

# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

*Tribunus*



*Plebis*

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

*Volume IX Number 2*

*May 2018*



*Blossoms on an ancient Sandisfield apple tree celebrate the end of a winter that wouldn't quit.*

*Photo: Ron Bernard*

**INSIDE: ELECTION 2018: SELECT BOARD CANDIDATE STATEMENTS. PAGES 9-11**

**MEET THE CANDIDATES: MAY 2, NOON AT COA, TOWN HALL ANNEX**

**SAVE THE TURTLES. DRIVE CAREFULLY. PAGE 16.**



# Memorial Day Parade

## SUNDAY, MAY 27

The Memorial Day Parade will again kick off from its gathering place at the Old Town Hall behind the former Silverbrook Café. Because of bridge construction on Rt. 57, the parade will be re-routed this year.

The honor guard will march south from Old Town Hall to the New Boston Cemetery for an honoring ceremony. The honor guard will then return to Old Town Hall where it will lead the parade, starting at 10 a.m., and continue south on the River Road detour to join Rt. 57 east of the bridge.

A second honoring ceremony will be held at the Berkshire Skilled Care & Rehabilitation facility across from the New Boston Inn. The parade will end at the American Legion Pavilion on South Main Street (Rt. 8) with a patriotic ceremony, followed by free hot dogs and refreshments at the pavilion.

The parade is sponsored again by American Legion Post #456 and the Sandisfield Fire Department. Maria Domato, Post Commander, and Fire Chief Ralph Morrison will share chairman responsibilities.

This year the Recreation Committee is sponsoring a Bicycle Decoration Contest. Kids should decorate and ride their bikes in the parade, with a prize for best-decorated. Parents/caregivers please call Billie Pachulski at 413-652-0252 or at therapy@bap.hush.com.

If you'd like to march in the parade (calling all veterans), drive your vintage car or off-road vehicle or super-sized pickup, ride a horse or ride your decorated bicycle, call Chief Morrison at 258-4742 to give him a heads-up. Or simply show up behind the Silverbrook by 9:30 a.m., and get in line. 

# Election Who? What? When? Where?

SEE PAGES 9-11 FOR THE "WHY?"

## Calendar of Election Events

- May 2** Meet the Candidates, Council on Aging, noon, Town Hall Annex
- May 12** Annual Town Meeting, Fire Station #2, Rt. 57 at 10:00 a.m.
- May 14** Annual Town Election, Old Town Hall, 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

Absentee Ballots available from Town Clerk, Town Hall Annex.

End date for absentee ballots is noon, Thursday, May 10.

## CANDIDATES FOR ELECTION

**Selectman, 3 years**  
 Jeff Gray  
 Brian O'Rourke  
 John Skrip (incumbent)

**Selectman, 1 year**  
 Charles A. Pease  
 George Riley

**Moderator, incumbent, 1 year**  
 Simon Winchester

**Board of Assessors, incumbent, 3 years**  
 Kathleen Burrows

**School Committee, incumbent, 3 years**  
 Billie Anderson Pachulski

**Board of Health, incumbent, 3 years**  
 Roger Kohler

**Planning Board, incumbent, 3 years**  
 Willard Platt

# York Lake This Summer

By Nina Carr

We're making an effort to keep York Lake open this summer, at least the same as last year. So far, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has agreed, as last year, to maintain the road into the parking area, mow the lawn (from time to time), test the water quality that it's OK for swimming, and provide porta-potties.

Through the Select Board, and on the behalf of the Council on Aging, we've been trying to get the DCR to agree to help us to open the bathrooms and provide running water.

So far, John Skrip at the Select Board has been in touch with DCR Commissioner Leo Roy. I've

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# Winter 2017-2018 The Winter That Wouldn't Quit!



Snow measured/estimated at a Beech Plain back-yard weather station.

