

The Montague Reporter

Six-Town Idea Clears Hurdle, Inches Toward November Vote

By MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – The Six Town Regionalization Planning Board (STRPB) met Tuesday to share updates on their effort to send a proposed school district agreement comprised of Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, Gill, Montague, and possibly Warwick to voters this fall.

Chair Alan Genovese said state senator Jo Comerford told him S.3181, “An Act providing equal opportunity for residents to vote on establishment of the Great River Regional School District,” left the Senate last week and is before the House steering committee. “Once it makes it through the House,” he said, “I think there’s a joint committee that just recommends it, then it moves to the governor for her signature.”

A supplemental appropriation bill signed into law last month also included \$16.5 million for grants to districts working on shared

see **SIX-TOWN** page A4

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Leverett Might Seek ‘Cultural’ Recognition to Spur Tourism

By GEORGE BRACE

At their most recent meeting on July 14, Leverett’s selectboard and finance committee handled a number of routine transfers and discussed a request from the Amherst-Pelham regional school district to hold on to extra money slated for a school roof replacement.

The selectboard also heard a request to move the town hall driveway, and looked into the possibility of declaring a “cultural district.”

Leverett Crafts and Artists (LCA) board member David Henion pitched the idea of creating a “cultural district” in Leverett, in accordance with Mass Cultural Council guidelines. Henion had suggested looking into the matter a year ago, but applications were closed at the time, and have since reopened.

Henion said Leverett had many features that meet the criteria of “cultural attractions,” including the North Leverett Sawmill, the LCA itself, other historical buildings, the Peace Pagoda, and conservation and nature features such as Rattlesnake Gutter and Leverett Pond. He also pointed out that the large number of artists and studios in Leverett might add to the list.

Creating a “district” would likely generate some measure of increased tourism, Henion said, and open up a variety of grant opportunities. He

see **LEVERETT** page A5

New Training Containers ‘Culmination of a Dream’

By MIKE JACKSON

GREENFIELD – “It’s like a Fisher-Price Rescue Center for a training center,” Samantha Wood marveled as a hydraulic truck crane began to hoist the first 20-foot container skyward. “It’s fantastic.”

The small group gathered early Wednesday morning behind the East Building at Greenfield Community College (GCC) watched intently as the crane crew positioned the college’s newest educational facility on a gravel pad, alongside

a row of similar-looking boxes used for storage. Wood, who heads GCC’s workforce development department, would later describe this moment as the “culmination of a dream” of creating a specialized classroom on campus where adults can train in the finicky art of home weatherization.

“We knew it was going to be a little unusual,” she grinned.

Sharon Cates, the college’s energy technology program manager, said the delivery of the new

see **TRAINING** page A6



Left to right: Greenfield Community College strategic innovation and workforce development director Samantha Wood, GCC energy technology program manager Sharon Cates, and Community Action energy director Peter Wingate have their first look inside the shipping container converted into an “attic” training lab for the campus’s new weatherization training program.

G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Special Ed Parents Complain Of Training, Reporting Failures

By REPORTER STAFF

GILL-MONTAGUE – The regional school committee is only meeting once a month this summer, and on July 14 its meeting room was packed with parents responding to a public call to “shar[e] concerns about student safety, district oversight, and accountability within the special education department.”

Natalie Spatcher, who has spearheaded the campaign, spoke first during the public comment period at the beginning of the meeting, describing herself as a “mother whose trust in this district has been broken.”

Her son, she said, is autistic and

non-verbal, and along with other children was “toileted in a classroom in front of their peers” while being restrained by three staff members; on another occasion he was “physically grabbed and pulled” by a staff member attempting to redirect him. In these instances, Spatcher said, incident reports were filed, but she and her husband were only made aware weeks later. They then began to hear similar stories from other parents.

“As more families came forward,” she said, “one question continued to stand out: How were so many concerns raised over time without

see **GMRSD** page A4



Natalie Spatcher (left) and other parents brought photos of their children to face the school committee as they described what they said was improper treatment by staff.

Drought Kindles Towns’ Ire Over Quabbin Land

By SARAH ROBERTSON

NEW SALEM – A shallow hand-dug well that provides water to the New Salem town hall, police station, and senior center ran dry again last month, a perennial problem that the town cannot afford to fix.

A short walk from the town center is a centuries-old farm with a view of the Swift River Valley, flooded 87 years ago to create the Quabbin Reservoir. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) now manages the 412-billion-gallon lake to provide drinking water for the greater Boston area.

On July 10, the MWRA held a meeting at the Quabbin Reservoir visitors’ center in Belchertown to listen to requests from communities within the Quabbin watershed itself

see **QUABBIN** page A5



State representative Aaron Saunders told water authority officials that increased aid to Quabbin towns would not be “charity,” but “recognition for the value of the resource you extract.”

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Debate Over Tree Warden Nets One-Year Compromise, Three-Month Committee

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard pared back a proposal by town administrator Walter Ramsey, at its July 13 meeting, to appoint the town’s public works superintendent as tree warden for the next three years. It limited the appointment to one year instead, and tasked a committee with developing protocols over the next few months for how the town should deal with sick or damaged trees.

The board also approved an administrative reorganization of the police department, contracted a

landscaping company to work on traffic-calming measures in Montague Center, and hired another company to help maintain the planters along Avenue A.

The tree warden discussion, which was allotted less than five minutes on the meeting agenda, took closer to 40, and was preceded by a public comment by Montague City resident Lilith Wolinsky complaining that two mature trees had recently been cut down on Depot Street without a public hearing, as is required by state and local law.

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

March on Capital Prompts Review of Smallpox Burials

By JOSH HEINEMANN

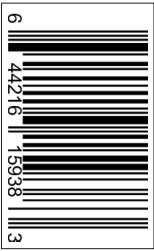
Montague resident David Detmold came to the Wendell selectboard’s July 15 meeting via Zoom as part of his ongoing effort to change the Massachusetts state flag. He is leading a walk from Wendell center to Seeds of Solidarity on Upper Chestnut Road in Orange, part of a longer walk across the state ending at the State House with town resolutions to change the flag.

The current flag shows the hand of Miles Standish holding a sword over a Native American who is clothed not as a northeastern American, but in western dress. The Latin motto translates, roughly, as “By the

sword we seek peace and liberty.”

Detmold said Wendell, with a 2018 town meeting vote, was the first town to approve a resolution addressed to the legislature advocating a change in the state flag. Other towns have passed similar resolutions since, and the walkers will present those resolutions at the state house. They plan to stop in Wendell Center on August 2 and walk to Seeds of Solidarity on August 3 along a route Detmold said he hopes will include Morse Village Road and then a discontinued section, known as Smallpox Cemetery Road, to connect with Neilson Road in New Salem, saving four miles of walking.

see **WENDELL** page A8



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SUMMER SCHEDULE:
VOL. 24 #32: AUGUST 6
VOL. 24 #33: AUGUST 20
VOL. 24#34: SEPTEMBER 3

The Montague Reporter

“The Voice of the Villages”

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Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August 2002

Department of Whoa

The “Department of War” came one step closer to reality on Wednesday as the US House of Representatives passed a defense bill that included the name change. The bill also sets a \$1.15 trillion base discretionary budget for the Pentagon, as requested by the Trump administration, up from \$893 billion in the current year.

That’s in *addition* to a request in a separate reconciliation package to jack mandatory defense production spending up from \$152 billion to \$350 billion a year – oh, plus an emergency \$88 billion to cover the costs of our glorious, necessary, and continuously triumphantly concluding war with Iran. (That’s \$38 billion already burned through and another \$50 billion being requested up front. Doesn’t sound done.)

All told that’s a jump from \$1.05 trillion to \$1.59 trillion – a single-year 51% increase, and “on par in real terms with the largest military budgets during World War II,” the non-partisan Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft points out.

We’re going to need a *lot* of testosterone supplements.

Oh, and Montague residents: That \$12.4 million town contri-

bution toward a library? With interest on the borrowing, it’s about \$740,000 a year in debt service: about \$86 per capita, or \$195 per household, in an average year.

(This implies that the 40% of the levy shouldered by commercial property owners will be passed back entirely onto local residents, which it won’t be. But we’re going along with a worst-case scenario, given that the argument was repeatedly made that the new cost could cause many to lose their homes.)

That \$16 million for a new tech school we’re voting on in October: with interest, \$111 per capita, \$251 per household per average year.

Holding that in mind, the single-year military increase Trump is requesting amounts to \$1,563 per capita nationwide, or \$4,098 per US household each year. (*Not* counting interest on any borrowing.)

We won’t be paying *all* of that immediately, and things aren’t so simple – some people will get jobs building tanks, or driving them – but it shows the scale of the investment in War the US may be making.

So, to those of you fighting the good fight against town taxes: *You gonna stand up to the feds?*

‘Let Your Heart Break’

During the almost-three years of Israel’s genocidal killing in Gaza and the West Bank, where more than 70,000 people have been killed by bombs, guns, and starvation – what have you been seeing, what have you been feeling?

I see pictures from people in Gaza – pictures of starving children, parents weeping while holding their dead children, victims of torture who have lost parts of their body. More than 1,000 Palestinians have been killed since the so-called “ceasefire” that Israel, the fascist state, is not abiding to.

Local Palestinians tell me stories of their family and friends who are trying to survive but don’t have access to basic human rights like water, food, and safety. There are videos of kids pleading with the world, saying they just want to go to school and play like all other children.

I went to a talk last week with two local Jewish residents who spent months in the West Bank as witnesses to the everyday violence that Palestinians experience there: violent mob settlers acting a lot like pogromists, acting a lot like ICE – murdering Palestinians and demolishing their homes.

I sobbed when I heard the details of this. My Jewish ancestors fled Russia because of horrific pogroms, and now Jewish settlers are enacting this same violence upon Palestinians.

To the people who are against local communities divesting from the companies that support these human rights violations, I ask you: if you had loved ones living in Gaza, starving and being killed, how would you want your community to respond to this? If you lived one day in Gaza, you would understand the emergency that it is, and you would support divestment and defunding Israel.

During the Holocaust, *good* people didn’t know, *good* people denied what was happening, *good* people did nothing. And now, every day, some *good* people in Western Mass are denying that Israel is committing a genocide and are fighting the divestment decision. I plead with you – look at what is happening. Listen to *Democracy Now*, read the *Guardian*. See the horror. Feel the horror. Let your heart break.

Mare Berger
Northampton

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



The geometric shapes painted on the Third Street wall of 102 Avenue A in Turners Falls were removed by handyman Roger Lamourieux, who says the building’s owners are anticipating doing mortar work on that wall. Readers may remember Rodney Madison, the artist who painted them around 2012 or 2013, and the controversies over his art installations in the planters on that side of the Avenue.

Letters to

the Editors

Recommendations for the New Library

In an earlier Letter to the Editors (“Response to Mary Feeney,” May 21, 2026), Montague public libraries director Caitlin Kelley, wrote that she and the library building steering committee would be “all ears” to hear my recommendations for the new library. My recommendations are below.

Libraries are especially important in small towns. The town of Montague is fortunate to have available a wide range of library services to town residents – in any of three libraries. As employees of the town, the director and other library staff provide professional Library Science, Information Management, and Information Services.

An example: trainings for town residents on the safety of our personal data on various devices in daily use. Small-group sessions held routinely for adults of all ages, and maybe even teens, will educate and promote the safety of users’ private data on the web. Routine trainings by professional library staff in the use of CW MARS, Libby, Kanopy, and other tech services – also for adults of all ages – will increase literacy in their use specific to the library.

Technology is always changing, and some, like myself, did not “grow up with screens” and lack tech savvy in navigating them. It will be beneficial to solve this by routine small-group trainings (as opposed to one-offs), and to include adults of all ages. The result will be public service, expanded tech literacy, and increased use of the library.

I have been impressed by the director of the public library in the town of Searsmont, Maine. In a small town (population: 1,500), she offers her expertise surrounding AI and technology for residents. The town of Littleton, Massachusetts’s program “Protecting Intellectual Property” is relevant to the many creatives and artists right here in Montague, as copyright informa-

tion would also be.

Libraries are critical to small towns. Professional leadership in LibSci, Info Management, and Info Services knowledge could become a town-wide initiative. It is a perfect match to lead Montague residents’ tech literacy. Our librarians’ leadership will guide and modernize our understanding of what “literacy” means in 2026, and increase use of the new Montague library.

Mary Feeney
Turners Falls

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Medic Reportback from Newark Strike Support

MONTAGUE – On May 22, approximately 300 “detainees” at Delaney Hall, the infamous ICE holding facility in Newark, New Jersey, announced a hunger and labor strike to protest “inhumane” conditions.”

On May 26, *Democracy Now* host Amy Goodman reported on the strike as Greenfield medical worker Nicolae Scott listened in.

Four days later, Scott drove down to New Jersey with medical supplies to support protesters outside Delaney Hall.

Scott describes what they saw: “State troopers tear-gassing the shit out of everyone. Men dressed in black, top to toe, pepper-spraying prisoners. Drones overhead. Concentration camp conditions.”

To learn more about this ongoing confrontation, watch “David Detmold’s Interview with Nicolae Scott,” on Montague Community Television now.

The interview is streaming online, and can be found by accessing *MontagueTV.org* and clicking the “Videos” link.

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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

Business first this week: “The Turners Falls Water Department will be **flushing fire hydrants**, July 27 to July 31. During this time, residents may experience temporary low water pressure and/or discolored water. “Annual fire hydrant flushing is an essential part of maintaining water quality, ensuring proper system flow, and verifying the operation of the hydrants. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we complete this important maintenance.”

Always happy to print that PSA. If you live in this particular Vicinity, you may as well snip this handy guide and tape it to the fridge: *Why is our water all brown?* They’re flushing the hydrants. Run the tub. *What’s with all the honking and sirens?* Softball team won a big one. *Why all the fireworks?* It’s summertime. *Why didn’t I get my Montague Reporter last week?* **It’s summertime.** *Is that building over there at risk of collapsing?* No, it’s probably fine. They put in some supports just in case. *Why was the grocery store closed this morning?* Raccoon fell through the ceiling.



