

Speaker takes no credit for Senate try

By DON EBELING

State House Speaker Thomas McGee, D-Lynn, has been having his problems lately in the leadership fight with his former majority leader, George Keverian, D-Everett.

McGee has denied charges that he is urging Democrats and Republicans to run

People and politics

against incumbent House members, who are Keverian supporters, in the upcoming primary and election.

Last week, McGee introduced Elliot L. Richardson, a Republican U.S. Senatorial candidate, to the House membership. The speaker told the House; "The chair would point out one thing — the speaker did not recruit the gentleman for United States Senate."

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State Rep. Robert L. Howarth, R-Springfield, will kick off his re-election campaign Thursday from 5 to 7 p.m. on the third floor of 12 Pynchon Place in downtown Springfield with a \$100-a-head fund-raiser.

Tickets are available from Catherine Labine of Wilbraham and David Panaia of Chicopee, and at the door.

Howarth has no primary opposition, but faces a general election challenge from Springfield Democrat Robert Collamore.

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Joseph A. O'Keefe has been reappointed state fire marshal by Gov. Michael S. Dukakis.

O'Keefe was the state's first full-time professional fire marshal, initially appointed in 1977.

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David Bartley of Holyoke, one of six Democratic candidates for U.S. Senate, has signed on Ray Strother of Washington and Joel Singer of Boston for his media team.

Strother, who is the media director for U.S. Sen. Gary Hart's presidential campaign, also worked on the successful 1982 gubernatorial campaign of Connecticut's Democratic Gov. Bill O'Neill.

Incidentally, the Bartley campaign has moved its Boston headquarters from 18 Tremont St. to the third floor of 5 Doane St., the former quarters for U.S. Rep. Edward Markey, who has dropped out of the Senate race. At the same address, on the sixth floor, is the office of Lt. Gov. John F. Kerry, another U.S. Senatorial candidate.

One of the Bartley staffers observed, "We see each other all the time."

By the way, Bartley will be the guest speaker at Friday's 12:15 p.m. meeting of the Springfield Rotary Club at the Marriott Hotel.

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Seizures of property owned by tax evaders and delinquents are continuing by the state Department of Revenue.

Revenue Commissioner Ira Jackson said tax collections of \$3.76 million have been made in the first 10 months of this fiscal year as a result of the seizure program.

Recent seizures were made of a tractor-trailer in Monson, owned by Lawrence Table; the Adams Berkshire Inn in Adams; a trailer with equipment owned by Carolina Industrial Equipment Co. of South Carolina at a Chicopee motel; and Carney's Restaurant in Turners Falls.

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Gov. Michael S. Dukakis will speak to more than 1,000 participants, including many Western Massachusetts residents, Wednesday at the second annual Governor's Conference on Aging at Worcester State College.

Other keynoters will be Tish Sommers, founder of the Older Woman's League and Displaced Homemakers Movement; Anna Brown, head of the National Council on Aging and director of the Cleveland Department on Aging; and Frank Manning, president of the Massachusetts Association of Older Americans.

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Vice chairman of the Massachusetts Federation of Young Republicans for the next two years will be William Clark Jr., chairman of the Hampden County Young Republicans.

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Honorary college degrees were awarded this past weekend to Western Massachusetts' two congressmen.

U.S. Rep. Silvio O. Conte, R-Pittsfield, was honored by Lesley College in Cambridge on Saturday and U.S. Rep. Edward P. Boland, D-Springfield, received a degree from Stonehill College in Boston on Sunday.

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Karen Smith of Springfield has completed the public-private sector training program sponsored by the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency. The program was designed to increase job opportunities for minorities in the field of property management.

Mount Hope Farm court hearing canceled

By JOHN HITCHCOCK
Union bureau chief

WILLIAMSTOWN — Williams College Treasurer William S. Reed said Tuesday that this morning's scheduled court hearing on the college's attempts to regain title to the 1,000-acre Mount Hope Farm has been canceled.

"We learned today that August Mansker has filed for financial reorganization under Chapter 11 of the Federal Bankruptcy Laws," Reed said.

Mansker, now of Macon, Mo., bought the former Rockefeller family estate from Williams in 1978 for \$850,000.

Reed said that Mansker and his former wife, Pamela E. Pierce, were notified last week of the college's intention to foreclose on the college-held mortgage with about \$300,000 remaining to be paid.

The step taken by Mansker, who could

not be reached for comment Tuesday, would put control of the Green River Road estate in the hands of the Bankruptcy Court pending its final decision.

Reed said it would be impossible to comment further on the situation until official notification is received of the bankruptcy proceedings.

"We want to protect Mount Hope and see that it is properly maintained," said the Williams treasurer.

