Calendar of Events

A complete listing of department, committee, commission, and board meetings is posted on the Town’s website, www.royalston-ma.gov.

Pretty much every social event in town is canceled or postponed due to a need to avoid contact with others during a COVID-19 pandemic. There is no egg hunt, no open mic (and not just because of the elevator), no club suppers, and no town election, for now. Even tax day is postponed. But this will pass, and our job now is to make lemonade out of a bushel of lemons. Ask for help if you need it. Look out for each other at a 6 foot distance, wash hands, consider the health workers, and be at our best (as best we can) in a stressful time.

Neighbors Supporting Neighbors
A small group of Town residents is getting together to plan for a “neighbor to neighbor” network that will provide support to Royalston people who may be quarantined or self-quarantined in the next few months. We need one or two more volunteers to help with the planning, and then as many people as possible who can volunteer to help out by shopping for quarantined people, calling them regularly to check in, or help with whatever other situations may develop. Volunteers will receive a brief training via email so that they can keep themselves and others safe. If you want to be part of this effort, call Carla Rabinowitz at 978-249-4422, or email at Royalstonladiesb@outlook.com. Please leave your name, phone number, and email.

Spring has not been canceled.
Select Board Notes
Christine Long, clerk, Royalston Select Board

Covid-19: Every person in this community has been affected by the worldwide pandemic. As of this writing, no cases of the virus have been confirmed in Royalston, but all of us are impacted by national and state edicts. Last month the Select Board issued a flyer outlining some of the effects here and providing basic information and later issued an update.

Many thanks go to our Police Department, which hand-delivered these flyers throughout town. It is also available on the town website, Royalston-ma.gov, and on our Facebook page, @TownofRoyalston. The board will issue further updates as needed and urges residents to check both Facebook and the town website regularly.

Covid-19 has profoundly affected town government. As you probably know by now, all town offices are closed to the public, though officials remain available by phone or e-mail. Meetings are also closed to the public; see “Royalston Board and Committee Meetings” elsewhere in this newsletter for details on how you can still obtain access to the proceedings.

Our school children are at home, receiving biweekly learning materials from their teachers via e-mail or paper packets, as well as biweekly phone calls.

Also see elsewhere for information on the town election, which has been postponed; a new date has yet to be determined. The likelihood is high that the annual town meeting will also be postponed.

End on a Positive Note – Broadband Design Underway:
On the recommendation of the Broadband Committee, the Select Board on March 24 accepted the final engineering design proposed by BLiNQ Networks of Toronto, Canada. That proposal now goes to our purchasing agent, Westfield Gas & Electric, who will facilitate the process of hiring the construction company. Stay tuned!

Royalston Board and Committee Meetings

In light of the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak, Governor Baker issued an emergency order on March 12 allowing public bodies greater flexibility in the conduct of meetings under the Open Meeting Law. The town of Royalston greatly values the participation of its citizens in the public meeting process, but given the recommendations at both the state and federal levels to limit public gatherings, the Select Board has decided to implement remote participation procedures. This means that:

1. Any or all members of a town board or committee may choose to participate in a public meeting via remote access. Meetings may be virtual in their entirety.
2. The public will not be allowed into board or committee meetings, even where there are even when there are committee members, town staff, or town officials physically present. Public comment portions of meetings may be temporarily suspended.
3. However, the public will be provided with alternative access through which they can watch or listen to meetings in real time. We will probably arrange publicly accessible conference calls for regular meetings and video conference sessions for public hearings. (As now, executive sessions will remain closed to the public.) Where possible we will provide recordings of open meetings on our website.
4. Notices for public hearings will contain information about the public may participate via electronic/technological means.
5. Where individuals have a right or a requirement to attend a public meeting or legal hearing, including executive sessions, they will be provided with information about how to participate remotely.
6. Meeting notices will still be posted at least 48 hours in advance (not counting Saturdays, Sundays, or legal holidays), unless it is an emergency meeting. Minutes will still be taken and later posted.

