

MONTEREY NEWS

October 2023 Est. 1970
Vol. LIII · Number 10



Pick up at: the library (in and outside), outside town hall, transfer station



Once again, Marc Holzer has captured a very crisp, detailed image of wildlife. The August issue featured his photo of a green heron on the cover. More of his photograph is located in the wildlife news.

One site has now risen to the top of the list for community shared solar system: land owned by the Town of Monterey.
Going Solar page 6

Little black spoons have popped up right across the brook from here.
World of Little Black Spoons page 24

Boogey Woogey Aphids!
A Walk Through the Trees page 25

“Will’s vegetable garden was huge. The rows absolutely even. And not a weed to be seen. His fingers worked like a magician’s, with such speed and accuracy that it seemed as if he never made a false move.”
Development of a Dream, Pt. 2 page 25

I want to underscore that shade trees, due to their long life cycle, are a multi-generational resource.
Town Tree Warden page 8

As many of you know, Mary Makuc, the first Director of the Monterey Community Center, has resigned her position.
Open House page 11

Hunting is a safe activity, and non-hunters can safely visit the woods at any time of year.
Fall Hunting In Monterey page 3

Are you looking for an inexpensive way to spread native plants in your yard?
Seed Saving and Sowing page 2

Note about this issue

This issue has been published late to accurately report the date, time, and location for the special town meeting, which was voted by the Monterey Select Board on Tuesday, October 3.

The meeting will be held on Monday, October 23, beginning at 6 p.m., in the firehouse.

The proposal to merge the two local school districts is hugely consequential and will impact the region for decades. As such, it deserves careful attention by our voters.

Beginning on page 12 you will find eleven pages of commentary by fellow residents of Monterey.

I thank all the contributors of commentary. I also want to thank the folks who were willing to have their submissions held until November, and others who agreed to substantial edits to afford the space for the school commentary.

It is always my intention to publish everything sent in, but with a limit of “only” thirty-two pages, I needed cooperation.

Thank you to everyone for participating in this community conversation.

—Stephen Moore, editor



Rubber Ducky Joy Escapades coming in November!

Help Make the Library Better

The strategic planning committee for the library would like to invite you to participate in a forum on Saturday, October 7, at 10:30 a.m. A facilitator from the Massachusetts Library System will lead us in an exercise to see what the library can do for you. This is your chance to help the library set goals and objectives to provide the services you would like to see. The previous strategic plan was instrumental in the construction of the renovation and addition to the facility. This plan will help map out what services we can offer to everyone. We are committed to being a conventional library with books, but libraries have expanded their services and there are exciting new directions we can add.

Would you like to see the library expand the collection by adding a library of things? We already lend a few things such as the ukuleles. What other things would you borrow that we can have? Would you like us to help bridge the digital divide? What kind of technologies could we add to the collection, and can we help you navigate and use those constantly changing devices? What kinds of programming would you like to see? Are there services we can add to assist children, seniors, or other groups in need?

Bring your ideas of what you would like to see. The forum for the construction project came up with many ideas, but in particular, there was the idea of a reading deck overlooking the Konkapot and the waterfall. We can thank that forum for the deck we currently have. If it's a nice day this fall, please stop by and sit out back over the river. You don't need to even pretend to read a magazine, you can simply sit out there and relax thanks to the people who made a point of sharing their dream at the last forum.

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Trick-or-Treat

On Tuesday, October 31, at 5 p.m., Bowie the Clown will be at the library to entertain the trick-or-treaters and the accompanying adults. Bowie was a hit at the open house last winter, so don't miss him. The Friends of the Monterey Library as usual make the library a worthwhile stop for the children. In the past, some residents have expressed a wish to see the children's costumes and give out candy, but the spread out character of Monterey means that the children usually go to the houses in the center of the village. The library would like to extend an invitation to anyone who would like to see the costumes and hand out candy to feel free to sit outside the library weather permitting, or inside if necessary. We have tables and chairs and are located in the center of the trick-or-treat district! Between Bowie doing his tricks and the Friends handing out treats, we've got Halloween covered!

—Mark Makuc
Library Director

Seed Saving and Sowing Seed Bombs, Giveaways and More!

Are you looking for an inexpensive way to spread native plants in your yard? Come to the seed saving and sowing workshop. As part of its monthly Backyard Ecologist program, the Monterey Native Plants Working Group is planning an interactive workshop featuring Julie Kern's winter sowing methods, tips and techniques on saving your native plant seeds for fall, seed giveaways, and a chance to dig up some perennials from the native plants, weather permitting. And, if you, or your kids, are willing to get your hands dirty, there will be an opportunity to make wildflower seed bombs, missiles that will explode in beauty and environmental resilience.

The workshop is Saturday, October 21, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Feel free to drop in any time for this fun, free, family-friendly event. Register at Pollinators01245@gmail.com, and we will keep you apprised of details.

—Janet Jensen

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Andre Lamberston is a photographer, filmmaker and teacher documenting the inspirational lives of resilient people around the globe. (Gallery open during events/by appt.)

SAT., OCTOBER 28, 10:00 AM
SANDISFIELD WITHOUT THE TREES
What would Sandisfield look like if all the trees were magically removed? See for yourself and learn about LIDAR (light detection and ranging) with **Prof. Will Ouimet**, UCONN. Followed by apples, cider and donuts. \$5

FOR DETAILS VISIT SANDISFIELDARTSCENTER.ORG

Letters

The *Monterey News* welcomes letters on a wide range of topics. Commentary on events and town affairs, notes of appreciation, or alerts for upcoming activities that might be of interest to Monterey readers.

Submit your letters to MontereyNews9@gmail.com, or mail them to PO Box 9, Monterey, MA 01245. Please include your full name and contact information.

Fall Hunting in Monterey Regulations and Seasons

October has arrived. It's the time of year that brings shorter days, colder nights, and hunters in the woods. Each year questions arise about men and women wearing camouflage and carrying guns in our woods or walking along our roads. This article goes over the most important regulations that pertain to hunting in Monterey and, by knowing the hunting seasons and regulations, residents can plan their outings and feel safe visiting the woods. Hunting regulations in western Massachusetts play a crucial role in balancing the interests of wildlife conservation and management with the recreational and economic needs of the local community. These regulations are designed to maintain healthy wildlife populations, sustain biodiversity, and ensure safety while providing opportunities for hunters to engage in ethical and sustainable hunting practices. A comprehensive guide to all the rules and regulations can be found at mass.gov/hunting.

Monterey has a bylaw that states "No person shall hunt on any town-owned or private property in the Town of Monterey without written permission of the owner of the land upon which hunting will take place. The written permission must be carried while hunting, and be renewed on an annual basis." It's important to note that this bylaw does not cover the roughly one-third of Monterey under the control of the state, such as Beartown State Forest, or the three-hundred-plus-acre Steadman Pond that is privately owned but has a wildlife conservation easement that allows for hunting. Additional information on areas open to hunting by right in Monterey can be found on the interactive maps located at the mass.gov/hunting website.

Hunting is a safe activity, and non-hunters can safely visit the woods at any time of year. Hunting accidents among hunters are extremely rare. Accidents involving non-hunters are even more rare. If you plan to enjoy the outdoors during the hunting season—wear an orange hat and/or an orange vest on your walks in the woods.

- Keep pets leashed and visible. Place a blaze orange vest or bandana on your pet.

- There is no hunting allowed on Sundays.

- Discharge of any firearm or release of any arrow upon or across any town, state,

or hard-surfaced roadway, or within 150 feet of any such roadway is prohibited.

- Possession of a loaded firearm, discharge of a firearm, or hunting on the land within five hundred feet of any dwelling or building in use, unless permitted by the owner or occupant, is prohibited.

- During the following deer hunting dates all hunters are required to wear 500 square inches of blaze orange on their clothing:

- Archery season (Zones 1–9): October 16 thru November 25, 2023

- Shotgun season: November 27 thru December 9, 2023

- Primitive firearms season: December 11 thru December 30, 2023

- Hunters are not required to wear orange during the bear and wild turkey hunting season.

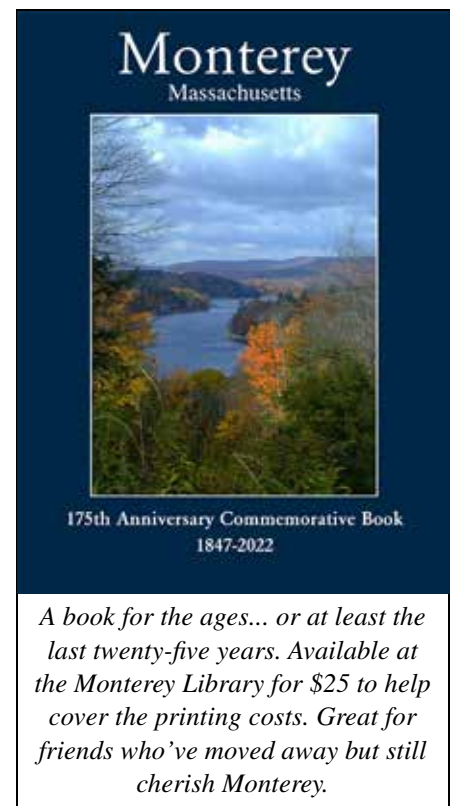
- Black bear season: November 6 thru December 9, 2023

- Wild turkey season: October 2 thru November 25, 2023

- Pheasant season: October 14 thru December 30, 2023

I'm including the pheasant season because the Tyringham Valley is stocked by the state and the Lee Sportsman Club for pheasant.

This article is not meant to be comprehensive—just a quick look at the fall hunting season as it affects Monterey. If you have questions not answered above, check out



the mass.gov/hunting website. This website was developed by the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and covers not only hunting information but fishing and general recreation. Well worth checking out for its interactive maps and trail guides. If issues arise concerning hunting or hunters you can call the Monterey Police number (413) 528-3211.

— Kenn Basler

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Parks Commission Fall Report

The lifeguards have packed up. Their chairs are stowed away. The parking area is clear and ready for you to meet at the beach and go for a walk with a friend. The quiet beach is still a wonderful Monterey park to spend time in. We had a good season and are grateful to the whole staff—all the Berkshire South lifeguards as well as Philip Enoch, our parking attendant. They worked through every kind of weather to keep the beach organized, clean, and pleasant, even when crowds became quite large. Remember to remove vessels from storage at the beach by October 15.

Playground

The old playground is gone. Equipment has been removed and metal and plastic/fiberglass materials were recycled when possible. The site must now settle (below) for one month before new equipment is installed. We expect installation to begin in early October.



Ballfield

For the past two years, the parks commission has researched ballfield contractors and put the project out to bid, but we received no response. Jim Hunt and the highway crew stepped in to save the ballfield which is now renewed and ready for the fall season. The hard packed infield surfaces have been removed and replaced with a professional baseball mix of silt, sand, and clay, rolled and vibrated into place. Base pads and the pitcher's rubber were anchored. Borders have been re-edged, and disturbed grassy areas have been reseeded. A few weeks of drying and settling will finish the job. Go down and take a look—or better yet—join a game and try the new field out!

Brewer Pond Trail

Another parks project has just been finished. We collaborated with Greenagers and the Conservation Committee to make the Bidwell Pond trail another good Monterey place to spend time in. Greenagers just



Above: The old soil was dug and removed, and the new specialized mix awaits spreading.

Below: The new soil in place, and reseeding grass.



finished their summer's work on the trail. It is well marked and a joy to walk! Parks signage is not yet up, but, if you are adventurous, look for the trailhead behind the kayak racks, and take a walk. Photos by Tom Mensi. —Tracey Brennan, Monterey Parks Commission



Town workers Sheldon Langley, Kyle Pettibone, and Pete Wilson. Not pictured is Tyler Collins who was doing a fair amount of the trucking.

Catching up with the Council on Aging

News flash 1: On Wednesday, November 8 we will be offering a virtual tour of the highlights of New York City's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Our guide will be Francesca Rosenberg, the Director of Access Programs and Initiatives, Learning, and Engagement for MoMA. As part of her presentation, she will explain how to access the many online programs at MoMA, and attendees will receive free passes to the museum. Please call or email to reserve your spot.

News flash 2: A group of us are going to see the 2 p.m. matinee of "Lunar Eclipse" starring Karen Allen and Reed Birney at Shakespeare & Company in Lenox on October 21. Contact me by October 5 if you want to secure a ticket.

As you will see in the accompanying article, we are switching things up on the fourth Wednesday of the month. Afternoon games for all ages will replace the documentary films, due to low attendance at the documentaries. We won't give up on documentaries though. We'll find good ones and rotate them in on our movie night at the library. As always, suggestions welcome.

And remember: Van transportation in Monterey is now available for everyone, with expanded hours and new towns added.

To reach me to reserve for events, with questions about scheduled events, or suggestions for new ones, please call (413) 528-1443, ext. 112, or email me at coaoutreach@montereyma.gov. Phone messages are picked up once daily Monday through Friday.