Season as of March . . . . .	87.5 inches
April 2. . . . .	3.0
April 6. . . . .	1.5
April 10 . . . . .	2.0
April 16 . . . . .	1.0
April 18 . . . . .	0.5
April 19 . . . . .	1.0
Total April . . . . .	9.0
<b>Total Season . . . . .</b>	<b>96.5 inches</b>

spoken with the head person at Beartown, the Berkshire headquarters of DCR, but the folks who do the actual work have not received messages yet as to how we should all cooperate.

Hiring a person or service to maintain the bathrooms has proven to be a bureaucratic process, so we are still in the "working it out" mode. New Marlboro has offered to share the cost of keeping the bathroom open.

Smitty Pignatelli has been very helpful on the state level. As chairman of the Committee on Conservation and Energy, which oversees the DCR, Smitty has proposed a budget amendment that would provide more staffing for the DCR. That would help next year, but for this year so far we're still "on our own." 

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

*The apple tree blooming on our front page this month is maybe 240 years old. We published the photo in June 2015, actually, but wanted to use it again now and in color to give us all a little lift.*

## A Store for Us? Maybe.

The Berkshire Eagle recently published a terrific column by Felix Carroll, “What is it About the Shelf Life of a General Store?” You’ll remember that we lost the New Boston Store to a runaway truck in October 2012. Since then, two proposals to open a new store/gas station combination have come and gone. Will we ever have another one?

General stores in rural communities traditionally served as much more than a central location to buy bread and milk. For a hundred years and often more, they provided places for people to meet socially and, when wood stoves provided the only source of central heating, a place to warm your knees and maintain a sense of community. Losing them is painful, like losing old friends and neighbors.

But it’s tough work, running a store. In his article, Carroll described owning/operating a general store in a small Berkshire town: “You could work seven days a week, not get rich and have half the town disdain you.” He wasn’t joking.

Tolland has no store. The Monterey Store, closed since late last summer, is seeking a new owner/operator. General stores still exist in Colebrook, Granville, East and West Otis, New Marlborough at Mill River, and Becket, which sounds like a lot of stores, but all are a long drive from the center of Sandisfield. Then you have the long drive home.

Simon Winchester on page 13 proposes a bakery/coffee shop, possibly in the back of the post office. He also lists the many “if’s” that will have to fall in place for that idea to work.

We’ve heard a rumor that a bid has been made to the bank that owns the former Silverbrook Café building. Maybe for a store. No information available yet.

In March, the editor of The Monterey News, Stephen Moore, wrote that a local party had been interested in purchasing the former Monterey Store/Café on Rt. 23, but that the buyer had withdrawn, with the property again listed for sale at a lowered price. Stephen added: “We’ll have to wait and see.”

In Sandisfield, we’re waiting but not seeing. Yet.

## A Caliber Mistake

Last month I wrote that the weapon used in the Florida school shooting was an AK-47. It was an AK-15. Typing too fast and thinking too slow, I slugged in “47”, knew in my fingers that it wasn’t right, said to myself to check that later. When later came I was doing something else and my error got into print. I hope that error didn’t weaken

too much my thoughts about the first half of the Second Amendment, the part about a “well regulated militia.”

My thoughts, in fact, were seconded in an April 9 editorial in The Berkshire Eagle:

... a landmark ruling upholding a state ban on the ownership of assault-style weapons [was] handed down from a federal judge in Massachusetts, where the famed Minuteman statue stands as the purest symbol of a well-regulated militia – an American institution enshrined in the oft-ignored first half of the Second Amendment.

– Bill Price  
West New Boston

## So Long Blues

As you dim  
Like a day dying,  
There’s a brief, sunny pause  
And there,  
Laid out as a field of buttercups,  
Is your life ... all of it:  
Picasso eyes and heads,  
Kisses and guitars,  
Great and grim old times,  
Empty glasses,  
Foolish rhymes.

– Val Coleman  
West New Boston



# Out of the Ashes

## DPW COMMITTEE TO CONTINUE ITS WORK

By Bill Price

The decision has been made to rebuild the town garage on the current site.

