

NEWSLETTER

TOWN OF LEVERETT

www.leverett.ma.us

December 2014

Notes From Around Town

- **TAX BILLS HAVE NOT BEEN MAILED.** They should be available by the end of December. **VOLUNTARY PAYMENTS GLADLY ACCEPTED!**
- **Don't sit at home this winter!** See page 5 for the Recreation Commission's **free Winter Workshop programs** for Leverett residents!
- **Kimball Trust:** Help this season with a donation to the Kimball Trust. The trust was set up in 1909 in the will of Catherine Kimball to provide clothing for Leverett children in need. You may make checks payable to Kimball Trust in any amount and send to Collector, PO Box 300.
- **Hunting Season:** It is deer-hunting season. To keep yourself and your pets safe please wear blaze orange; it has been proven to be more effective than any "bright color." Shotgun season is followed by black powder season. In total they run from Dec. 1 to Dec. 31. If you and/or your pets will be outside during this time please remember to wear your blaze orange. For more information go to: http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/recreation/safety/autumn_safety.htm
- Please, keep your **mailbox** clear of snow. The post office will not deliver a dozen LL Bean catalogs if its driver can't easily reach the box.
- **ALUMINUM FLIP-TAB** (from the tops of soda cans, cat food, etc) collection reminder from Les Allen: Keep them coming! Your efforts matter. Leave at Town Hall and/or bottle return section at the landfill.
- Leverett has a **parking ban: no parking anywhere on the road or roadsides—anytime during a snow storm.**

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINES:

1 February, 1 April, 1 June 2015

Send news items, cookies, and serenity to: Lisa Stratford, Box 300, Leverett, MA, 01054 or e-mail to townclerk@leverett.ma.us. Call 548-9150 for information and guidelines.

Board of Health

The Board of Health is proposing tobacco regulations for the Town of Leverett and will present the draft policy document at a public hearing on Dec. 15 at 7:30 at the Town Hall. All are invited to attend.

From the Select Board

Budget Crunch: Two abatements have created a major issue as we review the Town's budget and begin preparing for the next fiscal year. The facts are as follows: Abatement #1 – The assessors granted an abatement of \$3M to a property owner, resulting in a property tax reduction of \$57,600/year. The owner has appealed to the Appellate Tax Board, asking for a further abatement in the amount of \$6,546,700, which would mean an additional property tax reduction of \$125,696.64 in FY 2104 and \$130,148.40 in FY 2015. Abatement #2 – The assessors granted an abatement of \$31,200 to a property owner, resulting in a property tax reduction of \$599.04. The owner has appealed to the Appellate Tax Board, asking for a further abatement in the amount of \$106,339, which would mean an additional property tax reduction of \$2,041.71 in FY 2014 and \$2,114.02 in FY 2015.

Due to the need to hold in reserve a sum sufficient to cover the potential costs of these outstanding abatements, the Finance Committee asked for a joint budget planning meeting with the Select Board and Assessors, together with the School Committee, department heads, and representatives of the Regional School District administration.

Here are the options: If the Town budget were increased to the amount allowed by Proposition 2 ½, this would generate an amount sufficient to cover "fixed" expenses (e.g., debt service, contracted raises, and the Regional School) and provide a contingency for the "worst case" abatement scenario, but would leave only about \$50K over last year's budget for all other expenses. The tax rate would go up by about 51¢ / \$1,000 valuation (an average annual tax bill increase of about \$125) and "non-fixed" budget expense lines would be cut by 3.5%; If the Town did not increase to the Prop. 2 ½ limit, "non-fixed" expense lines would be cut 8%. Department heads were asked to propose budgets for both scenarios.

One proposal at the meeting was to move toward a reduction in the Community Preservation Act surcharge (currently 3%) to offset the effect of any tax increase. The Town Administrator was asked to explore the process for such a decrease in the CPA surcharge.

The meeting also included a review of the Regional School budget and capital plan projections presented at a 4-town regional meeting in November. The Regional budget involves uncertainties related to the cost-sharing formula that Shutesbury has contested in recent years. This may be resolved prior to the Annual Town Meeting.