Join the Community Garden
in South Royalston Village

The South Village Revitalization Committee is pleased to announce that the community garden project is now open to accept plot requests for the garden planned for the empty lot located at 1 School Street (between the store and church in the Village). ALL plots measure 10X10 feet. There are no fees for a plot, just first come first serve. If you would like to make a request, please submit the following information to Kelly Dolan at Cheallach@yahoo.com no later than Friday April 21, 2020:

*Your name (first and last)
*Email and phone number for contact purposes
*Your home address

Those obtaining a plot will be announced/contacted on Monday, April 24th. More information regarding rules will be provided once you have been chosen for a plot. Opening day will be May 1st and clean-out of the garden will be on November 1st. We hope those of you who have very little space to garden but wish to use your green thumb will take advantage of this wonderful community space!
**Town Clerk News**

*Maureen Blasco*

A number of people who registered to vote while at the Registry of Motor Vehicles found that they were not on the voter list last month, when they went to vote at the Royalston primary.

If you have moved to Royalston and have registered in this way, but have not voted yet, please make sure you are on the voter list. Call Barb at the Town Clerk’s office: 978-249-0493. If there is no answer, please leave a message including your name, address, year of birth and phone number. You will be called back.

This is a reminder that dogs can be licensed by mail. Send a check to the Town Clerk, PO Box 127, Royalston MA 01368. Costs: $6 for spayed dogs, $12 for unaltered dogs.

The annual Town Election will be postponed. No date is set as of this moment.

**Cultural Council News**

*Deb Nunes, Secretary*

Since our lives have been turned upside down, there isn’t much news! April: Open Mic cancelled. May: BayouX fundraiser cancelled (partly due to availability of Town Hall and the band’s schedule changing,) but we will reschedule sometime in the fall. We are planning on holding MUSICFEST2020 Sunday July 12, 2020, Noon to 5 pm. Everyone be well.

**Board of Health News**

*Phil Leger, chair person*

Transfer station will remain open during the Covid19 response until further notice. We consider this an essential town service. The reusable area and building will remain closed until further notice. So, please do not bring reusable items to pile outside to clutter and get wet.

Consider buying stickers ahead to minimize contact with workers. Plus the price will be going up to $4, so stock up now. Annual sticker prices are to rise to $75. The RBOH will have a final vote on this at their April 1st meeting. Comments welcome via email at boh@royalston-ma.gov.

Practice social distancing, cover your cough, wash hands, avoid handshakes, hugging etc. Check town website and Facebook page for updates on Covid19.

Our public health nurses and staff across the Commonwealth are working overtime and will continue to do so. Jim Barclay, Emergency Management Director is also working overtime on the response.

Keep an eye on your neighbors, especially seniors. We are a strong community and we will get through this together.

Oh, by the way the ticks are very active.

**The Royalston Energy Committee Needs You**

*Paul Duffin, Chairperson*

The energy committee has a vacant seat that needs to be filled. If you are interested in town policies or interested in better ways we can save the town monies through energy conservation, this committee is for you.

We meet on the first Tuesday of the month at 7 pm usually at the town hall, (but for now, by teleconference). You can express your interest via email at energy@royalston-ma.gov.

**Royalston Emergency Management**

*Director Jim Barclay*

e-mail ema@royalston-ma.gov or phone 978-249-2904

If nothing else, the past month has shown how quickly incorrect information spreads via social media – even quicker than a highly-contagious virus! For accurate information on COVID-19, don’t depend on Facebook, or what you overhear in the grocery store (from your socially-distanced 6’ away, of course), go to www.mass.gov, which has daily updates from the Governor, links to up-to-date stats on spread in Massachusetts, and lots of useful information on how to report symptoms and access medical care without exposing others; even how to access unemployment benefits if you’ve been laid off. For specific information on the disease itself, national and international statistics, go to www.cdc.gov.

For information on schools, go to that school’s official social media site, web page, or call. (Yes - phones are still a valid method of communication.) You can contact the Board of Health or Emergency Management, too; we receive government updates on a daily basis. The Town of Royalston’s Select Board has published a “COVID-19 RESPONSE” resource sheet, which is posted on the Town’s website, and Facebook page. It is also available in hard copy at the Post Office, and Royalston General Store. They should be updating as new information is received. Royalston Police are trying to ensure each household has a copy.

Please, verify your source and ensure it’s the latest information before sharing on social media; the facts about recommendations, school closings, availability of supplies and services are changing frequently – sometimes day-to-day!

