

The Berkshire Eagle

BerkshireEagle.com

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

\$1.25

Tick season's tiny terror

Now in peak months, experts say watch out

By PATRICIA LeBOEUF
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It's always a bad year for ticks in Massachusetts.

That's what Kayla Donnelly-Winters hears through her work as the public health nurse manager for the Pittsfield Health Department.

"Every season is considered a terrible tick season here," she said. The geography of the state is perfect for ticks, with

tall grasses and wooded areas, she said.

And disease-carrying ticks represent more than a nuisance for hikers, joggers and anyone else who might enjoy the upcoming Berkshire County summer.

Donnelly-Winters tracks all the tick-borne illnesses in the city of Pittsfield. She's had between five and 10 cases of Lyme disease reported over the last couple of weeks along with 10 to 15 cases of anaplasmosis, also known as human granulocytic anaplasmosis.

"Right now is a good time to start educating people, because [ticks are] really starting to come out," she said. "Every time you go outside, you're at risk of

coming in contact with a tick."

Ticks are most active between May and July and in the early fall, before temperatures drop below freezing.

The outdoor nature of popular recreation activities like hiking and camping put many Berkshire County residents at risk of infection, she said.

A tick can attach to a host when a person or animal brushes up against branches and other places ticks are located. They're hard to spot, especially young ticks, she said. Young ticks are about the size of a poppy seed.

Ticks burrow into the skin and bites



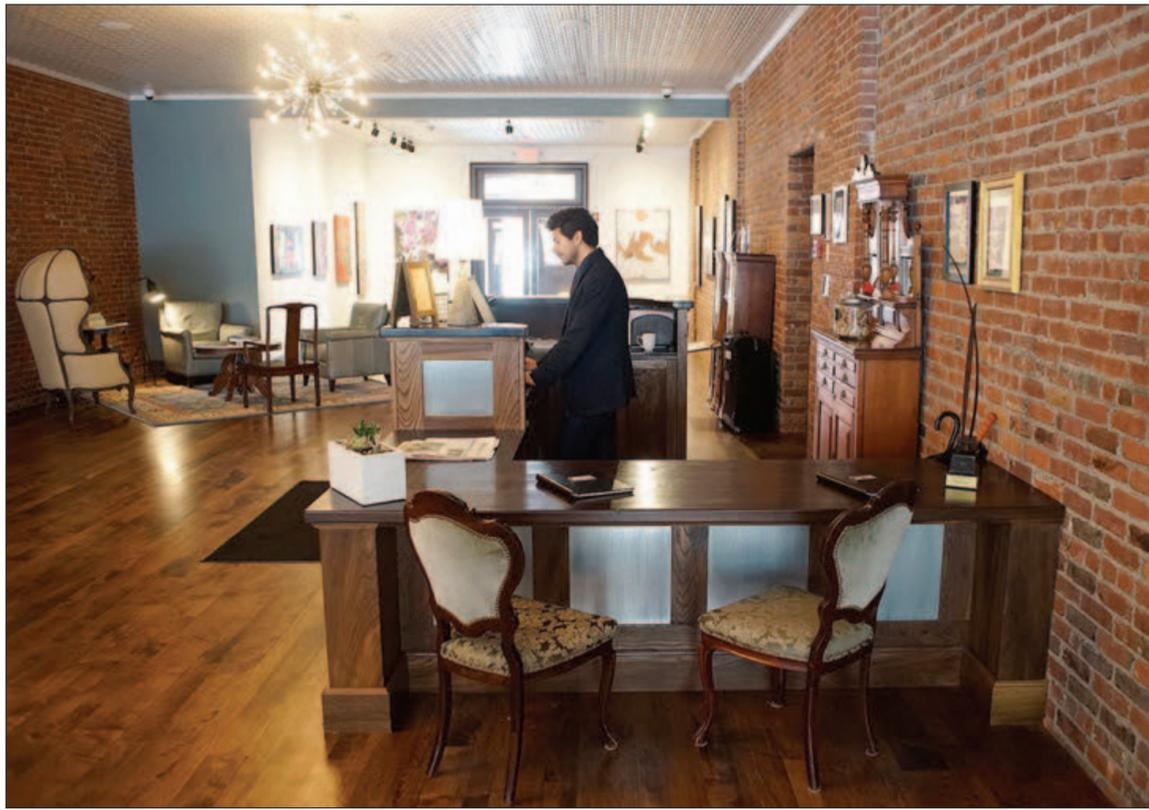
BEN GARVER —THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

These ticks were collected by South Street Veterinary Services in Pittsfield. Deer ticks are smaller than the common brown dog tick and can be vectors for diseases like Lyme.