—Kathryn Roberts
CoA Outreach Coordinator/
Administrative Assistant

Coming Events

Monday, October 2: Monthly CoA board meeting at town hall from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The agenda is posted on the town website. All are welcome.

Tuesday, October 10: CHP Mobile Health Unit at the firehouse pavilion from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Definitely have flu shots and we are waiting to hear about Covid boosters. No appointment needed.

Wednesday, October 11: Movie night in the library at 7 p.m., showing *Summer of Soul*. A 99% rating on Rotten Tomatoes and a *NYTimes* "critics pic," this concert movie shows never-before-seen film footage from the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival. See Stevie Wonder (at nineteen years old!), Mahalia Jackson, Nina Simone, Gladys Knight and the Pips, BB King and more. The *NYTimes* calls it "2 hours of outrageous poignancy." Rotten Tomatoes says: "*Summer of Soul* captures the spirit and context of a watershed moment while tying it firmly to the present....[T]his incredible music is not to be missed." The CoA will serve light refreshments.

Wednesdays, October 11, October 25: Easy Stretch and Balance with Annie! at the community center from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. Join us for this very popular class which presents a unique approach to exercising as we age (most exercise done seated). Only \$10.

Thursday, October 19: AARP Fraud Watch at 1 p.m., Claire Teague Senior Center, Great Barrington, 915 South Main Street. The topic is "Medicare Fraud: It's Enough to Make You Sick," with presenter Elliott Greenblott, Coordinator, AARP Vermont Fraud Watch.

Friday, October 20: Lunch out at Baba Louie's at noon. Please get in touch with Kathryn to reserve your seat at the table.

Saturday, October 21: "Lunar Eclipse," at 2 p.m., at Shakespeare & Company, Lenox. Contact Kathryn for tickets by October 5.

Wednesday, October 25: Game Time! at the community center from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Bring your favorite games or play one that's new to you. Fun for all ages and a great way to spend an afternoon with friends or make new ones. The CoA will serve light refreshments.

Ongoing Services

Parkinson's Support Group: This month's meeting is on Thursday, October 5, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Monterey Library. Caregivers are encouraged to attend. Call the CoA at the number above if you'd like more information.

Transportation: For trips to Great Barrington, Sheffield, Egremont, Stockbridge, and Pittsfield (Pittsfield is for medical only, Monday & Wednesday). Call (413) 528-1881. M-F 8-6, Sat & Sun 10-4. Priority given to seniors and people with disabilities.

Foot Nurse: Beverly Dunn is available for home visits. Call (413) 446-2469 to schedule an appointment. The CoA covers \$10 of her fee.

Free Safety Vests: Vests to ensure you are visible to car traffic when walking, running or biking are available in town hall.

—Lin Saberski
Chair, Council on Aging




Going Solar

The Renewable Energy Working Group (REWG) has been working to identify properties suitable for a municipally-sponsored, community-shared solar photovoltaic system (CSS). One site has now risen to the top of the list: the land owned by the Town of Monterey where the transfer station and public works facilities are currently located. This 11.4-acre parcel also contains the site of the town's long-closed landfill. It is adjacent to a gravel pit owned by Gould Farm.

The working group has undertaken two preliminary steps to facilitate a CSS on this town parcel. The first is to draft an authorization for the select board to lease the parcel for solar development, as required under municipal procurement protocols. The second step is to draft proposed changes to the current Monterey solar zoning bylaw. The select board has already reviewed our draft lease authorization, and we submitted our draft solar zoning proposal to the planning board on September 14. With the planning board's approval, followed by a timely public hearing, the bylaw revisions and lease authorization may be put to a vote at a special town meeting later this fall. What follows is a summary of the proposed bylaw changes, and the reasoning that supports them.

A new ad, not related to this project.



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Current Monterey Solar Zoning Bylaws

Massachusetts actively promotes the development of renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions. State law requires town zoning to facilitate solar photovoltaic installations, and prohibits bylaws that “unreasonably regulate” such installations. (Model As-of-Right Zoning Bylaw, MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER), 2014.)

The current Monterey solar zoning bylaw, passed in 2017, is based on the 2014 DOER model bylaw. It establishes a town-wide Solar Photovoltaic Overlay District (SPOD), wherein a (residential) “Small-

scale Solar Photovoltaic System (SSPS) ... either ground or roof mounted, on less than 1/8 acre, with a maximum generating capacity of 30 kW” is permitted “by right,” subject to normal lot line setbacks. It does not require site plan review or a special permit, but requires a building permit, and other applicable land use permits, such as wetlands protection.

Section 7.8 of the current bylaw regulates “the creation of new Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Sys-

tems (LGSPS) and Utility-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Systems (UGSPS).” The size of the solar generating facility determines the degree of regulation. Both LGSPS (“greater than 30 kW and less than one megawatt or occup[ying] more than 1/8 acre of land”) and UGSPS (“one megawatt or more regardless of the amount of land occupied”) require both a discretionary special permit, a technical site plan review, and large property line setbacks, as well as other applicable land uses permits.

The current bylaw also establishes a Large Solar Overlay District (LSOD). Large- and utility-scale systems in the

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LSOD with a capacity of at least 250 kW and land coverage of one acre or more are permitted “by right,” without a special permit or other discretionary approval. Normal lot line setbacks are required. Presently, the only land in this LSOD is the 10.7-acre parcel owned by the Town of Monterey, extending from Fox Hill Road behind the pavilion down to Greene Park. This Fox Hill Parcel is heavily wooded, east-sloping, and highly visible from various vantage points near the center of town.

Proposed Solar Zoning Bylaw Amendments

As noted above, the intent of the Renewable Energy Working Group’s proposed bylaw amendments is to facilitate installation of a community shared solar (CSS) system on the site of the closed landfill. First, we would rename the current overlay district (LSOD), now limited to the Fox Hill parcel, as the Municipal Parcel Solar Overlay District (MPSOD) to more accurately describe this limited overlay district. Second, we propose to add the 11.4-acre closed landfill/town garage parcel to the MPSOD. Third, we propose that a large- or utility-scale system in the MPSOD be subject to site plan review by the planning board. (The current bylaw does not require site plan review in the LSOD.) And, fourth, we propose that various forms of mounting solar panels be allowed.

Specifically, within this municipal overlay district (MPSOD) a “Large-Scale (LGSPS) or Utility-Scale Solar Photovoltaic System (UGSPS), whether solely ground-mounted, or including roof-mounted and/or canopy/carport-mounted solar panels ... shall be permitted as a By Right use subject to Site Plan Review by the Planning Board. (Building Permit, and other applicable land use permits such as Wetlands Protection, Board of Health, etc. remain in effect.)”

This bylaw amendment would not change the regulation of large- or utility-scale installations elsewhere in town. Either would still require site plan review and special permit and large setbacks.

The current bylaws contain detailed regulations in Section 7 dealing with “Plans, Setbacks, Compliance, Dimensional Requirements, Design and Performance Standards, Safety and Environmental Standards,” etc. There are more than

four pages of detail in the current bylaw, including large-scale setbacks of 75 feet, and utility-scale of 150 feet. We propose specifying that the required setbacks be measured to the actual photovoltaic components (panels, mounts, etc.), not “appurtenances” such as fencing, screening, access roads, interconnection poles, etc.

The setback dimensions remain the same in our proposed bylaw revision, with one proposed exception for setbacks which we drafted to address circumstances at the closed landfill and abutting property where the gravel pit owned by Gould Farm is located. The proposed setback exception would allow that the board of appeals “may in its discretion grant a waiver to reduce or eliminate setback requirements ... [w] here a LGSPS or UGSPS is proposed on a (non-municipal) parcel that directly abuts a separate parcel that is within the Municipal Parcel Solar Overlay District and which has a previously permitted or simultaneously proposed Solar Photovoltaic System (that is allowed By-Right with Site Plan Review)[.]” This discretionary special permit approval requires a public hearing.

The intent of this exception is to consolidate, rather than spread out, such a solar installation, in order to achieve optimum capacity, efficiency, and visual appeal. It’s a matter of seeing the installation as a whole wherever an invisible boundary crosses a continuous topography and use. This could benefit property owners, installers, and the public alike. In this case, Gould Farm might offer a solar developer the opportunity to combine an installation on their property with one on the closed landfill parcel without being forced to cut a setback swath across the center.

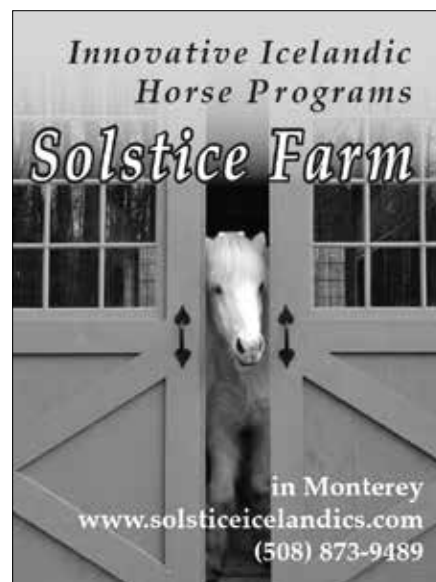
We have already noted attributes of the Fox Hill parcel that caution against use of that land for a single, large solar array: many mature trees would have to be cut, the land does not slope to the south, and the parcel is highly visible. The state Department of Energy Resources “encourages designating locations ... on vacant, disturbed land.” The closed landfill is just such land, as is the adjacent Gould Farm gravel bed. We have met with officials from the state Department of Environmental Protection at the closed landfill site, and they heartily endorse the prospect of solar development there, with specific environmental provisions. Simi-

larly, the Gould Farm gravel bed is nearing the end of its productive life, and Gould Farm is beginning the process of phasing out its use and restoring the site with new contours. They have expressed interest in a solar installation at the site.

Appropriate siting is key to successful, welcome development of solar power, and we believe these revisions of Monterey’s solar bylaws will encourage the town to generate electricity from the sun in a safe and thoughtful way, with appropriate siting, reasonable regulation, and opportunities for townspeople to participate in making the decisions at every stage. The Renewable Energy Working Group seeks a widely supported update of our local energy infrastructure.

We invite your comments, and hope for your support.

—Peter Murkett, Chairperson
Renewable Energy Working Group



Getting the Monterey News

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Town Tree Warden Shade Tree Advocate, Public Safety

Monterey voters might remember having voted for a tree warden back in May, and they might also notice that the name attached to this tree warden's report is not the person they chose. By way of introduction, I'd like to explain how I came to serve Monterey residents as your tree warden. I'd also like to share what I've been up to since being sworn in.

The town office of tree warden, as stated in Massachusetts General Law, confers the "care and control of all public shade trees," except those within state highways or under the jurisdiction of parks commissioners. The role is twofold: 1) to manage and to advocate for shade trees on town land, and 2) to protect public safety.

In any town as richly forested as Monterey, tree management will, by necessity, require cutting hazard trees in the name of public safety. But that somber necessity is checked by the competing imperative for advocacy—to protect and speak up for town trees. Thus Massachusetts General Law, in its wisdom, understands shade trees to be both a public good and a potential risk. The tree warden's role is to find the

right balance between those two ways of looking at a tree, between seeing it as an asset to celebrate and a hazard to manage.

How did I come to the position? The ballot for Monterey's May 9, 2023 town election was printed with one candidate's name for tree warden, that of incumbent Myles Pierce. Myles withdrew, formally submitting his resignation to the select board on May 23. In such instances, the select board is empowered to fill the vacancy through an interim appointment. That person will serve until voters can make known their wishes at the next election. Accordingly, the select board advertised the position in late May, and I submitted a written application.

At their June 13 meeting, I addressed the board and laid out my understanding of the role, as given above. Also, I added what I see as an implicit third responsibility: communication. Communication goes two ways. The tree warden must explain to town residents what is happening to their trees. And the tree warden must also listen to residents to understand what we, as a community, want from our shade trees and for our shade trees.

But why did I put my hand up in the first place? And what qualifies me? An answer to both questions is that I'm a lifelong amateur naturalist and tree enthusiast. I come from a farming family in Tennessee who viewed the trees on their land through multiple lenses: as an economic asset, as a natural resource, and a scenic heritage. In my career as a writer, I've followed my enthusiasms for farming and agriculture, outdoor recreation, and the conservation of natural resources. Forest management of course touches on all these activities.

Since I moved to Monterey in 2016, I have also taken on the care and manage-

ment of the trees on my property, including a row of mature sugar maples. I've read extensively about the natural and cultural history of New England forests, and I've become familiar with the many threats faced by our trees. They include pests such as the devastating emerald ash borer, as well as invasive plant species including oriental bittersweet, a strangler. Dutch elm disease is a widespread fungal killer, as was the blight that eliminated Monterey's former chestnut forests. Roadside sugar maples, including magnificent specimens planted in the 1800s, are harmed by salty runoff, while, throughout the region, acid rain affects maples' nutrient uptake. Armies of spongy moth caterpillars denude oak trees. And the hemlock woolly adelgid grazes through stands of that lovely evergreen. Unfortunately, all these threats exist in Monterey. It's a sobering reality.