**Got brush piles? Burn Permits** are available from the Fire and EMS Department through May 1st. To get the required permit, go to Station #1 (4 Athol Rd) on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Mondays of the month from 7-9 pm. On the day you intend to burn, call the non-emergency number (978-249-8138) and listen to the message to be sure that daily conditions are appropriate for burning. Then leave a message as instructed, including your address and permit number.
Phinehas S. Newton Library News

Kathy Morris, Library Director

Trustees: Jeffrey Mangum, Jennifer Basso, Theresa Quinn

Mondays: 10:00 am- 8:30 pm. Thursdays 1:00pm - 5:00pm and 6:30 - 8:30pm
Saturdays: 9:00 am - 12 noon
978-249-3572 www.royalstonlibrary.org

Library Services During the Pandemic

Kathy Morris, Library Director

Obviously, the Library is closed until further notice, but there are still services. High speed internet can still be accessed by all outside the library. In addition, the Library website and Facebook® page will have links to resources. For instance, there are stories read by celebrities, virtual visits to a multitude of museums and zoos and all sorts of activities. I’m going to post, eventually, some older photos that just never got posted (by me).

Your library card gives you access to eBooks and eAudiobooks as well as all the Statewide Databases. All on-line options are available at mass.gov/libraries. If you don’t have a library card and would like to sign up for one while we are closed, email or call the Library. We will be checking both. When contacting us include your name, address, and phone number and an email address (not required). We will notify you for any further information if we need it and give you your card number and password.

To download eBooks and e-Audiobooks you will need to download ‘Libby.’

From the app store on your device, download the ‘Libby’ app.

Open the app and select a network: Sails Library Network. (This is our primary network, but you can select any of the networks to increase the searchable items.)

Once a Library Network is selected - Tap Sign-in With Your Library Card

Choose MassCat Library Patron
Enter Library card number and password
Tap Enter The Library

You can then browse the collection, checkout materials, and place holds. Borrowed titles appear on your Loans shelf and download to the app automatically so you can read/listen when you’re offline.

The vast Statewide Databases include full-text magazine, newspaper articles, and encyclopedias and Gale One-file. There is a list on the Library website www.royalstonlibrary.org. Some include:

Opposing Viewpoints covers timely issues, such as capital punishment, immigration, or marijuana. This cross-curricular resource supports science, social studies, current events, and language arts classes. Informed, differing views help learners develop critical-thinking skills and draw their own conclusions.

Career Transitions provides guidance and essential activities to both current job seekers and those investigating new career options. Key features include resume and cover letter creation support, interactive interview practice, and tools to match previous work or military experience to potential career paths.

HeritageQuest Online provides access to more than 4.4 billion historical and genealogical records. This essential collection of sources has coverage dating back to the 1700s and can help people both find their ancestors and discover a place’s past.

Science Database is a growing resource of 7.3 million full text articles from over 1600 sources, supporting the needs of students studying applied and general sciences. Researchers will have access to all the charts, diagrams, graphs, tables, photos and other graphical elements so vital to scientific and engineering literature.

Research Companion helps students do more effective scholarly research and supports educators as they teach the core information literacy principles of finding, evaluating, and using information.

Remember, all residents can also register for a Boston Public Library eCard. Just visit www.bpl.org/ecard.

Pandemics have happened before and libraries have come through the other side. I haven’t checked Royalston town reports to see if anything is mentioned about the 1918 influenza epidemic, but Hopkinton Library recently posted that its library was closed for three weeks during that time.

Books Take you Places: If you’d like to sail away from the virus for a bit, Emily Dickinsen wrote, “There is no frigate like a book”. Since we’ve been closed, I’ve been transported from Manhattan to Nice, France (Akin by Emma Donahue), San Diego and Salton Sea, California (The Janes by Louisa Luna), Venice, Italy (Trace Elements by Donna Leon), and am about to head for Wyoming (Long Range by C. J. Box). After that, I need to get some other work done, so I’ll probably switch to non-fiction which I find as engaging but easier to set down than a mystery.

Nature is a Balm: Everyone, get up and get out of the house. Go for a walk; enjoy the fresh air; take in the coming spring before the ticks and black flies are in full force too.

Needed: Favorite Nature Quotes or Short Poems

If you find that you have some time on our hands, sit back, relax, and think up an original short poem or quip or search for that quote you love. Ideally submissions will be short, a couple of sentences from a poem or a short quote. Remember to reference the author and the poem title or the book if that is relevant. Yours could be included on identification markers on a nature walk on the Army Corps of Engineers property. Try to make the saying relevant to the area flora and fauna. For instance, as there are white pine trees, a saying about the whispering pines or the birds who inhabit the trees would be lovely. Submit them by email to royalstonlibrary@gmail.com or regular mail, Phinehas S. Newton Library / PO Box 133.
Thank You:
*to the anonymous donor who funded the library hot spots.
*to the authors of Flash in the Can 2, including Royalston’s Kathy Chencharik and Sharon Harmon, for an enjoyable writers’ gathering.