... We actually had a real reporter on that one, **trying to write a real article**, but it bummed key people out to be interviewed on the topic and they asked that we not. I will relay the main findings – it was scared but fine; it didn’t eat any food; all proper cleaning and safety precautions were followed; police sources confirm it was the only time it happened in at least the last five years – though out of respect for everyone, I’m not going to say which grocery store. Blind item.

Do expect fireworks this Saturday, the 25th, though, for **Christmas In July**. In accordance with ancient tradition the Franklin County Boat Club will put on a boat parade (think a costumed nautical circle pit around Barton Cove), followed by a fireworks show, and if you’re at Unity Park you’ll have front-row seats to both. And here’s a special scoop, which I read in the Greenfield paper: stick around for a surprise at the end of the fireworks...

Skies were pretty smoky last week. Hopefully we won’t see too much more of that this summer... or at least hopefully not on this newspaper’s “off” weeks. Once again, I recommend the **Air Watch** mobile app, because it’s local, though a lot of other apps are just about as good for tracking the smog.



Longtime reader and contributor Joe R. Parzych reports: “I enjoyed the **new improved seats** while watching the new *Minions* movie this weekend at the Greenfield Garden Cinemas... The seats are very comfortable and have a heat-warming button. It’s just like you’re sleeping in your own house on a couch. And bigger cup-holders. Isaac Mass said they’re going to have more of the new ones in September. The movie was awesome. It takes place in 1920s Hollywood.”

A cascade of announcements:

“The three candidates for the 1st Franklin District state representative seat will be at the Sunderland Congregational Church on Wednesday, July 29 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. for a forum. The candidates, **Lora Wondolowski, Corinne Coryat, and Amy LaVallee**, will speak and answer questions. All are welcome. “The Sunderland Democratic Committee encourages all voters in the 1st Franklin District to come to this event and meet the candidates. The committee is welcoming new people to join our team. For more information, contact Scott Gudell at sunderlanddems@proton.me.”

“The 13th Annual **Pocumtuck Homelands Festival**, a celebration of Native American art, music, and cultures, will take place on Saturday, August 1 and Sunday, August 2 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the Unity Park riverfront.... Forty outstanding Indigenous artisans will sell traditional craft including jewelry, pipes, baskets, original art, clothing and instruments.

“The entertainment stage will host a full schedule of presenters and performers.... history tent will present talks... variety of children’s activities... Eastern woodlands skills.... This fun and educational event is open to the public, ADA-accessible, and free. Donations are especially appreciated this year.”

See nolumbekaproject.org/festival/ for a full schedule. It’s a packed and prestigious lineup and I didn’t want to pick and choose who to mention.

And: “Responding to decades of pleas from Indigenous leaders in the state, a group of activists is beginning a **walk across Massachusetts** on Friday, July 24, calling for a broad-based educational program about the impacts of colonial-settlerism on Native communities, followed by a change to the flag and seal of the Commonwealth, which portrays a settler’s hand poised threateningly above the head of a Native man.”

More info on this at changethemassflag.com.

“Hi this is **D.J. Bobby C.** I wanted to share information about a huge event happening on Sunday evening, August 2, at Sundaes at Lena’s located on West Gill Road in Gill. This free, fun, family event is my way to say ‘thank you’ to the community for supporting my business for four decades. I will be the D.J. from 6 to 8 p.m., playing the great hits from the ’60s to today. Sundaes at Lena’s will be selling ice cream for people to purchase. Come celebrate, and bring the whole family.”

“The Montague Public Libraries is inviting home cooks, bakers, and family-recipe-keepers to help create something special. As part of this summer’s Summer Cook Book Club series, we’re **collecting recipes for a new community cookbook**. Proceeds will support the Friends of the Montague Public Libraries [and] copies will also be available through the Millers Falls Branch food pantry as part of a community giveaway....

“Submitting is easy. Email your recipe to librarian Kate or fill out the online submission form on our website at montaguepubliclibraries.org. Recipes should be your own, though adapted recipes are welcome with credit to the original source. Please include ingredients, measurements, cooking temperatures, and cooking times to the best of your ability. Recipes must be submitted by Wednesday, August 5.”

“Greenfield Public Library is **hosting a zine contest** as part of our 2026 adult summer reading program. We hope you will take this chance to showcase your talent, have your zine in the library’s collection, and win a Kindle Fire 7. More information on criteria can be found on the submission form at bit.ly/zinecontest.

“The deadline to submit is August 22. Note that you must be a member of our library network (CWMARS, covering Central and Western Massachusetts) to enter.”

Wendell Old Home Day is Saturday, August 8 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Parade at 11 a.m., Citizen of the Year announced at noon, open mic after that; live music from Warner Hill, the Bear Mountain Boys, and Can Collectors to follow. As Old Home Days go, this one’s worth checking out. We’ve heard a rumor that Sapsucker Gourmet Popcorn might debut a Maple Bacon flavor.

OK, signing off... See you next on **August 6!**

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

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• Historical events that took place in Sunderland, Northfield, Deerfield, and Gill

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GMRSD from page A1

anyone recognizing there was a larger problem in this classroom?”

Jordan Garren, the father of a non-verbal Hillcrest Elementary student, echoed Spatcher’s concerns and called for “immediate changes” including training, stronger safety measures, “new staffing,” and a fence around the school’s playground.

A third parent, Mikayla Alisauskas, shared similar stories and told the committee one of her sons had been “traumatized from his last year at Hillcrest,” though she spoke more highly of staff at Sheffield Elementary.

“You have to have a nurse, or someone who’s professionally able to teach these teachers how to handle children with special needs who require toileting,” she said.

After the parents, Gill-Montague Education Association (GMEA) president Heidi Schmidt criticized the district’s recent staff restructuring and layoffs. “All these decisions were made in a silo,” she said. “Staff were not talked with.”

“We are one of the lowest-performing districts in the state of Massachusetts,” interim superintendent Tari Thomas told the committee, “and we are committed to a strategy that prioritizes high-quality instruction..... We made these improvements – it was our best shot to not put additional burden on the local taxpayers.”

Though 17 positions were eliminated in the restructuring, Thomas said, most corresponded with retirements, resignations, and reassignments, with “only one teaching position in the reduction of force across the district.” “Any kind of change is going to feel disruptive,” she added.

The GMEA released a statement after the meeting disputing this, claiming that both a teacher and a paraprofessional were laid off, while five more teachers were “non-renewed” before receiving their professional licensure.

Business director Joanne Blier reported that state Chapter 70 aid for the coming school year appears to be coming in \$74,120 higher – about 0.9% – than the district had budgeted; this gain was more than erased by school choice and charter sending tuitions now appearing a combined \$195,136 higher than budgeted.

State rural aid, she warned, was also likely coming in below what was hoped for in the district’s FY’27 budget.

The committee discussed structural school funding issues and various efforts to lobby the state legislature for increased aid.

Thomas announced that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will be conducting a “full-scale” review of the district from October to April, including classroom observation, and interviews with staff and school committee members. “I’m really looking forward to this,” she said.

Thomas also announced that the district had hired Karen Patenaude, a veteran local school administrator, as director of teaching and learning.

The school committee approved new job descriptions for that role, for the “executive assistant to the superintendent and school committee recording secretary,” and for two newly added administrative positions: assistant director of business and operations and human resources clerk. Thomas said these descriptions were linked from the publicly available meeting agenda.

“They aren’t linked,” Montague member

Heather Katsoulis told her.

“They were going to be linked now,” school committee chair Jane Oakes replied, “because you approved them.”

“I would really encourage people to review those,” Carol Jacobs added, “because I think there’s angst – and understandably so – about some of the changes that are being made, but if you look at the very specific job duties, I think you’re probably going to see the importance of the position.”

“I see this as not sustainable,” said Montague member Cliff Spatcher. “We’re trying to do more with less people.... We need to look at what we actually need for people to get the job done, so we don’t have burnout.” The descriptions were approved 4 to 2, with Spatcher and Wendy Thompson casting “No” votes.

As of press time on July 23, the approved descriptions were not yet publicly accessible.

Jacobs was appointed as the committee’s delegate to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) conference this fall, with Oakes as an alternate delegate.

The committee discussed restarting the search for a superintendent in the fall. A field representative from MASC oversaw the process last year, which failed after one of two recommended finalists withdrew. Thomas has agreed to stay on as interim superintendent for a second year, and MASC has committed to seeing the hire through, though the committee discussed the possibility of seeking other assistance. No vote was taken on the matter.

The next school committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 11.

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Nuisance Declared *In Absentia*; Snow Was Costly

By KEITH WATERS
with MIKE JACKSON

At Erving’s selectboard meeting on Monday, July 13, the board held a public hearing about a dangerous dog, though neither the complainant nor the dog’s owner showed up.

Kyle Dragon, the animal control officer from the Franklin County sheriff’s office, was there. He first reminded the board that the town did not have service with his agency at the time of the incident, but said he reviewed the case from last year at the town’s request.

Dragon explained the complaint: a dog jumped out of a second-story window and attacked another smaller dog, who was walking by with their owner. The owner of the small dog refused to let it be examined by an officer before leaving the scene, saying that neither she nor her dog were injured. She later reported that they were both injured.

Police chief Robert Holst testified next. He said that there had been no further complaints since this incident and that he has not seen the dogs or any evidence of injury.

The board asked Holst if he had heard from the property owner; he said he had not.

Selectboard member William Bembury said that he felt, from the description of the incident, that the dog may be a danger to the public.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith said he was not so sure. Both dogs were unlicensed at the time, and have been licensed since.

Dragon said his agency recommended a “nuisance dog” finding. This would serve as a legal strike, he explained, and allow the town to set terms making action easier if another call is made about the animal and it is determined the terms were violated.

The town’s attorney read the relevant section

of the law, MGL Chapter 140, Section 136A, which includes a line that a dog may be declared a nuisance if it “has threatened or attacked livestock, a domestic animal or a person.”

Jacob Smith said he was reluctant to make this determination, as he had seen no concrete evidence that the incident had resulted in an injury, but Dragon and Bembury pointed out that there had been a threat.

Jacob Smith asked if the dog could be “assessed” by an “independent third party,” but was told this was not something the board could require, and when Bembury moved that the animal be designated a nuisance Jacob Smith joined him in voting “aye.” The selectboard’s third member, Jacquelyn Boyden, was not in attendance.

The order requires that the dog be kept on a leash in public, and not allowed to “breach the enclosure of the residence” again.

Truck & Treasurer

Highway superintendent Glenn McCrory reported that the price to buy two attachments for a wheeled excavator was an additional \$13,000. At a previous meeting he had reported that the purchase price had increased beyond the amount approved at town meeting in May, and suggested leasing the vehicle for the approved amount and purchasing the attachments with other funds.

The board agreed to McCrory’s proposal to take the \$13,000 out of his budget line for roadway improvements.

Next the board approved a \$24,499.57 contract with Atkins Carpet & Flooring to replace floors in the new senior and community center. The current floors have buckled and become unsafe.

The board and town administrator Bryan Smith discussed the open town treasurer position. Bryan Smith said he thought the hours being advertised as 25 to 30 made the position less desirable, and went on to say that he thinks the position should be allowed 30 hours minimum, and that there is more work than that.

The board agreed to increase the advertised hours to 35, with all work to start in-office, but the possibility of allowing up to one-quarter remote hours once the treasurer is up to speed.

Trash & Transfers

The selectboard and fin com met again on Tuesday, July 14 to vote on whether to engage Casella Waste Management for solid waste disposal. They approved a two-year agreement, covering FY’27 and FY’28.

This led into a much longer conversation about the cost of trash hauling, and whether the trash sticker system should be changed. Bryan Smith said the cost to the town was increasing about 10%, or nearly \$20,000, between FY’26 and FY’27. The members did not take a vote, but asked for more data on how many stickers were printed and used, the actual tonnage hauled, and how other towns compared.

The board also spent nearly an hour with the fin com closing out the fiscal year, and voted to move some \$140,000 from an underspent public safety account to others where it was needed.

The largest part of the deficit was an unexpected \$70,000 worth of extra snow plowing; another roughly \$55,000 was attributed to “general government.”

At the end of the Tuesday meeting, the selectboard retired into executive sessions to discuss its strategy in collective bargaining with the town’s water and wastewater staff and with the police.

Thanks to Bernardston-Northfield Community Television for recordings of the meetings.

SIX-TOWN from page A1

services or regionalization.

“That’s actually really big news,” said vice chair Greg Snedeker. “It’s sort of a nod from the state that regionalization is going to be a part of the future of the state plans.” If voters approve the agreement, a need for state aid for the transition is anticipated.

Genovese said a meeting with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) commissioner Pedro Martinez went “very well” – the team saw the STRPB materials, he said, and “went ‘Boy, this is it! More students, more opportunities.’” He clarified that the commissioner made it clear his support for a new district was contingent on the voters in the towns supporting it.

The STRPB, which no longer has its own budget, reviewed the informational materials it plans to circulate and brainstormed ways to get flyers photocopied, potentially by the towns. The board hopes to schedule a meeting of all six town clerks, to discuss possible issues with holding the special election on the same day as the national election in November, and a joint meeting of the six selectboards.

Talk drifted to the decline in the school-aged population, and Snedeker theorized as to why superintendents prefer competing for school choice to regionalization.

“We are not going to go out there and teach all of our residents economics,” Jane Dutcher interjected. “We need to make this simple.”

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LEVERETT from page A1

said he had already received pledges of support for work on attaining the designation.

Board member Tom Hankinson said he thought it was a “great idea,” but warned that it was “not a trivial exercise,” noting that the application was 28 pages long and contained financial requirements which needed to be better understood.

Board members said they would look into the matter further, and suggested Henion do the same and come to a future meeting with more information.

Retention

The regional school district recently accepted a bid for the replacement of the Amherst middle school roof that came in lower than what had been authorized by the four towns that make up the district, which include Leverett and Shutesbury. The district has asked the towns’ permission to retain the resulting overage for contingencies.

After expressing some confusion over what granting this position would mean, selectboard and fin com members decided to ask for a meeting with Shannon Bernachia, the district’s finance director, for more information.

Fin com chair Phil Carter disapproved of a related request from the district for letters from attorneys representing each of the four towns if they choose to allow the extra money to be held, saying he thought only one legal opinion should be needed.