Other News:

The **Transfer Station** supervisor, Neil Brazeau, will resign in May, after several years of diligent leadership, including the transition to Leverett's participation in the

Franklin County Solid Waste Management District. The job has been posted and all applicants are welcome. The Town is putting forward several proposals for a Franklin Regional Council of Governments (**FRCOG**) **technical assistance** grant, including the proposed water line from Amherst to the properties affected by the former landfill; affordable housing; public transit; a fire services region; information technology; and a road closure notification system.

The **hiring process for a new Fire Chief** to start in January 2015 is moving forward. A hiring committee is vetting the applicants and will report to the Select Board with the names of eligible candidates. The Board appointed **two new firefighters** to the department's roster.

The Board also added a new member to the Town's roster of **part-time police** officers.

Though the Special Town Meeting in October rejected a proposed change to the Town's **cell tower bylaw**, the study of options for providing the Town with mobile wireless services continues. Expect further information and another effort at modifying the by-law at the Annual Town Meeting, scheduled for May 2, 2015. Meanwhile, towers approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Board continue in process, under variances granted pursuant to federal law.

Visitors to Town hall have missed the ancient visage of **John Leverett** recently, as the Historical Commission took him for a couple visits to art restorers to determine the best and cheapest method(s) for cleaning the painting.

For the Select Board, Peter d'Errico

Fire Department

Dear town residents and neighbors,

On January 31st, 2015, I am retiring from the Fire Department (not my choice). I have served the town on the department for more than 41 years, 26 of which have been as chief. It is with great pride that I have served town residents, not only on the fire department, but also as a former police officer, civil defense director, custodian of the elementary school, and as dump keeper, back when it was a dump. I have always had the townspeople's support and respect, and for that I am truly grateful and want to thank you all.

I also thank all present and former members of the department. Without their willingness to serve alongside me through the years, I couldn't have accomplished what I set out to do, which was to build a solid, professional fire department.

It's that time of year: brush burning season will begin on January 15th and will run until April 30th. There are 2 ways to obtain a burning permit. If you have access to the web, go to www.fcburnpermits.com and follow the directions, or go to www.leverett.ma.us (it will direct you to this address). If you do not have access to the web, call 625-8200 and they will issue you a permit. Using the web is the best method for obtaining a permit. It is strongly

recommended that burning be done early in the season because of the possibility that it will terminate as it becomes dry and windy. Note: The DEP will not allow open burning if adverse weather conditions are forecast.

*Respectfully and for the last time,
John Moruzzi, Fire Chief*

Winter Reminders:

Winter sand is available to all residents, for private use only, at the Safety Complex. If you are elderly or physically unable to get sand, the Highway Department will deliver a 5-gallon bucket to you. Call Will at 548-9400 for a delivery.

The Select Board adopted the following policies and would appreciate your cooperation in regard to them:

(February 12, 1996)

No person other than an employee of the Highway Department shall **push, pile, plow, or blow snow or ice onto a town or county road** that impedes the flow of traffic. Whoever violates this resolution shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$50 per offense and be rolled into a snowball with only head and feet sticking out.

(December 29, 2003)

Residents are advised to secure their **mailboxes** against possible movement from snow removal operations. **The Town is not responsible for damage to mailboxes caused by snow removal operations.**

Treasurer/Tax Collector

FISCAL 2015 PROPERTY TAX BILLS have NOT been sent. They should be in the mail by December 31.

Once bills are mailed, you will have 30 days to pay (at least half the amount) without penalty, but please remember ***it is always the responsibility of the taxpayer to be sure payment is received timely, regardless of when or IF a bill is received.*** If you own property and didn't get a bill, contact the Collector's office. Allow at least 3-4 days when mailing payment. **DO NOT MAIL THE BILL ON THE DUE DATE**, as a postmark is ***not*** considered timely payment. *If you are making a "Due-Date payment," bring it directly to the Collector's Office.* You can also sign up for ***DIRECT PAYMENT***, pay online at leverett.ma.us, or drop off payment in box at back entrance to Town Hall. Office hours: Mon, Tues, Wed, Sat: 2:30 – 9:30pm; (***HOURS MAY VARY*** so call ahead **548-9666** or email treasurercollector@leverett.ma.us). If you need a receipt, please come during office hours or leave a stamped, self-addressed envelope in the Collector's mailbox. Please do not interrupt other Town Hall staff for tax payments/receipts.