Winter Book Club in the Time of Corona Virus:
Last Session will be an On-line Adult Read-aloud
On April 5 at 10 a.m., we had planned to continue the theme of books about talking to strangers with the graphic novel, Good Talk by Mira Jacob. Well, there is no way to get the physical book to participants right now, but we could read it together using a video conferencing app. Since this is a graphic novel, we could even read it in parts like a script. Listening in the background without speaking could also be an option. This is an experiment, but if you might be interested in trying, e-mail the library. We will e-mail back the code to join our read aloud session. We will use Zoom, a video conferencing app where you can see the other participants. (You don’t need to download Zoom onto your device to join a session.)

Some of the new materials at your library

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<tr>
<th>Adult Fiction</th>
<th>Adult Non-Fiction</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Bittman, Mark</td>
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<td>Verdick, Elizabeth</td>
<td>Mother Jones and her Army of Mill Children</td>
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<td>White, Dianne</td>
<td>Wright, Ian</td>
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DVDs: A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood (DVD & Bluray), Bombshell, Dark Waters (DVD & Bluray), Frankie, Frozen II (DVD & Bluray), Jojo Rabbit, Knives Out, Midway, Norm of the North, and Spies in Disguise
Historical Society

Peter Kraniaik, president

Little by little, we are improving things at the museum. The contractors have made the building weather tight. We are looking for tradesmen to bid on some new projects:

Restoration of the cove ceiling upstairs
Restoration of the fence around the Bastille #10 The Common

If you are interested in making a bid, please find the specs by visiting the website: royalstonhistorical.org or calling president Peter Kraniaik 978-249-7625 or vice president Stephen Chase 978-249-0358.

Thanks to Steve Boccardy for the donation of a 1857 map of Royalston. Please do visit the museum during the warm months to view our new map or do some research. We are planning an open house once our socializing restrictions are lifted.

History is important for our present and future. Our forebearers affected our lives, and our being here will make a difference for those that come after. History is what we leave to show we were here.

In your imposed downtime, why not engage in geneological research? My own discovery of my great-great grandparents marriage in Poland in 1861 was interesting. Lots of genealogy is available for research generally on-line, using the library data bases, or by getting the local angle through the historical society.

Census: Stand up and Be Counted

While you are home anyway... Remember to go on-line and fill in your census form at https://my2020census.gov. It matters because it determines our number of representatives in Congress as well as federal funding formulas for hospitals and health care, schools, libraries, arts, public safety, roads and more. The census can also be completed by mail or phone. If the government doesn’t hear from you, they will send someone knocking.. eventually. (So, if you fill it on-line now, it will save the government tax dollars that could be spent on other things, like ventilators.)

There is no citizenship question on the census. It does ask how many people live in your house, if you own your home, if you consider yourself Hispanic, and what race you consider yourself. The census is mandated in the US Constitution and has happened every 10 years since 1790.

Media Review

Mary C. Barclay

Read something good lately? Let us know at the RCN. Send your review by the 22nd of the month prior to publication. All ages welcome.

A World Without Work: Technology, Automation and How We Should Respond

by Daniel Susskind; Published 2020 by Metropolitan Books

Completely by accident, this book was one of the most germane selections for a pandemic – a book that addresses what we value, and compensation for that value. Think of the value of, say a stay-at-home parent, and the fact they receive no income for that job – a job that is currently priceless, as schools and daycares are shuttered. Musicians and artists are generally poorly compensated for their products, while athletes can be top income earners – and during this pandemic we are turning TO artists and musicians, and AWAY from athletes. Beginning with the “Manure Crisis of the 1890s” through today’s “task encroachment” and concerns about “technological unemployment,” Susskind tackles the tough subject of technological advancements, and how society adapts to each seemingly impossible change, and how those advancements change what society values. The economist discusses the “misplaced anxiety” that occurs with each variation from the norm, for example, the introduction of self-checkouts in the 2000s elicited an identical response to the introduction of the Spinning Jennies in the 1760s. The 1966, MIT-developed ELIZA early natural learning computer program was originally a poke at psychotherapy, but quickly became an important component of psychotherapy, and during this pandemic, even naysayers are jumping on home office, remote learning, and telehealth bandwagons, despite concerns of putting people out of work. This book is heavy with statistics, charts, and references. It’s very text-bookish. While most definitely not light reading, Susskind’s A World Without Work is fascinating, relevant, and well worth the time.