Complication

Resident Gregory Woodard requested a change to a long-standing informal arrangement under which he has allowed the use of a driveway on his land to provide public access to the parking lot behind town hall. Noting that the subject was discussed 17 years ago and again nine years ago, he said it was time for the matter to be “put to bed.”

Woodard said that though it did not go through, a recent proposal to provide postal service to Shutesbury residents at the adjacent Leverett post office – which he also owns – was complicated by the driveway arrangement, and that he would like more clarity about his options for use of his land in the future.

His preferred solution, he said, was for the town to build a driveway on the other side of town hall. Failing that, he suggested that the town take the land by eminent domain, though he said he was not keen on the idea.

Board members were not enthusiastic about build-

ing a new driveway, but said they would investigate the possibility. Member Jed Proujansky said he would get together with Woodard to learn more about the situation and explore alternatives that he may find satisfactory.

Balance

Participating remotely, town accountant Kelli Pontbriand answered questions regarding end-of-fiscal-year transfers from department accounts with surpluses into those with deficits, part of the process of balancing and closing out the FY’26 budget.

Pontbriand noted that the largest deficits were in the highway department’s account for snow and ice – which she said was “everywhere” last year, and is expected to be partially reimbursed by the state – and school expenses for health insurance and Medicare, which also rose throughout the area.

Pontbriand said she was unable to provide exact figures for certain Leverett Elementary School accounts as she had not yet received reports on summer wage and transportation costs, part of the FY’26 budget. She said she expected those figures in the coming weeks, but has had to use estimates as the state’s deadline for reconciling the books was July 15.

Fin com members criticized the administration for not providing the information earlier, saying the costs could have been estimated in a more timely manner.

Pontbriand also complained that the state’s July 15 deadline was too soon after the end of the fiscal year on June 30, and was “not really realistic.”

Other Business

Hankinson updated the board on the status of the driveable trail project at Woodard’s Corner, which would provide alternative public access to the King conservation area and its blueberry patches.

Hankinson reported that the town’s engineer believes he can provide information required by the conservation commission for possible approval in time for its August 3 meeting, and that if it is approved, highway superintendent Matt Boucher and his crew are ready to do the job this summer.

Mary London Ewing was appointed to the board of registrars.

The selectboard tentatively scheduled a closed-door executive session for its next meeting on July 28, with details about the executive session to be provided at a later date. Chair Patricia Duffy told the fin com members they were invited.



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LEVERETT CONSERVATION COMMISSION
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Leverett Conservation Commission, in accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act (MGL c.131 §40), will hold a public meeting on August 3rd, 2026 beginning at 7:00 PM in the Leverett Town Hall to review an NOI submitted by the **Town of Leverett** for construction of a gravel drivable trail with a nine (9) foot long bridge over an intermittent stream.

The application is on file and is available for public inspection in the Town Clerk’s Office at the Leverett Town hall or by appointment at concom@leverett.ma.us or (413) 548-1022 ext. 3.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC APOLOGY

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that CAPTAIN’S COMMAND AT BLUEBEARD’S BEACH CLUB OWNERS’ ASSOCIATION, INC. hereby publicly apologizes to TERRI SEVENE CAPUCCI, MICHAEL SEVENE and JAMES C. SEVENE, JR. for incorrectly naming them as the heirs of Barbara L. Sevene, having an interest in Week Number 10 in Villa Unit Number 225 in Captain’s Command at Bluebeard’s Beach Club, St. Thomas U.S. Virgin Islands.

Captain’s Command has been informed that the heirs are Rodney and Sheri Demers, Russel and Joanne Demers, Paul and Deborah Demers, of Turners Falls, Massachusetts, Ed and Carol Demers of Colrain, Massachusetts and Melissa and Arthur Patenaude of Vermont.

Richard H. Dollison, Esq.
Attorney for Plaintiff,
Captain’s Command at Bluebeard’s Beach Club

QUABBIN from page A1

for more financial support from the eastern part of the state – a fair exchange, many argued, for their protection of the resource.

“It would be hard to put a dollar amount on how important this watershed is for millions in the Commonwealth,” said state representative Aaron Saunders of Ludlow, whose district includes the Quabbin towns of Petersham, New Salem, Wendell, Shutesbury, Pelham, and Belchertown. “We are doing our part. We are protecting this watershed by forgoing any type of economic development, which is a cornerstone to providing the basics of education, public safety – bathrooms in our police station.”

“It’s time for a change,” Saunders said, “and not an incremental one.”

Representatives of the 12 watershed communities were packed into the stuffy room to share their thoughts. Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Rebecca Tepper, who serves as chair of the MWRA, told the roughly 50 attendees that it was probably the biggest crowd that had ever attended one of its board meetings.

“The Quabbin Reservoir plays a very important resource for drinking water to millions of people, but we also know that its creation came with significant sacrifices,” Tepper said. “Families lost their homes, their farms, businesses, and entire communities, and many residents were forced to leave the very places they call home. That history continues to shape these communities.”

Tepper pointed to a new commission tasked with reassessing the formula the state uses to calculate its “payments *in lieu of taxes*” (PILOT) to the towns for state-owned land, as well as the Mass Ready Act, an omnibus infrastructure bill which if passed would grant an additional \$100,000, over two years, to each town in the watershed.

Saunders and state senator Jo Comerford are sponsoring a separate bill, “An Act rela-



A sign in Belchertown warns residents not to approach the manmade lake.

tive to the Quabbin watershed and regional equity,” which would increase the value of watershed land in the PILOT formula and establish a host community trust fund to improve water infrastructure for residents.

Many attendees voiced their support for their bill.

Though 91% of the land in New Salem is state-owned forest established to protect the reservoir, only about 20% of the town’s operating revenue comes from state PILOT payments, according to town coordinator Emily Hill.

The town is seeking grants to fix its well – a project estimated to cost \$1 million. “We are reaching a critical point,” Hill said. “We failed our override, and we are out of money.”

Hill said she believes the town deserves

more state support, especially considering that its public safety officials often respond to incidents on the Quabbin land.

Most of the state is currently experiencing a “significant” multi-year drought, negatively impacting groundwater levels and increasing the risk of fire.

The reservoir is at about 82% capacity, according to the MWRA website, and this “below normal” level is expected to continue for the next 12 months.

“That’s not an unusual level, but it’s certainly something we pay close attention to,” said MWRA interim executive director Stephen Estes-Smargiassi.

The maximum “safe yield” for the reservoir is 300 million gallons per day, according to the MWRA. On average, consumers in the

eastern part of the state draw about 200 million gallons per day, but in June average daily withdrawals increased to 249 million gallons.

No water use restrictions have yet been imposed on the communities served by the MWRA. “We are not in a situation where we need mandatory restrictions at this point,” Estes-Smargiassi said, “but we are encouraging people to use water wisely.”

Saunders pointed out that Belchertown residents are under a nonessential water ban, and said the drought may force his community to cancel its fall sports season.

“While the Chicopee Valley aqueduct runs under our streets, we don’t get a drop,” Saunders said.

Comerford discussed the issue of wells in the region being contaminated with the industrial chemicals known as PFAS – including the Swift River Elementary school, which serves Wendell and New Salem – and suggested that a lack of access to water contributed to the devastating Wendell house fire last month which cost 84-year-old Robert Bowers his home.

In recent years, the MWRA has studied the possibility of expanding its infrastructure to serve additional eastern Massachusetts communities, but Comerford said those studies reinforced the idea that the Quabbin has no capacity to spare. A separate study concluded that providing its water to the towns surrounding the reservoir via pipes could cost \$500 billion.

Saunders said the watershed communities receive less than \$3 million annually from the MWRA, which manages an annual budget of nearly \$1 billion.

“This isn’t handouts – this isn’t charity,” he said. “This is recognition for the value of the resource you extract, that has facilitated billions upon billions of dollars in economic development for our friends and neighbors in the eastern part of the state.”



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TRAINING from page A1

lab – a pair of containers, one full of training equipment and the other a kind of hands-on residential building simulator – was just in time, as the first five-week session of a new weatherization program begins August 3.

“It’s really important work,” Cates told the *Reporter*. “Every home that is weatherized is saving a person money, is reducing fossil fuel usage, and is helping people afford to live because they’re not spending as much on fuels.”

The equipment and classes are both funded by grants from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC), with the college receiving \$175,000 to design and procure the lab and a close partner agency, Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV), given just over \$1 million to run a multi-year workforce training program.

“Huge props,” Cates added, were owed to a third partner: Oxbow Design Build, a worker cooperative based in Easthampton, which listened to everyone’s ideas and needs in detail, designed the apparatus,

and oversaw its fabrication.

“They dreamed up the solution with the containers, the opening walls, the attic crawl space prop,” Cates said. “All the bits and pieces.”

Oxbow worker-owner Carl Woodruff, taciturnly supervising the installation in a hardhat and high-visibility vest, told the *Reporter* he was more than happy to help with the program’s launch.

“I think what’s happening at GCC Workforce Development is exactly the type of technical training that we need to see,” he said. “Everyone I’ve worked with over there seems to be deeply committed to making that work.”

“It’s really important and meaningful work,” he added. “We work in an industry that is predominantly people who are going to be aging out really soon – people talk about the ‘silver tsunami,’ and I very much see that. So I think it’s more important than ever that we are providing opportunities for people to enter the trades.”

Woodruff said his firm has worked with GCC’s workforce de-

velopment department for “a couple of years now” about their relaunch of the weatherization program – Cates said she believes the previous version of the training was phased out around 2015 – as well as its new Climate Service Corps, a 14-week sequence that supports students through learning about HVAC work, conservation, clean energy administration, or weatherization and helps connect them with both certifications and internships.

“We’ve had a couple of interns join Oxbow,” Woodruff said, “but this is the first contract that we have actually done with [GCC].”

To deliver the finished product on time, he added, Oxbow ended up outsourcing much of the metal fabrication to the Greenfield-based company Campbell Ironworks.

The final round of delivery is scheduled for this Friday: a collection of two-foot-cube “tabletop props” demonstrating household terrain a weatherization tech might encounter.

“Individual students can work on doing the air sealing and insulating that they would do around that,” Woodruff explained, “and then they can actually be placed on a base module that will depressurize, and measure essentially how effective their air sealing was.”

“It was really fun for me,” Woodruff reflected. “It’s also meaningful for me, in a way that the other work that we do isn’t.... I learned everything on the job, and I was lucky enough that that worked well for me, but I saw plenty of people along the way who, if they just had a few months of focused technical training to get them started, it could jumpstart them five years into a career in the trades. I think it’s a really worthwhile investment for us to be making, as a community and as a state.”

Peter Wingate, energy director at Community Action Pioneer Valley, said he has been involved in weatherization since 1987.

“There was no real pathway, there was not really any formal training,” Wingate told the *Reporter*. “They just kind of threw you out there, and some survived and some did not.... When I talk to people my age, my story is so common, none of us knew what we were doing. Some of us liked it and stayed, and some of us didn’t.



Inside the training lab: Nooks and crannies were carefully designed to simulate an attic crawlspace (at left) and, behind plexiglass, wall cavities of various shapes.

“And just having something more planned out, I think, is makes so much more sense. And then, if you look at the where we’re going as a society and as human beings – and what we’re trying to do to maintain energy efficiency, controlling carbon levels– I think it’s a really exciting field for younger people to dig into.”

Community Action, which administers fuel assistance in Hampshire and Franklin Counties, is naturally positioned to support weatherization, Wingate explained. Any household that qualifies for fuel assistance also qualifies for support in making their building – whether they rent or own – more energy-efficient.

“About 90% of the households we serve through energy efficiency start off through fuel assistance,” Wingate said, “and the other 10% come as referrals directly from the MassSave program.”

From there, getting into workforce development was another natural step for the agency.

“We go out and do the energy audits, and local for-profit contractors do the actual work,” he explained. “They came to us and said, ‘We’d like to do more work for you, but what’s really holding us back is we can’t find enough trained crew people to hire.’ That’s what gave us the idea to apply for this grant.”

The grant was CAPV’s first with MassCEC.

After the first cohort of 12 students goes through the program, according to Cates, a second tier of the program will run: an eight-student “crew chief” class. Applicants for

that training must have been working in the field for at least a year.

CAPV youth and workforce development director Lisa LaPierre told the *Reporter* that though most of the workforce development candidates the agency works with come in through other programs – prison reentry, for example, and a “young parents” program for recipients of Transitional Assistance for Families with Dependent Children – any member of the public interested in receiving weatherization training should get in touch.

“We are still accepting applications,” she said. “If anybody is interested in joining this program, they can go to the Community Action website – *CommunityAction.us* – and on the main page there’s a big red box that says ‘Apply for the program.’ Even if they feel like they’re too close to the start date, we’re doing it again, so they should still apply.... We can help people find other jobs while they’re waiting for a training to start, we can be working on job readiness...We can be doing things like finding childcare, or helping them with appropriate housing.”

Behind the East Building, the excitement was palpable, and there was a sense the work was just beginning.

“The thing about workforce development is, we’re nimble and we can act quickly,” said Wood. “And partnerships and collaborations like this are almost the most important aspect of workforce development.”



Carl Woodruff of Oxbow Design Build heads over to help the crew position the “attic” training lab on the pad.

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Tree Power Struggle Rages; Some Smell Housing Ruse in Farm Map

By KATE SAVAGE

At last Monday’s selectboard meeting, Gill officials argued again over who should be overseeing tree work along the town’s roadways.

John Miner, the highway superintendent, has been managing the budget, staff, and equipment to remove dangerous or dead trees along the roads. But Joe Williams, who was recently reelected as tree warden, argued at the July 13 meeting that this work should be under his purview instead.

In the past, the selectboard has named highway superintendent Miner an “assistant tree warden,” but Williams said this position was not legal.

“There was never a town meeting to create that position,” he said.

Williams said he had the authority to appoint a deputy tree warden, but did not wish to give that role to Miner. According to copies of the town website saved by the Internet Archive’s WayBack Machine, Miner was listed as an assistant tree warden as recently as May 2024, but by September 2025 the

title had been dropped.

Miner said highway superintendents have traditionally been given the role of deputy tree warden so they could remove problem trees that came to their attention on the job. “If we want to trim trees so they’re not knocking on people’s windshields, and taking mirrors off and stuff, you have to write all that down,” he said to Williams. “Now, wouldn’t it be a heck of a lot easier to deputize me, so when we’re the ones out doing the work we can just do it?”