The TAX RELIEF FUND is particularly low this year, so please consider sending a donation now or when you pay your tax bill. Donations can either be made to the Leverett Tax Relief Fund or to a specific tax bill. If you

Local author/screen writer Steve Adams (aka Waldo Mellon) will be at the library on Thursday December 18 at 7pm to talk about his new book *What's What and What to Do About It*.

Amnesty for Overdue Fines from Leverett Library materials through December: Bring in a nonperishable food item for the Survival Center or dry food, kitty litter or liquid laundry detergent for the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society and we will waive your overdue fines on Leverett Library items. Sorry, but we cannot waive fines on items from other libraries or on charges for missing or damaged items.

If you are homebound please let us know and we can arrange for materials to be delivered to you.

Happy Holidays to you all and we hope to see you at the library very soon.

Ashley Blais, Library Director

FRIENDS OF LEVERETT LIBRARY

At our annual meeting at the end of October we elected the following officers for the next two years: D'Ann Kelty, Judy Hobart, Joanne Mully, Fenna Lee Bonsignore, Leslie Fisette, Laurel Kahn, and John Johnson. We bid a fond farewell to longtime board member Lorna Rivers, feted her with cake and hugs, and entrusted the famous "Velvet Elvis" to her for the time being. At that meeting, it was announced that the fund-raising challenge to make audio/visual improvements to the Community Room had been a huge success. We thank all who donated, and an especially sincere thanks to our "anonymous challenger," Gerry McFarland. His generosity along with the incredible support of over 40 others will make it possible to go beyond our original plan of ceiling-mounting the projector and adding speakers. We will now be able to integrate the hearing assistance system into the new amplifier, making everything accessible with ease.

Thanks also to those bidders on our annual Holiday Basket silent auction—another huge success this year. Please watch for a membership renewal mailing at the start of the year, or pick up a membership application at the library. Happy Holidays to all, especially our hardworking staff and volunteers.

D'Ann Kelty, for the Friends Board

LEVERETT HISTORICAL COMMISSION UPDATE

The Commission has been busy this fall between trips to Williamstown and Franklin (MA) to see about conserving the portrait of Gov. John Leverett that hangs in the Town Hall and helping the Leverett Historical Society put together a newsletter about the past year's activities.

Town Hall, the Select Board, the Historical Commission (LHC) and Society (LHS) worked together with the North Leverett Baptist and Congregational churches to submit an application to the State Archives in September requesting assistance in digitizing all of the town's historical materials. We had to measure the "linear feet" of boxes of papers, objects, books, etc. that exist in the town vault, the two museums (School House and Family Museum) and the two churches. Leverett's application was recently approved for services of the "Roving Archivist" from the State Historical Archives who will advise us on the best strategy to accomplish this important preservation task.

On warm days through October we continued our Cemetery Survey – now working on Mount Hope on Chestnut Hill in North Leverett. We hope to complete the surveying by fall 2015 in order to present a strategic plan for work that needs to be done in all of Leverett's 13 cemeteries to the Community Preservation Commission in 2016.

The LHC with the LHS is planning to celebrate Moore's Corner, North Leverett, and East Leverett National Register District designations in spring or summer 2015. If you are a resident in or neighbor of one of the districts and would like to participate in making decisions about various aspects of signage and/or celebration please contact Susan Mareneck (413-367-2403) or Betsy Douglas (413-548-9320).