You Know what Goes Well with Social Distancing?

Pancakes! Call Putneys, Divolls or the LeRays to arrange pick up of fresh, barely out of the trees syrup.
Congratulations and Good News

Graduates and graduates’ families: You did it, but now you are probably not having a graduation. My daughter is in the same situation, so I get it that it feels a bit hollow. Make the RCN your place to strut. Send a photo and a accolade-laden write up, and as much as a little newsletter can, we will make it a big deal. Got other big news or milestones? Let us know. Send them to chasesgos2@gmail.com or drop at the library.

If you cross paths with Chris and Jes Willhite, and they’re grinning even bigger than usual, it’s likely because their sons’ hockey team, The Greenfield Green Wave, won its first ever Divison 3A Western Mass Championship title. Just two days later, March 7th, the Green Wave faced off against Lunenburg/Shirley/Ayer and took the MIAA Division 3A State Championship in the final one and a half minutes of regulation play, with a score of 3-2. Congratulations to Owen (who sadly, had been benched for the season with a knee injury) and AHS Senior Matt both of whose contributions of time, talent, and positivity during their tenure on the team helped lead the Green Wave to victory!

Support the Country Store

The Royalston Country Store, while closed for dining in, is still serving delicious, bargain-priced breakfast, lunch, and dinner specials from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Check their Facebook page for specials. Orders should be called in at 978-249-9798, and it will be ready for pick up when you arrive. Please observe social distancing when picking up your meals. Our continuing support is necessary for this new owner to make it in Royalston!

Country Store Looking for Feedback

Due to the fact that the current COVID-19 situation could continue for a long time, the Royalston South Village Revitalization Committee Sub-committee to help the Royalston Country Store asked proprietors Heather Golding and Rob Sylvester what they are thinking.

Heather said that they have been looking for ways that could be helpful to the community. If there is enough interest and depending on what their new supplier carries, they could carry items that people now go out of town for. They want to know what supplies people would buy.

They would also like feedback on whether town residents are interested in curbside or home delivery of take-out or products. They would like to know what type of meals for take-out you would be interested in buying such as spaghetti dinner, etc.

You can reach the Royalston Country Store at 978-249-9798 or at their Facebook page.

Recipe of the Month

Mary C. Barclay

This comes from Sean Judge’s maternal grandmother. Sean’s mom, a special education teacher for 38 years, used to serve this often, feeding her own family and providing meals for many of her inner-city students. Sean and his bride, Amanda, live at Nine Oaks Farm, which they are carving out of the woods in West Royalston. They have two children still at home, four-year-old Kiowa and six-year-old Danny, who are always happy to see the quick and easy Cherry Valley Special on the supper table. It makes plenty to feed Cassidy, 22, Noah, 21, and Jasmine, 17, when they stop by, too!

Gramma Paula’s Cherry Valley Special

8 potatoes (peeled)
1 ½ - 2 lbs beef (ground or chunks)
2 large onions (cut to your preference)
1 can of corn (niblet or cream)
Seasonings to taste

Boil potatoes then mash. Brown the beef and onions. Remove from heat, drain, collecting drippings to make gravy, if desired. Add the beef and onions to mashed potatoes, with corn. Spoon into a greased 9x13 pan. Top with your favorite casserole topping – Sean often uses a parmesan bacon topping. Broil until topping is crisp. (An even quicker version uses instant mashed potatoes.)
ARRSD Working to Support Families
While School is Closed

All over Massachusetts, schools are closed in order to slow the speed of the spread of the virus Covid19, at least until May 4. During this closure, the Athol Royalston Regional School District is working to stay connected to its families.

To make sure students stay well fed, over 700 bag lunches and breakfasts are delivered via Merrifield bus to bus stops daily. To provide access to fresh foods, each Thursday from 10 - 11 at Athol Community Elementary School, there will be an outdoor market with local produce. Families can pay what they can, and Heywood Hospital will pick up the balance of the cost. SNAP benefits are accepted.

All teachers are posting enrichment work for their students on the district website (www.arrsd.org) and regularly calling families to check in on these families’ needs and wellbeing. Chromebooks have been available for check-out to families for school work, but clearly there are differences in availability of internet service in our area, so paper packets of work can be delivered to families by school bus.

