Calendar of Events

November 1  Sunday
2 a.m.  Time Changes to Eastern Standard Time – FALL BACK one hour.

November 3  Tuesday
Presidential Election
7 a.m.-8 p.m. All precincts vote at Royalston Town Hall. Masks mandatory; distancing practiced; hand sanitizer available

November 11  Wednesday  Veterans’ Day
Post Office, P.S. Newton Library, and schools closed

November 14  Saturday
10 a.m. Virtual Village School Open House on Zoom to learn more about the Village School. Meet teachers, see classrooms, and learn about our admissions process. Saturday November 14 at 10 a.m. Register in advance by emailing rise@villageschoolma.org to save your spot, or fill out the form on the homepage at www.villageschoolma.org Then check your email for a link to access the event.

November 26  Thursday
Thanksgiving – Post Office, schools closed

November 27  Friday
Thanksgiving Break – All schools closed

November 28 and 29  weekend
10 a.m.-4 p.m.  Holiday wreath sale to benefit the Royalston and Athol Historical Societies on the Common

Save the Date

December 4  Friday
6 p.m. South Village Tree Lighting and Gazebo Dedication sponsored by The Royalston South Village Revitalization group. All are welcome. Hot chocolate and cookies. Music provided by Larry Trask and Rene Lake. Memorial ornaments from the Ladies Benevolent Society will be hung on the tree. To get yours, call Laurie Deveneau at 978-249-5807 or visit drive by pie. The 120 Drawing will be held and a special guest in a red suit will visit. In case of inclement weather, the event will be held on the following Friday, December 11.

Drive by Pie!
Saturday, November 21
9:00 am to sell-out
Across from P.O., Royalston Common

Pre-Orders are Best!!

You can also drive buy and purchase what is available that day, but to ensure you get your favorite, pre-order by calling:

Maureen 249-5138
(Please leave name, order and call back number.)

Pumpkin $12
Apple, frozen or fresh $12
Mince $12
Blueberry, frozen or fresh $14
Pecan $16.

Pies available freshly baked or frozen and ready to bake in your own oven!

All proceeds benefit the Scholarship Fund Ladies’ Benevolent Society of Royalston

Holiday Wreath Sale
Sponsored by:
Lorraine Casinghino & Michael Adams-Leibman

All proceeds will be donated to the Athol and Royalston Historical Societies
November 28 & 29
10 am - 4 pm
9 on the Common, Royalston

*Social distancing and masks required insuring everyone a safe and happy holiday season
Select Board Notes
Christine Long, clerk, Royalston Select Board

Brand-New Regime for the WWTP: As of October 15, Royalston is no longer in the business of running a wastewater treatment system. We still have a system, of course, but the full-time department and staff of the town of Athol is now in charge.

A bit of history is in order: In July 2019 we reported on three disasters hitting our system in the space of a few weeks in June: our operator abruptly quit; the state Department of Environmental Protection revealed serious problems throughout the system, primarily with three key pumps that were not operating automatically; and a serious infiltration of groundwater into the system from a couple of possible culprits became evident.

We confronted these problems by the DPW’s identification of a just-retired superintendent of another town’s system who agreed to come on as an operator and consultant, a fall special town meeting securing funding for the necessary capital repairs, and a joint meeting of the Select Board, the Sewer Commission, the Board of Health and the Building Commissioner to deal with the infiltration.

Subsequently, the DPW arranged for two licensed operators from the Athol system to come on board as interim operators, with the consultant continuing his analysis, and the Select Board secured special town meeting and state approval to dissolve the Sewer Commission.

The Select Board, now acting as the Sewer Commission, knew we were still buying time and authorized the DPW to issue a Request for Proposals to find a corporate operator – all the responses received were impossibly expensive. But the board had also been in conversation with Athol over that town’s taking over the system, and this proved fruitful and cost-effective for both towns.

Thus, on October 14 the board entered into an intermunicipal agreement (IMA) with Athol, effective October 15. Athol now operates and cares for both the plant and the pumping stations, responds to alarms, and handles all state and federal reporting. Royalston remains responsible for capital upgrades and maintenance of the feeder system that conveys wastewater to the pumps.

While we did have to ask system users for a rate increase in the fall of 2019, the new agreement requires no additional increase for this year. This spring both towns will analyze how the new arrangement is working to make projections for next year.

Both Royalston and Athol consider this IMA a win-win. It joins three other partnerships – the two-town regional school district and the multi-town regional animal control system and veterans’ services administration, all of which have also proved beneficial to the towns.

Special Town Meeting “in the Barn”: A very brief STM on October 10 found voters receptive to all three proposals: increasing the upper limit on the tax title revolving account, adding funds to that account, and using $15,000 of Community Preservation money to create architectural plans for the Raymond Building and work on other historical features.

The enriched tax title revolving account will allow the treasurer to address a long-standing problem: over $730,000 in unpaid taxes, a backlog flagged by numerous analyses. The augmented fund will allow some cases to be taken to Land Court; eventual settlements will replace the legal fees.