According to April 5 Select Board minutes, Selectmen John Skrip and Mark Newman “proudly signed the documents as of this date with the insurance company.”

The insurance will pay \$460,000 to rebuild the garage and another \$711,000 to replace the three trucks and equipment lost in the DPW fire in December. The building is to be slightly larger and meet all town and building codes.

Mark Newman pointed out that had the town accepted cash instead of replacement costs “we’d have received a substantially lower amount.”

The insurance company will be in charge of constructing the new building, saving the town the cost of the bidding process and having to pay prevailing wages.

Finance Committee member David Hubbard spoke against going forward with the building without more examination of exactly what the Department of Public Works needed and without community input.

John Skrip, the minutes record, “reiterated that the contract has been signed and they are going forward.”

The DPW Committee, formed in February to determine the location and construction of a new garage, what town roads required, and the improvement of the Highway Department, met April 25. It will meet again May 2 or 3. All residents are invited.

The scheduled meeting, the second in a row missed by Highway Superintendent Bobby O’Brien, was attended by Chairman Brian O’Rourke, Town Administrator Fred Ventresco, and committee members Tom Jacobs, and Mark Newman. The meeting was observed as well by resident Ron Pachulski.

“We had a good meeting,” said O’Rourke, “but it’s vital that the superintendent be present, considering the topics John Skrip asked us to review.” The committee is discussing, among other items, where and how to maintain equipment and supplies during construction of the new garage, daily maintenance by the highway crew, and the creation of monthly logs for work and truck maintenance. 



*As of late April, “scrap metal is still piled where it burned, along with tools, fixtures, and all that remains black tinted rust.” – Bogart Muller, Sandisfield Times, April 2018.*

Photo: Setsuko Winchester

# TWO ROADS, BOTH TAKEN One Dirt

## BUT WHEN IT SNOWS IN SPRING ...

By *Brigitte Ruthmann*

Ah, the sweetness of life on country roads. Dirt roads, that is.

It comes at a price. Love them or leave them in the dust they kick up in the dryness of August and the ice and snow they collect in the Spring thaw.

But the picture postcard can get ugly in March – and even in this unusual year of April snowfalls.

It's tough for a plowman to clear a late season snowfall over mud.

And Sandisfield, like the rest of western Massachusetts, is chock-full of dirt roads needing special care.

Mud season this year arrived in late February, Department of Public Works Superintendent Bobby O'Brien said at a Select Board meeting April 17, by way of explaining the town's new policy of not plowing its many miles of dirt roads following the thaw.

This year that policy has left many residents stranded and more than a few of them angry.

When several inches of snow and ice fell April 16, the explainer for an absence of plows throughout the 92 miles of roadway was that it was expected to melt by the afternoon. Town employees had the day off anyway for Patriot's Day, a holiday in Massachusetts and three other states.

But the snow didn't melt, and paved and dirt roads went unplowed and some undriveable.

This year a half dozen snowstorms in March and April went unaddressed.



*September 2017:  
You could look through the holes in the surface of the Rugg Bridge and see the Clam River flowing toward its junction with the Farmington.*

*Photo: Bill Price*

"We use chip and salt," O'Brien said when asked about the policy and a conspicuous absence of salt and sand on dirt roads. "It's a hundred times better," said O'Brien, who couldn't explain why no salt or sand had appeared on top of local dirt roads following recent storms. He said his limited budget keeps him from doing the necessary work of rebuilding poorly designed roads with costly gravel beds.

At the meeting, longtime resident Barbara Cormier said, "I've never seen my road as deplorable," describing a winter spent slipping and sliding. "I don't know why there has been no salt or sand, and the two lanes were reduced by the plow to one."

A check of area towns by The Sandisfield Times revealed no similar policy of abandonment of winter road care following a spring thaw. In New Marlborough, where spring snows on dirt roads are cleared, a driver said he lifted his plow a bit – a similar tactic effectively undertaken by local plowing contractor Chuck Nelson.

