

LETTERS

Why are seniors 'second class citizens' at the senior center?

Dan Olshansky's Sept. 26 letter, "Senior Center brass should talk instead of order," was a very timely statement of the current situation at the Northampton Senior Center.

After five months out of town, I returned to the Senior Center in August to find exercise classes dwindled to less than half their former size, features of interest to seniors removed from the now sterile lobby, and such senior groups as bridge players, book club and music group being interfered with, always to their disadvantage and without explanation from the administrators.

It seems that the seniors, many of whom have been coming to — and contributing to — the center for years, have suddenly become "second class citizens" in their own place. Why?

JONA HAMMER
Easthampton

Shortcomings of the Climate March in Northampton

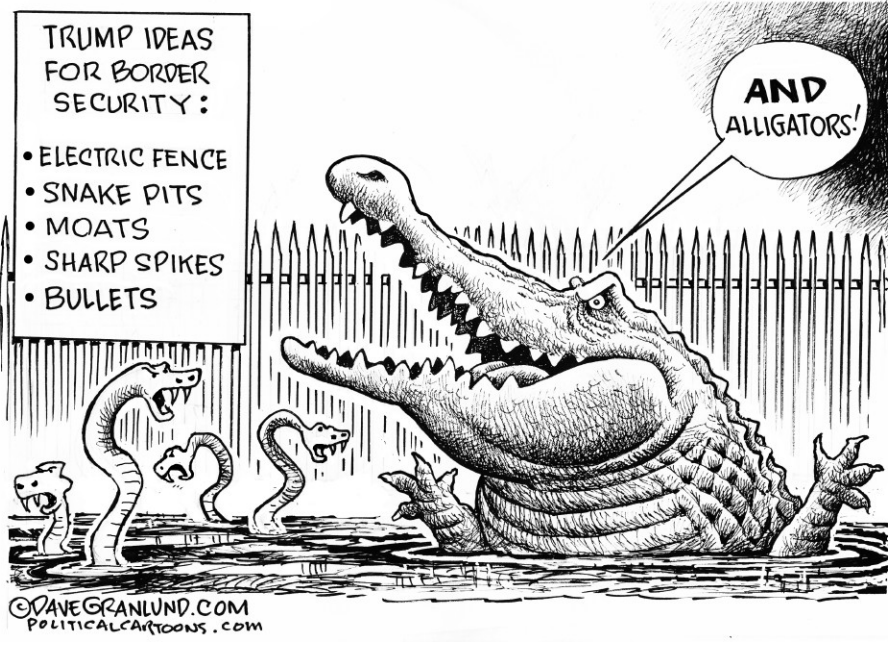
I'm a big fan on Greta Thunberg and of the Fridays for Future movement that she started. Caring about the environment is important for the sake of other living creatures and most of all for ourselves.

I could not travel to Boston for the Sept. 20 climate strike, so left work early to attend the rally in downtown Northampton. Sad to say it seemed to have been co-opted by a number of left-wing speakers who wanted to promote their own causes and diluted the focus of the march. I heard a lot of ranting against capitalists and not a lot of words about what we collectively need to change.

It was dominated by politicians, rather than the youth who are supposed to be the leaders of the movement. The most relevant speech was that of a middle school student who brought forth as interesting information the amount of carbon dioxide generated from burning one gallon of gas. The unasked question is how much CO2 was generated by those at the rally who drove to Northampton today?

We are all guilty of contributing to climate change and I include myself in that observation. I don't have much love for the fossil fuel corporations, but if we stopped buying their products they would go out of business very quickly!

The phrase "carbon tax" was mentioned a couple of times at the rally, but not described further. A carbon tax is a real world solution designed to influence the



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behavior of all of us who consume fossil fuels and to help encourage a decrease in their consumption.

I would encourage the readers of this letter to acquaint themselves with the Benson bill, which has been proposed in the Massachusetts Legislature by Jennifer Benson. It would place a fee on carbon at the point of production, would return some of the fees collected to individual households and retain a portion to fund new green energy projects.

A bill like this would help us take action toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reaching the goals that have been set by the Climate Strike movement.

ANN VAN DYKE
Montague

Climate change is all our faults; let's solve the problem

Over 400 folks marched up to Northampton City Hall on Sept. 20 to hear speakers rail against fossil fuel, corporations and legislators. Some speakers suggested climate change was not our fault, that we were victims of corporate greed and corrupt politics. Really? You and I had nothing to do with it. Really?