Changes at the Raymond: Residents will have noticed that a new roof almost identical in appearance to the former asbestos roof has been installed and, with the approval of the Historic District Commission, the old chimney is gone – giving the building a much cleaner silhouette. The Building Committee is surveying town employees about office needs and consulting with an architect about how to meet them. We’ll have more to report next month.

RoyalstonNet Broadband & SV Pilot Update
Andy West, Chair & Jon Hardie, IT Dir & Project Lead
Our project is now gathering momentum having approved a final engineering design vendor & project integrator.

1. Andy and Jon are now meeting weekly (virtually), with the Westfield Gas & Electric (WG&E) Team, our Project Manager. WG&E is a municipal utility AND the broadband network project manager & purchasing expert for 22 other Western Mass hill towns. We’re moving quickly from legal review of agreements to developing the step by step Network Engineering Specs, including a Bill of Materials, Statement of Work, and a Master Service Agreement. Then we can quickly move to Building Permits and expedited bidding, building towers, and connecting residents and municipal offices. There are hundreds of details in our $1,400,000 project. We plan to get them right, out of the gate!

2. We’re learning what to do (and what not to do) through collaboration with other successful wireless broadband networks. Our wireless network learning & sharing goes in both directions. Some northern New England towns use the same technology as we use in the South Village, but they want to upgrade to our more advanced LTE. By communicating with other small towns, we can compare projected tower & operating costs with rural - not city costs.

Our town-wide, town-owned, self-sustaining RoyalstonNet Fixed LTE Wireless Network (like our SV Pilot) has one very important component – ours is a not-for-profit system. Subscriber payments, from you, will stay local and pay our local vendors. After expenses are paid, there is a small amount set aside each month for repairs and future technology upgrades, without borrowing or tax increases.

We’re building our network so you can continue to use, access and upgrade to the latest technology in our network every 5-7 years. We want to continue to support & connect with each other: schools, library, home-based businesses, healthcare network, friends and families. RoyalstonNet is not about the technology. It’s about people.

Finally, RoyalstonNet will enable us to co-locate emergency radio antennas on our Fixed LTE wireless towers, for our often-isolated emergency EMS/Fire, Police Deps & DPW Crews. If you have any Questions about the SV Network or RoyalstonNet. Please Call Jon at 978-790-8474 or Email Jon@moonroad.com

Road Work Planned
Roadwork on Doane Hill and Northeast Fitzwilliam Roads will happen November 2,3,4, and 5th. Please plan accordingly for possible delays. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Also, the time is fast approaching that we will be dealing with winter storms. Please take time now to plan for vehicles to be parked off the public road system and out of snow removers way. This is also a great opportunity to secure your mailbox for snow plowing operations. Please remember it is unlawful to push, blow or throw snow or ice into the Public Way. Such a violation can be dealt with by fines and penalties. Thank you for those who cooperate and make our roadways safe.

Keith R. Newton - DPW-Supt.
Tax Taking Process
Brenda Putney, town treasurer
Becky Krause-Hardie, town tax collector

First, a thank you to the town for approving the funds for the tax title process. This is a multi-year process that can be quite expensive.

When a tax bill is not paid, a demand bill is sent to the owner. Additional letters and notices are also sent. When there has been no effort to pay the bill or commit to a payment plan, then a permanent lien is placed on the property. This is called a “Tax Taking”. The tax lien is turned over to the town treasurer and from this step forward, the treasurer’s office manages the process.

If the property value is less than about $23K, then after a 3-6-month waiting period, the town can proceed to foreclose without having to go through an extended legal process. This is done directly with the Dept. of Revenue. Properties that have a higher value must go through the land court process. The town hires its Tax attorney to manage this. They file the paperwork with the Land Court, (filing fee of $515 per parcel). The court has to be convinced that every effort was made to contact owners or heirs prior to approving the foreclosure. Part of the attorney’s job is to track down and notify everyone. This is particularly challenging when someone dies without a will or without a probate process. Once the foreclosure is approved, then the town can take ownership of the property. There is no further recourse for the owner, and homestead filings are meaningless in this case. At this point, the town can decide to keep the property, or auction it off. We can NOT just sell it to someone interested. It has to go through the auction process. Generally, the town will set a minimum bid to cover at least the taxes. Often, the town can recoup not only the taxes, but some or all of the property value. E.g., if a parcel had a value of $150K and taxes were due of $25K, the auction might produce a payment to the town of say $100K. Not only does the town get the taxes paid, but they also receive an additional $75K income.

Another approach is a sale of the tax lien itself. This is like selling the mortgage to another company. The company pays the town the taxes, and then tries to collect from the owner. If the owner doesn’t pay, then the company forecloses on the property. This company can then auction off the property, and all the proceeds go to this company. The advantage to the town in this scenario, is that the town gets the taxes right away, and does not have any of the legal expenses to foreclose. The company that has been looking at our tax title properties, has expressed interest in only a few properties. These are the ones that are most likely to generate the most income when they are sold at auction.