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PAUL & NIKI TSONGAS AWARDS

Preserving the past for the future



BEN GARVER — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

Marco Moreno tends the front desk at the Hotel on North in Pittsfield. The Hotel on North received the Paul and Niki Tsongas Award by Preservation Massachusetts. The hotel was honored in the best main street project.

Hotel on North, Onota 74, Cable Mills awarded for impact of preservation

By TONY DOBROWOLSKI
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Two projects considered essential to the revitalization of downtown Pittsfield, and a 134-year-old former factory building that was converted into apartments in Williamstown, have received the state's highest form of recognition for historic preservation.

Hotel on North and the Onota 74 residences, both on North

Street in Pittsfield, and Cable Mills on Water Street in Williamstown, have received 2017 Paul & Niki Tsongas Awards from Preservation Massachusetts for their creative re-use of historic properties.

Hotel on North, Pittsfield's first boutique hotel, is one of three Tsongas Award winners in the Best Main Street Project category. The Onota 74 residences, a six-story former

PROPERTIES, Page 6



SCOTT STAFFORD — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

Cable Mills in Williamstown was one of three projects in the Berkshires to receive the 2017 Paul & Niki Tsongas Award from Preservation Massachusetts for their creative re-use of historic properties.

Trump let intel slip to Russians

Revealed highly classified info at meeting last week, according to US officials

By GREG MILLER AND GREG JAFFE
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WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump revealed highly classified information to the Russian foreign minister and ambassador in a White House meeting last week, according to current and former U.S. officials, who said Trump's disclosures jeopardized a critical source of intelligence on the Islamic State.

The information the president relayed had been provided by a U.S. partner through an intelligence-sharing arrangement considered so sensitive that details have been withheld from allies and tightly restricted even within the U.S. government, officials said.

The partner had not given the United States permission to share the material with Russia, and officials said Trump's decision to do so endangers cooperation from an ally that has access to the inner workings of the Islamic State. After Trump's meeting, senior White House officials took steps to contain the damage, placing calls to the CIA and the National Security Agency.

"This is code-word information," said a U.S. official familiar with the matter, using terminology that refers to one of the highest classification levels used by American spy agencies. Trump "revealed more information to the Russian ambassador than we have shared with our own allies."

The revelation comes as the president faces rising legal and political pressure on multiple Russia-related fronts. Last week, he fired FBI Director James Comey in the midst of a bureau investigation into possible links between the Trump campaign and Moscow. Trump's subsequent admission that his decision was driven by "this Russia thing" was seen by critics as attempted obstruction of justice.

Congress:

Lawmakers express shock, concern about Trump disclosure of classified information, **A7**

INTEL, Page 6

BERKSHIRE HILLS REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Funding formula retooled with Stockbridge OK

At town meeting, voters approve plan that will cost them more

By CLARENCE FANTO
Special to The Eagle

STOCKBRIDGE — Voters at Monday night's annual town meeting resoundingly approved a new formula on how to charge taxpayers in each town in the Berkshire Hills Regional School District for future cap-

ital investment projects.

The approval by the third town in the district means the new formula is now in effect, opening the door to a potential new renovation proposal for Monument Mountain Regional High School. Two previous proposals were defeated by Great Barrington

voters and approved in Stockbridge and West Stockbridge.

The vote in Stockbridge on the new capital funding formula was 155 in favor, 91 opposed after more than an hour of impassioned debate. The result announced by Moderator Gary Johnston was greeted by cheers from one of the best-attended annual town meetings in recent memory.

The new approach eases the funding burden for new capital projects for Great Barrington voters but increases it for Stockbridge taxpayers, with little change in West Stockbridge.