Supports for dealing with the social emotional stress caused by the shutdown are also available. The situation is fluid and changing rapidly. Schools will be reaching out, but if any families have questions about food, school work, or emotional supports, please call your child’s school between 9 - 12 Monday - Thursday or e-mail your teachers or principals.

Stay safe and keep in touch.

What’s Happening at the Village School?
Rise Richardson

With the school closed, teachers are focused on providing home learning. Some K-6th teachers send out lesson plans for the week, some send out a daily plan, all via email. 5th-6th graders have math lessons on Zoom (videochat service) with the classroom teacher. George, the 5th-6th teacher is working with the children on writing the annual play script. It’s much harder than doing the work in the classroom.

Our aim is to bring a sense of normalcy and routine to this sudden change in students’ lives. The staff has an online weekly Zoom meeting to share what’s working, what’s challenging, and to support each other.

Monty Tech
Mary C. Barclay, Royalston Rep., m-barclay@montytech.net

This is an anxious time for most people, who are worried (rightly so) about physical, mental, and financial health, not to mention specific concerns of students losing voc-tech training time and coop jobs, as well as the effects on senior year graduation and beyond. During this stress-filled COVID-19 pandemic, it is especially important that all information comes from reliable sources. If you have any questions about Monty Tech, please get the first-hand answers at our website, montytech.net. There is a prominent link to “Information Regarding COVID-19 School Closure,” with dropdowns for Student and Family FAQs, an updated school calendar, a list of Special Ed. Department resources, several family resources, and supplemental digital resources, as well as general information on Novel Corona Virus Disease-2019. The latest letter sent to all Monty Tech families (in both English and Spanish) is also posted there.

At our Annual Town Meeting (whenever that occurs), Royalston residents will be asked to contribute $86,347 towards the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School’s FY’21 total budget of $28,814,886. Our contribution is comprised of the Required Minimum Contribution of $76,192, plus Transportation/Operating costs of $8,338, and Capital Assessment of $1,817. This is a decrease of $4,306 from FY’20, despite the fact our student population remains at 13.

Monty Tech is proposing a budget that’s just 2.7% above Required Net School Spending. The total budget increase from last year is just 0.19% (one of the lowest increases in the entire state), with the vast majority of the increase not under the control of the School Committee.

There are a few reasons Monty Tech is able to do so much with so modest an increase. First and foremost, the students (under guidance of, and working with faculty and staff) perform a great deal of the maintenance, and make many improvements to the building. The natural result is they tend to take very good care of “their work,” so despite being more than a half-century old, Monty Tech’s main building looks brand new. Students, faculty, and staff, also have added entire new buildings to answer growing demand for career, vocational, and technical education programs. Most recently, students completed their new Veterinary Sciences building – constructed with $2.6 million in donated funds, and in-kind services. Back in 2005, the first class of Masonry students graduated, having constructed (with a great many non-tax dollars, and volunteer assistance from the masonry community) their own building, from the ground up, with assistance from students in drafting, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and cabinetry.

Monty Tech students do lots for our communities, but let’s recognize faculty and staff this time, many of whom spent several days in March conducting an inventory, packing up all of the school’s personal protective equipment (PPE) and driving SEVERAL vehicles of masks, gloves, scrubs, goggles, safety glasses, and respirators to Heywood Hospital, Athol Memorial Hospital, and Fitchburg Board of Health. These items would be sitting unused since the students in the shops that use that gear are “home schooling” for the foreseeable future.

I am now in my 20th year on the School Committee, and delighted to report the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School is one of the finest (in many metrics) in the Commonwealth, has become a model for career, vocational, and technical education across the country, and enjoys this outstanding reputation thanks to dedicated administrators and 22 equally-dedicated School Committee members working together, placing safety and learning above all other considerations.

It is my honor, and great pleasure to serve in this capacity, and I encourage you to support this exceptional education opportunity for Royalston students at the upcoming Annual Town Meeting.
Classifieds

_free:_ File Cabinets: 4, gently used, 4 drawer; 2, a bit more mileage, 5 drawer. Assorted office, desk top trays and dividers. 978-249-3531, please leave message.

Services Available


Piano and Guitar Lessons: Evan Foisy. $20 for a half hour session. Call Evan 978-249-4250, or email evan55@comcast.net


2 matted horse stalls available; round pen, arena, generous turnout, watchful care 24/7. Black Horse Farm is near Birch Hill Dam by horseback. $400 per month. Training or any number of lessons $575 per month. Text Susanne at (978) 424-8580. Current email: cobbsuzanne4@yahoo.com. Stalls available for winter. Thanks!