Looking forward to the end of the Leverett Civil War Celebration in Spring 2015 (150 anniversary of the end of the Civil War), we are thrilled to have Liesel De Boor direct the reading of the Civil War play, "Hallowed Ground" on the weekend of May 9, 2015, with performances in both Leverett and Northampton. Casting will be in February for: Tom and Jimmy 18 and 15, Confederate Soldiers; Jubal Haley 19, Southern conscript; Lizzie Peaker, 15 white Southerner, Sam English, 20-35 Union Soldier; Musician any age, to play trumpet/coronet and Narrator, any age, any gender. More specifics on dates & times in the February newsletter. For auditioning contact Liesel De Boor, lieselddb@comcast.net. For information, contact Susan Mareneck susan.mareneck@gmail.com.

On Sunday, April 12, 2015, as part of the culmination of Leverett's Civil War Celebration, the Historical Commission and Society will host a reading of the Civil War-related Watson letters (Moore's Corner family) in conjunction with the showing of the last two episodes of Ken Burns' "Civil War" film at the Leverett Library.

Next two LHC meetings: Mondays: 12/15/14 – "Hallowed Ground" Committee at Town Hall 7pm, 1/5/15 – full Historical Commission Mtg. Town Hall 7pm.

Submitted by Susan Mareneck, Leverett Historical Commission
(Please contact me with questions/ suggestions @ 413-367-2403 or susan.mareneck@gmail.com.)

Leverett Energy Committee Progress Update

The committee has a lot of important stuff to tell you about choices you will soon need to be making about how electricity comes to your home. There are many details to get straight as well as a lot of still-unknowns. For now we offer an introduction to the whole picture with further updates to follow. It's likely you'll find yourselves confused about all the options you'll have before you but if you get confused now, you'll be less so later.

Here's some background: The State of Massachusetts--known nationally as a leader in renewable energy activity and opportunity--is attracting many 3rd-party suppliers of energy, both residential and commercial, some promising rates lower than WMECO, for example, some offering differing percentages of green energy, and some offering affordable and/or locally sourced (New England) green energy. In all cases, WMECO (or other provider) remains the conduit for the energy and continues responsibility for maintenance and repair of the system as a whole. We can now provide some details on three of these suppliers (see below) while awaiting updates from others.

The first of two important facts to keep in mind is that electricity rates are going to rise significantly; WMECO has announced it will ask for an almost-30% hike in January. Second is that a Town Meeting vote a few years back officially binds Leverett residents to whatever plan the Hampshire Council of Governments (HCOG) proposes as a 3rd party supplier. HCOG is not ready to publicize the specifics of its plan but each resident will receive a contract/notice when it is. So why are we investigating alternative suppliers if we are already bound to one? Because prescient voters at that town meeting included in the warrant article a guarantee that each resident could opt out of HCOG, choosing instead to stay with WMECO or sign on with an alternative supplier, if any should present itself. Viridian, Mass Energy, and Arcadia Power are three current alternatives (there will be more).

Viridian (www.viridian.com) established itself as a socially responsible supplier of affordable green energy. It offers two programs: (1) a three-year fixed rate supply of 59% green energy and (2) a three-year fixed rate of 100% wind energy. A percentage of the energy from solar and wind is generated at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Buzzards Bay; a portion of energy from wind is also generated at the Stetson Wind Farm in Danforth, Maine. Two additional features offered are the possibility of free solar panel installation (if eligible) with Solar City working with Viridian and a fund-raising opportunity for the town.

Mass Energy
(www.massenergy.org/renewableenergy/wmeco) supplies

electricity from wind, solar, and cow gas produced exclusively in Massachusetts and has the virtue of generating funds to encourage additional Massachusetts green energy sources. No contract is required, no time limit, and signing up is done through WMECO. Rates for 100% wind will be 3.5 cents higher per kWh than WMECO and 2.5 cents higher for combined alternative sources.

Arcadia Power (www.arcadiapower.com/) is a nationwide clean energy company based in Washington, DC. Arcadia partners with the lowest-cost provider (HCOG for example) and charges 1.5 cents per kWh over the WMECO or HCOG price for 100 % wind from the Midwest. A discounted rate is available should a critical mass of Leverett residents sign up with Arcadia. There is no required time commitment or contract.

Viridian and Mass Energy do not provide the low income discount provided by WMECO. Arcadia allows WMECO's arrangements to remain. More later.

