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LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

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Landscape architect Peter Flinker facilitates a small-group discussion at Tuesday's event.

A New Regional Elementary School District in the Making?

By JEFF SINGLETON

Should the Leverett and Shutesbury elementary schools join with Amherst and Pelham to form a new regional district? What are the educational and financial implications of such a move? Should the towns create a district for the elementary schools only or join with the existing high school-middle school district that already includes the four towns? On Saturday, Feb. 2 a crowd filled approximately two-thirds of the Amherst Regional Middle School auditorium to hear two reports by consultants hired to address these questions.

regional school district planning board, an entity required by state law for towns that want to study regionalization. Town meetings initially created individual town planning committees and in June, 2012 these joined to create the regional board. The planning board currently includes 12 members, three from each town.

Why are these discussions different? "This time, we are hiring experts..."

Consultant Malcolm J. Reid, who stressed that he was usually called "Mac," began the educational analysis by describing the key issues the process would need to address. These include governance questions (including the composition of a new regional school committee), buildings (community access, owning versus leasing, where elementary students would attend classes), Wednesday afternoon professional development time, the ownership of existing financial software, bidding for regional transportation services, union contracts (including equalizing wages and health plans) and numerous others. Reid also addressed concerns that have driven the current planning process, particularly the reality of declining

The questions are not new. According to materials handed out at the forum, "the towns of Amherst, Pelham, Shutesbury, and Leverett have had official discussions about regionalizing in 1968, 1976, 1992, 2009." So why are these discussions different? In the past, the process relied on volunteers with limited expertise. "This time we are hiring experts in school finance and education to collect data to ascertain the impacts of regionalization for each of the four towns." Funds have been provided by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and a "contingency fund" maintained by the Amherst-Pelham Regional District.

The research and resulting discussion is being coordinated by a

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Turners Falls Residents Weigh In on Downtown Livability

By CHRISTOPHER SAWYER-LAUÇANNO

TURNERS FALLS – About 45 people, most of them residents of Turners Falls, attended the Feb. 5 Downtown Turners Falls Public Planning Workshop on Livability. The public workshop was the culmination of several months of discussion and planning by Walter Ramsay, Montague Town Planner, and a consulting team led by Peter Flinker of Dodson & Flinker from Ashfield, in conjunction with Ted Brovitz of Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates from Boston. The study

is funded by the U.S. Dept of Housing & Urban Development Sustainable Communities Regional Grant Program.

Ramsay kicked off the meeting by explaining that the purpose of the workshop was for those who live in Turners to make their views known on how best to achieve greater "livability" in downtown Turners. He clarified "downtown" as being roughly the commercial sectors of Avenue A and Third Street. Flinker then explained briefly his role – to assess the needs and create a comprehensive plan for moving Turners forward. "As you

all know," he said, "Turners is a great place and we can help you. You've already done so much." He noted that since October the consultants and Ramsay have gathered information on Turners, complete with maps, demographics, measurements, market analyses, photos and interviews with business owners. They have also formed an Advisory Committee consisting of Ramsay, the consulting team, and what he described as "a core group of stakeholders" by which he meant several downtown business owners and res-

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Help These Kids Help a Friend and Have a Great Time



By LEE WICKS

Young people in Montague Center, concerned about a friend's health crises, have organized a benefit variety show. It will be held on Sunday, Feb. 10 at 2 p.m. at the Grange. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children, and all proceeds will be donated to their friend Parker Beauregard, to help with the ongoing costs of his treatment for Type I Diabetes.

