts Coop, which opens with a reception this Saturday afternoon.

**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.

**Elusie Gallery, Easthampton:** *Below and Within*. Julie Kumble of Montague and Martha Brouwer of Hadley explore the underwater world. Through June, with a reception this Saturday, June 6 from 4 to 7 p.m.

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# CALENDAR



## looking forward...

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Antiphon Trio*, deep listening using Pauline Oliveros's Expanded Instrument System; *Matt Samolis*. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Oxen, Problem With Dragons, Ash & Bone*. 7 p.m. \$.

Holyoke Media, Holyoke: *GWYN, Deadname, Schooner, Velveten*. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Steppin Razor Blades, Cenzo, Harry Katz and the Pistachios, Little Low, Nick and the Adversaries*. 7 p.m. \$.

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Ray & the Lovers*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Slob Drop, McAsh, tragwag*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Darlings, Easthampton: *Anthony Pasquarosa, Blood of a Poet, Pemale*. Rough Chop food truck opens at 6 p.m.; music at 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *Los Cumpleaños, DJ Bongohead*. 8:30 p.m. \$.

### SUNDAY, JUNE 7

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *First Sunday Word*. Open mic with featured writers Eileen P. Kennedy and Linda Wlodyka. 1 p.m. By donation.

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* (2025), followed by a Q&A with writer and producer Ricky Camilleri. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Community Contra Dance*, with caller Will Mentor and the Monday Night Session & Friends. Fundraiser for Common Hall accessibility fund. 7 p.m. By donation.

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

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Mimi Fang, Cove, Semi-Formal*. 7 p.m. \$.

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.



As of publication time tickets remain for the Mekons' show next Tuesday at the Iron Horse in Northampton. Lester Bangs called them "the most revolutionary group in the history of rock 'n' roll" and Patti Smith called Bangs "the last of the great beatniks" and Dylan called Smith "a poet with a rock and roll heart" and Springsteen called Dylan "the father of my country" and... Wait, what was the question? Are you really too busy, on a Wednesday night, to see the Mekons?

Wendell Senior Center, Wendell: *Memory Café*. "Social gathering for people living with changes to their memory or thinking and the people who care about them." 10:30 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.

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Nick's Book Group*. William Shakespeare, *Othello*. 3 p.m. Free.

Porter-Phelps-Huntington House, Hadley: *The Wholesale Klezmer Band*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *Writers Read*, featuring *Audrey Jiggetts, Christine Benvenuto, Tom Skarzynski*, open mic. 7 p.m. By donation.

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

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

### THURSDAY, JUNE 11

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Recycling Myths Workshop*. 4:30 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Film screening, *Of Moths And Men* (2023), with local filmmaker Daniel Hales. 6 p.m. By donation.

Four Phantoms Brewery, Greenfield: *A New Blue, Open Jazz Jam*. 6 p.m. No cover.

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

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *On the Lam*. Benefits the Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center. 7 p.m. By donation.

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: Movie, *How to Train Your Dragon* (2025). Meet a real bearded dragon and other reptiles from Reptile Nook at 7 p.m.; movie at 8 p.m. Free.

THCC, Easthampton: *Feminine Aggression, Modern Ego, Phantom Ocean*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

33 Hawley, Northampton: *Asteroid B-612: A Love Story*, performance by the Hatchery Dance Company. 7:30 p.m. \$.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Levyosn*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Masala Jazz*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Black Uhuru*. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold, Brattleboro: *Kivimäe, The Bandit Queen of Sorrows, Vanna Pacella Power Trio*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Blood Bucket*, more. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *AFK, Letters of Marque, Film & Gender*. 10:30 p.m. \$.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 13

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: *Herb Walk* with Jade Alicandro. Register at [www.tinyurl.com/nmherbwalk](http://www.tinyurl.com/nmherbwalk). 10:30 a.m. Free.

Lake Pleasant: *Community-Wide Tag Sale*. 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. \$.

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

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

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Local History Librarian Support*. 12 p.m. Free.

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

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

Guiding Star Grange, Greenfield: *Swedish Dance*. Intro workshop, snacks, open dancing. Live music on five-string fiddle and nyckelharpa. All welcome. 1:30 p.m. \$.