He said the property has great potential for future use, but nothing could be done until the Bankruptcy Court makes a final decision.

When Mansker and his wife bought the estate, they were operating a chain of health clubs established by his wife in several western states. During divorce proceedings in 1981, a second mortgage for \$900,000 was taken on the property as part

of the settlement. There is reportedly some \$640,000 to be paid on that mortgage, although Mrs. Pierce is not foreclosing on the property, according to Mansker's attorney, James Stedronsky of Winsted, Conn. Stedronsky also declined to elaborate on the situation.

Both Mansker and his former wife were said to be in Williamstown over the weekend to discuss the matter, but neither could be reached for comment.

In recent years, Mansker had shifted his business efforts toward videotape courses on losing weight and on becoming financially successful.

He continued to maintain the estate with a skeleton staff. He had earlier said that it cost about \$300,000 a year for maintenance.

A group of Williams alumni, The Purple Mountain Partnership, offered Mansker

\$1.2 million for Mount Hope last December, but Mansker complained that the Williams group was attempting to bypass him by dealing with his former wife.

Mansker then was offered \$2 million by Carley Capital Development Group of Madison, Wis., but that deal also fell through.

The property was put on the market this winter for \$2.5 million, but there were no reports of any buyers.

Williams bought the estate from Lenox Hill Hospital in 1963 for \$600,000 after the hospital was left the property by Alma Rockefeller Prentice, who died in 1962.

Mrs. Prentice and her late husband, Col. E. Parmalee Prentice, acquired several farms in the late 1920s and built the 72-room Elm Tree House in 1928.

Williams considered several uses for the estate, but decided to sell to Mansker instead.



Photo by David Vallette

Dockside and the offshore moorings remain empty of boats at the YMCA marina at Pontoosuc Lake in Pittsfield. Lower water levels in the lake, dictated by leaks and a potential safety problem in the lake dam, have left the boat area unusable because of insufficient water.

Rise in lake water level approved by commission

By DAVID A. VALLETTE
Union staff

PITTSFIELD — Pontoosuc Lake dam is not in danger of breaking up, so while repairs may be needed, replacement is not, Dean P. Amidon, the state Department of Public Works' chief Western District Highway Engineer, told the Berkshire County commissioners Tuesday.

As a result of Amidon's assessment, and that of private engineer John Cysz who was hired by the commissioners to decide a course of repairs, the commissioners decided that the water level of the lake can now be allowed to approach more normal levels, easing problems for recreational users.

"I think the dam is not in too bad a shape...I don't think it's ever going to go anywhere," Amidon concluded.

The worst that could happen is that the stones of the dam continue to loosen and fall out, but that would not affect structural integrity, the state engineer said. He said no "immediate" problem exists.

Cysz and Amidon, after talks with John Hanon, director of the state Division of Waterways, also said funds are readily available for the repairs of the dam, and the county should proceed in procuring them through the division.

Under the preliminary plans developed from Tuesday's conference, the lake's water level, now down 18 inches from the top of the dam, will be allowed to rise about a foot, keeping it just below the cap of the dam where officials believe the interior problems lie. The extra foot will allow boaters to navigate safely again in the generally shallow lake.

The repairs, pending receipt of funding from the state, would then be handled in the fall after the recreational season. The water level would have to go down about four more feet to allow work on the structure, according to Cysz.

Still to be determined is whether a full replacement of the dam is in order on the long term.

"It might not be necessary," Amidon said, calling for the county to seek the assistance of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to take core samples of the dam interior before deciding the dam's future.

Amidon said that a proposal from the commissioners and from Mayor Charles L. Smith to build a new dam and a new bridge on Hancock Road in tandem, would require funding the DPW cannot supply. The bridge, just a few feet south of the dam, is scheduled to be replaced as part of the reconstruction of Route 7, and Smith and the commissioners feel if the dam needs replacement, both tasks could be handled at one site at the same time.

Cysz said that along with the apparent structural problems with the dam, replacement would make sense because the present dam has an inadequate spillway capacity.

Cysz and Robert Saulnier, chief county surveyor who for years has kept tabs on the water level of the dam, indicate that much may be learned by removing the cement cap of the dam, revealing the status of the dam's interior.

Saulnier said that work done in 1981 to shore up the dam, which involved use of a special compound to seal the structure, apparently did not "take." Instead of a solid, the material became "jello-like," samples have shown.

"I think if we took the cap off we would be surprised at what we see down there," Saulnier said.

Cysz said the county should also erect scaffolding along the dry side of the dam and dig into the structure to see just how soft it is and determine if more stones are about to be lost. Several stones have already fallen away from the dry-side surface.

Council backs citizens' vote over jai alai

By SANDRA CONSTANTINE
Union correspondent

NORTH ADAMS — The North Adams City Council Tuesday night unanimously approved putting the jai alai question before city voters as part of a special June 26 referendum.