Now, what have I been up to? My first move was to align with Monterey's director of operations Jim Hunt. I've enjoyed getting to know him over several hours of looking at roadside trees together. Likewise, I'm in regular communication with National Grid as we take steps to share information and coordinate efforts.

Next, the job description requires a tree survey. As a practical matter, most public shade trees are along town roads, so you might have seen me driving very slowly along our roadways and hopping out with a tape measure and clipboard to take note of any at-risk tree. The three risk categories include hazard trees that require action, ailing trees that will likely soon require attention, and weakened trees to keep an eye on. For my own knowledge and education, I'm adding a fourth category to the survey: legacy trees of exceptional

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Monterey Council on Aging



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scenic importance. These are trees to protect as town assets—the trees we hold in trust for future generations. They include grand old “witness” trees, notable rows of boundary trees aligned like colonnades, and light-dappled canopy corridors where high branches merge overhead. The beautiful sugar maple canopy above Gould Road, from the transfer station to River Road, is a prime example.

Overall, what my survey shows is that the trees along Monterey roadways are mostly in good shape, except for the ash, thanks to conscientious management by previous tree wardens and aggressive cutting by National Grid along its power lines. Unfortunately, those ash trees are a very big exception. They continue to die in large numbers.

I’ve identified two stretches of town road as management priorities. They are Tyringham Road and Route 23 east of town, from approximately Bidwell Road to the Otis town line. I’ll be marking trees along Tyringham Road soon. For more information, please come to tree hearings when they are announced for upcoming select board meetings. The town contracts with John Field Tree Service to do the work. Most of us would prefer not to cut trees, I’m sure. But I encourage you to look more closely at the scheduled work and realize that dead and dying trees must be removed to protect public safety.

As a final comment, one that I also made to the select board in June, I want to underscore that shade trees, due to their long life cycle, are a multi-generational resource. If we as a town envision a tree-filled future for Monterey, we must motivate ourselves to plant trees now. The old saying goes that the best time to plant a tree was ten years ago. (The second-best time? Today.) In a similar vein, a story about Marquis de Lafayette, the French aristocrat and hero of the American Revolution, relates that a gardener at his estate in France protested planting a certain tree because it would take a century to mature. “Then there isn’t a moment to waste,” answered Lafayette.

To email me with questions or concerns, please use the contact link on the Tree Warden page of the town website, montereyma.gov/tree-warden.

— Kevin West
Monterey Tree Warden

Visible House Number Signs A Reminder

The Monterey Police Department is facilitating purchasing house number signs in compliance with town bylaws as a way to easily find your house in case of an emergency. Help first responders find your house quickly to serve you and to keep your house safe.

The police department already has orders for ninety simple green signs with reflective numbers to put at the end of your driveway. The reflective aluminum signs are 6” x 12”, two-sided, and have two holes for easy mounting.

The department will do a bulk order to keep the cost down. Each sign will be approximately \$20.


If you wish to order your house number sign, please contact the Monterey Police Department by sending an email to Officer Jennifer Brown at jbrown.montereypd@gmail.com.



We will contact you as to the exact amount and where to send the payment. If you have already put it in an order you will be contacted.

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Monterey Police Department



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Monterey Community Center

Weekly, bi-weekly and monthly activities:

Mondays: *Hablemos!* 10 to 11:30 a.m. *Intermedio y Superior.* Practice Spanish and meet new friends.

Mondays: Simple meditation, all are welcome, 4:30 to 5:45 p.m. Beginning on November 6, time moves an hour earlier, to 3:30 to 4:45.

Monday, October 23: 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Cookbook club. Fourth Monday of the month. Register by emailing WendyGJ@gmail.com. See page 27.

Tuesdays:

Chair yoga, 10 to 11 a.m.

Singing with Vikki True, 11:30 to 12:45 p.m.

Bridge and Pitch, 1 to 4 p.m.

Mahjong, 7 to 9 p.m.

Wednesdays: Tai chi with David Crowe, at 10 a.m. \$8 per class or \$30 for the month.

Wednesday, October 25: Council on aging Game Time! from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. See page 3.

Thursday, October 5: Darn Yarners, at 10 a.m. First Thursday of the month.

Thursday, October 19:

Wellness check cancelled this month.

Chorus with Oren Rosenthal, 4:15 p.m.

Thursdays/Sundays: Music jam sessions with Mark Andrews. Thursday, October 5; Sunday, October 22; and alternate Sundays thereafter, from 6 to 8 p.m. All skill levels are welcome, instruments and singers. If you are interested, please contact Mark Andrews at mccjamgroup@gmail.com.

Fridays:

Super gentle yoga, 10 to 11 a.m. Please register by emailing james-boneparth76@gmail.com.

Bridge, 1 to 4 p.m.

Last Friday of the month: transformational breathwork, October 27, at 5 p.m.

Saturdays:

Coffee club, 8:30 to 10 a.m.

Ping pong, 2:30 p.m.

Sundays: Al Anon family group meeting, 9 a.m.

Special Events:

Saving & Sowing Native Plant Seeds. Saturday, October 21, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. See page 2.

You can find more information on events at our website ccmonterey.org, by calling (415) 528-3600, or emailing calendar@ccmonterey.org.

—Mary Makuc, MCC Director and Nancy Kleban

Leaving as Director A Thank You

It was my pleasure and privilege to work with the Monterey Community Center (MCC) committee—a fabulous team—and the Friends of the Wilson-McLaughlin House, all the Monterey folks who came in, plus presenters and performers, who really brought the place alive.


After Joe Baker, Mike Banner, Steve Moore, and many others worked so diligently to finish the renovation of what was called Edith's House, it was my joy to serve the community center. I was delighted to welcome more and more people over the years since the center officially opened in April 2017. There was always someone inquiring if they might have a group, class, lecture, or concert in our space. Indeed, at 4137 visits in the last fiscal year, we had more than nine times the visits as we did in 2017-2018 (432).

I really want to thank all past and present members of the MCC committee! The committee meets monthly and collaborates on our offerings. They also volunteer for setting up and closing down after events. They march in the parade and stand in the cold at Winterfest, Halloween, and more to serve the community.


If you enter the MCC, you can read on the wall plaques the hundred-plus names of those who gave money to convert the house into the MCC. Many of you reading this now are up there.

Since 2017, I have drawn inspiration from a few MCC supporters in particular. The first year I was guided by the wise and multi-talented Joe Baker, our first and only executive director. Also, from the inception until today there was Bonner McAllester, our conscientious community garden maven who lets me know things to watch out for around the house and yard. Both Joe and Bonner, as well as Mike and Mo Banner, still help with upkeep and so much more behind the scenes. We have also had the Department of Public Works with Jim Hunt and his crew maintaining the property, following in Shawn Tryon's footsteps.

I particularly thank Laurie Shaw, who stepped in to fill Joe's shoes upon retirement from her forty-year career. This meant advising gracefully, assisting with writing, keeping our meetings on task, and letting me bounce ideas off her every week. She is our committee



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chair and an unsung hero. Thanks for your guidance and encouragement, Laurie!

Our publicity volunteers are: Maureen Banner on poster design and Essy Dean and Catherine Hurst on social media.

Mikey Trelawny-Cassity fashions the paper calendar and Paul DePreter handles the sign out by the road.

The Monterey Library, the Bidwell House Museum, Gould Farm, the *Monterey News*, the cultural council, the public safety professionals, parks commission, and especially the council on aging all helped over the years and continue to do so.

I give special thanks to Rob Hoogs for donating hours of his expertise, and to Kay Purcell, and to Sheila and Stuart Steiner for always believing in our mission. I am also very grateful to my immediate family for filling in more gaps than I can list.

The one who has assisted the most behind the scenes day-to-day the last three years is Nancy Kleban, who has handled the website, phone, and more, with wisdom, humor, and patience.

May we all continue to enjoy Edith's and Marjorie's house and welcome the new director soon!

—Mary Makuc

Open House for Mary Makuc Sunday, October 8

As many of you know, Mary Makuc, the first Director of the Monterey Community Center, has resigned her position. While we are searching for just the right person to replace her—as if—the MCC Committee is holding an open house in Mary's honor on Sunday, October 8, from 2 to 4 p.m. Please stop by to have a piece of cake and show your appreciation for Mary's hard work. I'm sure many of you have spent some time at the MCC over the past six years, and for whatever reasons you were there, Mary made it happen. Please join us in thanking Mary for getting the MCC off to a great start and wishing her a fond farewell.

—Laurie Shaw, chair
Monterey Community Center

Covid Vaccinations Information

1. From the Council on Aging, page 5. Tuesday, October 10, CHP Mobile Health Unit at the firehouse pavilion from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Definitely have flu shots and we are waiting to hear about Covid boosters. No appointment needed.

2. The Southern Berkshire Health Collaborative is also moving about our area offering vaccinations. They use this site for appointments:

home.color.com/vaccine/register/berkshire

The site asks you to enter your birth date, and answer a couple of pertinent questions, and then it will provide a listing of vaccination clinic locations and dates, and let you select an appointment time.

3. The CDC provides a utility to searching for vaccination sites:

vaccines.gov/search/

After entering your zip code and choosing a vaccine a map will be displayed of vaccination sites. Some are public clinics and some are pharmacies. Some allow you to make appointments, and others, like some pharmacies, take walk-ins.

Thank you to Chris Blair, Mary Makuc, and Lin Saberski for the above information.





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Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills Schools Merger Decision

School Districts Merger Special Town Meeting, October 23

In the following pages you will find the full gamut of information, opinions, and perspectives on the upcoming vote to merge the Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills regional school districts. I have tried, to the best of my abilities, to make sure that all the statements made about provisions of the merger agreement are accurate to the proposed agreement—but I am not a lawyer.

The actual agreement may not be attached to the warrant calling for the special town meeting. It is available through the home page of Monterey and the 8town.org website. Copies may also be available in the town hall and library.

The Vote

The vote will be held at a special town meeting on Monday, October 23, beginning at 6 p.m., in the firehouse. This is an eight-town agreement. If even *one* town does not vote to accept the agreement at their town meetings, then the whole merger effort comes to an end. Child care arrangements to be decided.

If the merger proposal is accepted, there will be a second vote to follow once a plan for a new high school is created and cost estimates made. This vote will most likely be decided by a majority of all the voters in the eight towns.

—Stephen Moore, editor

Merger commentary is as follows:

1. Kim Alcantara, Monterey's elected school committee member, and member of the 8 Town planning board. Pages 12–13
2. Jon Sylbert, appointed member of the 8 Town planning board. Page 14
3. Don Coburn, appointed member of the 8 Town planning board. Page 15
4. 8 Town board update. Page 15
5. Susan Cooper, Monterey Select Board. Pages 16–17
6. Roger MacDonald, Monterey Finance Committee. Page 18
7. Mickey Jervas, Monterey Library Trustee. Page 18–19
8. Mary Makuc, parent. Page 19
9. Stephen Moore, Monterey News editor. Page 20–21
10. Justin Makuc, Monterey Select Board. Pages 21–22

Vote No on the Merger

As we head into a possible vote around October 23 at a special town meeting, the residents of Monterey, and all the eight towns, have a major decision to make.

For most people, it is confusing. Having to make a decision based on assumptions, lack of data, what-ifs, and special legislation, required for multiple parts of this merger, which may not be accepted by the state, really leaves a lot of uncertainty for the children of Southern Berkshire Regional School District's future.

The only answers we seem to receive from the 8 Town Regional School District Planning Board (RSDPB) are to reference their website, which is not exactly user-friendly, and people have mentioned that half the time the links they reference for the information they are requesting do not work.

One of the things I can tell you, that Don Coburn mentioned in a previous article, is that it's not going to cost just \$50 per household. Based on underestimated capital costs alone, it will be more than that.

To merge this district, we will be handing over roughly a \$70 million asset that includes the school campus and eighty-five acres of land. While the towns of Southern Berkshire will no longer have control over the building (Mt. Everett) and lands, we will still be paying on the legacy debt attached to this building for the next ten years. If people remember the history of our school, when Berkshire Hills was approached thirty years ago to help build the school, they told us to go it alone, and so we did. Something our towns worked hard to build and pay for will be handed over to the newly merged district.

In order to entice us there have been misleading statements.

It is deceptive to state that there are savings associated with this merger. Included in these savings is the projected cost of tuition for vocational technical students that they assume will attend the new high school. Also, the savings are based on "guestimation" of costs on the new building; or money they hope to receive from the state, for example, money funding the transition committee.

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Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills Schools Merger Decision

Another misleading statement is if we vote for a merged district without a cost or plan on the new high school project, not to worry—there will be a second vote once the cost is established—to accept the cost (bond vote). Technically, this is true—however—the second vote will be a majority vote by all the voters of the eight towns deciding to accept it or not. That means it's not just our five towns deciding at the second vote whether we want out of this agreement. We could be outvoted as the three towns that make up Berkshire Hills School District have two thousand more registered voters than we do. Having accepted the merger in the first vote, we could be forced to accept this merger no matter what. That right there tells me to stop it on the first vote!