After we sang, clapped and cheered, most of us walked back to fossil-fueled vehicles and turned the key, sending pollution and poisons into the atmosphere. We then returned to homes with fossil fuel electricity and heating. My question is, how are we (you) not guilty, and more importantly, what are (we) you going to do to stop climate change and prevent our ex-

inction?

Let's start with things you know all of us can do right now as individuals. Here are a few easy ones. Trade your car for an electric car. The Chevy Bolt has a 230-plus mile range, as do many other electric vehicle choices, which is more than the average 40 miles per day most of us need.

Next, you will want to fuel your car and home with solar electricity. Talk to local solar installers about low- to no-cost options, or look for community solar projects.

Don't forget your home. Start with a free energy audit, increase insulation and replace your fossil fuel heating/cooling with heat pumps. Not vegan? Consider replacing meat with a vegetable/pasta choices several times a week.

Look, just because we are guilty of contributing to climate change does not mean we can't challenge our politicians and corporations to do their part! Yes, tell state legislators to end utility renewable energy caps, and cap fossil fuel instead, and that it is time for carbon tax.

Tell the state Senate to release the Green Works legislation stuck in committee! Tell both chambers to fund electric vehicle incentives that expired Oct. 1. And most importantly, end all state and federal incentives to fossil fuels!

As Thunberg says, this is an emergency, we need to stop believing in fairy tales that doing nothing is an option. I believe in you. Please don't say you feel helpless, or solutions are too expensive. You know the alternative and do you really believe that is acceptable?

So when I see you at the next rally, march or meeting I want to hear all about your success to change your future.

CHRISTOPHER SMITH
Hatfield

COLUMN

'Whose planet? Our planet'

I stood on the steps of Northampton City Hall on a late Friday afternoon with friends and organizers of the Climate Emergency March for Social Justice.

We watched the broad line of marchers — young and old, various races and ethnicities, male and female, straight and gay — emerge from under the railroad bridge and march down Main Street. For the longest, we couldn't see the

end.

"Hey-hey! Ho-ho! Fossil fuels have got to go!" "Whose planet? Our planet!" echoed from our historic downtown buildings. Unlike the crowd, for a moment I

was silent with pride, gratitude and hope. There was a movement coming our way.

Chances are fair that you were in that crowd of a thousand or more, or took one of the 15 youth-led buses to Boston, or joined the hundreds gathered at the noon rally at Pulaski Park. Or you stood out in Greenfield or Springfield. If so, I thank you for responding to the call for the Global Climate Strike.

Four million people around the world demanded on Sept. 20 that our governments declare a climate emergency and act on it to put an end to burning fossil fuels in a just economic transition. The upsurge didn't come out of nowhere. The drumbeat of the marchers recalled the steady drumbeat of evidence that global temperatures are rising, glaciers and sea ice are melting, powerful storms and fires are destroying whole communities and the complicated web of species interdependence is unraveling due to environmental and climate destruction.

In May, carbon dioxide levels hit 415 parts per million, a level last approached 3 million years ago.

July was the hottest month ever reported since records of global temperatures began.

Then a study of North American birds showed a decline of 3 billion, or 29% of the total population in recent decades.

Last week, 2019 Arctic sea ice minimum was reported as tied for the second lowest in history, after that of 2012.

The sea ice report augmented the most recent extensive report by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the oceans and frozen parts of the world (cryosphere). Like sea ice, glaciers are shrinking worldwide. Oceans have absorbed 90% of the excess global heat and a quarter of the carbon dioxide our burning has produced.

The result is a warmer and more acidic ocean inca-

pable of supporting many of the species — especially shellfish and coral reefs — on which humanity depends. The changes themselves will provoke a lowering of oxygen levels in the ocean, further harming its ecosystems.

And just this morning I heard on public radio that Hurricane Lorenzo, which slammed the Azores on Wednesday, is the strongest hurricane ever to hit so far north and east in the At-

lantic, provoked by those warmed ocean waters referred to by the IPCC.

This is the physics that those Sept. 20 climate strikers were

tackling as they marched toward City Hall. But these threatening natural phenomena were set upon our world in great part by fossil fuel industry greed. Exxon knew long ago that its products were toxic to life on earth, but it and its allied corporations, investors and politicians covered up.

Now we are faced with the consequences and our movement, which has the potential to cross most political lines, must do everything it can to save a future for our children and our planet's species.

"We will only be able to keep global warming to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels if we effect unprecedented transitions in all aspects of society, including energy, land and ecosystems, urban and infrastructure as well as industry," said Debra Roberts, co-chair of IPCC Working Group II. "The ambitious climate policies and emissions reductions required to deliver the Paris Agreement will also protect the ocean and cryosphere — and ultimately sustain all life on Earth."

