

NEWSLETTER

TOWN OF LEVERETT

www.leverett.ma.us

December 2021

Notes From Around Town

- **Hunting Season:** It is deer-hunting season until Dec. 31, 2021. To keep yourself and your pets safe please wear blaze orange. (As ugly as it is.)
- Please, keep your **mailbox** clear of snow. The post office will not deliver your packages if the driver can't easily reach the box.
- **Village Neighbors** is available for some services to folks over 60, including small home repairs with a grant they received for the labor. Contact Village neighbors.org or call 413-345-6894.
- Leverett has a **parking ban:** no parking anywhere on the road or roadsides—anytime during a snow storm.
- If you are elderly and not accustomed to reading the *Newsletter* online and would like a copy dropped off at your house, please call 548-9150. Copies of the Newsletter will be available for pick-up at the Town Hall and Village Co-Op.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINES:

1 February, 1 April, 1 June 2021

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

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 548-9400 for a delivery.

The Select Board has 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 damage from snow removal operations. **The Town is not responsible for damage to mailboxes caused by snow removal operations.**

From the Select Board

A request was presented by Fire Chief Brian Cook to re-start the Junior Firefighters Program for 16–18-year-olds. This program has been used successfully in the past to introduce younger people to the first response discipline, and to identify those who may be interested in becoming more fully engaged with the Leverett Fire Department. Chief Cook also took the opportunity to request the department increase inspection fees, using the difference in receipts to modernize inspections record-keeping. Both requests were approved. We also learned the department received a \$2,000 grant for “wildland” gloves and helmets, a need that may have become apparent during the Joshua Hill fire.

Chief Cook also presented a proposal to combine the current part-time position of Fire Chief and the appointed position of Emergency Management Director, creating a full-time position. (Jim Field has been our EMD for over 20 years, I believe, at the pay rate of \$25 per year, and he has the audacity of stepping down now.) The proposed change would have a budget impact and will be addressed more fully as we develop the budget in preparation for Town Meeting.

The position of Police Sergeant has been reactivated at Chief Minckler's request, and Officer Steve Gould was promoted to Sergeant during the Select Board meeting on November 16. Chief Minckler was presented with two, complimentary circumstances: An increase in policing responsibilities following ratification of the Intermunicipal Agreement with Wendell, and a candidate qualified for the Sergeant position already on the payroll. We congratulate Steve on his promotion! Notable is Sergeant Gould's willingness to work at the Sergeant position with no increase in pay while waiting until funds can be appropriated at Town Meeting this coming spring.

One of our open positions, that of Treasurer, has been filled with the hiring of Ryan Mailloux. Ryan has considerable past and current experience as treasurer of schools and municipalities, including being the current treasurer for Shutesbury. Other positions in town, namely Tax Collector and Conservation Commission Agent, remain unfilled, although prior Collector Dee Ann Civello has offered to fill in temporarily (thank you, Dee Ann).

Details are being finalized on the East Leverett water line project well ahead of the winter season. Aside from the obvious benefit of delivering potable water to all eligible homeowners, we learned from Chief Cook that at least some homeowners in Leverett may qualify for lower insurance rates due to the added fire hydrants along the Amherst water line.

Town resident Ann Ferguson presented for discussion a state bill that supports single payer health care in Massachusetts. Ann presented data that illustrates how such legislation can provide savings for municipalities like Leverett that have a significant health care expense. Equity in health care afforded by and intrinsic to a single payer system also was discussed. Ann proposed the Select Board host an educational forum to present the single payer concept and this bill specifically, and to answer residents' questions. Ann further proposed presenting a resolution at Town Meeting supporting single payer health care legislation.

The Amherst-Pelham Regional School District has just begun annual four-town meetings to discuss the upcoming 2023 district budget. It is very early, and much more will be learned concerning Leverett's financial commitment in the next two months.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP) has been working with the Leverett Board of Health to screen Leverett wells for the presence of PFAS, a plastics derivative and a contaminant in natural aqueous systems worldwide. MA DEP also has been working with the Leverett Conservation Commission on a Notice of Intent to manage invasive weeds in Leverett Pond. Both subjects have been in the popular press recently, and it is recommended readers with questions about either subject address their questions to the respective committees just referenced.

