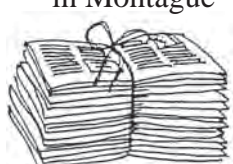


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## GUEST EDITORIAL

It Was Called *Women and Life on Earth*

By ANNA GYORGY

**WENDELL** – Forty years ago this month, 600 women came together at UMass on the vernal equinox weekend, the start of spring 1980. The event was called *Women and Life on Earth: a conference on eco-feminism in the 1980s*. They gathered as women active in different movements – for peace, safe energy, sustainable agriculture, women’s and community health – under the newly articulated concept of ecological feminism.

Later this month, 40 years later, women will meet in this key election year to discuss action plans for 2020, recalling the earlier event and asking: How can we work together for the changes needed in the coming decade? For the health of our home communities – and of the planet?

March 28, 2020 is another anniversary: 41 years after the meltdown at the Three Mile Island reactor near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. That accident brought sudden awareness of nuclear dangers, and a rapid shift in public opinion. This was the case in Franklin County, where years of opposition to twin nuclear reactors planned for the Montague Plains suddenly made sense.

It was after the 1979 accident at Three Mile Island that 12 women activists met and decided to organize a conference together around the new term “ecofeminism.”

Back in 1980 we were concerned with more than stopping nuclear power, ecological and mil-

itary dangers. We were also deeply involved in projects for life. These included forms of sustainable agriculture, founding food co-ops, recycling and composting projects in our towns, and community solar and weatherization projects.

Out of the March 1980 Women and Life on Earth conference came the Women’s Pentagon Action, which brought 2,000 women to Washington, DC that November for a day of workshops before encircling the Pentagon in a dramatic action, demanding “No more amazing inventions for death.”

The 1980 conference had other “herstoric” spinoffs. The Women for Life on Earth movement in England established a Women’s Peace Camp at the Greenham Common airbase. There they protested for years against the stationing of nuclear cruise missiles, eventually successfully.

The cruise missiles were part of a buildup in nuclear weapons, a Cold War danger that had spread worldwide. Now the stakes are even higher. Forty years later, the nuclear threat remains real, with a massive buildup of nuclear bombs, large and small.

Both the nuclear/military danger and the climate crisis affect lower income and communities of color the most, in the US and worldwide. The income inequality that has reached obscene levels is paralleled by greenhouse climate pollution inequality. The less industrialized nations produce only a fraction of harmful greenhouse gases, yet they suffer its effects more than

wealthier countries. Oxfam reports that 10% of the world’s population creates 50% of this pollution. There are rich polluters around the world, not just here at home.

So, what to do in this new decade?

In early 2019, the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice decided to call a meeting of groups and women activists in our area to exchange goals and plans for this year, hoping for greater cooperation. We call it WLOE2020. Not all will agree on solutions or actions to take. But we will hear each other, and recognize some of the extensive work and care going on in our area.

We know that many more women are active and care about peace, ecological, racial and economic justice in our area than those who will join our 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. meeting at Greenfield Community College on Saturday, March 28. We see this gathering of some 20 groups and 100 women as a start, with reporting at [www.traprock.org](http://www.traprock.org) and elsewhere.

March is Women’s History Month, a good time to remember the history of women and their communities, as we look forward to making more.

*Wendell resident Anna Gyorgy was one of the planners of the 1980 conference and Women’s Pentagon Action. She’s now part of the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice, organizing the March 28 event. She can be reached at [info@wloe.org](mailto:info@wloe.org).*

## ZONING from page A1

change a number of Greenfield’s zoning codes in an effort to make them less restrictive, with the goal of opening up opportunities for increasing housing stock in the urban core.

More downtown density is one of the goals in the Greenfield Sustainable Master Plan of 2014. It could help preserve open space and farmland on the edges of town, while creating more walkable places to live, improving environmental sustainability and quality of life.

The proposed zoning changes have been met with both strong community support and with opposition, from Mayor Roxann Wedegartner and others, over their details and the way they were brought forward. After much feedback, Dolan and Wheeler are now offering compromise amendments for the planning board and EDC to consider.

The process began last fall, when Dolan and Wheeler asked that zoning be put on the agenda for discussion at several planning board meetings. After those discussions, and following recommendations from the Greenfield Affordable Housing Project, which was tasked with addressing the needs of people without shelter, the pair proposed a series of zoning changes in what is known as the “urban residential” zone.

These would allow three-family dwellings by right, and eliminate parking minimums outright. Minimum lot sizes would be reduced from 8,000 to 2,000 square feet, frontage from 65 to 30 feet, and open space requirements from 40% to 20% of building lots.