Timeline: Letters have been sent to those in Tax Title hoping to get some payment plans in place, and soon will be beginning work with the attorney to prioritize the parcels to send to land court. That process once begun, will take anywhere up to several years. Next, the tax lien company will be pursued to see if they will move forward on any of the remaining properties. Then the land of low value properties will be filed with the state. That process could be completed within the next 3-6 months.

The treasurer and tax collector encourage owners in tax title, to sell one or more of their properties, if they own several, to preserve their house. That is likely their last recourse, and should be seriously considered as homestead filings don’t apply to tax takings.

Board of Health News
Phil Leger, chair person

The Council on Aging (COA) in partnership with the Royalston Board of Health (RBOH) held a drive through flu clinic on October 14th. Gary Winitzer from COA organized the event and directed the planning. Over 50 flu vaccines were given that day. Folks from the Athol Pharmacy were on hand to supply the vaccines. Judie O’Donnell and her team of nurses from the Wachusett Medical Reserve Corps assisted them in administering the shots. Theresa Quinn and Michelle Deline assisted with registration. Keith Newton, Tom Leray, Gordon Morrison, Michelle Deline, and Philip Leger all assisted in set-up and tear down of pop up tents and signage. RBOH assisted with signage, traffic cones, supplies, and flow of folks through the line. It was a beautiful fall day on the common and folks lined up early. We were able to handle the queue as folks entered from the library end of the common and proceeded towards the church. This flu clinic counted as an Emergency Dispensing Drill (EDS) which the RBOH has been training on for years. If the Covid-19 vaccine is available in the spring, this type of clinic will be considered again. Although the pharmacy ran out of high dose senior vaccine, names were taken and Athol Pharmacy will contact them and make arrangements to administer the vaccine. A big thanks to all that participated and assisted in this event. Still time to get your flu shot. Check with your primary care provider or your local pharmacy.

Although Royalston continues to have very low Covid positives (4 total), surge is happening in MA and beyond. Be safe by wearing your masks when in public, washing your hands and maintaining social distancing. This will be with us into 2021 and the only way this will be defeated is for all of us to do our part regardless of your political leanings. With the holiday season upon us, think about who and where you are going. Many people have been working non-stop to provide essential services and working behind the scenes contact tracing, following up on complaints, and giving guidance to businesses and people. DO YOUR PART, BE SMART, BE SAFE. We can get through this if we all are rowing in the same direction.

Transfer station is prepping for winter operations. Items are being moved and relocated in anticipation of plowing operations. A big thank you to RDPW for cutting back brush and moving old unused trash dumpsters. The Boy Scouts are making a new collection box which will be relocated adjacent to the bottles and cans. And we’re hopeful a new asphalt area will be built adjacent to the trash compactor so we can put the mattress and TV shipping containers off the drive through area. Stay tuned.

With the beautiful weather and hunting season upon us, ticks are still very active. Check yourselves and your pets.

“Welfare checks” are occasionally performed by our police officers, generally at the request of an employer when an employee hasn’t shown for work, or by a family member who has been unable to make contact with their loved one. Late last month, an on-duty police officer was sent to check the welfare of a “regular” at the Royalston General Store, who had not been in for several days. Thank you, to the proprietor Heather, for caring enough to notice, and especially for taking action.
Phinehas S. Newton Library News
Kathy Morris, Library Director
Trustees: Jeffrey Mangum, Jennifer Basso, Theresa Quinn

Pick up times Mondays: 2:00 - 6:00 pm. Thursdays 1:00-3:00 pm. Saturdays: 9:00 am-12 noon
978-249-3572  www.royalstonlibrary.org

Donations to the Friends
Deb D’Amico and Tom Musco
Gordon Morrison
Marguerite LaCroix
Walt Thornton and Nanji Davison
Paul Montero
Grace Belmont
Ginny Moore
Tom Montagno
Phillip Leger and Mariah Mallet
Geoffrey and Diana Newton
Robert Fairchild and Norah Dooley
Virginia Gingras
Chuck and Polly Longsworth
Steve and Cindy Savoy
Ron Hurley
Allen Young
The Village School
Shadow
Phil and Carla Rabinowitz
Joe Liebman and Michael Adams-Liebman
Kate Duffin
Bernie and Philip LeBoeuff
Sara, Mike, and Hailey Dilg

Wowbrary –
Presenting the Library’s Newest Additions
If you haven’t signed up for Wowbrary, I highly recommend it. You will receive weekly email alerts with all the new materials that have been added to the library in the last week. It’s a great way to see what is new and to read reviews of the materials. You can also program it to alert you when your favorite authors have books that have been added. And it’s easy. Just go to www.wowbrary.org, type in Royalston’s zip code (01368), select our library, enter your email and enter. If you don’t receive an email confirmation, and use gmail, check in ‘Promotions’ and your email may be there. If it is, just move it to the inbox and after that the alerts will come to your inbox. It is especially useful during Covid-times when we aren’t open (yet) as you can at least virtually browse the shelves.