The Stockbridge Finance Committee had voted 6-0 against the formula, Chairman Jay Bikofsky told the capacity crowd. He cautioned

FUNDING, Page 6

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Ticks

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the host, the bacteria it carries is injected into the host and replicated. Replication can take up to 36 hours, so if the tick is removed before it has been attached for over 24 hours, infection is less likely, according to an online fact sheet on Lyme disease written by Paula Aucoin, medical director of infection control and prevention at Berkshire Medical Center.

Lyme disease — the most common tick-borne illness — often causes the early symptom of a bulls-eye rash. Many people infected also experience flu-like symptoms, including a fever, headaches and extremely sore muscles and joints, Donnelly-Winters said.

Later symptoms can show up weeks to years after the initial infection time and commonly affect the joints, nervous system and heart.

It's essential to let your doctor know you've been bitten, even if you're not experiencing symptoms, Donnelly-Winters said.

"If you do start to feel sick, don't just think it's the flu, especially if you know you were bit," she said.

Lyme disease is typically treated with antibiotics over a period of days to even months. Some doctors will

also put patients on antibiotics as a preventative measure before test results come back, she said.

It's important to take preventative antibiotics if it's suspected you were bitten by an infected tick, said Kenneth Mercure, who runs the Lyme Alliance of the Berkshires.

"[Wait and see] — it's like playing Russian roulette," he said. "There's more than one tick-borne illness you can get around here. I ended up with four of them. Do not just be concerned about Lyme."

Mercure has been treated for Lyme disease off and on since 2010 in a treatment plan that required extended rounds of antibiotics.

An effort to ensure insurance companies cover the cost of these potential long courses of antibiotics passed as part of the state budget bill last summer.

Some insurance companies had followed guidelines that advocated stopping coverage of antibiotics to treat Lyme disease after about one month of treatment, said Sharon Hawkes, a member of the Massachusetts Lyme Legislative Task Force and former Lenox resident.

"Ticks don't read calendars," she said. Some people need to be treated with more than the typical month's worth of antibiotics, she said.

Massachusetts had 2,922 confirmed cases of Lyme disease



BEN GARVER — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

These ticks were collected by South Street Veterinary Services in Pittsfield. Deer ticks are smaller than the common brown dog tick and can be vectors for diseases like Lyme.

in 2015, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

That same year, 95 percent of Lyme disease cases nationwide came from 14 states, including all of New England.

Hawkes cautioned that those numbers are deceptively low, as CDC criteria is extremely stringent for confirming a case. Cases of the disease that are treated without a specific diagnostic test known as the Western blot also would not show up in CDC numbers, she said.

Responses to Lyme disease should be preventative, not reactive, said Stephen Rich, a microbiologist and director of the University of Massachusetts Laboratory of Medical Zoology, which runs a nation-

al tick-testing service.

Spraying clothes with tick-repelling chemicals and checking your body thoroughly after going outside are a couple of many measures people can take to reduce their risk of contracting tick-borne diseases, he said.

"The most important thing about Lyme disease is not to get sick," he said. By the time symptoms arise, complicated testing can make the treatment process difficult, he said.

"We want to make people aware, so they don't fall into that category," he said. "People are much more aware of this. People are watching for ticks, and that's good. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Tips to Prevent Tick Encounters:

- Wear light-colored clothing and long-sleeved shirts and pants in the woods. Tuck your pants into your socks.
- Try to avoid brushy, wooded or grassy areas.
- Use bug repellents with the chemical DEET. Use repellents with no more than 30 to 35 percent DEET on adults and 10 to 15 percent DEET on children.
- Stick to main pathways and the center of trails when hiking. Ticks cannot jump or fly, so they attach onto animals and people who brush against plants.
- Ticks are small, so look for new "freckles."
- Thoroughly check yourself and animals and children for ticks after coming inside, specifically inside and behind the ears, the hairline, back of the neck, armpits, groin, legs, behind the knees and between the toes.

SOURCE: MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

If you find a tick attached:

- You can remove the tick yourself or seek medical help to remove it.
 - If removing the tick yourself, use fine-tipped tweezers to pull the tick out with steady, even pressure.
 - Get as close to the skin as possible when removing the tick.
 - If a part of the tick remains stuck in the skin, leave it or seek medical care.
 - If removal is successful, wash the bite area and your hands with soap and water, an iodine scrub or rubbing alcohol.
 - Dispose of the tick by submerging it in alcohol and putting it in a sealed bag or flushing it down the toilet.
- Source: Kayla Donnelly-Winters, public health nurse manager for the Pittsfield Health Department

Resources:

- For information about ticks and tick-borne diseases, call Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Infectious Disease 617-983-6800 (nights, weekends and holidays) or 617-983-6550 (normal business hours)
- Visit mass.gov/dph/tick or cdc.gov/ticks

Funding

FROM PAGE 1

that the town would be saddled with additional debt despite a declining student enrollment.