Together with other representatives from the ad hoc North Leverett Sawmill and Dam Committee, Richard Nathhorst formally recommended the town acquire [accept as a gift] the Kirley sawmill and form a private-public nonprofit organization similar in structure and legal framework as the Leverett Municipal Light Plant. The committee has done considerable legwork assessing the condition of the building and dam, investigating insurances to address potential liabilities, and even contacted the state Office of Dam Safety to get their read on liability presented by the dam. The committee has contemplated various uses for the building and dam and currently envision a "living history museum" and possibly even a small hydropower plant to replace (compliment?) the existing dam. It was reiterated that it will be Town Meeting, and not the Select Board,

who ultimately makes the decision to accept or not accept the Kirley's offer. Between now and Town Meeting in April the committee plans to continue to explore use options for the property.

Annual Town Meeting will be held April 30, 2022, barring unforeseen circumstances.

In a joint Finance Committee/Select Board meeting it was decided a 3% budget increase guidance would be sent to town departments ahead of FY23 budget discussions. This, considering current inflation at 5% and a current town tax rate hovering around \$20/\$1,000, and a school budget that must include a \$66K reduction to accommodate a SPED expense from the prior year.

Ending this on a very high note, the Select Board was honored on October 31st to present the Gold Cane award to Hilda Williams, most senior female resident in Leverett. It is impolite to banter people's ages around indiscriminately, so be it known Ms. Williams is old enough to deserve it and young enough to appreciate it. Congratulations, Hilda!

Tom Hankinson, for the Select Board

Leverett's Season of Giving

The Kimball 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.

The Select Board will be **collecting food** at the Town Hall, School, and Library to bring to the Montague Food Pantry. No doubt your generosity will be greatly appreciated.

When your tax bill comes your **voluntary donation** will assist many of our elderly and disabled residents to ease their real estate tax bill. **If every household donated \$5 we would have close to \$4,000 to defray the burden for our qualified residents.** Look for the check-off box on your bill.

Thank you.

PLANNING BOARD

Planning Board has just begun a major project which will carry on for at least 2 years – the creation of a Master Plan for the town. This plan will provide guidance for future development for the next 20-30 years. The town currently has no active Master Plan. The following areas will be covered: livability and affordability; capital and disaster planning with an eye towards climate change; a review of the zoning bylaws and subdivision rules; social and economic equity impacts of regulation and policy;

discussion of whether and how to promote development; assessment of assets, liabilities, and town services in terms of return on investment to best guide budget allocation; and consensus-building on how to address the property tax rate.

We are currently in the process of hiring a professional consulting service with extensive experience in this area to guide the process. The cost for the first year is covered through a grant the town has secured. The Planning Board, in consultation with the Select Board and with the guidance of the consultant, will create a Master Plan Working Group comprising a cross-section of the community to oversee the work. The Planning Board recognizes that the success of the plan hinges on the ability to fully engage the community and is dedicated to doing so.

This plan will reflect the will of the town and all its communities and interest groups as we move forward. Its importance cannot be overstated. We will keep the town in the loop as we put together the Working Group and involve the different boards and committees. We will reach out to the town as we proceed. There will be many opportunities to get involved. Stay tuned.



Scott D. Minckler
Chief of Police

**LEVERETT POLICE
DEPARTMENT**

P.O. Box 300, 95 Montague Road
Leverett, Massachusetts 01054
Phone: (413) 548-4994 ~ Fax: (413) 548-9100

Leverett Police Department would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season. Please drive with care while traveling to and from your holiday destinations. Leverett PD is here to do our part in making sure everyone makes it home safe.

Leverett Police Officer Steve Gould was recently promoted to the rank of Sergeant. Having another supervisor will allow items to be delegated to the Sergeant, freeing up the Chief for other matters. Sergeant Gould will be working evenings during the second half of weeks. Stop by and get to know Sgt. Gould. Congratulations Steve!

The Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA) with Wendell has recently reached one year. There have been few issues, and business is going smoothly. The towns are finishing up on a three-year agreement and a lease for Leverett officers to use the renovated Wendell Police Station as a substation. These items are in the final stages and we hope to have them signed by the New Year.

This time of year we usually see an increase in thefts from unlocked motor vehicles and thefts of packages that have been delivered. Please remember to lock your car doors at night, bring packages inside in a timely manner, and keep an eye out for anything out of the ordinary. Stay vigilant and contact Leverett Police if something looks suspicious.

Once again please enjoy this holiday season with family and friends. Contact Leverett Police for any issues we can help with. Officers will be here to assist you. From all of us at Leverett Police Department, Happy Holidays!

Scott D Minckler, Chief of Police

Tax Relief Committee

Now that we're all bundled up and preparing for another New England winter, The Tax Relief Committee invites all Leverett homeowners and taxpayers to donate, and power up our tax relief fund!

Two easy ways that you can help out:

1. Check the box on your tax bill and scribble in an amount to contribute
2. Send a check, any time of year, to: Treasurer, Town Hall, 9 Montague Road, Leverett MA, 01054 or drop off a check at Town Hall.

In the spring of 2021, tax relief was awarded to six of our community members who applied for assistance. Awards ranged from \$400 to \$900. These awards were smaller than previous years because the tax relief fund received fewer contributions. But we are grateful to everyone who donated, and no amount is too small to matter.

This neighborly support relies almost entirely on your donations. Our current balance is \$1345. We've set a goal of raising an additional \$3000 this year. Want to help us get there?

For those who wish to apply for tax relief, if you are a senior citizen (age 60 plus) or have a disability, and find it challenging to afford your property tax bills, you may contact the Assessor's office at (413) 548-4945 to request an application. If you have previously received tax relief from this fund in the past few years, you should receive an application in the mail.

The Tax Relief Committee reviews applications once a year, in the spring, and makes awards prior to when the second tax bills are due. Award amounts depend on how much \$ is in the tax relief fund. Eligibility requirements

are noted on the application, as there are income and asset limits. The application should be submitted to the Treasurer's office before April 15 of the year that financial assistance is requested. You can also refer to the Town Website under Tax Relief Committee for more helpful information.

Tax Relief Committee

December greetings from the Library!

We hope everyone is staying warm. It's a nice time of year to turn our minds to cozy things like fires, a fragrant new recipe, a good book, and a puzzle. Well, the library can't help with the warm fire, but we have everything else!

Each month this winter, we'll be giving out samples of a new spice for you to try. This month, you can pick up a sample of star anise along with a few suggested recipes such as Star Anise Honey Cookies, Mulled Wine, and Butternut Squash Soup. Join our newsletter for updates on next month's spice and thank you to the Friends of the Leverett Library for supporting this delicious program!

Pull out your ukulele, or borrow one from the library for our final Ukulele Strum-Along of the year on Monday, December 13th. Email the library for the Zoom link. We hope you can join us.

As a service to the community, we are piloting a program to offer PCR Covid Testing kits here at the library. You can pick up a kit during our open hours. You will then return these self-testing kits to one of the drop-off locations at UMass. More information about these kits can be found here:

<https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/coronavirus/covid-19-testing>

Remember, we offer Curbside Pickup by request during our open hours. Email us at leverettlibrary@gmail.com or call us at 413-548-9220 and we'll get your items outside for you.

Jill Palmer has been a familiar face around town and in the library for years. We are so pleased to announce that she has accepted the position of Library Assistant. Sue and I are grateful to have her here, she is a great boon to the community.

Want to stay up to date with all our exciting news? There are more ways to stay in-the-know than ever:

1. Our monthly email newsletter. Sign up here: <https://leverettlibrary.org/p/42/Join-the-Leverett-Library-Mailing-list>
2. A weekly email listing our newest books. Sign up here: <https://wowbrary.org/signup.aspx?l=3286>
3. Follow us on Facebook

Everyone is welcome to stop in to borrow books, movies, magazines, puzzles, and more. There is always something going on at the library. We're here to help!