The Shield Has Arrived
The front desk is now spanned by a very clear protective shield – so clear that someone tried to reach through it to pick up books…. We still have to rearrange furniture, get some air purifiers in place, and watch the numbers but we’re getting there. In fact, we will be discussing opening on a limited basis at our upcoming Trustee Meeting right after the newsletter has gone to press. So watch the sign boards out front, the website, and Facebook® page. We’ll also leave a message on the phone. And, before we officially open, if you need to use a computer, we will make an appointment for a convenient time for you to use a computer. And don’t forget, we have the three hotspots that we loan for two weeks and there is free internet access 24/7 outside the building. And you can print remotely from your phone or computer as well.

Ann Verrelli Retires
It is with great sadness that we will soon say good-bye to Ann Verrelli as the library custodian but not as a regular library patron. After X years and despite the constant pleading that she not, she has decided it’s time to retire. All of us appreciate the fantastic job she does cleaning. We are all amazed at how much and how competently she can complete the work in two hours. And there is no one who can get the sand out of the rugs in the winter like Ann. She has offered suggestions and improvements to how we do things, is a joy to be around, and has made keeping the library spotless look easy. All of us love coming into the library after she has cleaned. We will greatly miss her, her joyous laugh, and her talents.

Weekly Yoga Class has moved to the lower floor of the First Congregational Church on Tuesdays at 6 pm. The class, currently limited to 10 people, is appropriate for all abilities. Yoga can improve flexibility as well as physical and mental balance.
Custodian Position Available – The Phinehas S. Newton Library is looking for a responsible person to assume the duties of custodian at the library. The position is 2 hours per week and entails vacuuming, mopping, cleaning the bathroom, taking the trash and recycling to the basement, dusting all horizontal spaces, indoor window cleaning when necessary, sweeping the front steps (but not snow shoveling), and various other light tasks. The position pays $14/hour. If you are interested, please contact the library by phone or email.

Holiday Books
We have been weeding the collection and will have many Thanksgiving books for kids and some cookbooks that we will be putting out for people to take and keep. They will be available at the top of the stairs. And don’t forget you can ask for holiday books or any subject and we’ll put together a selection for you to pick up.

Some of the new materials at your library

**Adult Fiction**
- Alam, Rumaan
  - Leave the World Behind
- Banville, John
  - Snow
- Chappel, Anne
  - Shadow of the Hyena
- French, Tana
  - The Searcher
- Grisham, John
  - A Time for Mercy
- Haig, Matt
  - The Midnight Library
- Hilderbrand, Elin
  - Troubles in Paradise
- Hoffman, Alice
  - Magic Lessons
- Johnson, Craig
  - Next to Last Stand
- Kane, Diane
  - Flash in the Can
- Klay, Phil
  - Missionaries
- Koontz, Dean
  - Everywhere
- Lemmie, Asha
  - Fifty Words for Rain
- Maguire, Gregory
  - A Wild Winter Swan
- Mayor, Archer
  - The Orphan’s Guilt
- Paolini, Christopher
  - To Sleep in a Sea of Stars
- Penny, Louise
  - All the Devils are Here
- Robinson, Marilynnne
  - Jack
- Schwab, Victoria
  - The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue
- Sparks, Nicholas
  - The Return
- Ungar, Lisa
  - Confessions on the 7:45
- Walschots, Natalie
  - Hench

**Adult Non-Fiction**
- Cohen, Michael
  - Disloyal, A Memoir
- Garten, Ina
  - Modern Comfort Food
- Laubach, Rene
  - AMC’s Best Day Hikes in the Berkshires
- Reynolds, David
  - Abe
- Rich, Jason
  - My Online Privacy for Seniors
- Seinfeld, Jerry
  - Is This Anything?
- Stanton, Brandon
  - Storey’s Curious Compendium of Practical and Obscure Skills
- Weiner, Tim
  - The Folly and the Glory
- Wolkoff, Stephanie
  - Melania and Me
- Woodward, Bob
  - Rage

**Audiobooks**
- Grisham, John
  - A Time for Mercy

**Children’s Fiction**
- Arnold, Tedd
  - Fly Guy & Fly Girl
- Barrett, Hayley
  - The Tiny Baker
- Copeland, Misty
  - Bunheads
- Cronin, Doreen
  - Click, Clack, Good Night
- Dean, Kim
  - Missionaries
- Gibbs, Stuart
  - Sunflower Lion
- Harris, Chris
  - Spy School Revolution
- Henkes, Kevin
  - The Alphabet’s Alphabet
- Lowry, Lois
  - The Willoughby’s Return
- Parr, Todd
  - The Joyful Book
- Pinkwater, Daniel
  - Adventures of a Dwergish Girl
- Stilton, Geronimo
  - Superstore Surprise
- Timberlake, Amy
  - Skunk and Badger
- Willems, Mo
  - The Wimpy Dragon’s Guide to Good Party Planning
- Woodson, Jacqueline
  - Before the Ever After
- Yolen, Jane
  - I Want to Sleep Under the Stars!

