



TODAY'S QUOTE

"There is nothing wrong with making mistakes. Just don't respond with encores." — Anonymous

TOMORROW'S WEATHER



Chance of thunderstorms
High 86
Low 68

WINNING LOTTERY NUMBERS

MASS. DAILY NUMBERS drawn Tuesday afternoon were:
2-4-6-1
MASS DAILY NUMBERS drawn Tuesday night were:
8-3-8-6
MassCash
1-15-19-26-31
MegaMillions
4-17-24-25-48
Megaball: **34**

LOCAL



Local Happenings
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WHAT'S HAPPENING 'BEYOND OUR BORDERS'
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RMV headed to Foster Street?

CLARK DOUBTFUL OF CHANGE

BY GUS STEEVES
NEWS STAFF WRITER

SOUTHBRIDGE — Despite nearly 6,600 signatures opposing the plan, it looks like the Registry is still moving.

But exactly where is up in the air, possibly depending on the outcome of a Monday meeting in Worcester that included Lt. Gov. Tim Murray, Town Manager Chris Clark, Councilor Laurent McDonald and four state legislators.

"It went good; they heard what we had to say," McDonald said. "The whole thing, like everywhere else now, is money."

During the meeting, McDonald proposed what he thinks could work as a solution, but declined to be specific because it would require Town Council approval. When asked, however, he said it would involve using vacant town property, noting, "We wouldn't have any control over private space."

Clark, however, was more direct. Tuesday morning, he said, he met with a site search person from the Registry and took him on a tour:

"I did show him the water department building as an alternate to the site here in Southbridge," he said, noting the town could offer "a dis-



From left, Lt. Gov. Timothy Murray, Councilor Laurent McDonald and Town Manager Christopher Clark are slated to meet in Worcester Monday with area state legislators about the ultimate destination of the Southbridge RMV office.

counted rent or maybe no rent." The water department vacated its building on Foster Street a few months ago, when all of the public works operations came together in

the new Guelphwood Road facility. Since then, it's been mostly vacant, although part of the basement is

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TIME PASSAGES ...

Close-to-home vacations of yesteryear

BY CHRISTOPHER TANGUAY
NEWS STAFF WRITER

STURBRIDGE — As families continue to struggle in the unstable economy, municipalities everywhere are promoting recreation opportunities close to home, using buzz words like "staycation" and "daycation" to take the place of a good, old fashioned vacation.

For years Sturbridge, too, has relied heavily on the tourist dollars brought in by Old Sturbridge Village (OSV), the town's many restaurants and conventions or events held at places like the Host Hotel and Publick House.

At the turn of the 20th century, before costumed interpreters and a split-lane highway, Sturbridge really made its name as a tourist destination.

What stands today as the Central Mass South Chamber of Commerce office and tourist information center on Route 20, across the street from the entrance to Old Sturbridge Village, was once the home of Charles Tatman, one of the first tourism-minded entrepreneurs in Sturbridge. The home itself was originally located on the other side of Route 20 in the earli-



Christopher Tanguay photo

One of Charles Tatman's guest cabins still stands — sort of — in the woods on the corner of Vinton and Leadmine roads.

er part of the 1900s in what is now a parking lot, but was moved during the creation of OSV.

Along side Tatman's home was a row

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This photograph of a tug-of-war at the Sturbridge Fair, courtesy of the Southbridge Historical Society, appears in Brian Burns' 1988 "Sturbridge: A Pictorial History."

Methane energy plan considered

LANDFILL GAS COULD POSSIBLY BE CONVERTED FOR USE AS FUEL

BY GUS STEEVES
NEWS STAFF WRITER

SOUTHBRIDGE — In the dark Cannery Hall of 12 Crane St. Tuesday, several people shed what they hoped was some light on the issue of using landfill gas to generate energy.

To some present, it's the wave of the future. To others, it still doesn't solve the problem of trash.

And to Jerry Leone, Casella's director of sustainable development, the whole issue is nothing new.

"It's identical [to other places]. I could walk in here and be right back there," he said afterward. "People are concerned, uninformed and need to be given the facts that this has been done elsewhere successfully."

He was basically a last-minute addition to a planned talk by Kelly Fagan of Shaw Environmental, a firm that serves as the regional U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) contractor for the Landfill Methane Outreach Program (LMOP). Presented by the Future of Southbridge group, Fagan briefly summarized some elements of the LMOP, but noted she couldn't answer certain questions because she's not actually a spokesman for EPA.