On Sept. 20, we glimpsed the movement that will fight to do it, and it gave us all heart. But the next steps are harder: That movement must grow exponentially in the coming months and years and it must work effectively at all political levels to implement policies that massively cut emissions, support and expand our natural defenses, including all our forests, while protecting, benefiting and empowering those who are most at risk from the effects of climate change — young people, poor people, working people, indigenous communities and people of color.

Whose planet? Our planet.

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MARTY NATHAN

COLUMN

What's good in newspapers, what needs to change

By ROBERT WEINER
and ZACHARY FILTZ

The American newspaper industry has struggled and evolved significantly in the last several decades. The Daily Hampshire Gazette is no exception to this, and has been one of the valuable small town papers that has stood the test of time during its existence.

As many papers have closed as a result of the changes to the industry, the Gazette has made it, especially during the nearly 40 years of leadership of now-retired editor and publisher Jim Foudy. Established in 1786, the Gazette provides an excellent source of all things Hampshire County and is truly a national model for all smaller papers to follow.

The newspaper industry had shrunk by 462 papers from 1970 to 2016, dropping from 1,748 dailies to 1,248, according to Statista. That is a 26 percent decrease.

With so many fewer newspapers, one might think that the American newspaper is doomed to die a slow death. Those who think that are not thinking about a reasonable alternative — the newspaper needs to continue to adapt to changes in culture.

According to the Pew Research Center, in 2017, advertising revenues for the newspaper industry were \$14.5 billion, while revenues for circulation was \$11 billion. Digital advertising accounted for an average of 35 percent of newspaper advertising revenue for publicly-traded news organizations.

People are also looking at newspapers online in smaller increments per day. The average time per day of people visiting newspapers on the web was only 2.3 minutes for the fourth quarter of 2018. That number was down 15 percent from the same quarter in 2017.

People are getting more news from blogs and other internet sources than newspapers. A survey in an article by PR News Wire found that more than half of teens (54%) get news at least a few times a week from social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter and 50% get news from YouTube.

In terms of recent data, Pew also calculated that estimated total U.S. daily

news print and digital circulation combined was 28.6 million readers for daily and 30.8 million for Sunday, which were down 8 percent and 9 percent, respectively, from 2017.

The newspaper industry as a whole is struggling, but not necessarily for the three largest papers in the U.S. Data reported to the Alliance for Audited Media reports that from 2017 to 2018, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal posted 27 percent and 23 percent increases in digital circulation, respectively. So some bigs are getting bigger — at the expense of small papers.

While the news takes the form of several different applications, the printed newspaper has taken the hardest hit of all of these applications. The website Editor and Publisher shows how some newspapers have found ways to cope and even turn the trend around into increasing circulation, community involvement and revenue.

The Register-Guard of Eugene, Oregon, decided to use a different approach to take on a difficult problem: using editorial articles to expose and study homelessness. Longer in length, the paper published 50 articles through the course of one year.

"Local government officials and people who work for agencies that work with the homeless population often told us

they were pleased that the newspaper was examining the issue and that it gave them information they did not have before," Register-Guard editorial page editor Jackman Wilson said.

The homelessness series concluded with a registration-required public forum. The forum included 170 in attendance, with more than 20 people speaking.

Newspapers currently do have some things going for them. Take the Daily Hampshire Gazette, for example. The paper features active sports and opinion sections. Opinion pages generally have a "letters to the editor" section, as does the Gazette. Taking the time to read opinion articles — known as "op-eds" — enlighten the reader's mind, especially if it's on unfamiliar subjects. In turn, the reader of the op-ed will be exposed to a well-reasoned solution to some type of local or state problem.

A newspaper feeding its readers same-old, same-old can only stomach so much of it for so long. What about introducing a more visual way of telling a story? A new focus on video journalism could bring some much needed assistance to an otherwise bland industry.

Another idea is to give the humble town newspaper a department for investigative work. Give the audience who craves serious, in-depth investigative work something to chew on. Finally, using the editorial type of article yields more strengths than many newsrooms realize for readership, especially on pressing, local issues.

The newspaper industry has two paths it can pursue. One is the continued, status quo of spiraling downward and cutting costs. The other is pursuing innovation in video, re-invigorating investigative work the editorial style article, and other innovations each paper can uniquely create. It's an essential decision that is up to America's newspaper publishers to decide the fate of such an important industry.

Robert Weiner, a former Amherst resident and political activist, was a Clinton and Bush White House spokesman, among other politicians. Zachary Filtz is a senior policy analyst for Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions for Change.



Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg, center, takes part in the Climate Strike, Sept. 20, in New York.