**Children’s Nonfiction**
- Murrie, Matthew
  - The Screaming Hairy Armadillo and 76 Other Animals with Weird, Wild Names
- Murata, Sayaka
  - Earthlings
- Novesky, Amy
  - Girl on a Motorcycle
- Tamaki, Jillian
  - Out Little Kitchen

**DVDs:**
- Deadwater Fell, The Good Fight Season 4, Irresistible
- Killing Eve Season 3, Orange is the New Black Final Season and Outlander Season 5

**Dear Library Patrons, Library Trustees, Friends of the Library, and Kathy,**

Thank you. It was with a sad heart that I had to inform Kathy that I could no longer work my regular Monday night shift in Royalston. I have been lucky enough to have spent 20 years at the Phinehas S. Newton Library learning from one of the best. Kathy has been an amazing mentor and an even better friend. The Trustees, Friends of the Library, and Library patrons have always been extremely supportive and wonderful to work with. The Phinehas S. Newton Library is a true reflection of how wonderful a place Royalston is. Again, thank you.

Keep Reading!  Gina

**Craft Kits Continue**

Thanks to the creativity of Gina Verrelli and Brooke Coleman, we will continue to have weekly seasonal craft kits for kids and sometimes for the family to pick up 24/7 at the top of the stairs.
Historical Society News
To thwart Covid-19, it may make sense to have more of your Thanksgiving feast outdoors this year like the Indigenous people who celebrated the harvest around here for around 20,000 years. Before the Pilgrims “First Thanksgiving”, Indigenous festivals lasted four to seven days or longer. There was harvesting and gathering along with celebrations of thanks featuring music, song, dance, and feasting. Tributes were collected and distributed to the poor in their communities. Long hours were spent collectively repairing homes, preserving food, and generally preparing for the coming winter. Typical “New World” menu items included acorns, beans, birch bark, blackberries, blueberries, cattails, corn, cranberries, fish, grapes, honey, wild meats, milkweed, mints, popcorn, pumpkins, sassafras, squash, nuts, and more. The historical society lacks local Indigenous artifacts in the collection. If you know of any history particular to our town, please pass it on to fill this gap.

Please consider becoming a member of the RHS (annual dues are $25). Send a check to PO Box 23, Royalston MA 01368. To join us, reach out through our Facebook page, our website royalstonhistorical.org, call Stephen Chase, 978-249-0358, Peter Kraniak, 928-249-7625 or email this newsletter.

First Fire
Every year about this time
We light the fire in the woodstove for the first time.
The renewal of an old ritual,
as old as time itself.
Position the wood just so.
Kindling in place,
strike the match.
Match to kindling—
an active hope –
a promise of warmth.

The journey from summer to winter begins like a trip on a New England highway.
Early morning mist rises from the land.
A column of smoke ascends from each chimney.
Farmhouse porches hold a wealth of wood.
Evidence of preparedness,
solid self-reliance,
defense against the coming coldness.

Like Christmas candles,
Or the Hanukkah lamp,
we kindle the light
against the encroaching darkness.
We light the fire in the wood stove
for the first time.

Michael Young
Current Royalston Poet Laureate

Royalston South Village Revitalization News
Update on the Gazebo, Linda Alger, Gazebo Sub-committee Chair
The RSVR Gazebo project is moving along rapidly. Tom Musco and Roland Hamel have put in countless hours on the project. Thanks to the DPW for all of their assistance with the flagpole and bushes removal and excavating. (The flagpole and bushes will be relocated after the gazebo is in place.) Robert Fairchild, a retired master electrician, who is spending his retirement in Town, has volunteered to do the electrical work. Tom Kellner has offered to do the painting. Jay and Jeff Hopkins will be supervising the pouring of the pad and Graves has donated the concrete.

In my conversation with Tom Musco (project manager), a crane and operator have been confirmed and there will be a two day Gazebo raising. In these unprecedented times I couldn’t be prouder of our community. Great things happen when we all work together and this project proves that. Thanks to everyone who has played a part. South Village Tree Lighting and Gazebo Dedication

The gazebo rafters have decorative cuts, an allusion to the Village’s Finnish immigrants.

RSVR 120 Drawing Fundraiser for Village Sign
Maureen Blasco is Chair of the RSVR Holiday Fundraiser, a 120 Drawing—$20 per ticket (1 $500 winner, 1 $200 winner, 2 $100 winners, 3 $50 winners, 5 $20 winners). The drawing will be at the South Royalston Tree Lighting on Dec 4 at 6:00 p.m. If you are interested in selling tickets or buying them, call Maureen at 978-249-5138. We are raising money for a “Welcome to the Village of South Royalston” sign with artwork created by Gordon Morrison through a Royalston Arts Council grant. Gordon is a Royalston resident who is an author and illustrator of nationally known wildlife and plant guidebooks and it is an honor to have his artwork as part of a new sign as people enter our town from the south.