Laurie Truehart: private wood carving lessons. 978-249-3291.

Graphic digital artist. Websites, print materials - posters, flyers, brochures, business cards, etc... Also photo and slide scanning offered. Barbara 508.364.3339 or brguiney@wildblue.net.

House cleaning. 4 hr - $60.00. Royalston resident. Call Fran: home 249-4596 or cell 978-895-0817.

DTM Landscaping. spring cleanup, snowplowing. Call Theresa Gates 413-336-1850 or David Plourde 413-336-1593

for sale:


Large gym/sport(?) bag exc. cond. Will take offers. Call Gordon Morrison at 978-249-2947.

Fitness Equipment - In good working shape, Lightly used - Bench with weights, $100. Cross-country ski machine, $35. Treadmill (Smooth 5.0P) $400. Call Polly 978-249-5901.

Putney’s Sugarhouse $6.50/half-pint; $10/pint; $18/quart. Jessica Putney Schanz at 978-939-3329 (cell); 978-249-7787; jessputney1989@gmail.com.

Maple Syrup from Divoll’s sugar house. Prices: pints $10, quarts $18, half gallons $30 and gallons $55. Call John 978-894-5109

Sweetwater Sugar House at the LeRays has syrup available. Call 978-249-3464.


Pork Cut Packages available. Variety packs. 10 lbs - $55 20 lbs - $100. Sausage also available for $4/lb breakfast, hot, sweet, and cajun. Call Chet 978-895-6327

Jarvenpaa Farm Eggs. $2.50/dozen. 17 River Rd, So. Royalston. Come by anytime. Cooler at the bottom of the driveway next to road.


Local, raw honey from Squier Davis Farm. One pound jars $8.00. Call Deb/Joe Nunes at 978-249-4000.

Mulch your garden - Fertilize by the load or by the bag from Black Horse Farm (978) 424-8580 or email suzannagaits@gmail.com.

Birch Knoll Farm - Hay for sale, Contact Helen at 978-249-3163 or 774-239-5062


Scholarships Available

Royalston Academy Scholarships: Forms are available through your high school guidance counselor, Royalston Library, or Kristen West c/o Royalston Academy Scholarship Committee, PO Box 35, Royalston, MA 01368.

The Katherine Seymour Bullock Cole Memorial Scholarship (up to $1000) is available to graduating high school resident of Royalston going on to a higher education.

The Judy Jenkins Musco Scholarship is available for Royalston residents interested in pursuing educational activities including college, home schooling, educational travel, and educational and literacy programs.

The Ladies’ Benevolent Society Scholarships are open to all residents (regardless of age or gender) pursuing higher or continuing education opportunities. Forms are available from high school guidance counselors and the Phinehas Newton Library. For more information, contact Theresa Quinn 978-249-3819, theraquinn@aol.com. Deadline for submissions is April 17, 2020.

Chet Hall Memorial Scholarship is open to those who attended ARRSI schools past and present. Applications are with guidance counselors or call Royalston Community School 978-249-2900. Deadline: April 17, 2020.
Garden Notes  March 22, 2020

Congratulations. You now have the opportunity to read five hundred or so words without reference to youknowwhat.

I explored the garden, in earnest, two weeks ago. How could I not? Temperatures were running twenty degrees above normal; the soil, though damp, was not sodden. I set some priorities, but, as is often the case, I had to step back (and back and back) before I was able to step forward. Case in point: the task at hand was to work up some beds (beds that ought to have been worked up last fall). But prior to that task, I was obliged to remove my piles of weeds and spent vegetables to the compost pile. But prior to that, I was obliged to move the remaining compost to compost-ready beds. Most of the work accomplished related not to turning the ground but to kicking the garden into a sense of order. Strawberries were uncovered and delighted I was to discover they had wintered well and commenced new growth. In fact, most everything appeared to have wintered well, a result, I’m sure, of our winterless winter. Garlics, which often dies, did not. The garlics had just emerged, but not enough for me to uncover them. And, surprise, surprise, the spinach survived. Having unsuccessfully coddled them for years with heavy applications of mulch, I did no coddling last fall. Go figure.