Selectboard member Jen Waldron said the tree warden should identify which trees need to be removed, but the highway superintendent should oversee the actual work. “All of the budget, all of the equipment, and all of the staff are supervised by him,” she said. “There should be a firewall there.”

Waldron asked Williams to bring a written proposal to the board about how tree work could be done in town moving forward.

Farmland Pilot

Tamsin Flanders, a senior land use planner at the Franklin Regional Council of Gov-

ernments, announced at the meeting that Gill was one of five towns chosen to participate in a pilot model for developing farmland protection plans. Under such a model, an advisory group with representatives from the agricultural commission, conservation commission, planning board, and selectboard and three local farmers would work on gathering information about farms in Gill.

“The end product is a written document, and a lot of maps,” Flanders said.

Selectboard member Charles Garbiel expressed suspicion about the process. He suggested that once the farmland has been mapped, the state could then demand housing development on non-agricultural land.

“I don’t see it going anywhere other than to get more maps,” said agricultural commission member Dan Flag.

Other attendees saw it as a good opportunity for the town. “The state has money to put into farmland protection,” said conservation commission member Brian Donahue. “It stands to reason to me that this is an opportunity for us to be part of that conversation,

and to be in a good position to receive more money to protect farmland down the road.”

Members of the agricultural and conservation commissions said they would return to the selectboard with recommendations for the new committee’s goals and members.

Other Business

In the interest of making town buildings more energy-efficient, the selectboard approved applying for comprehensive building assessments for the elementary school and public safety complex. The process provides information on electrification feasibility, potential upgrades, and carbon reduction strategies, and will be funded by Eversource.

Amy Gordon was reappointed to the cultural council through July 2029.

The selectboard’s next meeting, on Monday, July 27, will be held at the Riverside municipal building on Route 2. The regular meeting will begin at 5 p.m., and a community discussion about the future of the building, which once housed the Four Winds School, will begin at 5:30 p.m.

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Ramsey began the discussion by explaining why he thought that in the absence of a well-paid, independent tree warden position, the town’s public works department (DPW) was the only one with the capacity to deal with tree maintenance, removal, and planting.

The tree advisory committee had recommended a “highly qualified” independent candidate following the resignation of the warden last month, he said, but when she was informed of the scope of work involved she withdrew her name from consideration.

Ramsey recommended that DPW superintendent Sam Urkiel be appointed as the warden for three years, and also that he, Urkiel, and the tree advisory committee work together to develop an “operating protocol for public shade trees.” He showed a proposed organizational chart with the DPW superintendent at the center, reporting to the selectboard, and with the tree committee off to the side advising both.

Selectboard member Nate Card said that though there was “much to be gained by [the tree warden] having a strong working relationship with the DPW,” he was concerned Ramsey’s model “constitutes a conflict of interest,” because the department’s top priority is “the care and maintenance of the built infrastructure,” as opposed to the town’s “living infrastructure.”

Card read from the town’s 2021 “public tree protection bylaw” concerning the warden’s responsibilities, which include compliance with state law and the “preparation and maintenance of a current public tree management plant,” which he noted the town does not have.

Another section of the bylaw states that any evaluation of whether a tree is an “emergency hazard,” which would bypass the required public hearing before removal, should be based on an “objective risk tree rating system such as the USDA Forest Service 12-Point Risk Tree Rating System.”

The tree warden’s responsibilities include the “preparation and maintenance of a current public tree management plant,” which the town does not yet have.

Selectboard member Marina Goldman suggested that Urkiel be appointed for one year, with a “check-in” scheduled in six months, and that a selectboard member sit on the committee that drafts protocols for tree removal and planting. She noted that the finance committee will also review stipends this year, including that paid to the warden, as part of the FY’28 budget process.

After a half dozen public comments, generally negative toward Ramsey’s proposal, the board voted to appoint the reportedly reluctant Urkiel, who was not in attendance, as tree warden for a year and tasked a committee with developing new protocols within 90 days.

Sara-Evelyn Lane was also appointed to the tree advisory committee until next summer.

Reconfigured Brass

The board reviewed a set of proposals for restructuring the police

department that chief Jason Haskins had initially made in June. Haskins brought a document, developed in collaboration with the department’s staff unions, clarifying the policy governing promotions to the positions of sergeant, lieutenant, and deputy chief, saving the town from the cost of contracting with independent assessment centers.

Haskins’s original plan had called for the creation of a “promotional assessment committee” to review applications, which would include a member of the community at large as a non-voting “observer.” Haskins said this had been a demand of the unions, but that he “passionately” believed the public member should have a vote, and that the unions had relented.

The board unanimously approved the promotion policy and endorsed job descriptions for the deputy chief position, upgrading the existing, but unfilled, lieutenant position, and a new lieutenant role reporting to the deputy chief. The position of staff sergeant, also vacant, will be eliminated. Haskins noted that it is not a police job, but an officer in the Marine Corps.

The town’s policy on traffic control officers (TCOs), off-duty police officers or civilians who assist on-duty police at special events, road projects, and emergencies, was updated. The new policy is more “robust,” Haskins said, because it specifies the periodic training TCOs must receive.

The board also approved an agreement with the the city of Greenfield and the Franklin County sheriff’s office renewing Montague’s participation in the regional Special Response Team, which responds in situations a single department can not handle. Haskins said the team now has a drone component and a negotiating capacity.

“I happen to be the commander of both of those,” he added.

Streetscapes

The board awarded a contract for traffic-calming improvements in Montague Center to the Amherst-based Taylor Davis Landscaping Company.

The project became mired in controversy after local residents said an initial design proposed in 2024 failed to address the causes of speeding and had ignored their complaints. In January a revision of the design by Bowman Consulting Group, which oversaw the bidding process that led to the choice of Taylor Davis, was also panned by residents at two selectboard meetings.

But there was virtually no discussion at the July 13 meeting of the \$492,986 contract, which is funded by a state Complete Streets grant. Assistant town administrator Chris Nolan-Zeller said he was “really happy where this landed,” because he had feared that with the increase in oil prices “since the Iran war began,” bids would come in above the \$500,000 grant amount.

“We’re about \$7,000 under,” he said. “It’s not a huge contingency, but we’re able to move forward.”

The board awarded a \$7,000 contract for the maintenance of planters along Avenue A in Turners Falls to Abound Design Incorporated, a firm based in Conway. The work will be funded from the town’s community development discretionary fund.

The contract represents a shift in town policy, as maintaining the downtown planters has historically

drawn a good deal of voluntarism from local residents and store owners. At the June meeting when the board agreed to hire a company to bring order to the inconsistent “patchwork” approach in place, Nolan-Zeller said this tradition would still be encouraged under the new regime.

The board awarded a \$7,000 contract for the maintenance of planters along Avenue A in Turners Falls to Abound Design Incorporated, a firm based in Conway.

The scope of work encourages the maintenance contractor to “collaborate with local businesses, property owners, civic organizations, and community stakeholders to enhance the downtown planter program,” though any “improvements and enhancements” from these parties must be “coordinated and approved by the DPW superintendent,” who reportedly has a full plate.

Representations

RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto unveiled a new website for her program, the town’s cultural development arm, at www.riverculture.org. LoManto said she had worked on the site for “months and months” with Peter Chilton, co-owner of Nova Motorcycles, who she called an “excellent” web designer. The site is a “work in progress,” she added, and “not everything is 100% perfect.”

LoManto said her goal was to integrate the site with the program’s newsletter, showing images of events in chronological order. “As the event happens, it disappears,” she explained. The site also contains an interactive map of downtown Turners Falls, as well as a section on local Indigenous culture with a link to documents from the recent study of the 1676 massacre and battle at the falls.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz asked if the site could be accessed through mobile phones, and LoManto replied that it was designed for phones as well as computer screens.

She was also asked if the site reflects the fact that RiverCulture, which had originally only sponsored events in Turners Falls, now covers all of the town. “Yes,” she said, “the other villages and their amenities are listed under ‘Cultural Attractions.’”

Other Business

The board authorized Ramsey to sign an agreement with the state board of library commissioners for a portion of the grant – roughly \$11 million – that will help fund construction of a new main library in downtown Turners Falls, as approved by voters on June 24.

Ramsey noted that the remaining portion of funds pledged by the state, just under \$329,000, would be disbursed when the project is completed.

The board retired into an executive session to discuss the “physical condition and/or mental health of a police officer as it relates to a request for injury leave” under state law.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 27.



Looking Back: 10 Years Ago This Week

Here’s the way it was on July 21, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Heads Butt in Gill

On July 11, after considerable debate, the Gill selectboard reappointed nine male and one female part-time police officers, all previous officers recommended by police chief David Hastings.

Selectboard chair John Ward challenged reappointing all 10, suggesting the town could save money with fewer part-time officers. Hastings said he felt it was

important to keep all of them, and that six were academy-trained with no complaints in the past 15 years. He added that a female officer was important when searching female suspects, and noted that part-time officers pay for their own training and cost the town nothing if they aren’t working.

Ward and selectboard member Randy Crochier continued pressing the chief for details. Administrative assistant Ray Purington said he believed insurance cost the town around \$200 per officer per year.

The motion eventually passed, 2 to 1, with Ward voting no.

20 Years Ago

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

Montague Finally Has Budget

After a \$600,000 Proposition 2½ override was turned back by 58% of the voters on June 6, the Montague selectboard and finance committee and the Gill-Montague school committee went back to their drawing boards and labored over cuts to services and personnel.

Town meeting members got down to the nitty-gritty Wednesday night, working their way through a lengthy special meeting, carefully debating every facet of a negotiated compromise and turning back a few of the selectboard’s proposed cuts as they closed the gap. Both the town and the schools came away with a budget in hand by the time the meeting closed at 10:30 p.m.

Don’t Blame the Tornado

After the tornado hit Wendell Tuesday, the front wall of the former senior center was leaning even

further than it used to, 10 inches out of plumb, prompting the building inspector to call for it to be razed.

Historic commission member Jerry Eide argued at Wednesday’s selectboard meeting to save it. He blamed the new lean on the architect’s decision to gut the structure, weakening it, and the contractor’s failure to install diagonal bracing, rather than on the tornado itself.

Goldman’s Next Film

On Monday, Montague Center resident Marina Goldman came before the selectboard seeking permission to film a new feature, “Bridge of Names,” on location in Lake Pleasant. She assured the selectboard her company would have appropriate insurance. The board approved her request.

Goldman’s first local feature, “All American Boy,” a coming-of-age story about a boy growing up in the ’60s, was shown locally before winning awards at the Hollywood Film Festival. One scene was filmed inside Carroll’s Supermarket in Millers Falls.

140 Years Ago

Here’s the way it was on July 14 and 21, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

Cherries and blue-berries are plentiful.

The advance guard of the river drivers has arrived, and six million logs are jammed on the French King.

The earth that is taken from the Allen Brothers’ cellar is used to widen the Avenue near the corner of Second street.

Splendid specimens of fossil prints of fishes were discovered in the sand-stone blasted out of Allen Brothers’ cellar.

Now that the potato bug can be successfully dealt with, a new foe appears in the form of a large louse which kills the plant in a short time.

Dr. Wormsley’s well known gig has come out within a few days radiant with new paint and varnish, while his horse rejoices in the splendor of a shining new harness.

Manchester & Ward are selling a large number of copper bath tubs this summer at the low price of \$12.00 while the price was formerly \$20. No man can afford to be without a bath tub in his house at the prices charged.

A couple of tramps broke into the Montague City school house and stole the little desk clocks. They left behind them a frying pan and a raw turnip, which they obtained at a store in this village. They were hard looking chaps.

The selectmen would be justified in adding a couple of policemen to the force while so many strangers are in town liable to patronize the many saloons.



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WENDELL from page A1

That discontinued section is now a footpath with deep ruts, trees that have fallen across it, and sections with ankle-deep water. Detmold said he wanted permission to cut the fallen trees. He said he would use his own chainsaw to open the footpath, use the logs to make a corduroy road over the wet places, and while he is there cut the trees inside Smallpox Cemetery so they do not knock over gravestones.

His proposal brought out opposing understandings of that cemetery, and of Wendell’s 19th-century history.

Cemetery commissioner Sylvia Wetherby said genealogy research done by local historian Pam Richardson showed that although the headstones show other surnames, the cemetery was attached to the Jabez Sawyer lot, and was a private family cemetery holding only family members. She said Ina Phelps, who gave the road and area around it to Massachusetts Audubon in her will, stipulated that it should return to its natural state, with nothing cut, and nothing changed beyond what nature changes.

Wendell historian Jean Forward, however, said the historical commission’s cultural resource survey stated the people buried there include a traveling salesman who had smallpox, stayed in a home, and infected family members there. The victims were buried, with hard digging in winter, in an out-of-the-way place to isolate contamination. Their burial established the cemetery as a town facility.

Massachusetts General Law says that access to a public cemetery – at least a footpath – must be maintained. Phelps’s wishes do not supersede that law.

Detmold, Wetherby, and Forward agreed that they would all do more research and contact Mass Audubon, in the hopes that the issue can be resolved at the next selectboard meeting on July 29.

Detmold said the walkers were also planning to stay in Wendell overnight on August 2, and asked if they may camp on the common. He did not know how many would come, but hoped to have a better idea before the July 29 meeting.

Selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato said there was no legal reason not to allow camping on the common, but that the walkers may do well to stay on lawns of homes nearby.

Roads & Poles

Highway commission chair Phil Delorey reported that the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has agreed to cover the \$129,000 cost of leasing a new town dump truck, \$56,000 a year. However, MassDOT will not cover the \$28,000 cost of a plow or snow removal equipment.

He said he hopes the coming winters will be mild, and that the money can come from the snow and ice budget; otherwise, it will need to come from the highway general budget.

Delorey said steel for fabricating members for the Farley bridge arrived late, and fabrication is behind schedule, but he still hopes bridge construction will be done by the end of August.

Hearing that, one Wendell resident said, “Oh, so November.”

The selectboard held two pole hearings with National Grid representative Steve Soucy, who asked for two poles off West Street for slot meters. Slot meters receive signals from smart meters and give the utility information about an outage without anyone having to call from an affected house.