Under the LMOP, she said, EPA is trying to "reduce methane emissions" by promoting landfill gas-to-energy (LGE) projects and "to get peers together to exchange ideas."

Methane is one of several components of the gas landfills emit as their trash decomposes, but how much of that gas it comprises varies by the nature of the trash, water content and other factors. Present in our atmosphere in very small quantities naturally, it's one of the most effective greenhouse gases, having about 25 times the heat-trapping potential of carbon dioxide (some sources say slightly less, others much more, depending on how it's calculated), and is also the predominant component of natural gas used to fuel homes.

Fagan noted landfills are the second largest manmade source of methane; number one is agriculture, especially cows, sheep and goats. In landfills, the gas forms under warm, moist, anaerobic conditions because of the action of various microbes. Oxygen kills those microbes and prevents the gas buildup, but typical landfills control it by vacuuming the gases to a central point and either flaring it off or burning it for energy.

Today, she said, there are 496 operating LGE plants nationwide plus 525 "candidate projects," including Southbridge. If all of them created such plants, Fagan claimed they'd create enough power for about 700,000 homes or to equal driving 9.2

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Kelly Fagan

Brimfield takes no action to halt lawsuit

BY CHRISTOPHER TANGUAY
NEWS STAFF WRITER

BRIMFIELD — The town clerk's statement proved to be prophetic.

At a Special Town Meeting (STM) in June, called to order just before the second half of the Annual Town Meeting (ATM), Town Clerk Pamela Beall cautioned against rescheduling the STM to a

later date to discuss a proposed bylaw change that would significantly impact the standing of a lawsuit in which the town is currently involved.

Beall said reconvening the meeting for the article, which was tabled during that June session, would be a waste of time because the article would probably never make it off the table.

She was right.

At the continuation of the June STM on Tuesday, July 28, the voters of Brimfield immediately defeated the first motion, which was to take the proposed bylaw change off the table, possibly marking the shortest Town Meeting in Brimfield history.

The bylaw, as explained by Jonathan Silverstein,

Brimfield's town counsel, would change the way the emergency fees for flea market owner/operators is calculated.

"Currently, it's figured by the number of vendors per field, per day," Silverstein explained at the June meeting when the topic was first broached at a Town Meeting.

On Tuesday, July 21,

Selectmen Diane Panaccione and Thomas Marino met with the owner/operators of the flea market to discuss a possible resolution to the lawsuit. The action was brought against the town by the May family, by way of amending the proposed bylaw change that would be satisfactory to

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Area officials hope to inspire change at RMV

RMV

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leased to one of the businesses run by Center of Hope.

"I think he was pleased that the site made a lot of sense, but was non-committal," Clark said.

Later, however, he added, "We gave them a viable alternative, but I was basically told in a nice way that it's still going [to Charlton]."

To McDonald, almost anywhere would be better

than the site the Registry has been considering — the empty visitor center at the eastbound Mass Pike rest area in Charlton. He said the state would have to "spend about \$1 million on the outside of that building" to make it usable, including extending a walkway and making it handicapped-accessible, adding signs because it crosses a truck lane, rerouting a McDonald's drive-through lane, road painting, signs in the lot itself and on Route

20 and other changes.

"It's a totally asinine proposal [to move there], but you can't get it through her head," McDonald said, referring to state Registrar Rachel Kaprielian. "She thinks it's the best thing since popcorn."

Kaprielian has argued the move is necessary to save money, is safe, and has been "signed off on" by Mass Highway, the Turnpike Authority and the state police. Last week, she said going to the Pike site would-

n't cost the Registry anything because it's already owned by a sister agency and the various necessary work could be done by other state agencies within the Executive Office of Transportation.

State Sen. Steven Brewer, D-Barre, was one of the Worcester participants, as were Sen. Richard Moore, and Reps. Geraldo Alicea and Anne Gobi. Brewer said he didn't "think the Pike was a reasonable solution," and, even though he repre-

sents the town, believes going there "is not any net benefit for the people of Charlton."

"If there's a viable location in Southbridge — and I stress viable: access, parking and safe — let's look at it," he said.

Describing the existence of a Registry branch in Southbridge as "particularly critical," Brewer said he even uses it, despite living nearly an hour away.