Selectman John Skrip said he nearly sunk into a muddy mire after checking on a complaint regarding Dodd Road. He pledged to turn the matter over to the town's DPW Committee.

"We need thousands of tons of gravel," said Skrip, who also pledged to bend the Commonwealth's Lieutenant Governor's ear on the topic during a planned upcoming visit.

"We are not getting enough," resident Nina Carr said about Boston's ignorance of many western Massachusetts unmet budget needs, including its dirt roads. 



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# TWO ROADS, BOTH TAKEN One Paved (or Chip-Sealed)

SOME GOOD NEWS, MAYBE ...

By Seth Kershner

In April, an ugly trifecta of snow, rain, and frost caused major headaches for Sandisfield residents and their road crew.

However, some good news may be in store for folks on Cold Spring Road.

Last fall energy giant Kinder Morgan committed in writing to chip sealing the road in order to repair the damage done by heavy equipment during pipeline construction over the past two years. (Chip sealing, a less expensive procedure used to resurface roads, was recently used on stretches of West Street and Town Hill Road.)

While Kinder Morgan is not contractually bound to fix the road, Select Board Chairman John Skrip and other town officials hope that Kinder Morgan will agree to upgrade their offer and instead of chip sealing, resurface Cold Spring Road with blacktop. “Chip seal is something I’ll have to redo in six or seven years,” Highway Superintendent Bobby O’Brien said in response to questions from the Times. “But with blacktop you can walk away and not worry about it for another twenty years.”

O’Brien also noted that in this case the difference between chip seal and blacktop is \$180,000: small change for the nation’s largest pipeline company, which routinely posts many millions in annual profits.

O’Brien has asked Rep. Smitty Pignatelli (D-Lenox) to pass along the blacktop request to Attorney General Maura Healey, who has been acting informally as a mediator between Kinder Morgan and the town.

In other news, work on Rugg Bridge is nearing completion. “The only thing we’re waiting on now is the deck to be delivered,” O’Brien reported. The town is also waiting on an estimate for painting the bridge. “We’re right on schedule and expect that it will be open for traffic in mid-June,” O’Brien added.

Of course, during the months-long detour, little River Road has taken a beating and will need repairs when the weather warms up. While this is on the highway department’s docket, O’Brien



April 2018: The new and repaired steel frame, ready for the decking to arrive. Decking? We don’t need no decking! Throw ¾” plywood on it and we’d be good to go!

Photo: Setsuko Winchester

clarified: “as far what’s going to be done with that road depends on capital funds.”

Which is why the Massachusetts Senate’s recent approval of a three-year, \$600 million Chapter 90 bill came as welcome news. Commonwealth towns receive Chapter 90 funds annually based on miles of roadway and other factors. Unfortunately, these funds – which are a critical part of Sandisfield’s highway department budget for road maintenance – have been cut quite a bit over the past ten years. The Senate bill, approved unanimously on April 11, earmarks \$326,482 for Sandisfield – a sum slightly less than what the town received last year.

“Western Massachusetts has severe regional transportation infrastructure needs,” Sen. Adam Hinds (D-Pittsfield) noted in a press release, “especially after this long, tough winter – and local budgets are impacted as municipal officials try to maintain

roads and bridges in a state of good repair.”

In a phone conversation with the Times, Sen. Hinds said that his priority this year was to go beyond Chapter 90 and set up a supplementary “culvert fund” for towns to draw on. “This is important,” he said, “because too many towns I represent have culverts in need and they don’t qualify for Chapter 90 due to technicalities.”

Sen. Hinds also sympathized with residents who feel that those who hold the purse strings in Boston do not understand the infrastructure needs of rural communities. “I don’t want Massachusetts to be a tale of two states, where it’s winner take all in the east while folks struggle to keep their lights on out west.”



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# Promises, Promises

## AND STILL NO PLAN B

By Jean Atwater-Williams

We've been here before. Just last year, the town pinned all its Broadband hopes on Frontier Communications with no "Plan B" in place. In fact, the Select Board voted to withdraw from WiredWest saying it was "too confusing" to simultaneously pursue or even entertain more than one option.