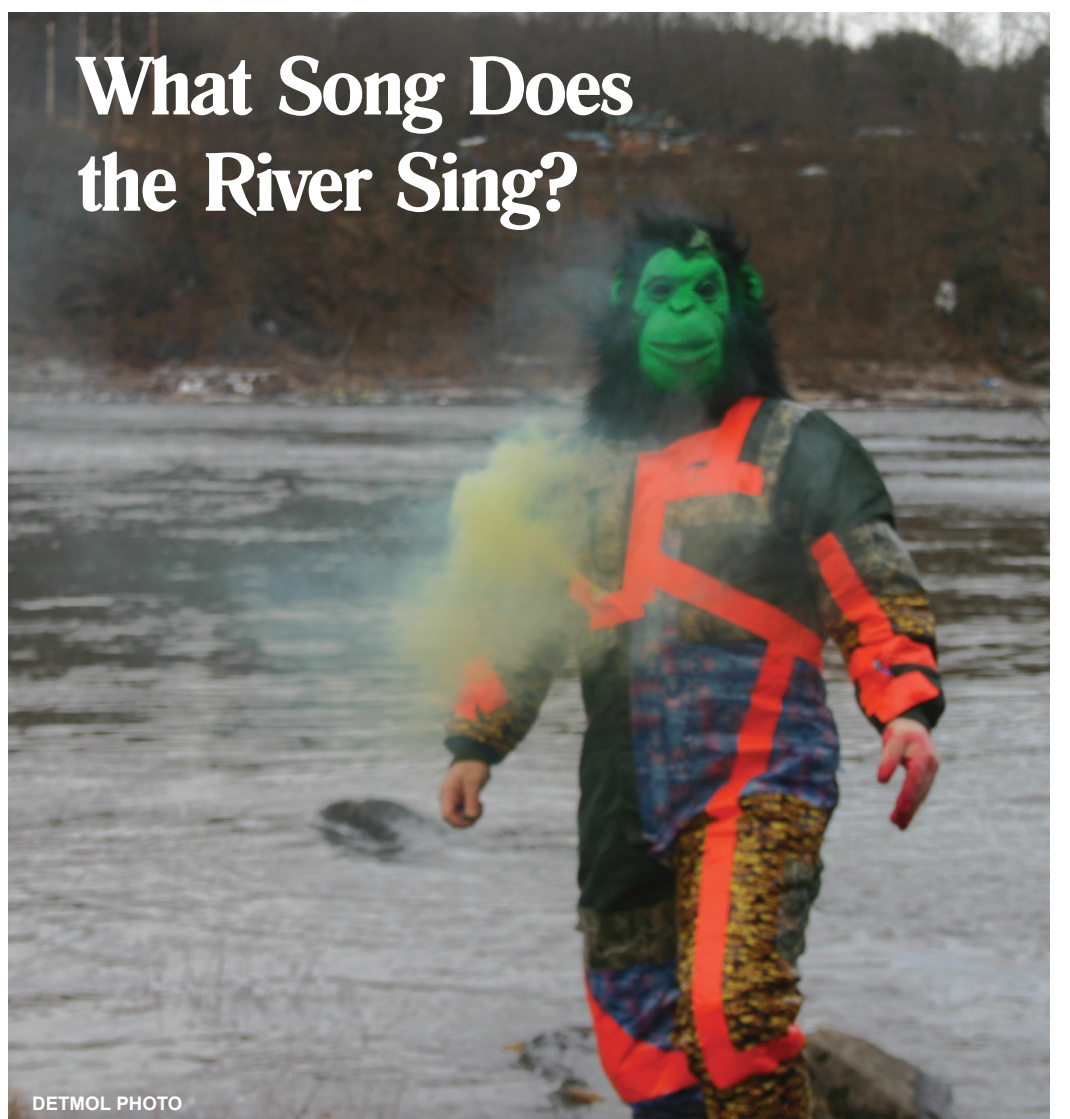
Just days before Halloween, six-year-old Parker Beauregard, who lives in Greenfield, was diagnosed with Type I Diabetes. He'd seemed tired, but this did not worry his parents at first. After all, he'd just started school. He was thirsty when he came home, but again, this did not seem like cause for concern. Then he began wetting his bed, and it was time to see a doctor. "His regular pediatrician couldn't fit him

in that day. He didn't think it was an emergency, but I knew something was very wrong," said Rebecca Beauregard, Parker's mother.

South Deerfield Pediatrics squeezed Parker in, and he ended up spending four hours at the doctor's office undergoing blood and urine tests. He went home with enough insulin to keep his body stable for the night, and spent the following day at

see HELP page 7

What Song Does the River Sing?



DETMOLD PHOTO

Torsten Zenas Burns mugs and billows silently at the Noisecapades.

By DAVID DETMOLD

GREAT FALLS – On Saturday, under freezing conditions but considerably more favorable skies than the inaugural Peskeompskut Noisecapades endured in

2011, over 70 noisicians and friends gathered once again on the far side of the power canal – past the collapsing, ice-encrusted foot bridge, the half-burned timber cross lying in a field beside a derelict brick pump house

from some long forgotten mill, now spraypainted with swastikas and "white power" slogans, down the zigzag path to the frozen bank of the Connecticut, in the shadow of the moribund one-lane see SONG page 12