Regional Assessment Committee member Bronly Boyd stressed that only new projects would be affected by the proposed revision.

He acknowledged that approval of the new formula could finance a new proposal to renovate Monument Mountain Regional High school, resulting in a potential increase to Stockbridge taxpayers of 32 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value.

According to Fredric D. Rutberg, a Stockbridge delegate to the Regional Assessment Amendment Committee, adoption of the formula would reduce the burden on Great Barrington taxpayers.

Rutberg is the board president of New England Newspapers Inc., which owns the Berkshire Eagle.

If the amendment were adopted, he stressed, any new project that may be proposed would be subject to voter approval in each town.

The new formula would be manageable and fair to the Great Barrington property owners, Rutberg added. He said renovation to the high school is urgently needed.

He suggested that financing a new project by the current formula, based on a town's current student count, would not necessarily be reasonable in the future because future enrollment levels are unpredictable.

Bikofsky countered that school districts could be reconfigured in the future, depending on recommendations by the Berkshire County Education Task Force.

Rich Bradley of the Berkshire Hills Regional School Committee pointed out that district school spending had increased only modestly, about 1.5 percent annually, in comparison to the pace of inflation.

Resident Mark Sprague declared that the physical state of the high school is "a joke" and that when it rains, students patrol the hallways with buckets, collecting water from the leaky roof.

"You need to know how bad the high school is and how much it needs renovation," said resident Charles

Gillett. "It's important for each generation to build a school for the next generation."

But Planning Board Chairman Gary Pitney urged a no vote, citing the financial burden of upcoming town projects such as bridge repairs and highway department garage replacement.

He stated that approval of the new formula could be unaffordable, especially for aging residents.

Resident Sarah Horne declared that most of the town's funding should go to education and that other projects could take a lower priority.

All three towns were required to approve the formula in order for it to be adopted. Voters in Great Barrington and West Stockbridge gave it the green light this past winter.

Instead of assessing the towns by student count, the new formula towns based the charge on a community's equalized, taxable real estate value.

Approval in Stockbridge doubles the town's share of future capital projects from 15 percent to 32 percent. That's because property there has a higher value, computed by population.

The group reviewing the tri-town school district agreement voted unanimously to recommend the change to the funding formula for the capital budget for future construction projects, beginning next year.

The change does not affect current capital budget assessments for paying down the bond on the construction of the district's Muddy Brook Elementary and Monument Valley Middle School completed in 2005.

Great Barrington approved the plan overwhelmingly by a voice vote at a special town meeting on Jan. 27. West Stockbridge voters approved it by 43-10 by secret ballot on Feb. 27.

Great Barrington makes up about 72 percent of Berkshire Hills student enrollment, while Stockbridge and West Stockbridge each contribute about 14 percent.

Any one of the three towns can still vote a new capital construction project down, requiring the school district to resubmit it with possible revisions until it was approved, or abandon it.

Contact correspondent [Clarance Fanto at cfanto@yahoo.com](mailto:Clarance.Fanto@cfanto@yahoo.com) or 413-637-2551.



BEN GARVER — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

The Onota Building on North Street in Pittsfield received the Paul and Niki Tsongas Award for preservation.

Properties

FROM PAGE 1

commercial building that was mostly converted into apartments, received the award for Best Use — Housing. Cable Mills, a three-story historic mill on Water Street that was also renovated for use as apartments, received the award in the Biggest Impact — Rural/Suburban category.

The three projects were all honored at an event that took place last week at the Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston. A total of 22 projects across the state received awards in 17 different categories this year.

According to Preservation Massachusetts, the Tsongas Award competition is conducted to "showcase the importance, impact and valuable nature" of preservation both nationwide and across the state of Massachusetts.