The Frontier deal fell apart. No surprise, but no disappointment, either. Frontier would have been bad for Sandisfield. This plan would have resulted in millions of our tax and personal dollars flowing to a giant telecom for a network we would neither own nor control. We would be at Frontier's mercy, forced to subscribe for 15 years.

Despite Sandisfield's town leaders' single-minded infatuation with Frontier, the MBI's Flexible Grant Program continued to list Sandisfield as "unserved." As a result, with no action by Sandisfield, three proposals were submitted for the town: Westfield Gas and Electric, Matrix, and Crocker Communications.

Westfield's proposal would have the town funding, owning, maintaining, and operating the network – a multi-million-dollar, labor-intensive option, but one with the most control and potential for income. The state allocation of \$1.2 million would come to the town to defray construction expenses.

The Matrix proposal would require the town to be responsible for "make ready" costs, which the town would have to front, but would be reimbursed by

the state out of the \$1.2 million state allocation for Sandisfield (a process similar to Chapter 90 road money). Plus, on an ongoing basis, the town would be responsible for pole rental. Matrix would build the network with its own capital and would own, maintain, and operate the network.

The Crocker proposal, however, is what the Broadband Committee and the Select Board have voted to pursue. In this scenario, Sandisfield's \$1.2 million grant allocation from the state goes directly to Crocker. The company says they will build and own the network with that money (OUR money) and cover the town as far as that money will go. Crocker estimates they can wire 50-60 percent of the town with those funds.

In order to do 96 percent of the town (the percentage the two other vendors are committing to), Crocker says they will need an additional \$990,000. And that doesn't include installing conduit to wire Otis Wood Lands, which is a challenge unto itself (and too complex to address here).

Under the Crocker plan, subscribers would pay for installation (a \$500-\$750 one-time cost for driveways up to 150 feet, with an additional fee for beyond 150 feet) plus monthly service anywhere from around \$86 to \$149 plus taxes (depending on take rate and services).

Crocker is applying for federal funds (FCC CAF and USDA funds) to make up the shortfall needed to wire 96 percent of the town. Broadband Committee Chair Jeff Bye reported at the April 5 Select Board meeting that Crocker is "75 percent sure they will get the money." Crocker's written proposal states that obtaining these funds is "not certain."

So what if they don't get the grants? What is Plan B? Select Board chairman John Skrip admitted there isn't one. He assured townspeople that the Crocker deal has an escape clause if they don't get the federal funding. When pressed as to whether the Select Board would proceed with the project if it included less than 96 percent coverage, Skrip said "We wouldn't do that." Jeff Bye echoed that sentiment.

It's clear town leaders want no ownership of the network, nor any responsibility for ongoing management. They simply want a no-cost, no-hassle solution. And if Crocker gets the federal grants, the Crocker solution would meet those requirements.

But if Crocker DOES NOT get these funds, and the town decides to bond for the shortfall, there would most certainly be a cost – at least \$990,000 plus interest, and probably more, as Crocker's cost estimates appear to be unrealistically low as compared to the other vendors' proposals.

The Crocker solution is the lowest cost solution ONLY if Crocker receives enough federal money to build out 96 percent of the town. If Crocker is unsuccessful in this, the Select Board should exercise its escape clause and pursue Matrix as its Plan B.

A spreadsheet analyzing the three options available to Sandisfield can be found at [sandisfieldtimes.org/2018BroadbandComparison.pdf](http://sandisfieldtimes.org/2018BroadbandComparison.pdf)

Responses to MBI's Flexible Grant Program can be viewed here: [broadband.masstech.org/last-mile-programs/program-unserved-towns/flexible-grant-program](http://broadband.masstech.org/last-mile-programs/program-unserved-towns/flexible-grant-program).