Another issue is the fact that there isn't a collaboratively designed, well-articulated educational pathway forward, as this will be decided by an appointed transitional committee. Once we merge, Mt. Everett will lose our Early College Designation, that allows our students to earn up to thirty college credits prior to graduation. We would lose our Transcend Grant, Innovative Pathways, Learning Acceleration Network Grant, and many more programs. As these programs are grant funded, they are not transferable to the new district, would have to be reapplied for, and we may not receive them. After the merger vote, while waiting for the second vote, all the above-mentioned grant programs which are long-term, stair-stepped grants, we would have to ask permission of the appointed Transition Committee to move to the next step to continue these programs. This is stated in the 8 Town agreement they want you to vote for. We could possibly lose everything that makes our district special.

So, what happens if we actually are allowed to unwind if the bond vote is defeated? Do we have to go back to the drawing board, so to speak? Everything we have attained as a district could be gone. Seems to be asking a lot, to sacrifice our children's education, for uncertainty and no educational pathway. Not only do they not have any educational plan, but as asked in the *Monterey News*, where are

the children from Monument Mountain High School going during the construction? Well, there is no plan for that either. Could Mt. Everett handle the capacity of those students? The answer is yes. Think about that...

A Few Sticking Points for Some People

- A large number of students come from Richmond Consolidated and Farmington River schools, as Berkshire Hills has contracts with those districts. Are those towns going to be charged \$26,000 per vo-tech student if SBRSD decides to merge, or are we helping pay and build a school for towns not in the new district? To clarify, regular choice, not vo-tech students, will not pay that fee, as Massachusetts has school choice laws. Did Berkshire Hills consider approaching Richmond, Sandisfield, and Otis about a merger with them?

- Merging will not only be costly for the five towns of SBRSD, but it also takes away school choice. No longer will we have the ability to make a decision on where our children can attend by what as a parent we feel is right for them. According to the 8 Town agreement, after a certain point, the children will be assigned to the school that is closest to them.

- Shorter bus times are promised, and according to them, we will benefit from their transportation plan—including shorter bus times, promising older kids not riding with younger kids, due to staggered starts at the elementary level and secondary level and more.

- Transportation came up at the Sheffield meeting in August with the five SBRSD towns select boards and finance committees who met with the 8 Town RS-DPB. Marie Massini, from the Massini bus company, which has handled the districts' busing for many years, stated that their busing plan does not work. The plan calls for full-size buses up one-lane dirt roads in Monterey and New Marlborough with no turnaround ability, over bridges with a three-ton load limit, and a plethora of other issues. Marie literally drove every route and made a statement that only four out of the forty planned routes actually work. For

most of you, we all know transportation is one of the most expensive things in a school budget.

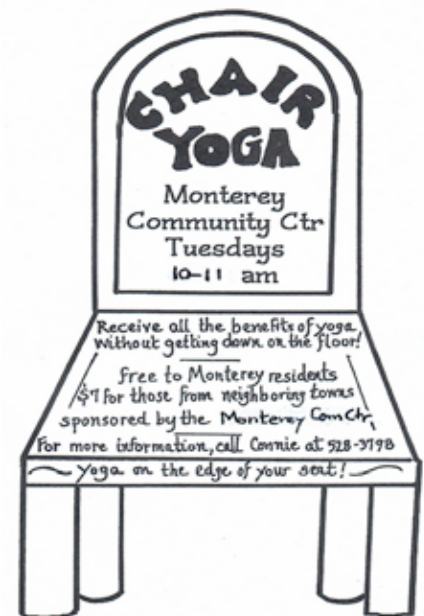
- Different start times—How many working parents rely on getting their younger children picked up at an early time, or being watched by an older sibling? Has anyone ever tried to get before-school childcare? Are we supposed to switch our jobs' work schedules? This is what happens when school does not start until 8:45. I know I relied on my older children to get their siblings on the bus, so I could go to work.

Vote No

I am a resident of Monterey, with three children in our district. We are being asked to vote on something that could change the course of our children's lives, that has no design or cost, no educational pathway or guarantee of the classes or programs we have. We are expected to vote on promises, assumptions, what-ifs, and in hopes of special legislation that they cannot guarantee will be passed.

I am tired of people's concerns not being addressed, including my own. Clicking "Here" on links on a non-user-friendly website are not really the answers people are looking for.

—Kim Alcantara,
Monterey's elected school representative,
and a member of the 8 Town planning board.



Vote to Form New School District

There are also risks in a no-vote that clings to the status quo. The data is clear on this. We are an aging population faced with an irreversibly shrinking enrollment.

Not all votes were unanimous, and compromise is part of any negotiation

A separate future of diminishing educational choices for a declining peer group, or a sustainable future together with an enviable menu of comprehensive, robust educational opportunities, including an integrated vocational and technical component, to enable students to succeed in tomorrow's ever more competitive world?

Monterey Representative, Regional
School District Planning Board



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Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills Schools Merger Decision

A Merger Would Support Monterey Long-Term

At our October special town meeting, we will be voting on the creation of a new eight-town regional school district. The crucial facts supporting this step into the future are: 1) the past and future debilitating decreases in school enrollment; 2) annual savings of \$1.2 to \$1.8 million; 3) our children's assured ability to attend a new, state-of-the-art high school combined with a new vocational-technical facility.

Without the merger, our costs will rise far more than with it, state aid will diminish, and our ability to provide our children with the necessary educational and cultural environment will be increasingly compromised.

Twenty-four town representatives have spent over three-and-a-half years studying and debating the issues. Their work has been supported by highly professional experts in all the relevant fields and by the Department of Education, which is prepared to provide around \$50 million for the new high school. This is not an opportunity that will come again. Thus, your vote will be of historic significance. It will determine our ability to adequately educate our children for the twenty-first century.

In casting your vote, remember that the majority of the new school committee (six of eleven) will come from the five towns currently making up the Southern Berkshire Regional School District. That should insure that the best aspects of our present schools will not be lost in the merger.

The long-term health and prosperity of Monterey will depend in large part on our ability to attract young families. For them, education is key. Without assured access to the new high school, they will, I think, choose to live elsewhere. Let's not let our town become a retirement village. Let's keep it vibrant.

—Don Coburn

Monterey member of the 8-town Regional School District Planning Board

8 Town Planning Board Update

Whether the Southern Berkshire Regional School District and the Berkshire Hills Regional School District will join to create a new single PreK-12 district is expected to be put to the voters of the eight member towns the last week of October.

In July of this year, the 8 Town Regional School District Planning Board voted to recommend the creation of the new district—to be known as the Southern Berkshire Hills Regional School District. The new district would maintain all existing elementary and middle schools as they are but create a single high school in a new state-of-the-art facility to be built on the Great Barrington campus.

The 8 Town high school would have greatly expanded vocational (also known as Chapter 74) facilities and programs, which would be available to high school students in all eight towns. South County students are seriously underserved in vocational offerings as compared to other parts of Berkshire County and the Commonwealth.

The 8 Town board's July vote followed a three-and-a-half-year study by the twenty-four members of the RSDPB (which includes three members from each of the eight towns). The board was originally convened to explore possible new models of operation in the face of staggering declines in enrollment and rising operating costs in both districts, trends expected to continue. The board concluded that by creating a single new district, the eight towns would be better positioned to provide the broadest range of educational opportunities and support services our children deserve in a way that is sustainable and the 8 towns can afford.

Over the last year, the board has been working on a proposed regional agreement for the new district. That work was supported by legal counsel and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

At its September 26 meeting, the board was presented with a final draft of the proposed regional agreement, which on September 14 was formally approved by DESE's Office of Regional Governance and its legal office as an agreement it could recommend to the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education. Should the board vote to approve that agreement, the board's recommendation and the proposed agreement will be forwarded to the select boards of the eight towns for placement on the warrants for the October special town meetings.

The board will continue to hold public forums to provide information about its recommendation and answer questions. October 4 at the Mahaiwe (an informational forum to be moderated by *The Berkshire Eagle*, which will cover all topics, and which requires registration); October 11 at Mt. Everett; and October 18 at Monument Mountain (both covering all topics). We will also be present at the Stockbridge Finance Committee on October 2 and the West Stockbridge Select Board meeting on October 10. (In September, we presented at a joint 8 Town select board/finance committee meeting and at select board meetings in Egremont and Monterey). All voters should visit 8towns.org for detailed information about the reasons behind the board's recommendation and additional information about upcoming meetings.

—Lucy Prashker, Chair

—Jake Eberwein, Project Manager

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Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills Schools Merger Decision

The Eight Town School District: To Join or Not to Join?

This is a hard article to write. I have been wrestling with this complicated issue for months, and I remain torn on this incredibly important decision. The vote before us in October carries a lot of weight, and will likely commit the Town and its future children to a path for decades to come. But which path to choose? I urge every Monterey voter to spend some time reading about this complex issue and talking to people on BOTH sides of this choice so you can really consider which option you feel will be best for our kids and our future.

Here are some of the many issues underlying this decision: 1) enrollment, 2) finance, 3) transportation, 4) administration, 5) representation and 6) educational program(s).

Enrollment

This one seems fairly straightforward to me. School enrollment is declining, not just in the Berkshires, but nationwide. Birth rates have declined in the last few decades, and they are likely to continue in that path. There is a lot of data on this one, but I can sum it up for you, our population is aging. You can read a thoughtful discussion about this in a recent *New York Times* article (September 6, 2023) titled

“America is Growing Old. We Look Into its Future.” It is not necessarily a bad thing for the planet, but will definitely cause some problems for everyone’s economy. We can quibble about blips of a few students this year or that, but Mt. Everett had 230 high school students in 2012 and only 161 in 2022, declining by 30% in ten years—and that downward trend is very likely to continue. That leaves us with the question of whether small is good or bad, which is perhaps truly at the heart of this merger issue and which I will come back to later.

Finance

Oddly this one seems pretty straightforward to me. There are a lot of questions about the numbers provided by the 8 Town Regional School District Planning Board (RSDPB): assumptions about the cost of the building, the borrowing rate, the administrative savings, the vocational educational facilities and their cost—so many assumptions! But even when you tweak the numbers, Monterey will almost certainly come out ahead financially. The students would be in a new building with our residents paying a very modest fraction of the capital expense. (SBRSD will pay 10% of capital cost after state aid for ten years, and slight annual increases to 15% after fifteen years.) The operating cost will likely also be reasonable. The RSDPB worked very hard to lighten the financial

load on the southern towns and to moderate (or smooth as they call it) the budgetary change that would occur at the outset of the new district. Even if the cost of the building turns out to be significantly greater than they are currently estimating, because of the apportionment of funds and the percentage paid for by the state, Monterey’s portion of the building cost will be pretty reasonable.

Transportation

This is one of the issues that has always been a sticking point for regional school districts in rural areas. The Great Barrington site IS most centrally located for the eight towns. That is simply a geographical fact. We all have low confidence in routes planned by GPS systems because we live here and have some credible knowledge of how often GPS routes are problematic in the Berkshires. That said, for most kids in Monterey the transit times are likely to be better—my girl would have been on the bus about one hour less per day; in a typical school year that is 180 hours less on a bus, the equivalent of four and a half entire work weeks! Time she could have been playing, sporting, or doing schoolwork. The transit times will be longer for some kids, no question, but also shorter for a lot of kids districtwide, including most of the kids in Monterey.

Administration

In theory, one of the sources of savings in combining schools is reducing the administrative burden, theoretically halving the number of administrators. But the devil is always in the details. Who will those administrators be and how will they be chosen? Supposedly the transitional school committee will have that as part of their purview, although it is unclear to me how the new superintendent will be chosen. Doubtless much of the rest of the administrative staff will flow from that choice. Personally, my experience says that given the site and the existing infrastructure, inertia will probably result in the Berkshire Hills administrative staff being more likely to be chosen in those roles. How those choices will affect the new school, its academic programs and its school culture remains to be seen. The



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Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills Schools Merger Decision

southern Berkshire towns will have six of the eleven seats on that committee, so there will certainly be opportunities for our representatives to influence the outcomes.

Representation

The new school board will have eleven seats, Monterey will have one, and the five southern towns will have six collectively. That means the towns of the SBRSD will have a slim majority on the board (six of eleven) that will be doing the hard work of choosing an architect, finalizing a building plan, putting together a new administration and making sure a solid educational plan is in place, including what vocational programs will actually be offered. Yes, that is a big job. Yes, we had better be sure we have a strong, knowledgeable person willing to participate in this really crucial job. One voice out of eleven seems small. But right now we have one of ten representatives, so in all honesty this isn't really much of a change. That board is going to be crucial to the success of the new system, so if the towns vote to go forward with the merger, active positive participation will be our best path to a sound plan.