Selectboard member Paul Doud asked how many more slot meters to expect in Wendell, but Soucy could not answer. Not all Wendell households have smart meters, and the terrain will determine where the slot meters need to go. The poles would be inside National Grid’s right-of-way.

No citizen came to object, and board members allowed the poles to go in.

Other Business

The planning board sent the selectboard the news that they do not need the support of town counsel for their dealings with the solar developer Wendell Solar, LLC.

Adrienne LaPierre came in person to ask permission to hold a wedding on the north common on October 4, a Sunday. They would set up a small circle of chairs on the common, and a table in the gazebo, and the wedding would include a champagne toast in the Wendell Meetinghouse. For that she needs to follow the Meetinghouse’s one day alcohol permit policy.

The wedding parking would overlap the Good Neighbors schedule, and should be on one side of Center Street only. The office building lot usually has room.

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Friday, August 7 at 6:30-8 PM
BluGroove

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14 AT 6:30-8 PM
MATT YORK

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21 AT 6:30-8 PM
BAD NEWS JAZZ AND BLUES ORCHESTRA

Word from wood bank supervisor Sarah Butler was that the state Department of Conservation and Recreation is not interested in moving the tall log pile from Montague Road to the wood bank site. She suggested just pushing the highest logs over as a means of making the pile shorter.

DiDonato said she thought Walter Regnier, who had bought and cut or removed logs from 95 Wendell Depot Road, might have an opinion.

Grass on town properties grew long in the five weeks before it was cut most recently. Gerry’s Landscaping wants to cut it on a two-week schedule, which does not mesh well with Wendell’s wish to have a three-week schedule.

DiDonato said she leaned toward allowing Gerry’s schedule, but having them cut the grass no shorter than three inches, using money from the town properties maintenance account. The issue, including how many mowings will fit within the budget, can be discussed before the next mowing season.

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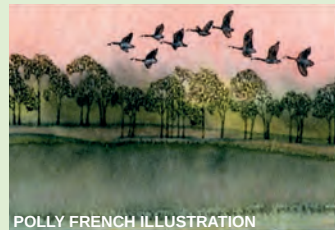
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JAMIE SIMPSON PHOTO



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – It’s been a quiet month at the old house on the edge of the river, as the man used to say on the 6 p.m. Saturday night radio show.

Or at least he said something to that effect. You may remember *A Prairie Home Companion*.

A month has passed, slowly, since my last report on the dog and birdlife from this little corner of the planet.

This summer, I’ve put my finger on the words for a growing personal dichotomy: I’ve gotten used to living in two worlds, which has definite advantages. Let me explain.

There’s this first world some of us inhabit, the world of wild things, the world just here outside the back door or a few steps down the woodland path. Then there’s the second world beyond, the world of the daily news, that world full of menace, explosions, destruction.

How to maintain any kind of peace of mind if all the mayhem of the world beyond our quiet backyard borders keeps intruding?

I move between the two, keeping a wary eye on the headlines and CNN, but returning as often as I can to the place of balance, to the place where my activities are not particularly unusual, it’s just that there I am in harmony with them.

So really, it’s become my job to recount the business of the first world. You can read all about the chaotic other world whenever you want.

July 1, if you recall, found us on the sixth day of living under the heat dome. The temperatures have hovered between 90 and 100 for days. The window fans in the upstairs rooms have been whirring all night, drawing in what coolness the dark brings.



MONIQUE BRULE PHOTO

The Skunk Twins explore the author’s yard.

By the time the pale dawn light comes, the catbird has already been calling her crazy breathless mimicry, enough to wake me up.

This is already the week of the young birds. Nesting is over. Thrushes, orioles, and wrens all have their own allotted time when the adults escort their offspring around the yard and woods, teaching them the best places to find a meal. They follow their harried parents as they learn the ropes of life out here.

The dutiful song sparrow brings her young to the yard and explains that this is the place where the humans put out food, and it’s easy pickin’s all year long. All you have to do is show up, offer a little tune, and it’s a free lunch!

It is the time for the young, but also the time of roses. Their heady perfume fills the yard in the early morning and calms a bit in the noonday sun, but by the early evening they once again fill the air with a wonderful, feminine scent of ladies from the last century.

The river flows by here every day as it has for at least the last 14,000 years.

The water is perhaps a bit too low for some, but the osprey can find advantage in that. He pivots overhead on pointed wings; it’s easy fishing for him now. His prey, the small-mouthed bass, lingers near the surface in the warm water where he can swoop down and catch his breakfast.

In some ways, the calendar seems to be taking a big bite of the summer apple, one week at a time. What a difference a week makes out here.

Out of doors, life is short, like summer itself.

One week young birds follow their parents around squawking, seeming to be helpless and see **WEST ALONG** page B3

THEATER

A Lark, a Pole, a Stake – and Sparks

By CLAIRE HOPLEY

DEERFIELD – It’s early evening. Plump clouds are making themselves comfortable in the sky, and verdant self-confident trees shade the crowd strolling along Old Main Street in Historic Deerfield. When they reach the Ashley House everyone seats themselves on rows of white chairs, ready to watch the first play in the three-play sequence *A Stake in the Ground* set in 1774.

Called *The Liberty Lark*, this play features Elihu Ashley (played by Yar Petrov) and David Dickinson (Mario Long-Imbimbo) elatedly debating independence from the rule of King George III of England. They’re excited: larking about, carried away by their enthusiasm for freedom, and totally oblivious of the black slave Jinny (Rae Janeil) cleaning the windows. Equally, they don’t notice, let alone acknowledge, another enslaved person, Cato (Marcus Never-son) who passes by with his pitchfork.

What can liberty mean in a society with slaves? And Deerfield certainly had them, as evidenced by the “witness stones” now placed in front of the houses where they worked.

Ashley and Dickinson were historical Deerfield residents, as was Cynthia Williams, the young woman who intervenes in their talk. So, too, were the characters who will appear in the following two plays: *Jinny and Cato* by Valyn Lyric Turner and *Sparks on Dry Tinder* by Patrick Gabridge.

The playwrights are members of Plays in Place, a Boston-based organization whose mission is to dramatize historical events for performance in the locations where they occurred. In July 1774 Deerfield patriots set up a tall Liberty Pole, only to have it chopped down overnight by the loyalist Tories of the town. The meaning of liberty is therefore at the heart of the see **THEATER** page B8



DEREK FOWLES PHOTOS

Top: Yar Petrov (left) and Mario Longo-Imbimbo (right) as Elihu Ashley and David Dickinson in *The Liberty Lark*, the first of the three plays that make up *A Stake in the Ground*. Above: The audience walks through Historic Deerfield to the next play in the sequence.

PREVIEWS

THE NOISE OF SUMMER

By MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – *Nobody on the road / nobody on the beach / I can feel it in the air...*

We’re rounding the corner into August and the outdoor shows are abundant. Every Monday the Montague Community Band enlivens the bandshell at Peskeompskut Park, every Thursday there’s a free show at Greenfield’s Energy Park, and now there’s one at Riverfront Park in Erving every Friday. Big national acts are on the slate at Tree House Brewing (Gin Blossoms, Steel Pulse, Violent Femmes) and Look Park (Gillian Welch, Lyle Lovett, Sierra Ferrell), smaller beer gardens like the Deja Brew and Shutesbury Athletic Club are in full swing, and even the rod-and-guns are in the game.

For more, check out our Events Calendar on Pages B6 and B7; we put a lot of work into it these days...

So much will happen before our next edition on August 6, but there’s two bookings in particular I’d like to highlight for our readers that both happen to be booked indoors, shows open to the public at private social clubs.

Next Saturday, August 1 it’s **The Outerspace Band** at the Greenfield Moose Lodge. Outerspace is a true institution, a local(ish) band now in its 58th year that has been reconvening most summers to verify that there is still rock’n’roll in this world if one summons it.



GE MORSE PHOTOGRAPHY

The Outerspace Band, heading into their mature phase.

Outerspace is one of the last intact units from a very different time in the Connecticut River Valley, when the roadhouses and music halls here teemed with childless young baby-boom adults – from 1973 to 1979, the drinking age in Massachusetts was 18 – and when the small town of Wendell alone, according to Outerspace bassist John “Klondike” Koehler, was home to over 50 full-time working musicians and at least as many close associates.

“We managed to squeeze out a pretty good living – a pretty good liftoff – between ’72 and ’77,” Klon tells the see **NOISE** page B2

Pet of the Week



‘BINDI’

Meet Bindi, a Standard Poodle mix living in Monson. She is gentle, quiet, snuggly, and shy. She needs an experienced and patient owner, as she was abused at a previous home. Her current carer would like her to go to an adult-only household, “as she does avoid children.”

Bindi is housetrained and micro-chipped, but will need to be spayed

within 30 days of adoption.

To begin the adoption process, visit the Dakin Humane Society website, www.dakinhumane.org, and find the “Available Community Animals” link. (Dakin offers these listings as a courtesy.) Adopting Bindi will require direct communication through Adopt-A-Pet. There is no adoption fee.

NOISE from page B1

guys, and a couple of roadies, in addition to the six-piece band.... Easy drives to over 50 college gigs, and to Boston, New York City, and beyond.

“We joined the Wendell fire department with Chief Everett Ricketts, and learned to fight fires along the railroad tracks. Great shows in those years, an endless run of Sunday night shows at Jack’s in Cambridge and wild nights at the Warwick Inn. Good times in Wendell....”

Outerspace shared bills with Waylon Jennings, Dr. John and the Sun Ra Arkestra, and, you know, played at the White House for Susan Ford’s prom – as toothsome local legends go, the hippie equivalent of the Turners Falls High School team’s 1942 championship win at Fenway Park – but history, and life, eventually took over.

Members now live in Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and South Carolina, and Klon booked this year’s centrally located reunion. “We originally planned to do this show at the Rendezvous,” he explains, “but we were asked to start at 9:30 and play ’til midnight or something, and that was just way beyond our sleep schedules – and those of most of the folks we play for.”

The Moose offers ample parking, wheelchair-accessible entry, a big dance floor, and an early start time: doors at 6 p.m., and a two-hour Outerspace Band set at around 7. The cover is \$15 cash.

“What matters more than how many shows we play, now,” Klon says, “is how we keep the vibe alive.... We never think we’re playing the last gig. We’re playing the *next* gig.”

The summer’s out of reach / Empty lake, empty streets / The sun goes down alone....

For those readers still seeking yet more rock’n’roll on Tuesday, August 4, the spot is St. Kaz in Turners, and please bring your earplugs.

The main attraction is **Smirk**, a grim West Coast punk outfit – really mainly one guy, a lifer named Nick Vicario – riding a small wave of acclaim for having moved to Connecticut and sobering up and growing a bit older and slowing things down and recording a world-weary record that sounds more like the Wipers than before.

That new record, *Speculative Fiction*, was put together largely by Vicario with underground A-listers joining him in the studio as ringers (mems. Ceremony,



Dauber, coming in hot from the Hudson Valley.

Rixe); his touring band is reportedly only slightly less rarified (mems. Poison Ruin, Hotline TNT).

Smirk seems a little take-it-or-leave-it to this pre-viewer, but the bill is tightly stacked. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., for \$10, and the Paw Paw Culinary Club, featured here on June 4 (*Pancakes, Corn Dogs, and Cholent at the Polish Club*, Page B2), will have charge of the kitchen to sell “fries w/fancy toppings.”

At 7 p.m. **Dauber** goes on – also esteemed visitors, a three-piece from the Hudson Valley assembled by Mike Abbate, who played bass in the recently disbanded Screaming Females. Jenna Fairey (ex-Spowder), known as a tremendously heavy hitter, will drum, and Quinn Murphy (ex-Verse) will handle bass as Mr. Abbate has apparently switched to the high guitar.

Dauber sounds considerably more like a party on record than Smirk, who are in the middle of the sandwich with the local support, **Demented FX**, going last. DFX are an excruciating hardcore supergroup who would look at me funny for trying to describe them in the *Reporter*, and as I said, bring earplugs – you don’t want to have to squish fries w/fancy toppings into your earholes.

This show could be a one-off, or it could herald another new phase for the extremely welcoming social club.

“Fitting a five-piece (Smirk) in up by the porch exit is gonna be a bit weird, but we’ll figure it out,” Michael Reed, who pulled this one together, explains. “The nice thing is that we can start early, which is a problem at the Voo.... I’ve tried to prepare Brenda and the gang for what the music will be. They’re unflappable for now.”



Senior Center Activities JULY 27 TO AUGUST 7

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 7/27

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

Tuesday 7/28

9 a.m. Chair Yoga
10 a.m. Therapy Ball Workshop
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 7/29

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

Thursday 7/30

10:30 a.m. Senior Farm Share
1 p.m. Pitch

Friday 7/31

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
2 p.m. Chair Dance
4 p.m. Computer Class
(must pre-register)

Monday 8/3

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

Tuesday 8/4

9 a.m. Chair Yoga
10:15 a.m. Chair Massage
12:30 p.m. Tech Tuesday
3 p.m. Tai Chi

Wednesday 8/5

9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent
10 a.m. Outdoor Yoga at the Discovery Center

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 8/6

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

Friday 8/7

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
2 p.m. Chair Dance
4 p.m. Computer Class
(must pre-register)

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 7/27

9 a.m. Good for U
10 a.m. Seated Fitness
12 p.m. Pitch
1 p.m. Yoga
Tuesday 7/28
9 a.m. Stretch and Balance
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer
12 p.m. Painting with Teri Wagner

Wednesday 7/29

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

Thursday 7/30

9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow
Friday 7/31
8:30 a.m. Quilting / Open Sew
Monday 8/3
9 a.m. Good for U

10 a.m. Seated Fitness
12 p.m. Pitch
1 p.m. Yoga

Tuesday 8/4

8:15 a.m. Nail Clinic
8:30 a.m. Nurse
9 a.m. Stretch and Balance
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer
Wednesday 8/5
9 a.m. Interval Training
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics
11:30 a.m. Bingo

Thursday 8/6

9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow
12 p.m. Brown Bag Lunch
Friday 8/7
8:30 Quilting/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 August 18. Luncheons are held on the fourth Friday of each month at town hall. For more information, contact coa@leverett.ma.us or (413) 548-1022, or check the town newsletter or the LeverettConnects listserv.