Warmly, Hannah Paessel, Library Director

FRIENDS OF THE LEVERETT LIBRARY

On October 31, 2021, we held the annual meeting of Friends of the Leverett Library.

Leslie welcomed and presented the slate of officers for the coming year: Leslie Fissette, President; Peggy Brownell, Treasurer; Leah Larkey, Membership Coordinator; Kathy Weller, Secretary. Members-at-large: Carolyn Anderson, Gerry McFarland, Marilyn London-Ewing, and Rich Addelson. There was a motion that the slate be approved as presented; it was accepted unanimously.

Hannah Paessel, our new library director, introduced Julie Anne Collier of Wingmasters, who presented a fascinating outdoor program featuring 6 of her impressive birds. Two of her kestrel portraits are featured on the 2021 Leverett mugs for sale at the library.

The annual Holiday Basket Auction is underway on line until December 14 at 1:00 pm. Themes include art supplies, gardening, jams and jellies, dog toys and treats, birds, Italian dinner, chocolate, coffee/tea, handknit socks plus treats to enjoy by the fire and an unusual mineral collection! Please visit the library website <https://leverettlibrary.org> for pictures, lists of contents and bidding directions. The baskets are now on display at the library.

The Friends of the Library use funds raised through membership, donations, mug sales, used book sales and the basket auction to support library programming. In 2021 we purchased items needed by the library staff to streamline book returns and re-shelving of books. In addition, we purchased storage dollies for the new community room chairs and passes for local attractions. Dawn Marvin Ward is able to maintain the beautiful patio garden with funds from the Friends.

Our annual membership drive is underway for the 2022 calendar year. Please consider joining or renewing your membership, and introduce your neighbors and friends to our wonderful library. Forms are available at the library and on the library website.

We are thankful for your support.

Leverett School Committee

The Leverett School Committee has had a busy fall preparing for upcoming budget discussions. Members of the School Committee work closely with the school principal, Annie Foley-Ruiz, the Union 28 district superintendent, Jennifer Culkeen, and the Union 28 director of finance and operations, Bruce Turner, to put together a budget for Leverett Elementary School each year. Leverett School Committee representatives also attended a 4-town meeting on November 20 with town officials from Amherst, Pelham, Leverett and Shutesbury to discuss the financial constraints and priorities of each town regarding the Amherst-Pelham Regional school budget that funds the Amherst Regional Middle and High Schools. We are in the process of negotiating the next contract with teachers and school staff. We have been discussing Amherst's decision to move their 6th graders to the Amherst Regional Middle school building where space is plentiful to take some pressure off of Amherst's overused elementary school buildings. We held a special meeting with Amherst superintendent Dr. Michael Morris, who answered many school committee and community members' questions about the move. We learned of the many logistics involved regarding Amherst's move of its 6th graders to the ARMS building, including curriculum, staffing, and finances. So far, the Leverett School Committee is continuing to gather information about this issue, and sees no compelling reason to change our existing elementary school model.

We are grateful to the Leverett Elementary School nurse, Leah Hirshberg for helping to organize COVID-19 vaccine clinics at LES in December and January.

The school committee meets the first Monday of each month at 6pm during the school year and all meeting information is posted on the town website.

Jess Rocheleau for the Leverett School Committee

LEVERETT HISTORICAL COMMISSION

EXCITING NEW DIRECTIONS -

The programs on Leverett's industrial history, brought to you in person and on zoom since 2019, have spawned new ideas, among which are "embodied history." This is the history of workers at industries who had unique skills, understanding, and relationship to the machinery they used. Their interpretive signage explains the historic structures across Leverett's landscape.