Educational Program

I saved the hardest for last. We have fewer kids, a complicated and uncertain world and economy, changing technology, and nationwide statistics indicating that our approach to education needs some big changes. The two school districts in question are doing okay, but is okay good enough? And do the measures of student performance tell us about the school, the academic program, the teachers, the students, or the community, or maybe all of the above. Trying to get comparable data for the two school systems proves awkward.

The state has "School District Report Cards" that give you a lot of information on the schools, including graduation rates, percentage of students going on to college, MCAS scores, and lots of other indicators. I went back to the 2020 report cards to get pre-pandemic 2019 data (reportcards.doe.mass.edu/).

- In 2019 graduation rates were 90.2% for Southern Berkshire (SB) and 94.1% for Berkshire Hills (BH).

- Southern Berkshire had 71.1% of their graduates go on to higher education versus 77.8% for BH.

- The MCAS performance scores for both towns are at or above state averages for tenth grade, I have totaled the meet and exceed expectations numbers (MA is state average): English language: SB 83%, BH 75%, MA 61%; math: SB 65%, BH 64%, MA 58%; and science: SB 96%, BH 81%, MA 74%. Truthfully, as an educator and scientist myself, I am not really sure how much these numbers tell us about how well we are educating our children in either district. Nor am I certain what changes we need to make in education to prepare our children for the next fifty years.

In addition, our focus on college, while it opened doors for many, has failed to provide adequate training for a lot of students who will be entering the workforce in desperately needed and frankly lucrative trades. SBRSD has done amazing work with a small faculty, engaged parents, and a lot of creativity. I fear that some of those programs will be lost, and that active community engagement may also decline in a larger school system. Their efforts raise a lot of important questions, such as vocational training: fantastic in concept, but is it better achieved through active internships across all of the trades with local craftsmen who may be future employers, or through a few vocational technical school-based programs? Maybe we could have both, but where will we put our energy? And which programs should we back? How many cosmetologists do the Berkshires need? Will the additional cost of a solid program for plumbing or electricians be a better investment? Would knowing their likely earning capacity change a kid's decision about what to pursue? On the college bound track, what will happen to SBRSD's great collaboration with Bard College at Simon's Rock?

But wait, there's more. The cultures of the two schools are different. I have heard a lot of concerns about negative aspects of school culture in the Berkshire Hills district. I haven't spent a lot of time there recently, so I absolutely cannot speak from experience here. But parents with kids in

both districts have told me some concerning stories. What creates a school culture? Can the administration significantly influence the culture of a large body of students? Do anti-bullying programs actually reduce bullying? How can a school community change the drug culture of a group of high school students? Do inclusive classrooms (ones which do not group students based on past performance) improve performance for all kids or only those with historically poor performance? Does the program allow substantive options for high academic performers?

I had hoped writing this article would help me to come to a clear conclusion, but I cannot honestly say that it has. Declining enrollment, long-term financial considerations and logistics argue that this is a good idea. But my life experience argues that bigger rarely turns out to be better, and there is a lot riding on a future committee of eleven people. A lot of vitally important decisions need to be made in a short period, very likely by people with limited knowledge of education. This decision commits the town to one course for many years to come. I wish the right choice was clear.

— Susan Cooper

Monterey Select Board

This is an individual opinion and does not represent the Monterey Select Board.

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Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills Schools Merger Decision

The Merger Proposal

Over the past couple of years the planning board for the proposed new district has been looking at many factors including enrollment, transportation, education, and finance. The whole process is complicated. Reports and handouts are full of numbers and percentages, savings, and expenses that are sometimes hard to figure out. Sometimes the information you want is there, sometimes you have to read between the lines, and sometimes you need to send an email to Jake Eberwein, the 8 Town planning board project manager, to get some clarity. For myself this is a difficult decision and one that I am still working on. I know that there may be people who are looking for a definitive answer from the finance committee about what might be best but unlike the 8 Town planning board we don't have the resources to go out on our own to verify and check all the 8 Town board's data or even present alternative options. Like you we just have what they provide on the website or learn during the forums they host.

Right now, for me, the struggle lies in two areas. The money and the community.

The Money

Financially the 8 Town planning board shows what they conceive as cost savings. They talk about savings of \$1.5 million/year from pooling resources and economies of scale and reinvestment of those savings. They have a plan to spread the assessment cost of local contributions across all eight towns along with a 2% "safety valve" capped so "that no town's operating assessment increases in any year by a percentage that is significantly higher than the increases in the other seven towns." Debt service on the new school would ultimately be lower for Monterey than our current debt service for the Southern Berkshire Regional School District. Some of their numbers on costs and borrowing might be dated but not that far off to skew the totals. Are any of these huge changes to our overall current costs? From what I can tell not a whole lot. But to some in Monterey saving \$50, \$100, \$200, no matter the amount can make a big deal in

their lives. Then, there is the community.

The Community

I have been to two forums. One in Sheffield with select boards, finance committees, school committee representatives, and citizens from all eight towns. I also went to one recently at the Monterey Town Hall. At the Sheffield forum, and to some degree at Monterey, it was obvious that people from the Southern Berkshire Regional School District are very concerned about their school, Mt. Everett. They are concerned about what their school offers that the Monument Mountain Regional High School doesn't. They are concerned that their kids won't get the same opportunities from outside resources. They are concerned about the time their kids might be spending on the bus to Great Barrington. They are concerned that their school district will disappear and all that has been created will be gone. They are concerned. I hear that and it tugs at the heart. Year-over-year we read and hear about the demise of the small towns, the loss of community, how things were so much better before. And now—right here—we have a community, that we in Monterey are part of, concerned that something that makes our town unique, is going away.

This is my struggle.... money versus community.

Where do we go from here?

Lastly, I strongly recommend going to the 8 Town regional planning board's website, 8towns.org, and reading as much as you can. It is full of report data, committee and subcommittee meeting minutes, news articles, the draft of the eight town regional agreement, and more. I would also suggest talking to your neighbors who have children who attend a school in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District, especially if it is the Mt. Everett junior/senior high school. As they say, "knowledge is power" and it also makes for some good conversation downtown when the coffee truck is around.

Sincerely,

—Roger MacDonald

Monterey Finance Committee Member

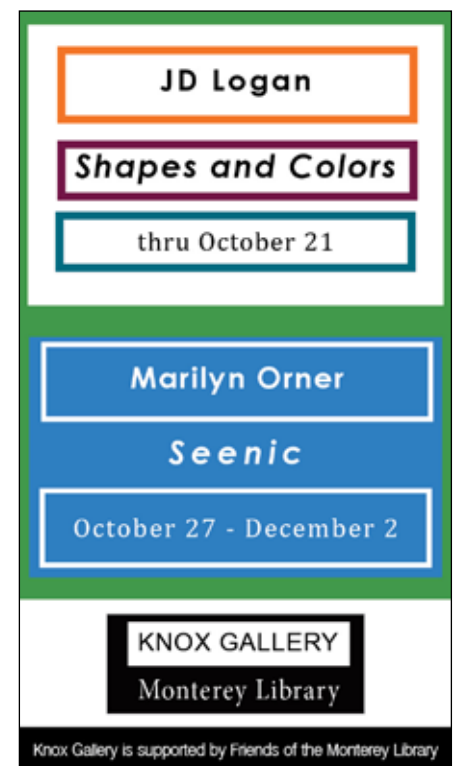
The Merger Question

I admit that I have not been diligent in following what has been going on with the school merger proposal. My three children attended Southern Berkshire schools, K–12, and graduated many years ago. I felt that letting those with children in school now, as well as current students, make decisions for the future might be the best road to take. However, I have recently seen that many who are involved are older citizens. They should have a say, but maybe not be the core of the process. Since trying to catch up I have found a number of areas of concern. A lot of what I am reading is political—a sell job.

Financial

At the Monterey Select Board meeting on September 12 the focus was on financing, so I will start there, although it is not the most important consideration.

Referring to Don Coburn's article in the September *Monterey News*, I find his numbers, while not incorrect, misleading. As for what the cost of the new high school will be to Monterey if the merger succeeds, he states, "the average house in Monterey will have



Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills Schools Merger Decision

an increase of just under \$50 a year.” But, “If the merger fails Monterey will have to fund the expense of our children who choose to attend the expanded vocational [Chapter 74] programming at the new school at an annual estimated cost [including transportation] of approximately \$26,000 per student.” These figures were confirmed at this meeting. What Mr. Coburn fails to include is how much does \$50 per average house amount to. There are 842 houses on the Monterey tax rolls. $842 \times \$50 = \$42,100$. Add to that figure the other 500 taxed properties that don’t have houses on them. Assuming, and this is just an assumption, their tax increase to be \$20 per year that would yield $500 \times \$20 = \$10,000$. So, if we merge the two school districts, this portion of our cost will cover the cost of only two students attending the Chapter 74 vocation program. It was mentioned at the September meeting that they think three Monterey students will attend the vocational program. If that is the case, and we do not accept the merger, it will cost us \$ 75 per house for those three students to attend the vocational program. I am okay with that. Also, including the transportation? These kids will be bused somewhere anyway. I don’t think there will be a bus for the three students, and not three buses. I think that \$26,000 figure might also be misleading.

Voting on the Debt

At a second vote, in a year or so, we get to approve the debt for the new high school. At that time the votes will most likely be counted based on a majority of individual votes in all eight towns, not by six of the eight towns. I obtained voter registration numbers for the eight towns; Great Barrington alone, with its 5,000 voters+/-, has 36.3% of the total voters. The three towns of Berkshire Hills District have 57% of the voters for all the eight towns, compared to 43% in Southern Berkshire District (5,542, plus Alford). So, that second vote is not a tool for the small towns of Southern Berkshire Regional should they decide

after accepting the merger this October that the debt, and the educational and administrative structure of this merger, is not in the best interest of our children. Pushing for a vote to accept the merger now, before all the facts are in does not make sense to me. In fact, I find it very disturbing.

Educational Programming

This should be the main focus. After all—that is what schools are for. In reading about the philosophies of the two districts I find that of Southern Berkshire to be more education-oriented. It appears that we encourage our students towards excellence. Berkshire Hills teaches all at the same level. Interestingly, on September 17 there was a piece on WSBS about the problem with the dumbing down of education in America. Is that the direction we hope our students take? Mt. Everett currently has an agreement with Simon’s Rock College whereby our students can obtain college course credits while in high school. We will lose that if we vote to merge. We will also lose the rural schools “Transcend” grant, which is supportive of small schools in a number of ways, if we merge. Perhaps you can read all about this and other programs at Mt. Everett in the SBRSD Summer 2023 newsletter that was mailed to every resident in Monterey. Another sales job, but a different angle. I liked what I read.

Sports Team Opportunities

While there may be more positions available, they will still go to the “athletes” in a much larger student body, and not the average student—and doesn’t that sound great. With a smaller student body pretty much anyone who just wants the opportunity to play can make a team and can get recognition.

We have waited this long, why can’t we wait for all the facts to be in before we make a decision as to whether or not a merger is right for the children of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District?

—Mickey Jervas

Against the Merger

As the town meeting vote on the school districts merger approaches, I want to share my experience as a mother who sent all five of her children to Southern Berkshire Regional School District from kindergarten through high school graduation from Mount Everett. My children attended SBRSD from 1999 through 2022, for a combined sixty-five years of schooling.

My experience is that the district and the high school are excellent. As enrollment has declined, I have not seen decreases in offerings or the quality of education; instead, I have witnessed SBRSD continue to innovate and explore new ways to stay ahead of the curve. My children benefited from dedicated teachers, rigorous curriculum, diverse extracurricular opportunities, and a tight-knit small school atmosphere. SBRSD gave them a great foundation as students and citizens in our world, and thoroughly prepared them for the various paths they have chosen since high school.

My great experience with SBRSD is one of the reasons I will be voting against the merger at the special town meeting.

Sincerely,

—Mary Makuc

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From My Experiences

As the editor, I have now spent months intensively reading the 8 Town planning board updates, fact checking on their website, recruiting and carefully reading information and opinions from other folks in town, and holding many, many conversations with people. It is nearly the end of September and I am only now clarifying my own views towards the merger. This is not simple or easy for any of us, but very important for our whole region.

I want to thank our three representatives to the 8 Town planning board, Kim Alcantara, our elected school representative, and Don Coburn and Jon Sylbert, who were appointed. This has truly been a huge commitment in time and thought, years-long, long-meetings-long no doubt. We are fortunate that they have different opinions because that strengthens all of us.

There are *a lot* of weeds one can dive into. Should we decide because of our tax dollars? Because if we don't merge then vocational student tuitions would cost the town (two vocational students would be less than 1% of town budget, and this could go up or down every year)? Because a small student base gets us less state aid?; because "bigger is better is more"? Because the busing routes aren't 100% worked out (or even 20% worked out)? Because larger schools can yield more competitive sports teams, (but less opportunities)? Because there isn't a complete educational philosophy already in place?

What is actually important at this juncture? I have thoughts about a few considerations.

