

August 15, 1990

GREENFIELD: Main St. business owners look ahead after fire. Page 2.

GREENFIELD: Local agencies compete for state grant money. Page 2.

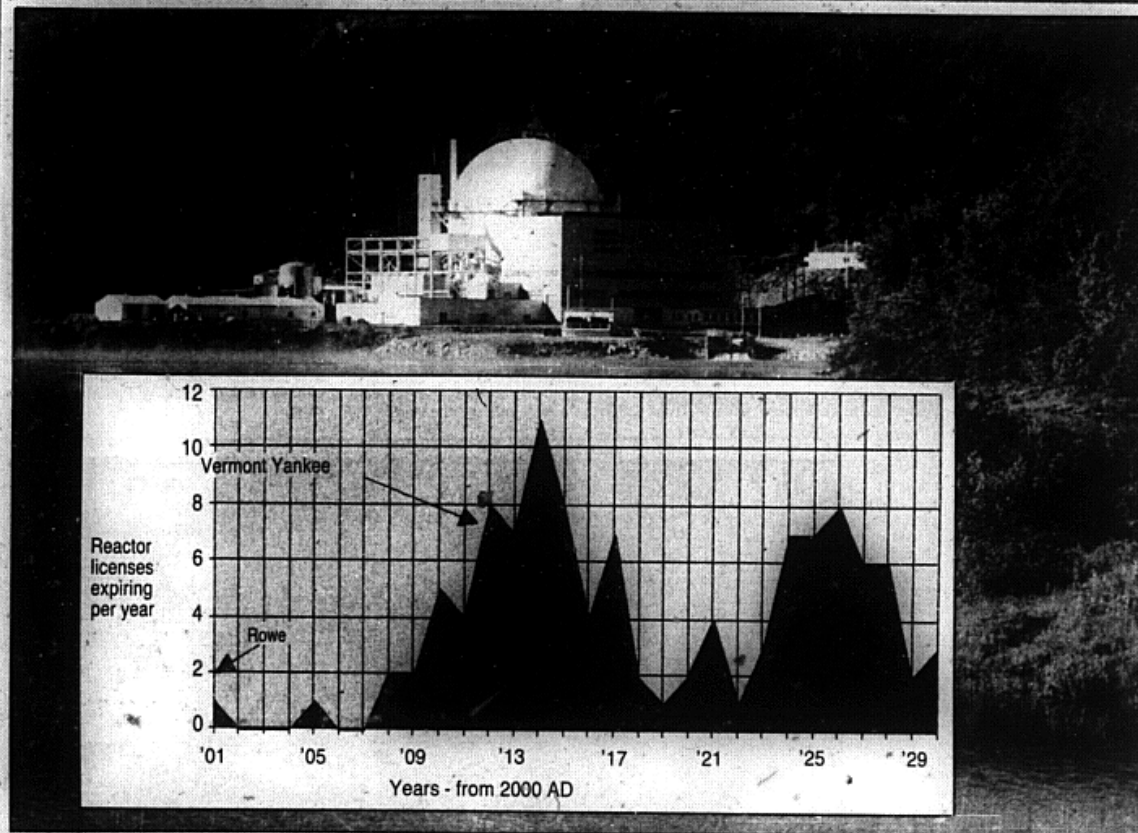
# The Record

198th Year-No. 194

32 Pages

Greenfield, M

SINCE 1792



## Relicensing Yankee Atomic

### After 30 years, nuclear power plant looks toward future

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first installment of a three-part series on Yankee Atomic's nuclear generating plant in Rowe.)*

By VICKI RITTERBAND  
Recorder Staff

The year was 1980. Yankee Atomic Electric Co.'s Rowe nuclear power plant was celebrating its 20th birthday and anti-nuclear sentiment was strong locally and across the country. A non-binding referendum had nearly passed in state Sen. John Oliver's district that would have instructed Oliver to vote for a moratorium on construction and licensing of new nuclear power plants.

Al Giordano, then of Charle-  
mont, manager of a 150-member

campaign to shut down the Rowe plant, was making some ambitious promises.

"(Now) we are seeing the beginning of the end of the atomic age in Franklin County," Giordano pronounced at an anti-celebration of Yankee's 20th birthday. "By the autumn of 1984, four years from now, the Rowe plant will be decommissioned," Giordano predicted.

Giordano was wrong. On Aug. 19 at 8:19 p.m., it will have been 30 years since the Rowe reactor split uranium atoms for the first time. At 30, Yankee Rowe is the oldest operating nuclear plant in the country, and its owners are intent on continuing to use it to generate electricity into the 21st Century, possibly until 2020.

The company is in the initial

### 30 years:

Atomic power in Rowe

stages of seeking an extension of its 40-year license, which expires in 2000.

By most accounts, its prospects for obtaining the renewal look good.