*Portia Weiskel (548-9737; pweiskel@post.harvard.edu)
for the Leverett Energy Committee.*

Family Museum News

If you have read the Historical Society newsletter, you saw the news about the raffle for the watercolor painting by Bill Rathbun of the North Leverett Sawmill. By sending a donation to the "Raise the Roof" fund for the museum at P.O. Box 57, Leverett, MA 01054, you will be given a chance to win the picture. The drawing will be on Saturday, December 20 at the Museum at one o'clock. You do not need to be present to win the raffle.

The Museum will be closed for the months of January, February and March, EXCEPT BY APPOINTMENT by calling 548-9452. (If there is a blue 2008 Pontiac Torrent parked outside, WE ARE THERE!)

Unlocking Public Transportation for Leverett

Need a ride? You can't get there from here. Representative Stephen Kulik wants to change that by introducing legislation this January to overturn a Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Mass DOT) statute that prohibits a town like Leverett from being a member of two transit authorities at the same time. With the statute overturned, not only can Leverett continue with the PVTA senior van service to Hampshire and Hamden Counties, the town could have the same service provided by the FRTA to Greenfield, which is not served by the PTA. This would be a vital service for seniors not able to drive to medical appointments in Greenfield. In addition, Leverett would finally have the opportunity to work with the FRTA for a much-improved bus route to Amherst and Greenfield. If you think that sooner or later there should be an alternative

to the private automobile for getting to certain destinations, contact Kulik to express support for his effort to overturn this restrictive statute. Email: stephen.kulik@mahouse.gov; Address: One Sugarloaf Street, South Deerfield 01073 or Room 238, State House, Boston 02133; Phone: 413-665-7200 or 617-722-2380. For more information call Roy Kimmel @548-9330.

Leverett Recreation Commission Winter Workshops

The Leverett Recreation Commission is pleased to announce an offering of winter workshops. The following workshops are free to Leverett residents. Non-residents can participate for a fee of \$12/class, providing there is room in the class.

Yoga – with Nancy Paglia (413-548-9015)
Thursdays 5:15-6:30 pm in the Leverett Library starting January 8 to March 5 (no class on 2/19 and 2/26). Bring mat and blanket.

Water color painting for beginners—dry brush to wet-in-wet washes with Nancy Emond
Thursdays 6:30-8:30 pm in the Town Hall
Starting January 15 to March 5
A **materials fee** of \$30 is due before the first class (call 367-9535 to arrange payment).
Bring to first class: a spray bottle (for water), a 1” flat-tip **watercolor** brush and a round-tip **watercolor** brush.

Printmaking Without a Press—monoprinting, collagraph printing, and relief printing –
with Julie Rivera (549-1029)
Thursdays 6:30-8:30 pm in the Town Hall
Starting March 13 to April 2
Bring a sketchbook and a basic set of tools like pencils and scissors. \$10 to \$15 materials fee for relief blocks, papers, and ink.

Drumming—Afro-Cuban using provided djembes – with Jeff Hinrichs (413-530-3698)
Mondays 7:00 to 9:00 pm in LES Music Room
Starting February 2 to March 30 (No class 3/16)

The following classes are free to all participants:

Tai Chi—with Dennis Shapson (413-367-9760)
Ongoing weekly classes in the library
Beginner class - starting 2/7 Saturdays 11:00 am to 12:00 pm
Advanced class--Saturdays 10:00 to 11:00 am
Advanced class--Wednesday 1:45 to 2:45 pm

Qigong – with Dvora Eisenstein

Tuesdays 5:15 to 6:15 pm
Ongoing weekly classes in the library

Registration will be on a first-come/first-serve basis.
For more info, call Diane Crowe, LRC Chair, at 413-548-9394 and look for printouts at the Leverett Library, Town Hall and Village Coop.