School Size

Don Coburn stated that research shows that high schools of six hundred or thereabouts are an optimal size. Has this included spread-out rural areas, or are they more heavily compared with high schools with thousands of students in dense suburban and urban settings? Do these studies factor in areas with schools twelve to fifteen to eighteen miles away from some of their students' homes?

I taught in two elementary schools in a smaller urban setting in Vermont. Granted,

these were younger children and the considerations are different. But within the schools there were very remarkable differences in attitude, energy, creativity. In one school where I taught for eight years, we had 105± students in six classrooms. In the other, a building first built in 1890, added to in 1929 (and was still called "the new school" in the 90s) had over four hundred students. In my small school the principal was everywhere, knew all the kids and parents, and really listened to his staff. If someone had a good idea he supported it all the way. It was a vibrant school with huge parental support. PTA meetings had twenty or twenty-five parents show up.

In the older, much larger school, I only saw the principal when I was in the office, or at very large staff meetings. I rarely saw her in the halls or in any of the classrooms. She was a smart, hardworking principal, but she just wasn't available as a leader. Neighboring classroom teachers would support each other as best they could, but when I went into the hall, and around one corner, I had no idea who the kids were, and most didn't know each other. PTA meetings there might garner ten parents.

My experience with being part of educational initiatives, reading various studies, etc., is that everyone tries to get it right. I have no doubt that the 8 Town planning board wanted to do the same. But what metrics capture what I just described above, and how can they factor them into their recommendations?

Transportation and Geography

This is a big issue for the "customers"—the students and families—and quite reasonably so. There has been considerable dissent over the busing study, buses too big on roads too small, travel times, etc. This will get worked out over time.

What can't get "worked out" is our geography, especially in south county. The furthest reaches south from Great Barrington are Ashley Falls and Mt. Washington. Google maps gives drive times of twenty-five, thirty minutes. But school buses are not point A to point B modes. They wind around, make many stops to fill the buses.

I lived with exactly this situation with one son going to middle and high school seventeen miles from home. Year-round

basketball all those years, games, scrimmages with teams an hour or more away, driving to pick up after practices, summer league play. Younger brother had to tag along for most of those backseat road hours. There were mornings when we didn't make the bus on time. (Not good mornings for Dad.)

This is really an issue for Sheffield and Egremont, not so much for Monterey, but I am highly sympathetic to those families down there.

Shiny New Objects and Climate Costs

In one of my "inconvenient questions" in a previous issue I tried to raise the consideration of the climate costs to new construction. I received a reply from the 8 Town project manager that the state requires new construction to meet energy, air-flow, and other efficiency standards.

But I was asking about the climate costs for building. I think just about all of us realize that we can't keep doing what we've always done and thinking that tinkering with energy standards in new construction is going to be enough for dealing with climate change.

Everything we have, everything we build, and everything we discard, has embedded climate costs, not paid in dollars, but in carbon dioxide. This includes all the emissions from mining, manufacturing, transportation, demolition, just to get to the point of building. And CO₂ is not a local cost, or even a national cost, it is a global cost, it is "in the bank"—which we call the atmosphere. Some of the CO₂ emitted from the original construction of Monument Mountain High School is probably still helping to warm our planet.

Mt. Everett was built oversized around 1990, anticipating a larger school population, and now, even though it is in good condition, is significantly underused. I cannot speak to the condition of Monument Mountain high school and whether it has reached the end of a useful, rebuildable life.

I have a hard time thinking that we should contribute (and abandon) one large existing high school (in good condition, new roof and insulation, new boilers set) to a new district that won't use that

Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills Schools Merger Decision

existing capacity, but which intends to build a totally new, perhaps larger school. Southern Berkshire already has a school for this population with room to repurpose. Perhaps Berkshire Hills needs a better school for its own population.

We cannot continue “business as usual” if we are serious about climate impacts, including the ones we have already invested in our atmosphere.

There are many factors that definitely recommend the notion of the two districts merging. Declining enrollment, the possibility of additional educational directions, the ever-climbing costs of operating an educational system. A friend recently wrote, “The school issue is a classic case of no good options: whatever’s chosen has bad features so the best choice is the least bad.” Lucy Prashker, 8 Town board chair, said, when meeting with our select board, that, “The merger really doesn’t make sense without a new school.” So maybe that’s what this is really all about?

I have arrived at the view that we need to use what we have to the best of our abilities, to provide educational teams not just with new things, but with the best leadership and creative opportunities possible. I’m not sold on “bigger is better is more.” Smaller can be more dynamic, more nimble, more responsive. And that is how I am going to vote in October.

Thank you for reading this far.

— Stephen Moore

The Merger Proposal Detailed Perspectives


The opinions in this article are mine only and do not represent the view of the Monterey Select Board.

The vote on the School Merger that will be taken at Special Town Meeting is an important vote, and I hope all of the Town’s voters are able to learn about the proposal, voice their opinions at Town Meeting if they wish to, and ultimately cast their vote. I have had the opportunity to engage in discussions with the Regional School District Planning Board and its leadership on a few occasions, and I have found the group’s work to be thorough. I encourage all voters to consider all of the source materials and data as much as possible, but I would like to emphasize what I have found to be most important in considering this monumental decision.

I encourage all voters to review the financial obligations and estimates, meticulously prepared by the RSDPB, detailing the capital and operating costs of forming a new district versus remaining in the current district. However, I believe that the financial estimates are too unpredictable at this point to decisively inform the Town’s vote. The cost of building the new high school could easily increase from the projected \$100 million, or the interest rate could be higher than the modeled 3.25%, or both, but Monterey is allotted such a small share of the debt that this alone should not be reason to turn down the merger if it was

otherwise a good decision. I encourage you to review the debt service figures provided by the RSDPB and you will realize that every effort has been made to reduce the impact of the new school on the town of Monterey and the other SBRSD towns, and they have done so successfully (the \$44,390 projected debt payment for FY26 is roughly similar to what the town would pay per year for four years on our newest F-550 truck, even doubling that figure would be less than our annual debt service payment for the new Library or the most recent fire engine). Ultimately, any savings to the Town gained by voting no on the merger and not contributing to the new high school could easily be reversed by paying the per-pupil cost (estimated at roughly \$28,000 for FY26) to send students to the proposed new high school’s Chapter 70 Vocational Technical programs. The RSDPB estimated Monterey will send three students to the new Chapter 70 Vocational Technical programs each year, but I expect that this number will be volatile, and the fluctuation of just a few students could change that price drastically. In any given year I would not be surprised to see as few as one or as many as six students from Monterey in these programs – that difference is an estimated roughly \$140,000 for FY26, and I do not think there is any good way to forecast this number. These debt payments and Chapter 70 fee figures are not small, but, to put them in perspective, Monterey approved \$1,832,141.01 for education at this year’s May Annual Town Meeting. The Town will likely end

Detailed Perspectives, cont. page 22 >



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Detail Perspectives, cont. from page 21
up paying its small share of a new high school (construction cost and interest rate still unknown) or a per-pupil cost for its children to attend Chapter 70 Vocational Technical programs at the new high school (this number could fluctuate drastically from year to year). The financial repercussions of merging versus remaining unmerged seem too unpredictable and marginal to convincingly persuade a yes or no vote on economics alone.

Arguments in favor of one high school include that programs offered at either school will now be available to students from both high schools. I think the traditional virtues of a small school outweigh the benefits of a larger school in this case. I have witnessed robust and resilient extracurricular programs at both current high schools—in sports, music, theater, and more. As enrollment has declined, it seems that instead of programs being cut, other students are persuaded to join activities to keep them viable. This leads to high levels of student involvement which keeps impressionable high schoolers busy with good character-building activities. The lack of “try outs” and “cuts” usually makes the teams less competitive, but they play in a lower relevant division and have good seasons that teach the important lessons youth sports are after: teamwork, discipline, and sportsmanship. Even with recent decline in enrollment, it is clear that the minimal “critical mass” of students exists to run all of these various programs (sports, music, theater, and more), and these programs thrive because of high levels of student involvement. I think it is obvious that combining the schools would lead to the involvement of fewer students in extracurricular activities, and furthermore it would significantly reduce the number of leadership positions that teach our children valuable skills. Two senior class presidents would be reduced to one; two sets of varsity sports captains would be reduced to one; two color guards in the marching band would be reduced to one; and so on and so forth. For a few of the sports teams that are exclusive to one school or another at this point (football, hockey), co-ops are offered where students can play for the school with the team if their school does not have that team. We should continue to look into furthering co-op opportunities for sports and

other extracurricular activities. Generally, instead of cutting programs in the face of declining enrollments, students are driven to become involved in a variety of after-school activities. I think this involvement and leadership in extracurricular programs is critical to the experience that we provide our high schoolers and I think that, on the whole, the opportunities for involvement would be decreased if the two high schools were reduced to one.

In addition to the regional perspective, I think it is important for Monterey voters to consider the situation from our own point of view: Is the education offered by SBRSD and Mount Everett high school the best that we can provide for our high schoolers? I cannot predict with certainty the quality of a new school district and high school, but I confidently believe that SBRSD and Mount Everett provide an excellent education and life foundation for our children. In my recent experience as a student (I graduated in 2016), the administration nurtured a number of strong programs and opportunities for students that enhanced our high school experience: internships, independent studies guided by staff, AP-level classes, athletics, music, theater, a robotics program, field trips for hands-on learning (including international trips), and other innovative ways to engage students. Graduates from my class have gone on to succeed at small liberal arts colleges, large universities, in careers, trades, and the military. As my younger siblings, cousins, and friends continued to attend Mount Everett high school after my graduation, I have seen the same great educational and extracurricular experience. Declining enrollment is not noticeable through the robust athletic, music, theater, and other extracurricular programs. Dedicated staff and administration not only cultivate a rigorous and diverse curriculum and strong community atmosphere, but they have continued to explore new ways to improve the school, most notably developing and instituting the early college program with Simon’s Rock over the past few years. Thriving educational and extracurricular programs indicate that enrollment is nowhere near the minimum “critical mass” that would make a small school too small. The building itself is in good condition and all

evidence points to its ability to function for decades to come. We should make this decision based on what will serve our community far into the future, but I think the past and present show that Mount Everett has adapted to serve our community well as enrollment has changed and the needs of our children have evolved.

I appreciate the diligent and meticulous work of the RSDPB over the past few years. It is important to review the structure of our education system on a regular basis to ensure that it is financially sensible and serves our children and community. However, we are fortunate to have two excellent high schools in Southern Berkshire County. The choice between the two allows students and parents to choose what works best for them and it permits innovation at each school. I think it would be a loss for our community to merge these two high schools into one. Let’s instead focus on how to better each school and explore ways to promote opportunities for our high schoolers between the schools, especially when programs are exclusive to one.

—Justin Makuc
Monterey Select Board

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Bidwell House Museum

Cold nights, colorful leaves, and chrysanthemums on doorsteps; it must be October in the Berkshires. This is a wonderful time to visit the Bidwell House, whether you want to view the interior of the house, hike on the trails or wander the gardens. Guided tours continue through the end of this month, so book your tour soon. As a reminder, we offer hour-long guided tours on Monday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, at either 11 a.m., 1 p.m., or 3 p.m. You can call the house at (413) 528-6888, or email us at bidwellhm2@gmail.com, to make your appointment. If you prefer to spend your time outdoors, we have a number of self-guided tours, and the grounds and gardens are open daily, free of charge.

Programs are beginning to wind down for the season, but we do have a few more things planned that we want to share. First, on Saturday, October 14, from 1 to 4 p.m., we are hosting the free community event "Makers, Martha and Music: A Fall Afternoon at the Bidwell House Museum." Stop by the museum that afternoon to see artisans showcasing broom making, lace tatting, redware painting, and blacksmithing. You can also enjoy a concert by local musician Diane Taraz, who will present her show "Come to the Fair" while dressed in period clothing and using historical instruments. Sandy Spector will also be back portraying "Martha Washington" and is excited to visit with guests and talk about Martha's life and times. To top it off there

will be delicious cider and donuts. Head to the museum website to read all about this event and pre-register: go to our home page and look under "Events."

For November and December, we are once again planning to host a series of magical candlelight tours of the museum. Visitors will experience the museum through flickering candlelight and the November twilight visible through the abundant south-facing windows, while taking tours that focus on the furniture and decorative arts. At the end of the tour there will be wine and cheese and time to ask questions of your guide. Registration will open on the museum website in October and if last year is any guide, they will sell out quickly! Don't miss your chance to see the Bidwell House Museum in a whole new light.

Finally, we are planning a grounds clean-up day in late October to get the gardens ready for winter. Tasks will include raking leaves, cutting back plants, and moving outdoor benches and chairs indoors. If you are interested in helping out, contact the museum at bidwellhouse@gmail.com. As always, we are so grateful for the help of all of our Monterey friends!

Happy fall everyone!

—Heather Kowalski
Executive Director



Seal Cove, © Marilyn Orner

Knox Gallery in October

JD Logan's *Shapes and Colors* opened on September 15 and will be on view through October 21.