River Clean-up: Todd Neale, Rich Monahan and Marc Poulin pose with some of the debris that was collected along the Millers River at the RSVR River Clean-up on September 26.
Preparedness beats panic every time. Be informed. Make a Plan.

works to obtain state and federal funding to address such issues. And, of course, in some cases, climate change resiliency (think of the number of roads alone)

Deputy Director Tom Musco continues as the point person updating Royalston’s CEMP (Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan), an “all hazards plan developed to address the Commonwealth’s unique natural and human-caused hazards.” It is the basis of most of the grants we have been awarded over the years. We are also working on the MVP (Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness) program, which will help Royalston with the “process of planning for climate change resiliency” (think of the number of roads already subject to flooding... now add global warming, more water, beavers, etc.), and in concert with CEMP, align us with the frameworks to obtain state and federal funding to address such issues.

PREPAREDNESS BEATS PANIC EVERY TIME. BE INFORMED. MAKE A PLAN.

Recipe of the Month

SUNDRIED TOMATO SPINACH SOUP

1 cup heavy cream/half & half
8-10 oz. spinach, chopped
1.5-2 quarts chicken stock
+/- ½ c sundried tomatoes in oil
4 cloves garlic (chopped)
2 medium red onions (chopped)
Cracked black pepper
Rosemary Salt
Olive oil
Big blob of pesto (optional, in addition to, or instead of garlic)
+

Garnish options: fresh basil leaves; croutons

Sweat onions in olive oil until almost clear. Add garlic/pesto, sundried tomatoes, salt and pepper to taste. Add stock and simmer, uncovered, until your stomach starts growling. Add spinach. When cooked through, immersion blend until creamy. Add cream/half & half and blend thoroughly. Garnish.

Marion’s Food Pantry

This food pantry is to reach out to our community. If there is anyone in need or knows of anyone in need or if you would like to help, please contact Debbie Conrad - 978-895-3505.

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What’s Happening at the Village School?
Rise Richardson, director

It’s been a wonderful time to be outdoors. All K-6th children went canoeing on Tully Lake this fall. Preschool is outside all morning. K-6th classes spend a good part of the day in the Tent or the Pavilion, all outside. Recess is in the woods, lawn and field.

All K-6th classes join in the hour-long beautiful Friday afternoon hike on the east portion of the Camp Caravan property, down old cart paths, crossing rivers, through the woods, over gigantic erratic boulders, through the field and back to the school again, making a full circle. Children discovered porcupines, caves, snakes, salamanders and more.

When the bone-chilling days come, we will move inside our new building, which has a well designed ventilation system to keep the air fresh and clean. Everyone wears masks. We are used to it now.

ARRSD - Synchronicity

Until a few days ago, the Athol-Royalston Schools had been teaching remotely and in-person simultaneously according to family preference. Without complaint, students and staff in our schools wore masks, sanitized, and stayed 6 feet apart. There were very few discipline write-ups as kids were committed to following the rules so they could continue to socialize with peers and stay safe.

Worrisomely, at the end of October, there were some cases of students in Athol schools with positive tests for COVID-19. Soon after, the Athol Department of Public Health indicated that a bump of new community-spread cases could affect the school population in the district. Thus, right before Halloween, school moved completely to remote schooling. The situation will continue to be monitored and adjust.

This is a stressful time with challenges to academic success. However, there are supports. No matter which program model ARRSD schooling follows, curriculum that follows the state standards is in place. Daily, students’ social emotional well-being is nurtured. Family outreach is prioritized and virtual office hours are in place for secondary students to get extra help after school. For families with problematic connectivity, the new internet at at Royalston Community School is impressively fast (yay) and can reach the parking lot. The library also has 24 hour wifi. Please contact your child’s tech department or teachers with specific concerns about how to best support your child.

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

Monty Tech continues to monitor state and local data, including rates of Coronavirus positivity, which are beginning to make the (expected) creep upwards as students return to schools, and people spend more time indoors – the Town of Athol and City of Fitchburg are being watched very closely as they have both seen statistically significant upticks in positive COVID-19 test results. Monty Tech employees and students are all adhering to very strict policies and procedures that have been put in place, for example, except when eating, all employees and students are wearing approved face masks from the time they step on the bus/enter school, until they return home; frequently hand-washing/sanitizing; and always distancing. The first COVID-19 positive member of the Monty Tech Community was discovered October 19. With steadfast due diligence (and a fair dose of luck), Monty Tech will be able to continue with the hybrid model until all students can return to school.

Some policy adjustments were accepted at the October School Committee meeting, temporarily modifying the assessment period for 2021-2022 applicants. The interrupted semester will not be used in the assessment, as there is no consistency in how our sending schools accounted for attendance, grading, and discipline. Royalston students wishing to be considered for one of the two freshmen quota seats, or vacated upper class seats, can find the policy adjustments and 2021-2022 Application on the website under the Admissions drop down; complete applications must be in Monty Tech’s possession no later than March 31.