For Yankee Atomic Electric Co., which built and operates the plant for its owners (Northeast Utilities, New England Power Co. and seven other regional electric companies), the decision to seek a license renewal is mostly economic.

Yankee estimates that the cost of renewal — which is made up mainly of the costs of replacing

worn out equipment and of storing radioactive spent fuel — will be about \$28 million. It would cost about 10 times that to build a new fossil fuel plant that could replace Yankee's generating capacity, according to Yankee Atomic president Andrew Kadak.

Industry claims that nuclear plants have less impact on the environment than their fossil fuel cousins, and that their absence would create an energy gap that would be difficult to fill are also pertinent to the relicensing issue, Kadak said.

Nuclear energy critics disagree with these claims.

As the country's oldest operating plant, Yankee will be the first to

See NUCLEAR Page 11

## Officials, zoning stall downtown mural

By MICHAEL TERAULT  
Recorder Staff

GREENFIELD — A Brooklyn artist arrived in Franklin County Tuesday only to learn that procedural issues have put in limbo a planned downtown mural.

Janet Braun-Reintz was hired to paint a mural celebrating Greenfield's history on the wall of the Borofsky building facing the Veter-

ans War Memorial, in front of the police station. After months of planning, the project was to have started today.

But issues raised by selectmen Tuesday have stalled the project for the time being.

Selectmen told project coordinator Rebekka Tippens of Colrain that she did not go through the proper channels. Tippens said she apparently

was given incorrect information in the town hall.

Tippens said she consulted Building Inspector Bruce Austin a month ago and was told that he did not consider the mural to be a sign, and zoning should not be an issue. She said she proceeded based on that advice.

Selectmen's Chairman John F. Merrigan said the issue is strictly a zoning matter.

Town Attorney Edward P. Smith

said the mural could be considered a sign as he reads the town's sign regulations. The planned size of the mural would exceed size requirements for signs, according to the town's zoning bylaws Smith said.

For that reason, a special permit from the zoning board of appeals would be needed, Smith said. The special permit process can take at least several weeks, sometimes

See MURAL Page 11

# Mural

From Page 1

much longer.

But selectmen Bernard J. McGarrah, Edmund B. Olchowski and B. June Burniske had concerns that seemed to go beyond zoning. They questioned the appropriateness of the mural being located next to the war memorial.

"I appreciate your artistic approach, but I'm a veteran," Olchowski said. As for Tippens' assertion that the blank building wall detracts from the Veterans Mall, he said, "To me, that's a lot of hokum."

"You're assuming this is the place you're going to put it. I'm totally against it," Olchowski said.

"It seems that the dignity of the war memorial will just be violated," Burniske said. "To put a bright-colored mural there will make it look more circus-like. To put it at the (Veterans) Mall really disturbs me."

Tippens said the artist has already agreed to tone down the colors. She added that she thought the mural would add, not detract, from the memorial.

"I think it would enhance the feeling of the site ... It would add a fuller sense of community to it, and in the process of designing it, it would make us a fuller community," Tippens said.

Braun-Reinitz did not arrive in the county in time for the meeting. But she said from Tippens' Colrain home later that night, "While it is colorful, I think it is very respectful. I'll bet you anything that Jesse Helms wouldn't find anything offensive in that design."

Tippens said the artist had blocked out two months in her schedule to devote to the project and had turned down other jobs because she was planning to do the Greenfield mural. She thought it was unfair that the project was being halted now, on the day the artist arrived.

The building inspector was unable

to attend the selectmen's meeting, but attorney Smith said Austin had been under the impression that Tippens was going to consult Smith before proceeding.

Town Manager Norman E. Thidemann apologized to Tippens for the apparently wrong information she had been given.

"Occasionally things like this happen and we have offices that give erroneous information. It's happened before, some offices — and I've done this myself — have given wrong advice," Thidemann said.

However, that does not change the fact that the zoning is at issue, Thidemann added. "We can't change the zoning bylaws. I can't say to you, 'Oh, go ahead. We made a mistake.'"

"I think it comes under the definition of a sign," Smith said. "... A sign can be anything that draws attention ... I don't know where you go from here, but from my reading of the statute, it's a sign."