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is August 5. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for info or appointments. For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

OUT OF THE PARK SUMMER 2026



By JON DOBOSZ

UNITY PARK – Gentlemen, Ladies... and, for that matter, Kids, start your engines! Okay, maybe not engines *per se*, but get your carts ready for the ultimate gravity-powered event of the year: the annual **Montague Soapbox Races!**

The Soapbox Races are the perfect opportunity for all area racers – real or wannabe – to build their own custom carts to race down Unity Hill in Turners Falls. The event is scheduled for Sunday, September 27, so if you’re interested in being part of the energy, check out the building guidelines at montaguesoapboxraces.com, register, and start building your cart now!

If you’re interested in being a co-sponsor, this is a high-profile event that helps support the Montague Parks & Recreation Department’s Scholarship Program. There are various co-sponsorship levels, so if you’re interested in supporting MPRD, log onto the website and review what may fit your needs.

We just had a showing of our first **Movies in the Park** a couple weeks ago, but be sure to attend our next one planned for August 7; it will be a classic, *Pee-wee’s Big Adventure!* Movies in the Park is a partnership with RiverCulture and the Turners

Falls High School Music Boosters. Showings are held at Peskeompskut Park in downtown Turners. Showtime will be at dusk, and don’t forget to bring a blanket or lawn chairs!

Registration will also begin Monday, August 3 for our **Youth Soccer Program**, which is held in the fall, for all levels, including Start Smart Soccer for little ones age 4 to 6; Pee-Wee Soccer for 1st and 2nd graders; 1st and 2nd graders; Junior Travel Soccer for 3rd and 4th graders, and Senior Travel for those in grades 5 and 6. The program is held from September through late October/early November.

Please also note that we have plenty of spots remaining in our **Super Summer Soccer Camp** for those going into grades 5 through 12. The camp will be held from August 17 to 21 and is an intensive training camp to get your soccer player ready for the upcoming season.

That is about it for now. Be sure to visit our webpage, www.montagueparksrec.com, and our Facebook page for updates. If you have immediate questions, feel free to call us at (413) 863-3216.

Stay cool!
Jon Dobosz, CPRP, is director of parks and recreation for the town of Montague.



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WEST ALONG from page B1

definitely wanting to be fed. And next week they’re on their own, fending for themselves, but happy to find handouts of breakfast oranges at the feeder or fistfuls of sunflower seeds.

One week the wood thrush pours forth tremolo and vibrato in virtuoso song, and the next week the woods are silent. Now only a random note from the cheeky redstart and silence from the ovenbird, where just before, the woods rang with his persistent call.

The chimney swifts of the upper village streak through the air, screaming in the joy of flight; the next week the air above is mostly empty. They’ve already abandoned our 19th-century chimneys for the vast emptiness of other skies.

Whippoorwills still call endlessly in dusky voices up on the edge of the Plains, so all is not lost. At least now, in mid-July, there’s still quite a bit of summer left.

July 15 has found us emerging out from under the heat dome and into the dome of smoke. That smoke came from the forest fires in Canada, clogging the skies and turning the sun into an orange disc seen dimly through the darkened heavens.

But there are intervals when a merciful rain clears the air, and freshens the place up a bit. The morning sun reaches the deck, the peach tree, and the roses. They all shine, bringing back memories of Paris just after the street-washing crew has passed.

Years ago, in another lifetime, Senegalese-French workers in bright green jumpsuits regularly washed down the sidewalks outside our small house in the Paris suburbs. The jets of water cleansed the streets of cigarette butts and dog poop, all washed down into the intricate sewer system designed by French engineers a hundred years ago, to eventually flush into the Seine River, which explains a lot about the condition of the Seine. It left the streets briefly clean and glistening.

But that was long ago and far away, while here, at the edge of the woods, let’s just say the cleansing rain has freshened the place up a bit.

The birds are happy, at any rate, judging by their morning song.

The Skunk Twins up the street spend the evenings working the lawns together, shoulder to shoulder. I don’t know where their mom is. They seem to be too young, small, and naive to be out on their own. They turn to watch me and dog pass nearby, barely stopping long enough to check us out and let us pass without so much as a spritzing spray.

They pause occasionally to play, but it’s mostly all about food.

The cunning little vixen and her mate make the rounds of the neighborhood backyards and pathways through the woods known only to them. This couple, a pair of grey fox-

es, are beautiful in their simple furs. They look quite clever and pleased with themselves as they keep the rodent and rabbit population in check. They, too, keep us in touch with the world that really matters.

By *July 20* the smoke has cleared, and the air and sky are pristine. It has been a quiet summer after all, down here in this little corner of the world that time forgot, or so I like to think. Being anchored in the last century, it’s a good way to spend the summer, keeping at bay the news about bombings, bombastic politicians, and Canada burning.

It’s no wonder that some of us seek the peace of wild things.

Mind you, I do, on certain occasions, suspend my private rules when need be to venture out for the essentials like basic provisions, a trip to the gas station, or tossing the kayak on the roof of the car.

I do leave the world of wild things behind to visit the outside world for just a bit. However, I keep all that to a minimum.

But when Friday night rolls around, I make my way up the street, over the bridge and up to the village, fiddle case in hand, to the Element pub on Bridge Street.

There, in the nook of that wonderful space, a few of us gather to play our old tunes on fiddle, mandolin, and harp. Cold draft beer with a kick in it, hot tunes on a hot summer night... well, this is just the right combination after a quiet week spent in the company of other-than-human beings.

When the night winds down, I’m out the door, feeling quite pleased with myself, like the cunning grey fox.

I cross the bridge over my west-flowing river, tottering a bit, accompanied by the tunes still ringing in my head and by spirits of past family tipplers who have taken the same way home under the smiling moon.

I drift down the street to my neighborhood tucked away along the river, to the soft evening of fireflies, the growing chorus of crickets and katydids.

And as in the old song from my grandfather’s day, back in this place and for this summer at least, I’ll let the rest of the world go by.

*When despair for the world grows in me...
I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water,
and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things...
I come into the presence of still water...
For a time
I rest in the grace of the world,
and am free.*

From Wendell Berry, “The Peace of Wild Things”

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The Montague Reporter Podcast





HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Spy Camera; Unearthed Remains; Wearing Rainbows; Cheese Grater Last Seen In Kitchen; Balcony Delight

Monday, 7/6
11:09 a.m. Caller reports a female is highly intoxicated and trying to break into a building on East Main Street. Officer advises female was sitting on the front steps and was not trying to break into the building. She is going home.
11:37 a.m. Agency calling on behalf of party who reports her neighbors on K Street have set up a camera outside that faces her house, and it makes her feel unsafe. Officer spoke with agency and involved party. She would like this on record, and will be attempting to get another order through the courts, as a previous one was denied.
4:20 p.m. E-911 call; child on phone using profanity. Officer advises he spoke to mother and juvenile on Fourth Street. Juvenile did not have a phone in hand; mother was adamant that she removed the SIM card and hid the phone from the juvenile. Mother advises that there is another child with a phone in the area of Fourth and J Streets. Officers spoke to an adult in that location, who stated the kid was away at camp.

Tuesday, 7/7
4:26 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road reports that a tree on his property fell and is now resting on a live power line. Officer advises tree on house; burning hot wires over roadway; lines in danger of coming down and closing roadway. Eversource advised. Units staying on scene, keeping an eye on wires and roadway. Officer advises Eversource on scene. Building inspector also on scene.
5:18 p.m. Caller from Montague City Road looking to speak to animal control officer (ACO) regarding how he can get woodchucks off his property. ACO advised caller of his options.
7:37 p.m. Caller from Keith Street states that due to recent rain, an old Rubbermaid container that was buried on the property appears to have been unearthed. Caller reports some type of plastic bag inside; unsure of contents. Officer advises he located Rubbermaid container with deceased cat remains from a previous owner. Homeowner instructed to call the board of health.

Wednesday, 7/8
1:34 p.m. Employee reports that a male just stole a 24-pack of Corona beer from Food City and is on foot, walking towards the post office. Officer has located involved male, along with another male, near the corner of Second Street and Avenue A. Involved male also had some items from Walgreens that he had not paid for. Both units clear; officer following up at Walgreens and Food City.
1:56 p.m. Parties on East

Main Street served trespass notices in hand by the sheriff’s office.

Thursday, 7/9
10:47 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street would like it on record that someone egged her vehicle overnight and siphoned gas from it. Report taken.
5:41 p.m. Caller from East Main Street reports that a female is in the back of the building ripping his hammock apart and destroying property. States she is wearing rainbows. Caller called back in stating female is getting aggressive; can hear her yelling in the background. Female on her way home. Advised to stay away from the address.
6:13 p.m. Two parties behind fence at Railroad Salvage. Officer advised parties that behind the fence is trespassing and moved them along.
6:26 p.m. Caller reports he found a Chihuahua with no tags on the side of Federal Street. Caller will hang on to dog at this time and attempt to find owner. Advised to call with update if he finds owner or would like an officer to meet him at the shelter.
7:30 p.m. Caller reports she is on the beach area at Rock Dam and a small orange-and-white kitten is sitting there meowing at her. States she remembers seeing something about someone losing a cat matching the description. Officer spoke to caller and advised her MPD has not been notified of a missing cat. She will take possession of the cat and bring it to VESH to be evaluated and see if they can locate an owner.

Friday, 7/10
8:59 p.m. Caller reports that a group of intoxicated people are being loud and disruptive at the movie being shown in Peskeompskut Park tonight. Second caller reports a drunk male was trying to fight people, then left on a bicycle. Area checked; unable to locate.

Saturday, 7/11
10:05 a.m. Walk-in handing over what they believe is heroin that was found outside their apartment door on Bridge Street; would like it tested by PD. Officer spoke to caller, who is hoping to see an increased police presence in the area. Advised to contact PD if anything suspicious is going on.

Sunday, 7/12
1:44 p.m. Anonymous caller states that four vehicles are driving on the grass at Unity Park, wrecking the grass and creating a hazard for people at the park. Observed two vehicles near camping areas. Vehicles are not driving around; they drove to the picnic area to unload picnic goods and supplies, then exited on their own after unloading. No police action needed.
6:17 p.m. 911 caller from O Street reports there was a mini- “pop” or explosion noise in her kitchen, which caused dishes to fall and smash onto the floor. Caller states there is now an oil-type smell in the house. Transferred to Shelburne Control; officers advised.
11:51 p.m. Officer found door to Third Street Laundry propped wide open. Nobody located inside. Door re-secured.

Monday, 7/13
11:13 a.m. Walk-in reporting ongoing harassment and erratic behavior from a neighbor on Second Street. Officer spoke with caller to get more details about the escalating behavior and advise of options.
7:47 p.m. Caller states that two vehicles were drag racing on Country Club Lane just a few minutes ago. Caller states she spoke to a Thomas Memorial Golf Course worker who advised they have the names of involved individuals and plates of involved vehicles. Caller also advised there was a kids’ birthday party happening in the area when this occurred. Officer spoke to caller, who advised him that she has already spoken to the owners of the golf course and would like the incident on record. Officer then spoke with a golf course employee and made contact with two involved parties to inform them of the complaint and the potential negative repercussions. Both parties were very receptive, and one took responsibility for the incident.
8:12 p.m. Caller from Nouria states that an individual assaulted another party who was in the store. Caller states involved male who was assaulted has declined an ambulance at this time. Party who assaulted other party is no longer on scene; unknown direction of travel. Report taken.
8:40 p.m. Caller from Montague City Road states she is missing a cheese grater, which was last seen in the kitchen. Advised caller call would be logged.
10:49 p.m. 911 caller from Federal Street states her fire alarm sounded when her dishwasher made a noise. No active fire. Transferred to Shelburne Control.

Tuesday, 7/14
10:23 a.m. Walk-in reporting larceny of a laptop that belongs to her employer. Report taken.
5:02 p.m. Walk-in requesting to speak to an officer about a neighbor in her building. Reporting party states the involved party follows them when they go on walks and makes negative comments or facial gestures when seen. No threats have been communicated at this time. Advised RP to contact us if

the situation escalates.

Wednesday, 7/15
8:31 a.m. Walk-in had questions about how to return a large amount of keys to previous employer, who is having memory issues. Advised of various court options.
12:01 p.m. Employee from Lauralyn J. Brown Veterinary Hospital states that an older male has been coming in demanding that they treat his cat. He is aggressive towards staff; they have told him not to come back, but he has returned multiple times. Referred to an officer.
12:19 p.m. Walk-in states that her wallet and license were taken from her vehicle on Eleventh Street overnight. She is going to the RMV to get a new license. Caller did not speak English, so a translation app was used. Services rendered.
8:19 p.m. Caller from Avenue A reports neighbor is outside on her balcony screaming profanities and about how good her drugs are. Female advised of noise complaint; states she will turn music down and stop yelling.

Thursday, 7/16
3:38 p.m. 911 caller from Fourth Street reporting red and black motorcycle being driven in circles around the block on the sidewalk. Area checked; unable to locate.
6:32 p.m. Walk-in looking to speak to an officer regarding an out-of-control neighbor on Bridge Street. Advised of options.
7:58 p.m. Caller reports that when he was walking out of Montague Village Store, a man came up to him and asked if he had ever been hit by a car, then stated he hopes they are. Caller states he and his friend walked away; the man is still on the front steps of the store, smoking a cigarette. Caller states he has some of the interaction on video. Store owner calling in requesting to be notified of what is going on as it involves a tenant within the building, and that if she has to deal with the tenant, she needs to be notified. Advised an officer would reach out once they clear the scene. Situation mediated. Male was informed not to speak to juveniles regarding such matters. Store owner updated.