LRC Activities with Participant Fees:

Exercise classes – with Victoria Shaw
Strength, balance, and aerobic games in LES Gym
\$230/session (36 classes) or \$10 drop-in fee
Mondays and Thursdays—5:45 to 7:15 pm
To register, call: 413-253-5734

Leverett community chorus – Debbi Friedlander,
Director in the LES Music room
Tuesdays 7:00 to 8:30 pm
Starting January 20, Fee: \$125 for Spring session
Call Debbi at 413-835-1250 for registration info.

To register for free classes, use the following form:

LRC Registration

Workshop: _____
Name of participant: _____
Address: _____

Phone: _____
Email: _____

Mail to Diane Crowe
78 Cave Hill Rd.
Leverett, MA 01054
Or email to: diacrowe@yahoo.com

**Drop off your nonperishable food items at the following locations:
Town Hall, Library, School, Transfer Station.
Thank you!!**

their beauty, dash, and hunting prowess and sought to connect with the birds' spirit through the use of feathers. The raptors shown will include a Peregrine Falcon, Red-tailed Hawk, Great Horned Owl, and a mystery guest or two. Artifacts will include prehistoric stone tools, Northwest wooden carvings, Southwest baskets and weavings, and items from the fur trade. Suggested for ages 6 years and up. Sponsored by the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust (snow date February 22).

Community Events

Leverett Trails Committee

Winter Hike (with marshmallows)
Sunday, February 28, 1 PM, Gordon King Life Estate (the blueberries gate just south of mail box # 101) Hike and bonfire. If there is snow, it will become a Snowshoe/Cross-country Skiing Afternoon (also with marshmallows).

Speaking of snow. We will try to alert you to good snowshoe and skiing conditions on the trails. Check www.rattlesnakeguttertrust.org-- the home page will have a link to conditions.

We are planning the March-April Trails Exhibit at the Leverett Library. If you would like to help with the exhibit or with the trails themselves, contact the Leverett Conservation Commission, 413-548-1022 x3.

The Leverett Trails Committee is co-sponsored by the ConCom and the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust. Trail maps are available in the Leverett Library and online at www.rattlesnakeguttertrust.org where you can also get events information.

Rattlesnake Gutter Trust

Looking for: Transfer Station Returnables Shed Helpers

What a great way to meet folks, for students to do community service, or just to have fun and help out. Call or email Brooke Thomas 548-9281 or rbthomas@anthro.umass.edu

Native American Artifacts and North American Raptors

Julie Collier, Wingmasters

Sunday, February 8, 2015, 2 PM, Leverett Library

Julie Collier, raptor rehabilitator, will combine live birds of prey with a display of Native American artifacts, many decorated with raptor feathers molted from the birds Julie cares for. Julie, who has some Native ancestry, began researching and recreating feathered headdresses 30 years ago when she began working with raptors. Native people across North America admired birds of prey for

Holiday Invitation from the Leverett Literature Group

Our annual holiday literature read-aloud will happen on Tuesday December 23 at the library between 6:30 and 8 p.m. Past readings have included A CHILD'S CHRISTMAS IN WALES (Dylan Thomas), A CHRISTMAS MEMORY (Truman Capote), and a pretty funny parody of a Hemingway version of THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS (James Thurber). We welcome new ideas for short readings as well as your presence. We usually have good things to eat. Please call Portia (548-9737).

The Newsletter is affectionately published by the Town of Leverett 6 times per year and mailed to each address in Leverett (about 850) and subscribed to worldwide. It is the official publication of the Town and accepts articles from Town boards and committees. No politicizing or editorializing is allowed. When space is available, items from nonprofit organizations may be included. No advertising for the sale of goods or services for personal gain is allowed.

*Cover art by Margaret Nutting.
Compiled and humorously written by Lisa Stratford
and expertly edited by Portia Weiskel.*

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TOWN OF LEVERETT
December 2014 **NEWSLETTER**
LEVERETT, MA 01054

LEVERETT RESIDENT

LEVERETT, MA 01054



FOOD DRIVE!

Please Leave Canned or Dry Food at the
Town Hall, School, Library or Transfer Station.
We will deliver all donated food to the
Amherst Survival Center and the Franklin Area Survival
Center just before December 25th.
Thank You! The Select Board