Embodied history: It is comparatively easy to collect items from nineteenth-century history: people wrote letters, newspapers carried local advertising and

news. Collecting twentieth-century history, many organizations have discovered, is done most readily through oral history programs. But they have a short-shelf life. After 25 years, people start to disappear. The Mass Memories Road Show, for instance, urges communities to collect photos and memories town wide. The Lawrence History Center, as an example, has created extensive documentation of the many workers in its many mills. Examples of early Leverett industry predominantly in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century has insufficiently been collected. Given the availability of informants, it is important to gather their memories now.

Signage program: Historical commissions in many Massachusetts towns host signage programs. Putting up interpretive signs in the landscape is one of the central assignments of the commissions. Engaging residents by creating a uniform and standard signage program is done in many towns ([Stoneham](#), [Norwood](#), [Danvers](#), [Weston](#), [Westford](#), [Dartmouth](#)) are examples.

All around us, Massachusetts communities are marking significant anniversaries, and many are taking the opportunity to pay more attention to their historic landscape by creating new museums, planting trees, or restoring significant buildings. Compared to fifty or a hundred years ago, anniversaries are no longer simple celebrations of the hardy souls who settled each town and the first families who led it. For instance, land was not uninhabited or unused when first encountered by Europeans; colonial settlement meant displacement or cultural merging. In addition, with the advent of the internet, history has come within the reach of most families. A marking of a milestone thus asks us to consider what our specific history was, and what role it plays today. Much of the industrial history of towns like Leverett is written on the landscape that our antecedents walked. The 250th anniversary in Leverett affords the town an opportunity to collectively take stock of its heritage. This project enables such reflection.

The UMass Public History students Charlotte Murtishaw and Emily Whitted have made

tremendous headway in archiving and preserving the paper collections at the Moore's Corner History Museum and will move on to the Field Family Museum. Fantastic photographs, personal diaries and letters have been discovered, digitized and archived, including The Life of Louisa Kimball, an autobiography written in 1877 by Louisa Kimball at the age of 55, describing her early life in Shutesbury and Leverett. It was transcribed and preserved in the 1940s. Louisa grew up poor after her father died, and she and her siblings worked for various families doing odd jobs and labor.

In keeping with the "Sense of Place..." projects, a zoom and site visit were done in October for the Slarrow Sawmill on North Leverett Road. The zoom can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/ovvElvecuWY>.

Please take time to take a look at it.

We hope you will be part of these efforts!

THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Hi Leverett,

Here, at long last, is the YouTube link to the Slarrow Mill Zoom that was sponsored by the Leverett Historical Commission (with funding from you all through the CPA grant) <https://youtu.be/ovvElvecuWY>

As you may know, the current owners have offered the mill and adjoining land to the Town of Leverett. A Selectboard-appointed committee has been looking into recommendations relative to this proposed gift to the town and options for preservation.

Stay tuned!

Eva Gibavic

Leverett Energy Committee

Remember the year residents going through the center of town saw items of personal laundry waving in the breeze from a "clothesline" on the Town Green? A sign suggesting JUST TRY SUN DRY was part of this display. This little spectacle was a committee maneuver to draw attention to the especially high burden of CO2 emissions electric dryers were adding to the atmosphere, accelerating dangerous climate changes. Since then, we've sought other novel ways to direct our collective attention toward Doing the Right Thing about the still-intensifying climate emergency. Here is another: Please go out of your way to watch the most recent David Attenborough gift to us of the awe needed to do even More of the Right Things. His most recent documentary, A LIFE ON OUR PLANET (1 hr., 23 m.), is currently on Netflix.