Friday, 7/17
10:04 a.m. 911 caller reports she is in the Plains with two of her horses; they got loose, and she cannot catch them. States that when she gets near them they run away. Caller called back in stating she located the horses.
12:51 p.m. 911 caller reports that a male who has been trespassed is on an East Main Street property, digging in the dumpster in see MPD next page

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MPD from page B3

the parking lot. Second caller reports involved male came to her door and asked her to call the police because people are throwing his things away after he was evicted. Officers spoke to property manager, who states she is allowing him on the property to grab belongings. He will get what he needs and leave. Male has left property at this time; will return later with permission from property manager to grab more belongings. 5 p.m. Caller reports witnessing a seemingly drunk male threaten to beat, and kill, a couple sitting at a picnic table or bench in Peskeompskut Park. Caller heard the incident from the side of the Aubuchon building. All units advised. Officer spoke with parties who were reportedly threatened; they stated the involved male was being loud but not harassing them; stated he was heading home. Officer spoke with male near A.H. Rist; states he was heading home. 6:04 p.m. Report of a bird, possibly an osprey, in a tree on I Street. Caller inquiring what agency might be available to assist at this hour. Provided caller with number for Environmental Police dispatch. 7:23 p.m. Caller from Court Square reports that her neighbor is target shooting and disturbing her peace. Officer advised caller that this has been investigated during previous calls and that the neighbor is within his legal rights. 9:41 p.m. 911 report of suspicious person on Turners Falls Road. Officer advises not as reported. Peace restored.

Saturday, 7/18

11:35 a.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road reporting an injured raccoon; thinks both its back legs are broken. ACO advises raccoon was dispatched. 12:12 p.m. 911 caller from J Street reports that a red-headed boy at the park was taken into a camper, brought out a few minutes later, and placed into a silver sedan by the camper. Caller thinks male was drugged while inside. Not as reported: male is of age and is staying in the camper; was hanging out in vehicle with another party; no drug use occurring. Everyone is fine. 2:31 p.m. Officer flagged down near Hillside Plastics regarding a rabid fox in the area. Area checked; negative findings. Fox went in sewer drain. 5:13 p.m. Building inspector requesting sawhorses to close part of sidewalk near Avenue A and Fourth Street for a building whose side is starting to stick out. Contacted DPW; they state they are not going to place sawhorses if the building is not town property. Officers advised of call nature. Officer advises involved buildings are 125-131 Avenue A. Officer contacted DPW, who is refusing to come out; states building owner is responsible for closing off sidewalks. Officer requesting TFFD. Sidewalk closed off with help from TFFD. Corner of building set to be braced on Monday. Sunday, 7/19 8:38 a.m. Food City employee reporting raccoon in store. ACO contacted and en route. Raccoon removed from building.



MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

Karen Schoemer, August (Dromedary Records, 2025)



MYSTRA REVIEWS #14

Review by J. BURKETT and TROY CURRY

TURNERS FALLS – This week we are so excited to review the newest release by Karen Schoemer. Karen hails from the Albany area, and is the “lead singer” of the great band Sky Furrows. We are both big fans of Sky Furrows, and we interviewed them a year or so ago, so it made sense to review this new CD. Karen is actually more of a “lead poet” than a “lead singer,” but she is a great “front person” for that band, and they truly rock out. It’s so cool to hear her in a different context, as this album has all kinds of music and zones, and is so surprising overall! We definitely recommend all the Sky Furrows stuff, so check

out their albums and live shows ASAP... and this album, too, of course! We truly love it, and Karen’s other solo releases.

JB: Troy, have you heard this great new album by Karen yet?

TC: This is lovely, whoa! It’s nice that it’s on CD too. The vocals are lovely – layered and so dreamy, with the rhythm and guitar that almost reminds me of older Vini Reilly, but with less echo. This is so beautiful, Josh.

JB: It really is a departure, too... yet it builds off her stuff with Sky Furrows. Some songs are still rock, but a lot of it is so all over the place... with quiet tracks, and even some solo bass tracks.

The second half of the album is

particularly surprising!

TC: I’m listening to the second-to-last track, and will go to Track 31 and start over. This is really a unique, lovely album. It’s like a whole orchestra to the month of August... A kind of delirium dream that is really apparent with August 31.

JB: Oh, cool. I’ve been listening to it a lot! And yeah, the 31 tracks really give you so much to get lost in... I love to dive into a new and unknown universe like this album. It’s truly haunting and great.

TC: I have been listening to Autumn and the poetry is just stellar. Thank you so much. The music is so dreamy, and like shifting moods and reflections of summer on the change. This album I can listen to a lot.

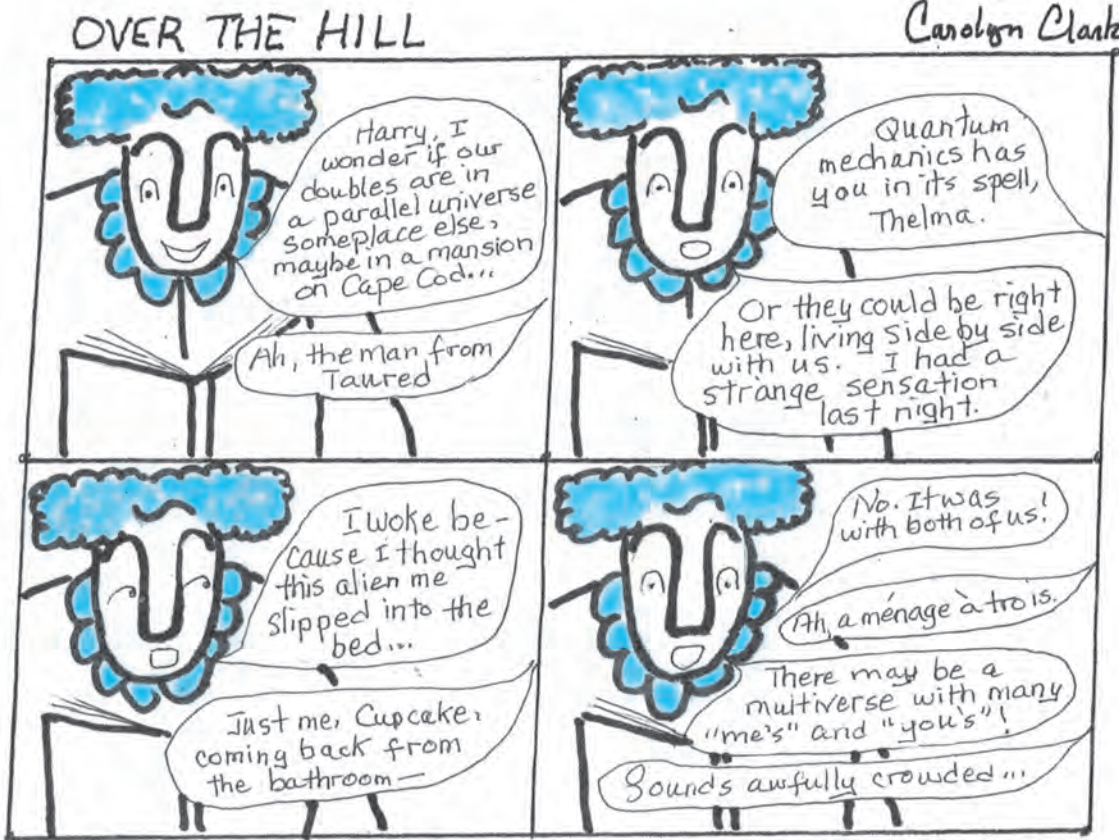
JB: I guess Wednesday Knudsen is on the album, and a bunch of other folks. I just talked to Wednesday, and she just played live with Karen. And I’ve heard Sky Furrows are better than ever! I guess they are in a new deep groove.

TC: Oh whoa, this is really exciting news. Sky Furrows and the new Autumn album are magic. I bet they are really mega “in the zone” live.

JB: Yeah, I can’t wait to see them again. And I hope there will be more releases like this! And more Sky Furrows albums soon, too. I am so glad they are out there doing what they do.



SUZETTE SNOW-COBB ILLUSTRATION



ROB MACHADO ILLUSTRATION



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The Children's Page

YONERMOD ILLUSTRATION

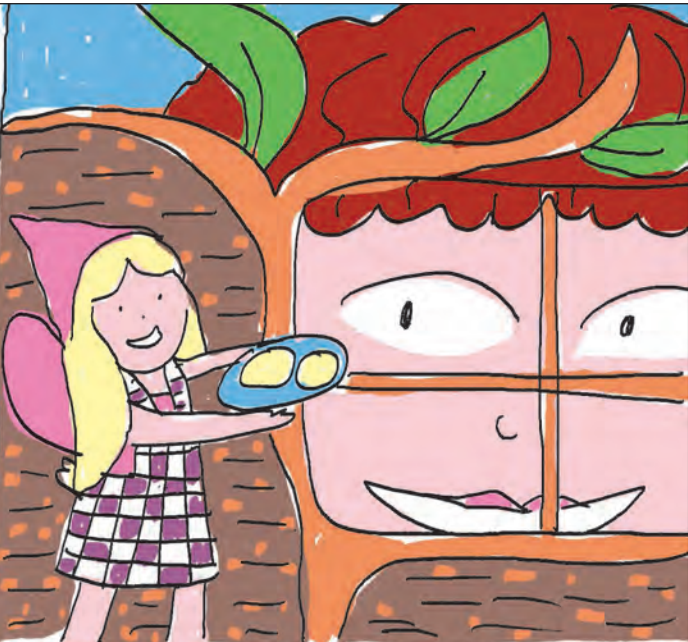
A Fairy's Breakfast

Words by Beverly Ketch &
Pictures by Hannah Broome



CHELLA AND VIOLA WOKE UP ONE FINE MORNING AND DECIDED TO WALK SPOT DOWNTOWN. THEY STROLLED HAPPILY ALONG AVENUE A, WITH SPOT SNIFFING AROUND AS IF IT WERE HIS VERY IMPORTANT JOB TO INSPECT EVERYTHING IN SIGHT.

AS THEY REACHED THE TOWN PLANTER WHERE FLORA AND FAUNA LIVED IN THEIR LITTLE FAIRY HOUSES, THEY STOPPED AND PEERED IN. THERE WERE THE TWO FAIRIES EATING BREAKFAST. THEY WERE A CHARMING SIGHT AT THEIR TINY FAIRY TABLE WITH FAUNA'S CATERPILLAR FRIEND CURLED UP AT HER FEET AND FLORA SPOTTED WITH FLOUR AND WEARING A CHECKERED APRON.



"I HAVE MADE PANCAKES!" SAID FLORA PROUDLY, "WOULD YOU LIKE SOME?" CHELLA AND VIOLA FELT VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE OFFER, BUT THEY EXPLAINED THAT PANCAKES THE SIZE OF A DIME WOULD NOT BE FILLING ENOUGH FOR THEM, AND THEY WERE BOTH BEGINNING TO FEEL QUITE HUNGRY.

FLORA TOOK OUT A TINY PIECE OF PAPER AND WROTE OUT HER RECIPE. VIOLA TOOK THE PAPER AND HELD IT CAREFULLY. IT SAID:



"I THINK WE CAN ADAPT THIS VERY NICELY. THANK YOU!" SAID CHELLA.

THEY PROCEEDED BACK TO K STREET, AND SPOT TOO, PRANCED QUICKLY ALONG AND STOPPED SNIFFING EVERYTHING, BECAUSE HE WAS NOW INTENT ON EATING AS WELL.



BACK IN THE KITCHEN, VIOLA GOT SPOT A BIG BOWL OF FOOD WHILE CHELLA READ THE TINY RECIPE. "I WILL USE THIS COFFEE CUP INSTEAD OF A THIMBLE, AND DUCK EGGS INSTEAD OF BUTTERFLY EGGS" SHE SAID TO HERSELF AS CLOUDS OF FLOUR FILLED THE AIR IN HER FLURRY. "VIOLA, COULD YOU PICK THE RASPBERRIES? WE DO NEED MORE THAN ONE." SHE SAID WITH A CHUCKLE.



NO SOONER SAID THAN DONE, VIOLA DELIVERED A LOVELY BASKET FULL OF RASPBERRIES THAT WERE GROWING PLENTIFULLY IN THEIR BACK YARD. SHE SCOOPED UP SPOT, WHO WAS NOW DONE WITH HIS BREAKFAST, AND GAVE HIM A BIG HUG.

CHELLA WAVED HER HANDS AROUND THEM AND THEN OVER THE INGREDIENTS LIKE A MAGICIAN. "THERE IS THE PINCH OF TRUE LOVE!"



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EVENTS

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THURSDAY, JULY 23

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Nice & Easy Walk. 10 a.m. Free.

Erving Senior Center, Erving: Barbeque with live music by Ed Hogan. Call for reservations. 12 p.m. \$

Energy Park, Greenfield: Steph Marshall, Pat & Tex LaMountain, John Lentz Trio. 6 p.m. Free.

Brewster Court, Northampton: Floyd Mercantile. 6 p.m. Free.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: Commissioning a Bespoke Instrument and Compositions, panel discussion on the seven-string banjar featuring its inventor, Michael Nix. 7 p.m. By donation.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: Shaky Graves, Dope Lemon, Texino. 7 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: COLA, Mimi Fang, Parking. 8 p.m. \$.

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

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Alex Kasznel & the Board of Directors, Bag Lady, Semi Formal. 9 p.m. No cover.

FRIDAY, JULY 24

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Kiddleidoscope Story Hour: Bees and Flowers. For ages 3 to 6. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Leverett Town Hall, Leverett: Council on Aging Luncheon. 12 p.m. Free.

Riverfront Park, Erving: Becky Ford & Johnny Fuller. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: Al & Friends, Guy DeVito. 7 p.m. No cover.

THCC, Easthampton: Fred Cracklin, Otobo, Mibble. 7 p.m. \$.

Nova Arts, Keene: The Rear Defrosters. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: Creative Writing, Marathon 77, Folly of Three, Concussionists. 7 p.m. \$.

Brick House, Turners Falls: Radical Joy, Map of the Stars, Grazer. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: The Brian O'Connell Fellowship. In the lobby. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Deep C Divers. 8 p.m. No cover.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: Sunset Mission, Bassal, Tumbletoads. 8 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: Owsley's Owls. 8 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: Rival Galaxies, The Vermen, The Y Lie. 8 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, JULY 25

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

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: The Village Project. Potluck, face painting, digital portraits, reiki sessions, and more. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

Element Brewing, Millers Falls: Lee Totten. 3 p.m. No cover.

Mystery Train, Amherst: Karla Borecky, Frozen Corn, Colossus Pine, Owen Manure. 5 p.m. By donation.

Brewery at Four Star Farms, Northfield: The Cartoon Moons. 6 p.m. No cover.

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: Half Shaved Jazz. 6 p.m. No cover.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: Unmasking the Monstrous, ceramic and mixed media sculpture by Wade Boswell. July 31 through August 28.