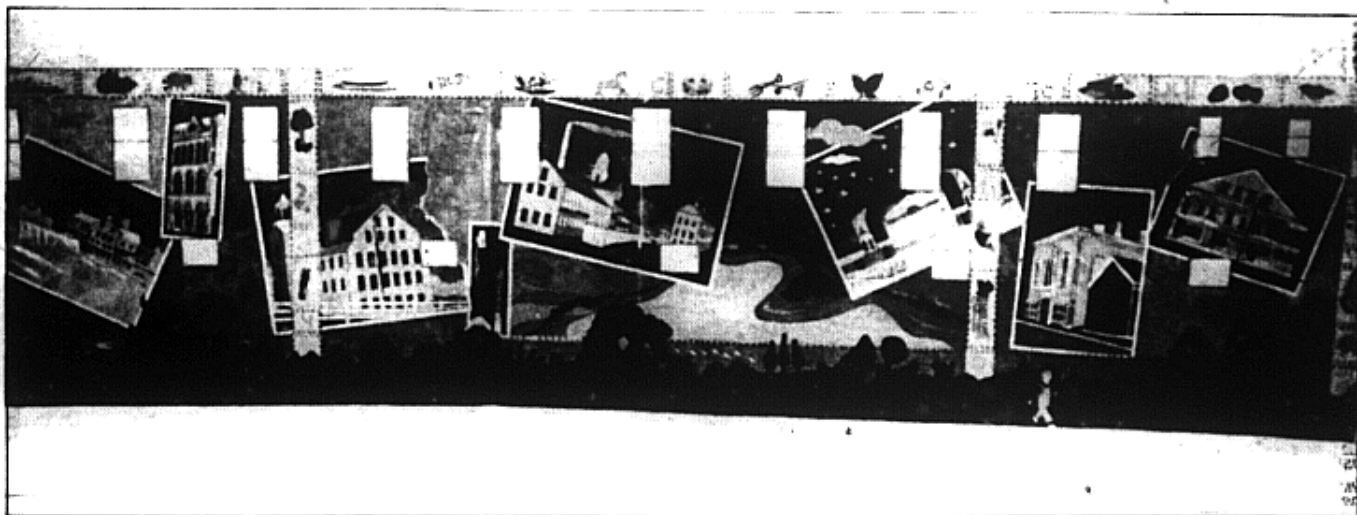
McGarrah picked up on the fact that Tippens lives in Colrain. "You're not a Greenfield resident," he said in a raised voice.

"I consider myself a member of this community," she responded.

"You want to jam something on the town of Greenfield we don't want," McGarrah said. "... I think you have a very small segment of people who really want this thing, and the rest of the town is sitting back waiting for someone to spike it ... This is not a popular situation."

The mural is being sponsored by the Institute for Cultural Understanding in Colrain and the Traprock Peace Center in Deerfield.

Tippens said a delegation of young people from Mirgorod, Greenfield's Soviet "sister city," was going to help paint the mural when it arrived later this month. She said the project was supposed to show them the value of a community working together.



Planned mural on hold for now

The new turn of events seemed to illustrate the opposite was happening, she said.

Olchowski said Tippens should have come before the selectmen previously as a formality. A scaled-down version of the proposed mural has been on display in the Greenfield Public Library for some time, but Olchowski and McGarrah said they had been out of town on vacation for several weeks and had only recently learned of the planned mural.

Olchowski said the mural proponents were soliciting comments from the public on the design of the mural but not on whether the mural itself is actually wanted.

Olchowski said it was therefore incumbent on the board to "stop this thing right in its tracks."

"If the OK comes through, well and good. Go ahead with it," Olchowski said, referring to the zoning board.

Thidemann said the proponents

theoretically could just go ahead and start work on the mural as planned. But he warned that if the zoning board later ruled against the mural or if the board were to approve a modified version of the mural, the painters could be forced to remove what they had painted.

Thidemann suggested that Tippens, Braun-Reinitz, attorney Smith, building inspector Austin and possibly other officials meet today to sort out the issue and see if the zoning board process could be "expedited" in any way.

Reached at home later Tuesday night, Tippens said she would try to arrange such a meeting to see if a special session of the zoning board could be held. She hoped that the zoning board could hear the matter as soon as possible.

Tippens said that work on the mural will be delayed at least for a few days, holding out hope that a speedy solution could be found.

The Greenfield mural would be 96 feet long and 25 feet high. Containing images of people, buildings and scenes from the town's history, the mural would be "a memorial expression for the whole community ... a living history lesson," Tippens said.

At the end of the selectmen's meeting, after Tippens had left, Olchowski reflected on the heated discussion over the mural. "People have different opinions (about art). That gal has one, and I have my own," Olchowski said.

## Artist responds

Discussing the controversy Tuesday night, Braun-Reinitz expressed some frustration with the situation. "If you're a public community artist, you have to accept what those words mean. They mean that public officials have to participate (in the process) and it has to be done in a

public way. The communities are coauthors," she said.

"But I've never quite run across a problem like this, I admit," said Braun-Reinitz, who had painted murals in the Soviet Union, Nicaragua, Liverpool, England and in several American cities.

"My feeling was we had touched all the bases in terms of legalities," Braun-Reinitz said, referring to the meeting with the building inspector. She thought the only bases left to be covered were aesthetic issues, which she as the artist had been prepared to deal with. She said she had revised her design of the mural based on comments and suggestions made by residents earlier.

Braun-Reinitz said she had some problem with the way the situation turned out, "especially the timing of it, on the day I arrive, (which) seems at best questionable." She added that she was not accusing the selectmen of any impropriety.

File photo

719