"It's less insane than Worcester, and less insane

than Springfield," he added.

At this point, he noted, the process is essentially in the state administration's hands, since the Registry is an executive department outside legislative control. But "we'll continue to make noise," he promised. Similar noise recently prompted the Registry to change its mind on closing a branch in New Bedford.

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Brimfield flea market vendor fee issue still tabled

BRIMFIELD

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the other people involved with the market.

The primary concern voiced by a number of people at the meeting, according to an unofficial transcription of the minutes, was the fact that as attendance at shows goes down and the emergency services fees have not. Many of the owner/operators suggested tying the emergency services fee into the general vendor's fee due from each person.

Edward Neal, the attorney representing the May family, said following the meeting on Tuesday that

some concessions had been made in the proposed bylaw, such as widening the window of time owner/operators have to report their occupancy to the town prior to each session, and using a notarized letter rather than an actual surveyor to monitor lot occupancy — all of which would have a direct effect on the way the fees owned by the owner/operators are calculated.

Neal said acceptance of the article with the amendment to the proposed bylaw, "very well could have solved all issues we had as issues."

"All that the Mays have ever wanted was consistent,

period," Neal said. "That's all they ever wanted."

There was some confusion running around Tuesday's STM, as some people in the crowd thought a conversation between Neal and Silverstein in which they were to settle on amicable amendments to the proposal may not have happened, and were unfortunately not willing to risk the issue going to a vote simply to find out.

To further complicate the issue, voters received a handout from the Bylaw Committee when walking through the door, urging Selectmen to, "consider repealing all flea market

bylaws which would more appropriately be handled as licensing rules and regulations."

"Our flea market bylaws are rigid and unresponsive to the changing business environment, health and safety matters, and are overly administrative in nature," the handout continued.

Following the STM, Silverstein explained passage of the article, "would have resolved one lawsuit and it would have given us breathing room on other recent issues."

Those other recent issues being another lawsuit brought against the town by several owner/operators

who are also crying foul regarding the fees charged for the flea market.

Neal said his next course of action following the outcome of the meeting would be to contact the scheduling clerk in Hampden County Superior Court to arrange a trial date.

"The town will spend money on a trial it didn't have to spend if this had been adopted," Silverstein said. Just how much the town will spend, he could not speculate, saying, "There are so many variables."

Panaccione said she was surprised that the motion to take the issue off the table was so vehemently opposed.

"I thought it would be open for discussion because they put forth some changes," she said.

Selectman Stephen Flishman was not.

"I had the feeling when I saw all the people," he said.

"This article was a proposal by the other party to settle the lawsuit," Flishman continued. "There were some changes, however, no one's going to know what they are because it didn't get to that."

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Residents mull over plan to convert landfill gas

ENERGY

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million miles.

Those numbers aside, however, some are skeptical. Some audience members raised concerns about the technology's ability to actually prevent various gases from escaping, how communities can balance efforts to recycle or compost with the fact some of those materials are methane's sources, the long-term safety of landfill liners, and whether the plants can operate at lower methane concentrations, among other issues.

Regarding the first of these, Fagan said LGE plants have "much lower" mercury and sulfur dioxide emissions than other kinds of power plants and can treat the gas for other components such as hydrogen sulfide, but noted the gases get burned either way. For specific gases or byproducts, she referred people to the EPA itself, however.

Audience member John Pulawski seemed particularly interested in the gas issue, wondering how the system deals with gases of various densities

(methane and hydrogen sulfide, specifically).

"When they come out of the landfill, they're mixed together and appear to me to react together," Casella's local director John Schwalbe said.

Earlier, he'd said the landfill's structure of layers enables them to "know how much [gas] is coming and where it's coming," adding the state emissions restrictions are the same whether they're flaring it or using it for energy production. The firm's daily tests are sensitive to "find a molecule of [escaping] methane, and we haven't found any," Schwalbe claimed.

Online, however, some sources claim that's not possible. One is a lengthy 2007 statement by Peter Anderson of Wisconsin's Center for a Competitive Waste Industry to the California Air Resource Board. Anderson argues, "there are no field measurements of the efficiency of landfill gas collection systems" and claims industry and EPA figures do not take into account the long periods such gas would have to be captured. Instead of the 75 percent capture figure commonly cited, which he claims applies only to the year

being tested under the best of conditions, he argues landfill systems typically collect just 28.5 percent of the gases released over the course of a century.