The original proposal would also simplify the definition of an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) to “a self-contained unit” capped at 900 square feet, allow them by right, and remove the requirement that the primary dwelling be owner-occupied.

The definition of a “family,” and related occupancy limits, would be removed from the zoning code, referring instead to health and safety codes to govern how many people may live in a dwelling.

## The Neighbors Look On

In recent years, Montague went through a lengthy process of tidying up language and changing restrictions in its own zoning code. These changes, which were approved in February 2019, were not as significant as those proposed in Greenfield. As both municipalities face a demand for more housing, some reformers seek to increase neighborhood density with measures that include cutting parking requirements and making it easier for homeowners to add accessory dwellings.

In an interview this week, Montague town planner Walter Ramsey explained that his town “amended our accessory apartment bylaw to make it easier to do accessory apartments... allowing them by right in certain cases, and by allowing them to be in separate units, like outbuildings. That’s allowed for four new accessory apartments to come into town.”

Montague also made some changes to its parking regulations, including experimenting with on-street parking by permit in the winter. There has been a concern about reducing parking minimums in Greenfield, given the use of winter parking bans to make way for plowing. Cities like Boston have on-street parking; after a storm, plows clear the streets and residents shovel out their vehicles. Ramsey said he coordinated with the Montague highway department for limited trial runs of the system in specific locations.

Dolan and Wheeler “basically took what Montague did and are taking it a step further, in terms of progressive zoning changes, in order to improve affordability and density,” Ramsey said. “That wasn’t our number one priority in our zoning updates – it was mostly housekeeping over several decades – but there was a little bit of making it easier to allow for new types of housing in town. I am encouraged by what Greenfield’s doing, taking it one step further by allowing even smaller lot sizes.”

“If we had built out to our zoning code, it would not be the com-

munity that we necessarily would want,” he added. “It would be a different-looking place, particularly in residential zones. It’s the legacy of zoning that we’re dealing with.”

**Wedegartner explained her view that there are “too many different things here, in one package of zoning, that really deserve their own hearing and their own review.”**

## The Public Weighs In

A public hearing on the Greenfield proposal, hosted jointly by its EDC and planning board, opened on February 11 and was continued to March 5.

Last week’s session drew a smaller crowd, many of whom had attended the first night.

David Singer, Greenfield resident and member of the zoning board of appeals, sent a letter expressing concern about the process leading to the proposed changes.

“I am pleased about the discussion and thoughtfulness inherent in the proposal,” Singer wrote. “I am suggesting however, that at the end of the day the zoning changes submitted be tabled. Instead, the Planning Board and Planning Department along with the City Council [should] open up the discussion in a manner that starts with our city planners and Planning Board, moves to citizen input, then goes to the Council for its role in transcribing, presenting and advocating for zoning changes that have broad support.”

“The suggestions made are perhaps appropriate for dense, urban areas but not for rural towns like Greenfield,” wrote resident Sandy Thomas. “Why would Greenfield intentionally change zoning that would decrease property values?”

Others praised the proposal. “I would also like to speak in favor of changing the bylaw against unrelated people living together,” said Greenfield resident Pia Diana Martin II at the hearing. “I would not

have been able to survive without that type of situation.”

“I think it’s incredibly unfair and, frankly, discriminatory to ban people who are unrelated to each other from living in close quarters, especially considering how hard it is to have mobility in the town if you’re low income and can’t afford a car,” Martin added. “I think we should have a certain level of disregard for people who are speaking only in terms of property values when they consider how we should structure our town.”

“I am a homeowner in Greenfield and a landscape designer and planner at Regenerative Design Group, a local firm here in town,” wrote Rachel Lindsay. “The zoning changes proposed here not only create much-needed additional flexible and affordable housing, they also exemplify the type of development that our communities should be taking in order to preserve open space and maximize carbon sequestration and other ecological services they provide.”

On the proposed change to the definition of family, and its constraint on the number of people who may live in a dwelling, John Bailey spoke up. “I’ve had experience with the whole unrelated-persons law, and all the regulations that go with that,” Bailey said. “Having to refer to ‘blood’ in the nature of your relationships to determine whether you are OK to live together is totally insane...”

“It seems to me that most of the negative comment comes from people up on Highland Ave. and that area, so it’s often a class issue about development, and where it happens. I think we are coming to a time where things need to change – faster, bigger, better, in many directions – and we have waited way too long.”

## The Mayor Objects

“There is a lot of good in this,” said Mayor Roxann Wedegartner. “My problem really, at the end of the day, is with the process.”

Both in comments at the hearing and in a phone interview, Wedegartner explained her view that

see ZONING next page

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