Ja'Duke Theater, Turners Falls: *JCPA Showcase*, children to seniors. 2 p.m. \$.

### SATURDAY, JUNE 13

Unity Park, Turners Falls: *Unity Skatepark 10 Year Anniversary Show*. Skateboard memorial dedication at 2 p.m.; music, *Rocking Puppies, Film & Gender, Feminine Aggression, Slob Drop, Jeanines*, 2:30 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Mary Lambert, Silvie's Okay*. 8 p.m. \$.

### SUNDAY, JUNE 14

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Gracious Calamity, nen specialist*. 5 p.m. By donation.

### TUESDAY, JUNE 16

Daily Operation, Easthampton: *BASIC, Slant of Light*. 7 p.m. \$.

### FRIDAY, JUNE 26

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Bill Frisell Trio*. 8 p.m. \$.

### THURSDAY, JULY 9

Brewster Court, Northampton: *Hot Dirt, Goldsetter*. 6 p.m. Free.

### SUNDAY, JULY 12

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Elaine Carey & Ava Mendoza Duo, Wednesday Knudsen, Erica Dawn Lyle*. 4 p.m. \$.

### SATURDAY, JULY 18

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

### WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Steel Pulse*. 7 p.m. \$.

### THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

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

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

The Drake, Amherst: *Gyedu Blay Ambolley*. 7 p.m. \$.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Son Lux*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Big E Court of Honor Stage, West Springfield: *The Smithereens*. 8 p.m. \$.

### FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

Palladium, Worcester: *Knocked Loose, Denzel Curry, Superheaven, Boundaries*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

### MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Cowboy Junkies*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

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**REASON** from page B1

green uniforms and shaved heads, reduced the pride he felt by continually reminding him he was no more important than a "maggot." The people he was being sent to kill were called "gooks." They didn't even rate as insects. The targets on which he learned to shoot M16s were named after female genitalia.

Al wasn't in Vietnam very long when he was ordered to ride shotgun on a truck carrying American kitchen waste to a dump site:

*And there they are, the people we have  
come to defend, crab scrabbles  
over the dump pile. Wary, turning to the  
truck they know not to rush. An old  
man comes too close, opens his personal  
dirty rice sack begging for our food  
waste  
his eyes tattered, his clothes partially  
shaped as cloth-torn stains,  
his eyes offered us a courtly request.  
"Watch this." One in tired fatigues  
lifted a smoke grenade, pulled the pin,  
dropped its burning yellow smoke  
into the old man's dump treasure and  
started his rolled-back jagged ice  
laughter in the tropic sun. The old man,  
his eyes torn away  
melting down his face, black sun on his face.  
Our souls in question as we stood by...*

Then came David. That's not his real name. The soldiers in combat made a point of not remembering the name of anyone who hadn't been "in country" fewer than three months. Al made this one up.

His orders were to retrieve the lifeless American bodies from a deadly ambush, but he couldn't tell if David was Asian, Anglo, or African-American. He wondered if the boy had ever known "the loyalty of a dog," or "the unity of a baseball game."

*.... We wrapped him in a poncho  
that would protect him from the rain,  
tied the poncho to a bamboo pole, carried  
him as if we were all  
going home that night in a pilgrimage of  
the bewildered.  
I regret the way we dropped him to the  
ground near morning,  
brushing one palm against the other as  
if we were finished.*

"David," the title of an award-winning poem as well as the name given to the unknown soldier, is Al's most anthologized work. It appeared most recently along with poems by Wilfred Owen, Sigfried Sassoon, William Shakespeare, and Euripides in Meagher and Pryer's antiwar collection *War and Moral Injury*.

Al grew up knowing how to handle guns. All the men in his family hunted, and it was for food, not pleasure. Entering a hooch on a routine patrol, he awakened a surprised Vietcong officer.