Alas, there have been significantly fewer opportunities since then. The temperature is in the mid-20’s as I write, and it is particularly frustrating in light of the fact that the sky is cloudless and the breeze gentle. Seedlings, some, have been started. Onions and leeks are the first on the block, germinated a couple of weeks ago. Nonetheless, it remains an article of faith that these wispy two-inch shoots will evolve into one pound onions in five months’ time. No sign of peppers yet, but celery and parsley have emerged. Other plantings will not occur until early April.

Whatever gardening occurring is occurring in the kitchen, zealously consuming last year’s haul. Stores remain adequate, and, in respect to the onions, more-than-adequate. If a recipe calls for one cup of onions, we will use two. If a recipe calls for no cups of onions, we will use one. Like many of you, there’s often a pot of coffee at the rear of the stove, in case anyone might stop by. (Remember when people used to stop by?) On our stove, the coffee space is shared with a pan of sautéed onions. You never know.

Larry Siegel  March 23, 2020

There is good news and there is bad news. The good news is that I dealt with yesterday’s frustration by heading out to the garden when the temperature ‘soared’ to 35°. Garlies were uncovered, piles were moved, but mostly I just spent a couple of hours where I most wanted to be. The bad news is that it is snowing mightily right now. How confusing.

Lost

On a Saturday in late winter Tom and I headed to Amherst to meet friends for dinner. We were early so, as we approached Downtown Athol, Tom said, “Let’s take a different route” and he steered us off Main Street.

With a left turn here and a right turn there we were soon on a road that was new to me. Houses grew further and further apart. Yards turned into groves which turned into forest. We followed a river and passed old farmhouses and giant barns. With no real sense of where we were I watched out the window with increasing interest. “Are we still in Athol?” I asked, then quickly added, “Don’t tell me! I want to see if I can figure out where we are.” This was an unexpected treat – the pleasure of being lost!

I trace my fondness for being lost to my childhood and countless after-supper rides in the family car. On warm spring evenings, my sister and I, pajama-clad, would pile into the back seat, leaving room for Grandmére and Grandpère, my mother’s parents who lived next door. In the days before seatbelts we crammed four abreast, my sister and I jockeying for the window. My mother sat in front, our youngest sibling in her lap. My father got behind the wheel, turned the key, and we were off.

Most rides began with a quiet conversation in the front seat: “Shall we go past the air field?” “Let’s ride to ‘the cool spot’” “I wonder if the cows are out in Payson’s field.” These were the standard rides on well-known routes. The view from the back seat was familiar and I would settle in.

But then there were the rides when our mother would suddenly say, “Let’s take this road. I want to see where it comes out.” What was she suggesting? A ride to the unknown? This ride was new to me. Nothing was familiar. Were we still in our town or had we passed into an unknown land? Trees, fields and farms passed by the window, but they were not the ones I knew. This was a true adventure! I could hear our parents, calm and curious, taking stock of landmarks and using a sort of primal dead-reckoning. “I think this will bring us out near Parker’s Pond.” “No, this looks more like the old Gleason place.”

I remember once or twice arriving at a dead end, or a dirt road that seemed impassable, and our father would have to turn the car around and find an alternate route. But most often we would reach a point where one of them would say, “Ah! So this is where that road winds up!” and they would stop the car to take it all in, putting the pieces together, widening the map of what they knew. Then, another triumph of exploration completed, our father would turn our car toward home.

These rides into the unknown fed my young spirit. Being all together in our car with our parents in full command was tremendously reassuring. When my family moved to a new town in a new state, getting lost on rides like these helped us claim our new home. It was all unknown territory, but slowly we learned where roads would lead and how everything would, eventually, connect.

Being lost is just a chance to navigate through the unknown with confident curiosity. This is what my parents taught me. As my mother would say, “We aren’t lost. This road will take us somewhere.”

Deb D’Amico
Wildlife Sightings
What's in your backyard? Let us know at the Royalston Community Newsletter.

A evening visitor at the West’s home on South Royalston Rd.

The Royalston Community Newsletter
Friends of the Phinehas S. Newton Library
PO Box 133
Royalston MA 01368

Royalston Resident
Star Route 80
Royalston MA 01368

You Know what Goes Well with Social Distancing?
Fishing!
The Millers River has just been stocked, and the water is high and cold because none is being held back for the canceled River Rat Race. Reportedly, the trout are really biting. Fisherpeople pretty much need to stay six feet from another anyway.

Check out Royalston’s official Facebook page.
Visit us @TownofRoyalston