Some members are experimenting with new ways to engage our community in climate crisis issues. Population

control was/is a big topic but it has been upstaged by the related concept of Out-of-Control Consumerism. Years ago, NPR host Scott Simon narrated an alarming video about a new illness called Affluenza. Still uncomfortably relevant, it documents the piling up of trash...mostly plastic trash, in our landfills. Piled up trash; incinerated trash; trash--mostly plastic--being dumped in our oceans; trash, again mostly plastic, and decorated with little symbols indicating its re-cycling category, but, of late, almost entirely deceptively misleading because approximately 11% of plastic waste we cheerfully think is heading off to be re-cycled actually is re-cycled. The biggest promoters of re-cycling now are fossil fuel companies, that, seeing in front of them the demise of their profits, now look to manufacturing and selling single-use plastic bottles. Recent images of failed recycling efforts such as the plastic "islands" floating around our oceans literally choking sea creatures to death raise questions--the least of which is: do we really need all this stuff? Here is a question for all of you: would you like to see the Energy Committee set up occasions for residents to discuss practical ways to reduce our toxic and inglorious levels of consumption? We will respond to each suggestion, keep a list of people interested, maybe show AFFLUENZA at the library.

Finally, for this last printed version of the town newsletter, here is a practical collection of suggestions for Doing More of the Right Thing. Please remember we are the committee in town devoted to problem-solving that extends beyond our town borders. We need all of you.

A Chart of Single-Use Swaps, compiled from several sources, including Alexandra Case of the Green Dream Foundation.

1 re-usable bag eliminates use of 170 plastic bags;
1 bamboo toothbrush eliminates use of 4 plastic toothbrushes;
1 metal straw eliminates use of 540 plastic straws;
1 cloth towel eliminates use of 7,300 paper towels;
1 re-usable coffee cup eliminates use of 500 plastic and foam coffee cups.

Could these numbers be disputed? Almost certainly. But are they still valuable for Pointing in the Right Direction? We will amend and refine statistics as they become necessary and available.

Meanwhile, we are still your "old" energy committee, working on finding places in town for solar installations, checking out use of heat pumps in our public buildings, keeping track of energy use statistics in town, and making use of our Leverett Energy Committee Alerts to keep everyone informed about what we are up to be why.

Portia Weiskel for the committee

413-548-9737

pweiskel@post.harvard.edu

Community Events

What About Ripped Clothing, Orphan Socks and Other Items Unfit for our Famous Clothing Shed?

At our very own transfer station we have the answer! There is a Salvation Army drop box on the left as you drive in. Why, you might ask, that particular drop box? Not only does the Salvation Army sort items for local resale, but anything that cannot be resold is graded, sorted, and baled to be sold as recycling material for things like rags, auto carpet and under-carpet padding. While sorting, trash and non-recyclables are removed. This treatment addresses the recycling of textiles in much the same way that our other recyclables are dealt with in the Springfield Materials Recycling Facility; locally and responsibly.

You may wonder about the other donation boxes you see around. Looking beyond the gaping slot, as it were, reveals various questionable practices. Planet Aid, for example, has been investigated for misinformation regarding where they send their proceeds. Apparently not Africa or other countries as purported. Most of the funds support a religious organization considered a cult (for more info: nbcwashington.com behind_the_bins). The Red Cross boxes seem legit, but it turns out that a 3rd party runs the operation and shares a mere 10% of the profit back to the Red Cross. Other local concerns make claims of doing good, but....where does it all go? Often to other countries to cope with, along with thousands of trash bags and tons of unknown, unsorted junk.

Bottom line? I'm aware of some Salvation Army beliefs that are uncomfortable for some, but given their responsible practices regarding these materials, I would like to encourage you to put that LONE SHOE, those UNZIPPABLE jackets, that UNRAVELING ugly Christmas sweater into the Salvation Army box. Just remember: NOTHING moldy or damp.

*I remain at your disposal, Annette Herda
Transfer Station Coordinator*

Village Neighbors is available for some services to folks over 60, including small home repairs with a grant they received for the labor. Contact Village neighbors.org or call 413-345-6894.

Annual Holiday Sale and Exhibit. The winter holidays are here!. It is time to think about seasonal activities at Leverett Crafts & Arts (LCA). An exhibit by the LCA studio-holders, Mudpie Potters and area artists and craftspeople, along with the traditional Annual Holiday Sale will take place over the first two weekends of December, 2021. LCA will be open from 10:00AM to 4:00PM on December 4 and noon-4:00PM on December 5; 10:00AM to 4:00PM on December 11 and noon-4:00PM on December 12.

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