The \$14 million, 45-room

Hotel on North is located in two former office buildings at 273-297 North St. that were converted into a high-end lodging establishment by co-owners David and Laurie Tierney of Pittsfield, who operate their own construction company. The two former office buildings, both built in the 1880s in what was known as the "Burns Block" during the 1960s, are located in an historic district. When Hotel on North opened in June 2015, it was Pittsfield's first new hotel in 47 years.

"We are extremely excited about the award," David Tierney said. "It's not just us winning the award, but it's starting to show that the state and people are taking downtown (Pittsfield) more seriously. The health of downtown is vital to the community, and it's nice to see people recognize that."

Hotel on North has also been designated one of

the "Top 10 New Hotels in America" by Architectural Digest and was one of the lodging establishments honored in the outstanding service category of the 2017 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards for Hotels. The Tsongas Award has a different meaning to the Tierneys than the other honors do.

"This is more of something special that's happening in the community," David Tierney said. "The other awards, the top 10, was not just about the building but the staff. This is more of the concept and the developers and people taking a chance to better the community."

The \$14 million Onota 74 residences located at 64-74 North St., are located in the Onota Building which was originally built in the mid-20th century. Along with the Howard Building on Federal Street, it is one of two downtown Pittsfield structures that have

been converted mostly into apartments by Allegrone Construction of Pittsfield (the first floors of both structures continue to house commercial space). Louis Allegrone, a principal in Allegrone Construction, could not be reached for comment.

In Williamstown, Cable Mills is located in what was originally a twine factory built in 1873 that also housed a variety of other industrial businesses.

Its last occupant, General Cable, closed in the early 1990s. The building has been sold twice since them most recently to current owner Mitchell Properties for \$3 million in 2007.

Financing for the \$26 million project came from a variety of sources, and includes both state and federal historic tax credits.

Reach Business Editor Tony Dobrowolski at 413 496-6224.

Intel

FROM PAGE 1

One day after dismissing Comey, Trump welcomed Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ambassador Sergey Kislyak - a key figure in earlier Russia controversies — into the Oval Office. It was during that meeting, officials said, that Trump went off script and began describing details of an Islamic State terrorist threat related to the use of laptop computers on aircraft.

For almost anyone in government, discussing such matters with an adversary would be illegal. As president, Trump has broad authority to declassify government secrets, making it

unlikely that his disclosures broke the law.

White House officials involved in the meeting said Trump discussed only shared concerns about terrorism.

"The president and the foreign minister reviewed common threats from terrorist organizations to include threats to aviation," said H.R. McMaster, the national security adviser, who participated in the meeting. "At no time were any intelligence sources or methods discussed, and no military operations were disclosed that were not already known publicly."

McMaster reiterated his statement in a subsequent appearance at the White House on Monday and de-

scribed the Washington Post story as "false," but did not take any questions.

In their statements, White House officials emphasized that Trump had not discussed specific intelligence sources and methods, rather than addressing whether he had disclosed information drawn from sensitive sources.

The CIA declined to comment, and the NSA did not respond to requests for comment.

But officials expressed concern about Trump's handling of sensitive information as well as his grasp of the potential consequences. Exposure of an intelligence stream that has provided critical insight into the Islamic State, they said, could

hinder the United States' and its allies' ability to detect future threats.

"It is all kind of shocking," said a former senior U.S. official who is close to current administration officials. "Trump seems to be very reckless and doesn't grasp the gravity of the things he's dealing with, especially when it comes to intelligence and national security. And it's all clouded because of this problem he has with Russia."

In his meeting with Lavrov, Trump seemed to be boasting about his inside knowledge of the looming threat. "I get great intel. I have people brief me on great intel every day," the president said, according to an official with knowledge of the exchange.

LOTTERY: MONDAY'S RESULTS

NEW YORK

Lottery day: 2-0-6 and 6-3-4-8

Lottery night: 6-6-3 and 3-7-6-8

Pick10: 5-13-14-16-18-23-25-28-34-35-37-39-41-43-47-51-53-59-67-72

MASSACHUSETTS

MassCash: 4-12-14-22-23

Sat. MegaBucks: 4-23-25-29-30-43

Doubler: 3

Numbers midday: 2-3-4-4

Numbers evening: 1-7-4-3

NH/VERMONT/MAINE

Lottery day: 7-5-1 and 2-0-7-5

Lottery night: 0-2-3 and 9-9-8-8