Marilyn Orner's *Seenic*—as in "seen" and "scenic"—opens on October 27. Orner focuses mainly on painting the local landscape, "wild and cultivated," with a particular focus on water.

Our winter community exhibit will be called *Glow*. Dictionary definitions of "glow" are positive sounding, and seem to relate to the beginning of winter! For example, "To shine with a low light and heat," "to have a warm, reddish color from exercise or emotion," "physical warmth or heat." Or—"a pleasant feeling."

We encourage all Monterey artists and friends to consider this topic as inspiration and be ready to submit a piece of two- or three-dimensional work, which should be not more than 24" x 18," or 430 square inches including frame. We cannot accept larger pieces.

The dates for submission will be in early December. Please stay tuned for eblasts and for further information in the November *Monterey News*.

All Knox Gallery events are admission free. Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, 452 Main Road, Monterey, MA, 528-3795; MontereyMassLibrary.org/Knox-Gallery; [Facebook.com/KnoxGallery](https://www.facebook.com/KnoxGallery).

—MaryPaul Yates

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The World of the Little Black Spoons

Little black spoons have popped up right across the brook from here. They are two or three inches tall, standing up from a bed of glorious green moss, and the spoons themselves are absolutely black. Some are straight up, some look a little windblown though I can't imagine the wind made them bend. There must be some other kind of steady pressure or factor that makes one spoon lean way over when others in its group do not. They do come in a group, though not hard upon each other. They are spaced out, and what makes this happen?

After initial complete bewilderment, as happens when you see a spaceship land, or maybe a giant lizard covered with fur or feathers, introduced by David Attenborough with his infectious enthusiasm for the miraculous, most folks seeing these little spoons would take a deep breath. Then they would settle down and say, "Could this be a mushroom?"

I never saw a velociraptor go racing by until recently on TV with David Attenborough. And I never saw a gang of little black mushrooms right across the brook from here until last week. What a thrill both times. You just have to be lucky, and I was. Brand new to me, so thank you, world of wonders and PBS TV.

These spoons are fungi, mushrooms, just not like any I ever saw before. This has been the season of the mushrooms. They even got a color front-page spread on the weekend *Berkshire Eagle*, and a



Little Black Spoons in Moss

centerfold inside. The writer/photographer had a certain David Attenborough eagerness, I thought, like my own excitement.

I have given this mushroom species a common name that I like better than the one I found in the books. Its Latin name is *Glutinoglossum glutinosum* which might make you think of gluten and wheat. I think the key here is stickiness, as in glue. I have not eaten any little black spoons. One writer says, "Many people do not tend to eat earth tongue mushrooms a lot." (Earth Tongue Mushrooms are a large group which includes the little spoons.) Does this suggest that a few people do tend to eat them a lot? Writing in 1902, Charles McIlvane tells us, "Some say it is delicious."

Many people do not mind eating that which is gluey. Just maybe not if it is growing out of a clump of moss and is black and these people are squeamish, or wary of that which is new to them. This wariness is well warranted when the exciting new

neighbor is a mushroom. I would probably feel some wariness if my first velociraptor were right across the brook without David Attenborough to introduce me.

Without such a companion, even if you can find a good book, it helps to make a list of new words, a glossary. So far we have glutinous, also viscid. The little mushrooms are saprophytic, feeding on non-living organic matter which is referred to by some as "detritus." Pretty soon we learn the little spoons are ascomycetes. This makes them part of a huge group which includes bread yeast and beer-making yeast, also truffles and morels. If you follow the trail of scientific study you will find yourself deep in the swamps of mycological PhD theses. Scholars assert that those little black spoons are members of a "well-supported clade."

This means that way back in their evolutionary history they and others had a common ancestor. They might look a bit different from each other now but we can tell where they all came from. Kind of like us and the velociraptors, we have a lot in common and it is because we came from somewhere. The dinosaurs left lots behind when something changed: their habitat.

Habitat is another of those glossary words, and right now we are lucky enough to be in the same one as the little black spoons, I just didn't know it until very recently. The spoons come up out of the ground to send their spores into the wind, to disperse. Mushrooms live mostly underground, usually in a mutually beneficial and dependent relationship with plants, including very big plants like trees. The plants make sugar, putting sunlight and water together in photosynthesis, and the magic of chlorophyll. Meanwhile, down under, the "fungal roots" soak up water and nutrients over large areas and take these to the plants.

Little black spoons jumped up lately into my conscious world, and like anything we learn about, including from old books and TV, have expanded my habitat. I didn't even have to eat them, just live next door.

—Bonner McAllester



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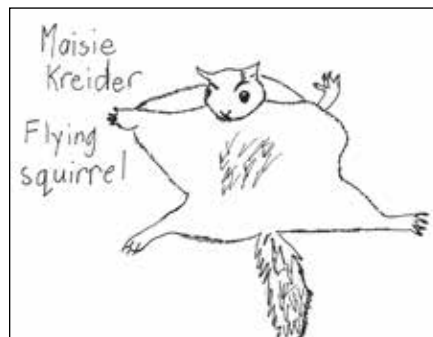


A Walk Through the Trees

I went on a Housatonic Heritage Hike at the Bidwell House on September 9 and it was about trees. When we went into the forest, Tom Ryan, the forester, almost immediately pointed out a dead-looking Ash tree. It had no leaves and vines were snaking around it. He said that it had Emerald Ash Borers, a type of insect that tunnels under the bark and feeds on the part of the tree that transports water and sugar and kills it. We walked a little farther in and saw a little hybrid Chestnut tree that the forester had planted because other American Chestnuts were dying from Chestnut blight, a fungus that infects the tree and kills it. We saw a Fire Cherry tree with lots of wild cherries on the ground near it. We stopped in a spot with lots of Hemlocks and spied a vernal pool that the forester said was used by frogs and salamanders in the spring. We walked on and spotted a Striped Maple (a.k.a. a Goosefoot Maple) with its striped bark and big, wide leaves that smelled delicious.

But my favorite part, overall, was the Beech Blight Aphids. But—wait for it—they are also called the Boogey Woogey Aphid! They are sometimes called that because in their colony, on their branch, they dance. They shake, back and forth, on the beech tree, a lot of their lives.

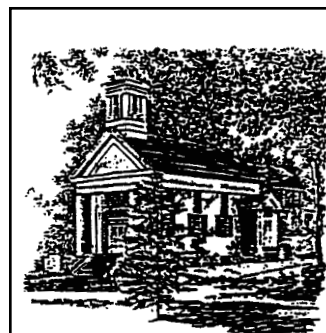
—Everett Kreider, age 9 ½



Three Facts about Flying Squirrels

- Flying squirrels can glow in the dark. Scientists think that it may help them find a mate.
- Flying squirrels can glide three hundred feet and make 180-degree turns.
- Some flying squirrels live in Asia and are larger than a house cat.

—Maisie Kreider, 5



New Marlboro-Monterey PTA Holiday Fund Raiser

For the '23-'24 school year we are already busy planning our Family Fall Pumpkin Social for school families on Friday, October 13, and applying for Monterey and New Marlborough Cultural Council grants. With some additional funding, we hope to have New Marlborough Central (NMC) school partner with a few local organizations, like Flying Cloud Institute, Berkshire Botanical Garden and MAPS (music-art-puppet-sound, recently offering kids programming at the GB library) for some amazing school residencies and classroom enrichment.

The PTA also hopes to raise funds for our school garden (fencing, picnic tables, gardening tools), some new outdoor playground instruments, a new PA/sound system for all school gatherings, a drop-off awning, and more.

And that brings us to our biggest fundraiser and community event of the year: save the date for our annual NMC Holiday Fair—Saturday, December 2! We're aiming for bigger and better—with musicians, local vendors, delicious food, a second-hand shop, wreaths, and birch reindeer for sale, and possibly some animals to pet! and importantly, more money raised than last year. Our fabulous online auction will go live in November so stay tuned.

Want to help? Donate? Sponsor a field trip or an in-school educational performance? Be a vendor at our holiday fair?

Please reach us at nmmpta01244@gmail.com.

It takes a village.

—Elizabeth Evans

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Monterey Historical Society

Third Thursday History Talks:

On September 21, our guest speaker Charlie Flint gave a fun, fact-filled show-and-tell with about twenty or so antique items. The audience was fascinated trying to figure out what the objects were and then hearing Charlie's intriguing and amusing descriptions. See the photo on page 30.

The next Third Thursday History Talk will be Thursday, October 19, at 7 p.m. at the library. Rob Hoogs will give an illustrated talk entitled "We are Still Here" about the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, their history, culture, and enduring presence here in their ancestral homelands. This talk will be in person and also available via Zoom. You can request a Zoom link by sending an email in advance to montereyma.historical.society@gmail.com.

Gould Farm and the Development of a Dream, Part 2

This continues the story begun in the August issue about Will and Agnes Gould and the Development of a Dream, as related by Bob Rausch in his talk on July 20.

After many years of moving from place to place throughout New England, New York, and New Jersey, just before Thanksgiving 1913, Will and Agnes Gould bought 105 acres in Monterey. Gould Farm had finally found its home in Monterey.

"In the early pioneer days of Gould Farm," Bob Rausch continued, "the sense of adventure was strong. Imagine Will Gould cutting chestnut poles to telephone company specs and snaking them into position with his draft horses. Imagine the frost on the living room windows so thick that one could not

see out for a whole week. Imagine getting enough oil lamps to light the living room and all the bedrooms, and imagine all the clothes and bedding to be washed by boiling them on the stove at the house and then taking them down to the brook to be rinsed. Imagine splitting mountains of wood for fireplaces and stoves, cleaning the barn, peeling potatoes, scrubbing pots and pans."

Everyone felt that they were helping to build something worthwhile. Days began early, and for breakfast there was plenty of what was served and it tasted good to appetites improved by an active life. Agnes Gould helped prepare meals while she also helped people who were feeling upset and in need of comforting. She handled most of the correspondence herself, welcoming visitors and guests and almost always checking in on people just before bed. In the evening, all gathered about the fireplace for stories, songs and games.

Will Gould would also offer talks in the living room based on the experiences of the day. Meanwhile the permanent group was growing. The Gould sisters came each winter for long visits, and members of the older generation, including "Aunt Clara Goodyear" and "Aunt Julia Colt," contributed greatly to the atmosphere of the group. In 1916, Agnes's sister Caroline arrived to take part in the work at the Farm.

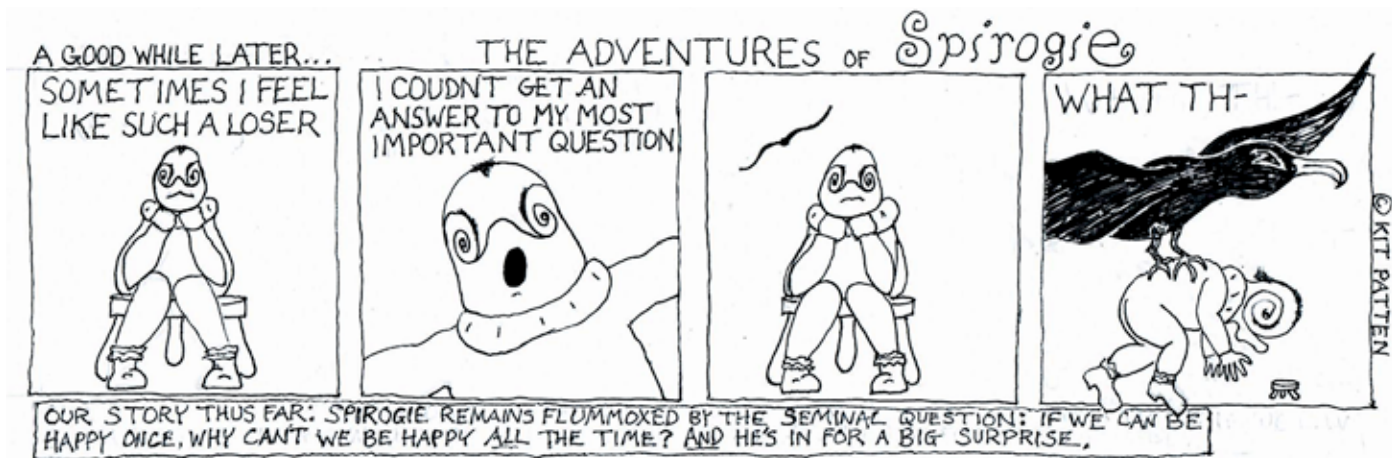
That generational profile, including family members of various generations, has been repeated since. When Bob Rausch first came to Gould Farm, that senior generation included Rose McKee, Faith Colt, Miss Eleanor Goodyear, Roma Foreman, Harriet Phillips, and Lois Winchester. They provided a grounding experience in Gould Farm life that was and is unforgettable.