More Coronavirus necessitated changes: Monty Tech’s annual Tour Day was cancelled. With more than 500 students expected, it had “super-spreader event” potential. The 2020-2021 Vocational Interest Program is being “reimagined” in hopes of allowing interested students from Monty Tech’s 18 sending communities to see what the school has to offer for career, technical, and vocational options. The JROTC is exploring pandemic appropriate ways to serve the school and community.

Thanks to a USDA partnership, Monty Tech provides free breakfasts and lunches for all in-person students, and as of October 5, these meal services were expanded to serve students learning remotely, with meals being put up in reusable, insulated bags. Sadly, only 20% of students were registered. MT is hoping to expand the program to include at least some of the 80% of the student population not yet registered.

An FY21 MA Skills Capital Grant of $323,160 was awarded in October, bringing to $1,779,686 the total of Skills Capital Grant money awarded to Monty Tech! Current funds will be used to support the Culinary Arts Program, School Cafeteria, and MT Greenhouse. An application was submitted mid-October for a $10,000 Social-Emotional Learning Grant.

It’s a tough year, to be sure, for each and every student, family, teacher, school employee, school committee member, and community leader, but if we pull together, we will survive, and we will be better for the effort.

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

Services Available


Photography Services: Events, portraits, weddings, horse and dog shows, and commercial photos. Visit www.snowheronstudios.com Call 978-249-8108 or 978-248-9454

Horse Help! You and your horse may find an extra pair of hands, another pair of eyes & experience useful. I can assist at your horse’s home space or my farm, working with your equipment or mine. Book by the day. Call or text Suzanne: (978) 424-8580.

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: cobbzuzanne4@yahoo.com.

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 bbrguiney@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

Support Local Farmers, Artists, Authors, Crafters
Do you live in Royalston and grow, harvest, or make a product, or offer a service suitable for gift giving and/or holiday feasting that you would like to sell? Especially in the Covid times, many would like to shop locally this winter. The newsletter will publish a list of local vendors in the Dec/ Jan issue. If you would like to be included, please send a very brief description of your item and include a contact point so shoppers can follow up to chasegos2@gmail.com by November 22. If you are willing to have your listing published on the town’s FaceBook page, please include a statement to that effect and we will share the information with those administrators.

for sale:


Fresh eggs: $3/dozen, as available, in a cooler at the end of the driveway of Nine Oak Farm, 185 Bliss Hill (north side). Sean & Amanda Judge plan to include duck eggs at a later date.

Custom thermal travel cups by Swank Kreations. Single pieces or sets; totally kool kids’s cups. Last chance for 2020 holiday orders! Krys and Keith Swan at swankkreations@gmail.com.

Fresh eggs and Royalston maple syrup from Putney’s Sugarhouse -$6.50/half-pint; $8/100 ml. glass maple leaf bottle; $10/pint; $18/quart; Eggs $3/dozen. Contact Jessica Putney Schanz at 978-939-3329 (cell); 978-249-7787; jessputney1989@gmail.com.

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

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

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

Fresh Eggs: $3/dozen, are available when the cooler is at the end of the driveway at 185 North Fitzwilliam Road. Contact Brenda Putney at 978-249-7787 to reserve eggs for pick-up.

Jarvenpaa Farm Eggs. $3.00/dozen. 17 River Rd, So. Royalston. Come by anytime. Cooler at the bottom of the driveway next to road.

Local Eggs, (first come, first served) for $3/dozen at the home of Tim and Tracie Wright, 6 Morse Road. Available eggs will be in the cooler by the roadside.


Local, raw honey from Squier Davis Farm. One pound jars $10.00 Cash preferred. Please add self serve on porch (#350 Route 32) or call 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


Dean’s Beans Coffee You can get yours delivered, fresh, once a month to the Village School, whole beans or ground. Around $10/ pound. Find the order form at www.villageschoolma.org and order online. You’ll pick up the coffee in the Village School hallway.
**Garden Notes**

*October 23, 2020*

It has been stated that in the world of sports it is a game of inches. Well, in the world of gardening, it is a game of degrees. That three-day cold snap last month resulted in a frost more far-reaching than I had assumed. I have heard of no other garden in town whose frost-sensitive plants survived. Except ours. Must be a result of right living. At any rate, we’ve hauled out the blankets three more times. Turns out it was unnecessary; uncovered tender plants survived without them. The seven-day forecast suggests that a fourth haul will not be necessary for the foreseeable future.

Anyone wanna come by and pick some basil? Prospect Hill Farm: Royalston’s banana belt.

I get irritated (me, get irritated?) when the weather people report that first frost has ended the growing season. It is obviously reported by weather people who do not garden. Still green, and still growing: carrots, beets, parsnips, leeks, celery, spinach, scallions and nine types of brassicas. They are not only growing, they are thriving, the cool days of autumn more to their liking that the dog days of summer. Perhaps these weather people should step away from their computers long enough to actually walk around a garden.