Looky Here, Greenfield: Desire Paths, work by visiting artists in residence Emily Holt and Chris Davis. Closing event next Friday, July 31.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Chaos on a Plate Presents The Rainbow Arc – Phase 1: Violet, paintings by Donna Barrett, and The Peace Birds Exhibit, artistic and community responses to ongoing events in Palestine. Through July.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Bernardston: Members Summer Show and Grand Opening. First exhibit at the new gallery location at 1 Brattleboro Road.

Black Birch Vineyard, Hatfield: Big Impressions, large-scale artworks by members of the Quabbin Art Association, through August.

Gallery A3, Amherst: Patterns of the Forest, interactive art by Rachel Loeffler, through July.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: Summer Fun, group show by coop members, through July.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne: Works by fiber artist Kate McClell and illustrator Margot Apple, through August.

Hosmer Gallery, Forbes Library, Northampton: Hannah Brookman, paintings, and Angela Zammarelli, prints and various media. Through July.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Shelburne Arts Co-op will feature Celebrating the Year of the Horse, an exhibit of paintings by Fabio and Sara Deponte, from July 29 to August 31 with a reception next Saturday, August 1 from 1 to 3 pm.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: A Different Thread. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

SUNDAY, JULY 26

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Sploot! How Animals Keep Their Cool. Drop-in family activities and crafts for ages 4 and up. 10:30 a.m. Free.

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

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: Banjo Playing Styles, workshop with Michael Nix. All levels welcome. 4 p.m. \$.

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: Yvonne Rogers. 4 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: Hauzu, Husbandry, Nevertheless.am. 5 p.m. \$.

Quarters, Hadley: Western Mass Electronics, with featured artist RooBee404. Bring your own synth, drum machine, sampler, etc. 7 p.m. No cover.

Academy of Music, Northampton: Fruit Bats, Al Olender. 8 p.m. \$\$.

Tourists, North Adams: William Tyler. 8 p.m. Free.

EXHIBITS

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls: Please Touch, participatory works by 15 artists, through August 7.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Ways of My Ancestors, photographs by Scott Strong Hawk Foster, through August 26 with a reception this Saturday, July 25 at 2 p.m.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague: Nature's Magic, abstract landscapes by TL LaFleur, through July.

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

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: LCA Artists, group show by artists with studios at the building, through August.

Leverett Library, Leverett: Community Mini Art Show. Through August. Free.

Artspace Gallery, Greenfield: Unmasking the Monstrous, ceramic and mixed media sculpture by Wade Boswell. July 31 through August 28.

Looky Here, Greenfield: Desire Paths, work by visiting artists in residence Emily Holt and Chris Davis. Closing event next Friday, July 31.

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Hosmer Gallery, Forbes Library, Northampton: Hannah Brookman, paintings, and Angela Zammarelli, prints and various media. Through July.

CALL FOR ART

The LAVA Center in Greenfield is accepting submissions until September 11 of short films for the 6th Annual LAVA Film Festival, which will be held November 12 to 14. Details at filmfreeway.com/LAVAFilmFestival.

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MONDAY, JULY 27

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

TUESDAY, JULY 28

Erving Senior Center, Erving: *Painting Workshop* with Teri Magner. Call (413) 413-3649 for reservations. Lunch at 12 p.m.; workshop at 1 p.m. \$.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Stamell Brothers*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Heart-Centered Yoga*. All levels welcome. 6 p.m.

Daily Operation, Easthampton: *Mark Robinson, Lupo Citta*. 7 p.m. \$.

Tanglewood, Lenox: *Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit, Patty Griffin*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: Matinee Movie: *Muscle Shoals* (2013). 4 p.m. Free.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Story Preserves*. Do you have a story to tell about earlier decades in Franklin County? Email storypreserves@proton.me to register for this workshop with a story harvesting and preservation organization. Performances will be held August 15 and 16. 5 p.m. Free.

Porter-Phelps-Huntington House, Hadley: *Jose Gonzalez and Banda Criolla*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *JJ Grey & Mofro, The Wood Brothers*. 7 p.m. \$.

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

THURSDAY, JULY 30

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Nice & Easy Walk*. 10 a.m. Free.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Story Preserves*. Do you have a story to tell about earlier decades in Franklin County? Email storypreserves@proton.me to register for this workshop with a story harvesting and preservation organization. Performances will be held August 15 and 16. 12 p.m. Free.

Greenfield Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: *National Arthouse Theater Day*, with 15 feature films. 12 p.m. \$.

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Rainbow Elders Gathering*. For LGBTQIA+ older adults and supportive caregivers. 1 p.m. Free.

Brewster Court, Northampton: *Stoner Will and the Narks, Original Cowards*. 6 p.m. Free.

FRIDAY, JULY 31

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: *No Strings Marionette Company*, puppet performance. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour: Dragonflies*. For ages 3 to 6. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Madhouse Multi-Arts, Greenfield: *Masala Jazz*. 5 p.m. No cover.

THCC, Easthampton: *BB Dozer, Spray Bottle Fever, CMPRSSN RTFCT, Offland, Derrick Noetzel*. 7 p.m. \$.

Marigold Theater, Easthampton: *JJ Slater*. 8 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Sequoia Rose*. 9 p.m. No cover.

Haze, Northampton: *Don Gadi, The White Moms, 22BB*. 9 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1

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

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2

Unity Park, Turners Falls: *Pocumtuck Homelands Festival*. Indigenous music, 40 craft vendors, storytelling, history talks, cultural activities, kids' activities, food, more. Details at www.tinyurl.com/nolumbekafestival. 1 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: *First Sunday Word*, open mic, with featured writers *Regine Jackson* and *Erin Brill*. 1 p.m. By donation.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *A Winter's Tale*, staged reading with live music. 2 p.m. \$.

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *Story Preserves*. Do you have a story to tell about earlier decades in Franklin County? Email storypreserves@proton.me to register for this workshop with a story harvesting and preservation organization. Performances will be held August 15 and 16. 2 p.m. Free.

MONDAY, AUGUST 3

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Gin Blossoms, Pernikoff Brothers*. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Bruise Bath, Rhubarb Duo, Sleep Destroyer, Jackals*. 7 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Orlen, Gabriel & Avery*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

St. Kaz, Turners Falls: *Smirk, Demented FX, Dauber*. 7 p.m. \$.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *The Revivalists, Rustic Overtones*. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Abronia, Sky Furrows, Kryssi & Wednesday*. 8 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Reid Genauer and Assembly of Dust*. 8 p.m. \$.

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

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

Brewster Court, Northampton: *The Fawns, Gentle Hen*. 6 p.m. Free.

Tree House Brewing, Deerfield: *Oteil & Friends*. 7 p.m. \$.

Asbestos Farm, Hadley: *Frank Hurricane, LUCY, Mark Cone, Ruby Lou, Fugga Wugga*. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7

Emily Dickinson Museum, Amherst: *Kimaya Diggs*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Lou Barlow's 60th Birthday and Variety Show*, with *Jeffrey Lewis, Adam Green, Bobby Bare Jr., Black Francis, Aleksa Atkinson, Sunburned Hand of the Man, Sick of Fun: A Tribute to Deep Wound*, and more. 7 p.m. \$.

Incandescent Brewing, Bernardston: *Seth Adam*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *Man-Made Tragedies, Couchboy*. 7 p.m. No cover.

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: Movie, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* (1985). 8 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Flames of Shiva*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Last Ditch, Greenfield: *Mibble, Virgo's Moon, Merry Brigade*. 8 p.m. \$.

Dream Away Lodge, Becket: *Frank Hurricane, Ruby Lou*. 8 p.m. Free.

MONDAY, AUGUST 10

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Comfort Link, Liz Meredith, Horaflora*. 7 p.m. \$.

looking forward...

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Unagi, Dome Lettuce, Soma 79, Ricci Rock, Trinker*. 9:30 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 9

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

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14

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

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18

Daily Operation, Easthampton: *Rome Streetz, Nickali Vocals*. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21

Black Birch Vineyard, Hatfield: *Cloudbelly, High Tea*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

Town Common, Greenfield: *Stone Soup Harvest Supper*. Farm-to-table community meal with live music, more. 4:30 p.m. By donation.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23

No Fun, Troy: *Dropdead, Agonista, Life Abuse, Mental Weather*. 1 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Laura Jane Grace, Brendan Kelly*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28

Palmer Historical and Cultural Center, Palmer: *Debilitation, Gnawed Off, Giftkrieg, Shunyata*. 7 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

1794 Meetinghouse, New Salem: *Elm Chamber Ensemble*. 4 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Forbes Library Lawn, Northampton: *William Hooker, Mal Devisa*. 5:30 p.m. Free.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

Colonial Theater, Keene: *Slavic Soul Party*. 7 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *John Andrews and the Yawns, Ruby of Thanks, Magick Lantern*. 7 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Lucinda Williams*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30

Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center, Great Barrington: *Jeff Tweedy, Case Oats*. 8 p.m. \$.

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CONCERT REVIEWS

Mister G at Energy Park

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I was able to ask a musician I saw at the Energy Park in Greenfield some questions about himself, alongside seeing his performance. Ben Gundersheimer is his full name. He has the nickname of Mister G, which was given to him by some of his students.

Mister G’s performance took place during the Annual Bee Festival that happens in Greenfield. His winning a Latin Grammy made me very interested in him for an article. The man has also written children’s books, one of which is called *Señorita Mariposa*.

“Been writing and performing since I was 9 years old,” he told me. “We’ve performed all over the world.” Lollapalooza in Chicago in July is another place he has performed besides Energy Park.

I asked him what it was like to win that Grammy. “It’s an amaz-

ing experience, and a great honor,” he said.

Mister G played the guitar for people, alongside a woman who also performed with him on stage. The two basically interacted with the audience. The beat from the guitar was steady. At one point, the woman wore butterfly wings as she danced. She was kind of interacting with the kids in the audience, who were enjoying the performance. The kids seemed to enjoy the guitar playing, too. They would probably also enjoy the children’s books he wrote equally well.

There was a table set up beside the stage with the books he wrote and t-shirts for sale. The t-shirts had characters from his books on them. One was a butterfly, like the one on the cover of *Señorita Mariposa*. The other shirts were like that. Another character was a whale.

Mister G was a nice man who answered my questions graciously.

A Concert Outside Greenfield Records

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – The Greenfield Records store decided to have a concert outside on June 28 for people to listen to.

First up was Jamey Wolff, who played a guitar really nicely while people listened. His singing voice was nice, too. People seem to enjoy hearing him. I particularly did so myself, mainly because I really like guitar music.

The next one was Dan Hales, another guitarist who sang too. He played an electric guitar, which sounded very unique when he played it. The same could be said for his voice as he sang. I found it a bit more enjoyable to hear than Jamey Wolff’s singing.

He said one song of his was called “Do Geese See God.” There was a bit of goose sound effects to that song. His whole performance was rather unique. I can’t believe the audience present would not have enjoyed this performer. He certainly was a unique one. He

changed guitars during his performance – he plays two different electric ones – and for one song he also played a harmonica while playing a guitar. I particularly liked the sound of them together.

Couchboy was a band that featured a drummer and three guitarists, and one guitarist also sang. Their music basically sounded to me like rock music. The guitarist’s voice sounded like a rock singer. None of it was bad-sounding, and the guitars sounded great with the way the singing was done. The music continued to sound good, and like rock music, throughout their performance. I like rock music, so I enjoyed this nicely.

Just for me, this worked well as a good concert. I would rank who I liked the best in order as first Couchboy, then Dan Hales, and then Jamey Wolff. I also found I liked this concert a lot better than the one I went to that the store did as an anniversary celebration. They maybe should continue doing them with this kind of talent.

THEATER from page B1

three 25-minute plays as an exciting personal prospect in the first one, as a bitter loss for the slaves in the second, and as questionable in the experience of the women arguing their views in the third.

After the audience has walked to the lawn of the Allen House, the second play *Jinny and Cato* features the slaves discussing their fate. Jinny describes her memory of being bound and dragged to a ship. Historic Deerfield’s archives show that she was the daughter of a king; now she is a slave-of-all-work in the home of one of Deerfield’s wealthy townspeople.

Cato, who was born into slavery in America, has no such recollections, and lacks Jinny’s memory-fueled heat, powerfully evoked in the Ray Jineil’s performance. Both she and the able Marcus Neverson, who plays Cato, have considerable stage presence. Their vibrance, notably, means that despite its lack of action *Jinny and Cato* is possibly the most compelling of the three plays.

The final play is performed in front of the Liberty Pole, which was re-erected in 1946 by Historic Deerfield’s founders, Henry and Helen Flynt, on the lawn of the Stebbins House to honor the Americans who died at Pearl Harbor. *Sparks on Dry Tinder* features the older Mary Stebbins, tellingly played by Tracy Grammer, arguing with young Cynthia Williams.

As women they have their own take on liberty, even when challenged by Joseph Stebbins, Jr. (Noah D. Braunstein). This piece was written by Patrick Gabridge, one of the



Top, left to right: Mary Stebbins (Tracy Grammer), Cynthia Williams (Lena Vani), and Joseph Stebbins, Jr. (Noah Braunstein) in Sparks on Dry Tinder.

Above: Rae Janeil (right) and Marcus Neverson (left) play the titular characters in Jinny and Cato.

founders of Plays in Place.

Historic Deerfield’s lawns and houses are perfect settings, so no additional scenery is needed for the performances, but the production’s attractive costumes help spirit the audience back to the late 18th cen-

tury. Writing in the program notes, producer Talya Kingston – who also wrote *The Liberty Lark* – says that designer Brittney Belz “spent time researching shapes, designs, and fabrics alongside Deerfield curators.” The result is Williams’s charming white dress and flirtatiously tilted hat, Stebbins’s restrained blue gown and white cap, and Jinny’s drab brown brightened by her headdress and shawl. The men, too, are nattily turned out in vests and three-cornered hats.

A Stake in the Ground will be performed every Friday and Saturday evening at 6:30 p.m., and every Sunday afternoon at 2:30 p.m., until August 16. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$15 for students and under-17s. And they come with free dessert: just show your program at Champney’s Restaurant after the performance and a treat will be yours.

So will an engaging evening, probing the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence among the lovely lawns and handsome houses of Historic Deerfield.

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