Years later, Agnes Gould described Will in the early years of Gould Farm: "His vegetable garden was huge. The rows absolutely even. And not a weed to be seen. His fingers worked like a magician's, with such speed and accuracy that it seemed as if he never made a false move. There were no wasted efforts. He would weed a long row of onions or hoe the potatoes, milk fifteen cows, and do the other barn chores with such dispatch that these activities were only a small part of the day's work."

Will Gould built a "boy's camp"—a two-story log house—in the maple woods across Rawson Brook. This building is now the "sauna." They built other cottages or houses for the growing Gould Farm family. Some Gould Farm members received consent to build cottages on the property—after their deaths, these cottages reverted to the farm for additional housing. Many of these remain in use today, with familiar names like "Colt" and "McKee."

By 1925, Will's farm had grown to over one thousand acres. (It is now about 670 acres.) Tragically, Will Gould died suddenly that year from a heart attack while fighting a brush fire near Main House. He was buried at Pulpit Rock on top of the hill, Will's favorite place for solitude, rest, and prayer.

Rallying to Will's intentions, Agnes Gould set an example of faith, courage, and fortitude after his death. Thoroughly familiar with Will Gould's methods and goals, Agnes Gould and others kept the mission going and Gould Farm growing, figuratively and literally. Agnes and her sister Caroline Goodyear, along with Rose McKee and many other directors, staff, and associates, worked together with a focus on those who found it difficult to find the care they needed elsewhere. Their guests





Agnes Gould

were nurtured, leaving with enhanced mental, spiritual, and physical well-being.

By 1958, old age had “come upon all those who had joined together in 1925” to fulfill Will’s dreams.” A new era began, with the old, traditional methods blended with new. In 1960, Rev. John Hall Snow became the first executive director of Gould Farm, living there with his wife and four children until leaving for another position elsewhere in 1961. He was succeeded by Rev. Hampton E. Price from 1961 to 1972.

The new Gould Farm Community Center (below), modeled after the beloved “Red Barn,” was named in his honor. Kent Smith was director from 1972 to 1990. Lisanne Finston is the current executive director, leading Gould Farm in its second century.

In 1978, Gould Farm opened a satellite facility near Boston, and began operating the Roadside Store. In 1995, Diane’s Trail was created by Bob Rausch in memory of his late wife. And in 2024, the new improved Roadside Store will open.

Thanks for your interest in the Monterey Historical Society.

—Rob Hoogs



Contributions in September

Natalie Powell
Bill Enlund
Francine Eget
Jerry Green
Andrew Somers
Bonsai Cox
Sharon Rosenberg

Thank you again for everyone’s continued support.

Letter of Appreciation Joyce Shelley's Obituary

What a beautiful job for Mom’s obituary. In fact, the *Monterey News* was a delight to read from cover to cover. It makes me miss the wonderful times at Turkeybush (their house on Wellman Road) and all of the wonderful people who still make Monterey such a rich and energetic community.

—Kitty Brown, Joyce’s daughter

Monday Night Supper Club October 9, Church Basement

In consideration of this beautiful land, the wonderful community, and the Mahican Nation—the Indigenous people of Monterey—the theme for October’s supper club is “Respect the Roots.” Coincidentally the supper club is on Monday, October 9, beginning at 6 p.m., also Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

Potatoes are getting dug, onions are drying, beets and carrots have been pulled, trimmed and scrubbed—let’s cook ‘em. Right along with the trusted roots is the well-known triad “The Three Sisters,” the symbiotic agricultural technique that consists of squash, corn, and beans that Native Americans have used for centuries. The things that can be cooked for this theme are beyond any enumeration that is suitable for our newspaper, and as an avid cook, the excitement that is stirred inside of me is almost too much to bear. Please RSVP to supperclubmonterey@gmail.com or email for more info, and we are looking for volunteers to help set up in our new winter location.

We will be having Monday Supper Club in the church basement for the foreseeable future—everything else is the same.

—Hanna Jensen

Monterey Cookbook Club

The monthly Monterey Cookbook Club met again for a tasty lunch on Monday, September 25, at the community center. There were six of us that chose recipes from Alana Chernila’s *Eating from the Ground Up*. We had a delicious lunch which included a celeriac and apple soup, a butternut dahl, caramelized fennel and grapefruit salad, tomato pie, caprese salad, and finished with a carrot cake. The conversation was lively and informative and the meal was enjoyed by all.

Our next meeting will be on Monday, October 23, at 11:45 a.m., at the community center. The featured cookbook will be Melissa Clark’s *Dinner in One: Exceptional & Easy One-Pan Meals*. Copies will be available at the library shortly. Please mark the recipe you have chosen with your name on a post-it, available at the library desk. Twelve spots are available, so please register with Wendy by email: wendygj@gmail.com.

—Wendy Jensen

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September's Wildlife Report: Otters, Beavers, Birds, Bugs, and NO BEARS!

Bonsai Cox sent in a photograph of a ladybug at her place (below), familiar neighbor all our lives, and always such a work of art.



Also in the world of insects, the Banners found a caterpillar that will one day be the gorgeous Black Swallowtail Butterfly, if it lives that long (below). Meanwhile, it is a glorious creature in its own right and in the moment, for the now.



Wendy Jensen took a photograph of an adult Monarch Butterfly (below), and anyone with access to the pdf version of this paper can see some of these marvels in color. Kit Patten called up in excitement about the “cloud of asters blooming all over the field” at his place, and says they are “thronging with bees: honey bees, also some bumble bees. “Amazing!” Kit said, “We haven’t seen anything like this for years.”



Mark Ferraro saw an adult Bald Eagle and sent his photograph (above). And Steve Moore had an intimate experience with a youngster, a fledgling Cedar Waxwing, out of the nest. At this stage, the young birds are still used to being fed by a parent, so when Steve put his finger down close to its face, the critter opened wide hoping for some insect protein. Always worth a try.



Down by the Konkapot, in what Ernest Thompson Seton called the “mud album,” Wendy Jensen took a photograph of exquisite wild art, the tracks of a turkey (above). The “tom” turkeys have been visiting Steve and Wendy for at least five days, a regular parade of six of them. And David Blaskey on Route 23 saw a line of about twenty turkeys on his lawn and took a photograph (below).



Bonsai Cox saw just as many Turkey Vultures perched on the famous dead white pine that we pass on the way to the transfer station (above). We have two species of vultures in these parts, and both like to perch on that tree.

Another favorite big bird around here is the Great Blue Heron. Marc Holzer sent several fine heron photographs (below).



Carol Edelman reports faithfully on the hummingbird scene every year. “One hummingfriend,” she says, is still visiting the “hanging geraniums as well as the feeder. We do take it in every night.” Carol hopes this female hummer does not “miss her flight.” Besides this, Carol reports a relative lack of owls, this summer, and wonders if the hunting for small rodents is poor, thanks to the near-daily visits of at least two foxes.



In the world of reptiles and amphibians, we have Wendy Jensen's photograph of a large wood turtle (above). They are known for the many peaked pyramids on their carapace (shell). We also have the sighting of a very teeny frog, inside the screen on the porch at Steve and Wendy's place, wedged in a corner. A careful and successful capture and release took place, and Steve later went to the kitchen drawer to conclude that this frog would have fit in the ¼-teaspoon.

Not so with another reptile sighting this time. This comes from David Blaskey who went hiking on the Appalachian Trail in South Egremont and "encountered a Timber Rattlesnake that was four to five feet long crossing the trail. "I caught myself right before stepping on his/her back... and waited patiently for the snake to move along.... Beautiful creature." David sent some photographs, showing the handsome markings on this very long snake, and its flat head (clearly above right).

The mammals, our closer relatives, have also been out and about. At the Edelmans' "Wild Kingdom" on Hupi Road, a graceful, perfect doe "has been dining on fallen apples in our yard almost every evening. She is very tall and we've been enjoying talking quietly to her as she munches, so she doesn't immediately bound away." The Banners on Griswold Road saw a bobcat, probably stalking a chipmunk, and sent a photograph (below). And Steve Moore saw a bobcat cross the road near his place.



Steve also reported two adult beavers industriously blocking up the culverts where a brook goes under the road. The road crew responded with a backhoe to clear the waterway and told Steve, "We'll be back every week now. They don't quit." Steve and Wendy sent in a photograph of one of their beaver neighbors (below).



In the home orchard, a porcupine "has nipped off a whole lot of small stems from the tops of our pear trees." Steve sent a photograph (below) of one of these "quill pigs."



One morning Steve and Wendy heard a "snuffling sound," and looked out to see two otters traveling down through their peach trees towards the driveway. Marc Holzer saw otters "cavorting" in the water and sent some photographs (at right).

Thank you one and all, for wild accounts and photographs from our local bioregion.

—Bonner McAllester
(413) 518-9385, bonnermca@gmail.com



Also from the "mud album," tracks of a band of raccoons along a stream.



Select Board Corner MontereyMA.gov

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— Justin Makuc, Chair
Susan Cooper and Frank Abbott
Monterey Select Board
(justin@montereyma.gov)
(susan@gmail.com)
(frank@montereyma.gov)

For general inquiries, please click
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For all meetings of town public bodies, go to the calendar on the home page. For agendas (with meeting location) and minutes, go to the individual board or commission tab.



On September 21, our guest speaker Charlie Flint gave a fun, fact-filled show-and-tell with about twenty or so antique items. See the Monterey Historical Society article on page 26.



Party's over, according to Lin Saberski.

< *Athlete's foot fungus out of control?
Thanks to Maureen Banner.*

Police Emergency Contacts

- For real emergencies, call **911**.
- The email address for the dispatch service is:

dispatch@sdb.state.ma.us.

- Police dispatch service number:

(413) 236-0925.

- For non-emergencies to contact the Monterey Police Department, call:

528-3211

Town Contact Information Emergency! 911

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admin@montereyma.gov

Assessor: 528-1443 x115

assessors@montereyma.gov

Building Department: 528-1443 x118

buildingsafety@montereyma.gov

Community Center: 528-3600

calendar@ccmonterey.org

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Library: 528-3795

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clerk@montereyma.gov

Town website: Montereyma.gov, under each department, for office hours.

Calendar

The MCC calendar is on page 10.

The Council on Aging calendar is on page 3.

Sundays: Monterey softball: batting practice at 10, games begin at 10:30 as weather permits.

Thursday, October 5: Parkinson's support group, 2 to 4 p.m., in library. See page 5.

Saturday, October 7: Library strategic planning forum, 10:30 a.m., in the library. See page 2.

Sunday, October 8: Open house for Mary Makuc, 2 to 4 p.m., MCC. See page 11.

Monday, October 9: Monday night supper club, 6 p.m., now in church basement. See page 23.

Tuesday, October 10: CHP van for flu shots, and hopefully Covid vaccinations. 1 to 4 p.m. See page 11.

Friday, October 13: Family Fall Pumpkin Social, New Marlboro Central School. See page 25.

Saturday, October 14: Bidwell House "Makers, Martha and Music," 1 to 4 p.m. See page 23.

Wednesday, October 18: Daytime book group, 1:30 p.m. See at right.

Saturday, October 21:

Seed saving and sowing, Native Plants group, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. See page 2.

Lenox Contra Dance, 7:15 to 10:30 p.m., 65 Walker Street, Lenox. Live music, all dances taught. LenoxContraDance.org.

Monday, October 23: Cookbook club, 11:45 a.m., MCC. See page 27.

Tuesday, October 31: Halloween program with Bowie the Clown, 5 p.m., at library. Come hand out treats! See page 2.



Six big tom gobblers just wandering around. These guys spent time picking up gravel for their gizzards.

Daytime Book Group

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, October 18, at 1:30 p.m., in the Monterey Library.

We will be reading *A Gift from Brittany: A Memoir of Love and Loss in the French Countryside*, by Marjorie Price.

New members are welcome. Happy reading!

—Beth Hoffman

Bracken Brae Farm Stand

To all my patrons:

I wish to say thank you for coming to Bracken Brae Farm stand to purchase your vegetables. I will be closing this year on Monday, October 9. Hoping for a better spring next year so that I might be able to have more fresh fruit. This year you purchased 1,500 dozen ears of corn.

—Anna Duryea



Roadside 2.0, September 21

The building outside appears to be tight and ready for winter. Inside the walls and roof have been insulated, workspace walls framed, plumbing rough-in, electrical work in process.

It is becoming easier to imagine sitting inside or out with friends for a wonderful breakfast or lunch!

—Stephen Moore

Monterey News

The *Monterey News* is an independent nonprofit corporation dedicated to fostering communication in the Monterey community. We invite signed letters, articles, drawings, poetry, and photographs. Submissions may be sent via email to montereynews9@gmail.com or to PO Box 9, Monterey, MA, 01245. For advertising rates or other information, contact the Editor at (413) 329-7912 or email.

Cricket

Cricket talk in the tall grass
All late summer long.

When summer is gone
The dry grass whispers alone.

—Valerie Worth



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*Contributions from local artists this month:
Rachel Jo Arnow, p.11; Everett Kreider, p. 25;
Maisie Kreider, p. 25; Bonner McAllester, p. 18; Kit Patten, p. 26.*

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