"[Until] now, conventional wisdom has considered EPA's assumption of a high collection efficiency rate to be correct, efforts at reducing [greenhouse gases] in the U.S. have focused on recovering the energy value in that methane," he wrote. "... The more appropriate response by the European Union, which is being followed in the Bay Area [of California], is to divert the source of the problem — the organics — from landfills in the first place."

Fagan agreed that organic materials are the main methane source. She couldn't really answer the recycling/reduction conflict that appears to raise, other than to note "you can't divert everything" and therefore might as well use the methane there for energy.

Fagan talked a bit about several LGE projects and their side features, such as greenhouses, royalties to participating communities and jobs. Leone did likewise, encouraging people to contact those communities for their reactions.

Afterward, he observed that some organic materials (such as plastics) aren't allowed in landfills anyway, and compost-

ing has its own issues. Addressing waste reduction overall would actually require dealing with "a slew" of social issues much larger than Southbridge. Today, he said, recycling rates are "flat if not going the other way [down]" because of the economy, lack of incentives and poor motivation.

"Waste is a problem that's inherent in all of our communities. Nobody can say they don't contribute to it," Leone said, adding that "very few people wonder where it went" after they discard it.

"People should be [motivated] just by wanting to do the right thing for the generations to come," Leone added, observing third parties like Casella or the government can help, encourage and educate but "can't recycle for them."

Regarding liner safety, Sturbridge resident Sarah Goodwin said she's concerned the landfill "is not monitored as well after the landfill is closed" and could cause other problems. How, she asked, would the company protect water and other concerns long into the future?

Schwalbe admitted there's no way to predict events for certain, but said the liners of clay and high-density polyethylene plastic are "highly engineered" to last for centuries. The trash, by contrast "breaks down faster," he said.

A quick Internet search for "lifespan of HDPE landfill liners" turns up only two sites. EnviroConSystems.com states it depends on the environmental conditions, but, "In buried applications such as a solid waste landfill, the life expectancy can be up to 200 years."

"HDPE has high tensile strength along with good chemical resistance and offers very reliable containment," it states. "... Exposure to high tempera-

tures, certain chemicals, constant loads and adverse site conditions shorten the life of the liner."

A detailed study of the influences on its lifespan at sciencedirect.com, however, found a "large variation depending on the specific HDPE geo-membrane product, exposure conditions, and most importantly, the magnitude and duration of the peak liner temperature." It reported a "service life ... estimated to be between 20 and 3,300 years," with the high end representing a maximum temperature of 37 degrees Celsius and the low end being 60 degrees and immersion in "synthetic leachate."

Schwalbe claimed, however, they're reinforced by clay layers that last virtually forever. Failure of the plastic "in a relatively short time" (meaning a few centuries) would essentially shut down several key industries, he observed.

"Long before that," he predicted, we'll develop technology to use what's still in the landfills and thereby remove it."

Regarding the concern about what methane concentrations will work, Fagan said they aim for more than 50 percent, but current technology can produce energy at lower levels. Leone and Schwalbe agreed, with Leone saying the Clinton, N.Y., landfill runs at 38 percent to 45 percent methane. Schwalbe noted landfills take a while to produce enough methane to be viable energy sources, but "Southbridge is already there."

FOS organizer Denise Clemence said one of the group's foci is on safety of Southbridge.

"I live here and I'm not selling out my children," she said, adding she hopes the group can help "bridge those questions" and others.

Schwalbe agreed, offering his phone number to attendees for questions and even inviting the community to arrange a landfill tour.

Gateway Players holds auditions

SOUTHBRIDGE — Gateway Players Theatre, Inc. will hold auditions for the Craig Lucas dark comedy, "Reckless," at 6 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 2 in the Gateway Arts Barn, 111 Main St., Southbridge. Men and women are needed for a variety of character roles Auditions will consist of cold readings from the script. Some cast will be playing 2-3 different roles, and some characters will need to use sign language.

Show dates are Fridays and Saturdays Oct. 23, 24, 30, and 31. Erin Morin is directing, with Lou-Ellen Corkum as producer, and Mike Dupuis as stage manager.

Gateway Players Theatre is in its 34th season and is located on the grounds of the historic Quinebaug Valley Center for the Arts and Humanities (The Arts Center). For more information, call Gateway at 508-764-4531 or go to the website, www.gatewayplayers.org.

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