*He tried to talk to me with three rounds  
in his chest.  
I can tell from here he reached for me....*

*I shot him in the delicate pink bubbles  
of his lungs.  
He drowned in his blood....*

*whether I was trained for it, it is the same.  
After murder, you understand it doesn't  
matter what it is called.*

On his 21st birthday, it was Al's turn to take a bullet:

*It burns now when I search  
the place the bullet stopped,  
below the shoulder blade it broke.  
It felt like my mother ripping cloth,  
spreading her hands, like sod would feel  
under a plow, the slump when bones  
break,  
the scaffold of the body fails,  
the earth a pillow....*

*Life review so short I asked for a re-run.  
Nothing changed. And then a return to  
the light and sound. Lying face down in  
my helmet in a pool of blood, the wound a  
small fountain. I would like to report: it is  
in the realm where fear exists.*

Al was rescued by medics and evacuated in a helicopter. "I didn't know if I would live or die," he writes. "The only tangible difference between me and them was that I was getting out and they were not; it seemed as though I would survive, and they didn't know if they would.... as they labored to move my body toward the escape they too

desired... *Looks like you got yourself a million dollar wound. Take it on home for us.*"

One Bronze Star and one Purple Heart later, Al sits on the steps of the Capitol Building in Washington, DC. He's fasting for 40 days, "on behalf of reconciliation" with the young man who, "by his death at my hand, gave me the gift of my own heart on war and peace." Soon Al will leave on the second of his two trips of redemption to Vietnam. He fears his soul will never again be whole if he "didn't do something on behalf of others who were intentionally made to suffer... for a world without remorse from the grief that comes of brutal and murderous intentional actions."

Scenes of abandonment and loss are everywhere Al goes: the homeless children of American fathers living on the streets of Saigon because no one will take them in, the numerous children living with cleft palates because of the lack of simple medical resources, the young woman visiting the hotels where Americans stay. Her father was from Texas: *Do you know him?*

*I have brought them paper and pencils,  
children's vitamins from Bangkok.  
She served us green tea and bananas  
while adding up their cost in her mind.  
I asked, "What are you saying,  
what are the children asking me?"  
Someone leans, intimate, to my right ear  
So I can hear above their song:  
"Take me with you. Take me with you."*

All these years later, Al has been able to reconcile. Sort of. Almost. Maybe. You can take Al out of Vietnam, but you can't take Vietnam out of Al.

Finding Buddhism as a way of understanding life helped him realize that the most effective way to live at peace with himself was to advocate for peace among others. He does this in large part by reading his immediately accessible, emotionally transformative, poems and prose narratives and talking with anyone willing to listen to him with an open mind in schools, libraries, prisons, and community centers.

Living today on a farm also eases some of Al's pain:

*The dogs and I walk the creek toward the  
beaver pond we know*

*where the three of us stop to watch the  
knurled tree snag  
become a heron and climb like a painted kite  
on wings as large as angels need.*

But, at the same time, the pain is always there:

*The sheep bring me outside, make me choose.  
I list the unspoken truths of war as I push salt  
with my fingers into the folds of rams' hides.*

His wife Suzanne helps more than anyone or anything:

*Suzanne's hand is there, her hip in the  
small of my back. I push my hips back  
against her, and her thighs come up against  
the backs of my thighs. There's no  
sound of sand pouring, just the serpentine  
passing of time as one arm snakes  
under my neck and the other glides over  
my chest. Her warmth  
assuages the chilling isolation of fear.  
Its weight dissipates, dissolves  
from the simple resolution  
of our temporary touch.*

That "temporary" is the key word here. Like F. Scott Fitzgerald's boats being "borne back ceaselessly into the past," Al's poetry brings us to places we may never have been or tried to forget and introduces us to people we'd never know or don't want to remember. His achievement is nothing less than one of the very best books in the highly regarded pantheon of antiwar literature.

*There is no other way out, no way down  
the alley.  
no holidays, no citations, no shiny ribbons.  
The doorway to the underworld — no  
other path  
no way to leave, no walk away from him  
lying there.*

A public reading and celebratory launching of Al's William Allen Miller's new book, *A Reason for Kindness: Selected Poems* (Levellers Press, 2026), will be held on Sunday, June 28, starting at 3 p.m. in the Montague Common Hall across from the town common. Do come. All are welcome.



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