The vote was in response to a recent proposal by City Councilor Robert M. Cramer asking endorsement of a proposed jai alai fronton-civic center.

The council has already approved the holding of a special referendum June 26 to seek approval to exempt more than \$1 million in road repair appropriations from the tax-limiting structures of Proposition 2½.

The controversial jai alai issue drew only about 10 minutes discussion Tuesday, with support expressed by Clark H. Billings, a former councilor who seeks the State Representative's seat now held by Frank N. Costa, D-Adams. The only negative note came from City Councilor George A. Champagne, who said, although he would vote to let citizens consider the issue on a referendum, he will personally vote against the fronton on the referendum ballot.

Speaking from prepared notes, Billings accused Costa of being "unwilling to exercise his public responsibility" by suggesting recently that the issue be put before the entire county.

"It would make no sense taking the question to that level if North Adams voters don't approve," Billings said.

The former councilor, a North

Adams State College history professor, praised the non-binding referendum question as being "the proper mechanism to test public opinion on the issue."

"Because economic recovery has failed to arrive in the Berkshires, Billings suggested that the area needs to develop tourism by cultivating the 'kind of repeat visitors' a fronton would draw."

"It would at least guarantee the success of the North Adams Inn and the Adams Berkshire Inn," Billings said, referring to the only hotels in North Adams and Adams. Both hotels are now closed for financial reasons.

Touting the fronton as a better tourist draw than the Western Gateway Urban Heritage Park State Park (now under construction in North Adams), the Natural Bridge and the long-stalled Greylock Glen Resort in Adams, Billings even ventured that it might encourage the completion of Greylock Glen, without the long-sought gambling casino.

"It certainly won't hurt us as much as doing nothing for ourselves," Billings said.

"If we don't have legislative action, it is useless to pursue it," said Pittsfield businessman Del P. Virgilio, who-told the council that he is still interested in building a fronton in North Adams.

Two years ago Virgilio also told councilors that he was interested in building a fronton. Cramer was an enthusiastic supporter.

Although North Adams favored the project, the legislature failed to approve its legalization.

Sensitive detectors causing false alarms

PITTSFIELD — As many as six false fire alarms per day have resulted from trigger-happy smoke detectors installed at the fire-threat-sensitive Berkshire County House of Correction, authorities said Tuesday.

Sheriff Carmen C. Massimiano said he has put in for \$1,000 to replace the present "products of combustion" smoke detectors at the jail which have "caused us trouble."

"They have produced as many as six false alarms per day when humidity and atmospheric condi-

tions trigger the detectors," the sheriff said.

To correct the problem, Massimiano intends to install low-voltage photoelectric detectors at the jail. The \$1,000 would pay for the 18 new detectors and no new wiring would be necessary.

In asking the Berkshire County Commission for quick budget action, the sheriff said the detectors "should be installed as soon as possible, before weather conditions change," referring to the looming high-humidity season.

Adams, Lenox to share state sewer grants

By GLENN A. BRIERE
Statehouse bureau chief

BOSTON — Two Berkshire County communities are among 12 cities and towns which will share more than \$1 million in state grants to study potential upgrading and repair of their sewer systems.

The grants, announced Tuesday by state Department of Environmental Quality Engineering Commissioner Anthony D. Cortese, include \$74,635 for Adams and \$36,590 for Lenox.

Adams will put up a local share of \$8,293 while Lenox will pay \$4,066.

The Adams grant will finance an overlook at the Adams sewage disposal system. Although there is a modern waste water disposal plant, the old sewer mains leak badly, with additional ground water entering the system.

The study will also look into the amounts and types of chemical wastes entering the system from the variety of industries in the town.

In Lenox, the same problem of infiltrating ground water will be studied. The 15-year-old Lenox disposal plant is fairly efficient, but the ancient lines admit vast quantities of water, which must be

processed.

According to DEQE, the majority of the grants are designed to address infiltration and inflow problems, a situation that occurs when uncontaminated surface and ground water enter a sewer system from leaking sewer pipes, interconnections of storm drainage systems and illegal connections from private residences.

The agency said this excess flow is taxing the capacity of many sewer systems, particularly in metropolitan Boston.

A bill is pending before the Legislature which would provide more than \$100 million to communities to rehabilitate and

remove excess water from local sewer systems. Like the grants announced Tuesday, the legislation would provide state funding of up to 90 percent for the local projects.

According to DEQE, problems associated with infiltration and inflow include basement flooding and sewer backups, health and environmental problems caused by overflows of sewage, restriction of growth and industrial expansion due to restrictions on additions to existing sewer systems, and the expensive replacement or expansion of sewer facilities.