Preparations of beds for next year continue apace, so much so I’ve completed work I do not normally complete until late November. There are several factors at play. The weather had been more than obliging. (How about that colorful and extended foliage season?) I have more-than-enough time. (Who among us does not?) And the workload has been significantly reduced. Until recently, sixty-nine beds (three or four feet wide, ten to thirty feet long) were occupied. Next year that number will decline to forty-seven, primarily in response to the likelihood that my farmers’ market days have ended, though partly in response to my acknowledgment of early-onset eldersomeness. Of those twenty-two vacant beds, about half have been permanently retired; the remainder ‘resting’ (either laying fallow or cover-cropped), to be rotated back into production in 2022.

Lettuce. Remember lettuce? (C’mon folks, it was but a month ago when I related how I had seeded, cultivated, thinned, transplanted, and watered a fall crop of lettuce.) Individual leaves were harvested in anticipation of a couple dozen fully-mature heads. A deer did not so carefully harvest. Pushing aside the row cover (set out for ‘protection’), it gnawed to nubbins a couple dozen almost fully-matured heads of lettuce. The Bambi from Hell. Oh well, raspberries are in full production (only a month late) and given a choice between a bowl of raspberries and a bowl of lettuce, it is a no-brainer as to which I (or any of you) would select.

**Leaves**

One morning several weeks ago I lingered at the breakfast table finishing my tea. It was late summer, so I was surprised when Tom came in from his morning chores and placed a leaf on the table in front of me. It was a beech leaf and, though summer’s weather lingered, this leaf had already turned a soft orange-gold. Tom’s gift of autumn’s first leaf is a tradition with us, and we share the same conversation year after year: “Wow! It’s beautiful!” “Can you believe it? The leaves are already turning.”

This first leaf of our Royalston autumn brought me back to another autumn 30 years ago. I was living in London at the time where the leaves turn a drab brown before falling, unceremoniously, to the ground. In a phone conversation with my mother I bemoaned the lack of fall color. Within a week a packet arrived from my mother with a note: “I thought you’d like a little bit of New England in your London home.” I unwrapped the packet to find a collection of leaves – maple, birch and beech – carefully protected in bubble wrap, each tinged with the bright colors of a New Hampshire fall. I was touched not just by the leaves themselves but by the image of my mother gathering, choising, pressing, protecting and mailing them off to her daughter an ocean away. I found some thread and attached each one by its stem to a stick I found in the back garden. My mother’s gift hung in my kitchen until each leaf dried and crumbled to dust. On rainy days, when the wind covers our roads with a blanket of wet leaves, I think of my father. Our parents shared the responsibility of teaching each of us to drive. But it was my father who took me out in the most challenging weather. He taught me how to steer myself out of a skid and to dim my headlights in a fog. On wet autumn drives when the roads were slick with fallen leaves he cautioned, “treat those wet leaves like ice!” Now, as I drive our roads, I hear his voice and heed his warning.

We are deep into this year’s autumn now. On still mornings I watch as leaves flutter, one by one, from treetop to forest floor. I think of Robert Frost’s poem, “October”, where he asks the season to come on slowly: “release one leaf at break of day/at noon release another leaf/one from our tree, one far away.” It amuses me to think that the poet may also have been lingering over a cup of tea, gazing out the window at leaves dropping one by one.

And what of Tom’s gift of autumn’s first leaf? It is a memory now. For several days it sat where it was placed, a precious object. We moved it carefully as we set and cleared the table or rummaged through the mail. Over time it dried and curled until it crumbled to pieces. Only then did we sweep it up and return it to our yard. Another leaf, another autumn.
Friends of the Library Notecard Sale

*In time for the holidays, the Friends of the Library are selling folded blank notecards. Local artist Amy Newland created six images for the cards that are available for purchase at the post office, on the artist's website www.amynewland.com, by calling or emailing the Library. You can buy by mail, but include $2.50 for postage for 1 to 3 sets. Cards with envelopes will be sold individually for $2.50 or in sets of six different images for $10.00.*

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

Are you new in town? Welcome!
Just wanted to let you know that all residents are encouraged to make submissions to the Royalston Community Newsletter. We especially love your good news, classifieds, wildlife sightings, ads, recipes, art work and media reviews. The newsletter is put together and funded by the Friends of the Phinehas S. Newton Library and direct mailed to every address in town as well as out-of-town subscribers. There are 10 issues a year. The deadline is always the 22nd of the previous month. Please keep submissions community oriented and brief. Send items to chasegos2@gmail.com or drop in the library dropbox.

Royalston Resident
Star Route 80
Royalston MA 01368

Lose a ring?
This ring from the South Royalston Grammar School class of 1938 was found in the woods and turned into the town administrator. There are identifying initials. We would love to return it to its owner. To claim, please contact Wendy Johnson at Town Hall (978) 249-9641.