*Jean Atwater-Williams, who owns and operates BizTech Associates, an IT support and services company, has worked to bring broadband to Sandisfield since 2008. She served on the Sandisfield Technology and Broadband committees, the South Berkshire Technology Committee, and, until 2016 was the town's appointed representative to the MBI and to WiredWest.*

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### Out on a Limb: an op-ed

*Subjects should be interesting to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents. Address either PO Box 584, Sandisfield, or email [editor@sandisfieldtimes.org](mailto:editor@sandisfieldtimes.org)*

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# Next Steps for Broadband

By Tom Christopher

Sandisfield's hopes for broadband internet took a hit in early March when Frontier Communications withdrew its offer to connect the town. Since then, however, thanks to the Flexible Grant Program of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, three new players proposed solutions for the town. On April 5, the Select Board, at the recommendation of Sandisfield's Broadband Committee, voted to pursue the solution proposed by Crocker Communications and its partner, the Japanese technology company Fujitsu.

Crocker's proposal offered a number of advantages over its competing bidders, Matrix Communications and Westfield Gas & Electric.

Crocker, a communications firm of Greenfield and Springfield, Massachusetts, and its partner will – at no cost to Sandisfield – design, construct, own, operate, and maintain a Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) network for the town. Once construction is completed, Crocker will be responsible for all costs associated with network operations and maintenance.

Because it has received a favorable assessment from MBI, Crocker is eligible to receive the full \$1.23 million MBI grant allocated for the town. Crocker estimates, however, that the grant will cover the cost of connecting only 60 percent of the housing units in town.

An additional \$990,000 must be raised to extend the fiber-optic cables to 96 percent of Sandisfield's residences, which is the MBI target figure. Crocker plans to acquire the additional funds through grants from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), both of which are offering money to support broadband deployment into rural communities across the country.

If the FCC and USDA funds are not forthcoming, noted Selectman John Skrip, then Sandisfield will be able to withdraw from any agreement with Crocker Communications without cost and re-assess the available options.

"If they get these federal funds, we're in great shape," Jeff Bye, Broadband Committee Chairman said in an article in *The Berkshire Eagle*. "If not, we'll have to revisit our decision. But I'm confident." He added that Crocker feels it is a strong likelihood they will get both grants.

Neighboring Tolland as well decided to go with the Crocker plan, which also depends on the provider receiving federal grants.

The Sandisfield portion of Otis Wood Lands will be included in the 96 percent MBI target figure, but Crocker's cost estimate does not cover the cost of installing underground conduit in the complex, which is the only way a provider can string fiber there. Crocker's cost estimate assumes either existing utility poles or existing conduit, and the Wood Lands' conduit has yet to be installed. If the conduit is not in place by the time Crocker is ready to run fiber in that part of town a wireless approach will have to be considered. Because Sandisfield has 120 housing units in the Wood Lands and Otis 100, the solution will require collaboration between both towns.

The speed of transmission Crocker is offering is fast at 1 gigabit per second (Gbps) both downstream and upstream and will be much faster than the service currently provided by Verizon DSL.

The estimated cost of a residential hookup will be \$500, plus an as-yet undetermined additional charge

for driveways longer than 150 feet. The monthly fee for service will be in the neighborhood of \$100. For an additional \$15, Voice Over the Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone service will be available to subscribers. The VOIP service will eliminate the need for existing hard-line telephone service now provided by Verizon.

There is no estimate yet for start or finish dates, as a lot depends on whether Crocker is successful in acquiring the necessary funding via the federal grants.

The town will meet soon with MBI and Crocker to draft an action plan to identify the responsibilities and tasks to be undertaken by each party, per the Flexible Grant Program process. As of this report, the first meeting has not been scheduled. 

## Open House at New NCCC Building

By Bill Price

Did you watch the year-long construction of the new building in Winsted near the Route 8 on-ramp? It's finished, and you are invited Saturday, May 5, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., to visit the brand new Joyner Health Science Center at Northwest Connecticut Community College.

The building will house the NCCC Veterinary Technology program on the first floor and Allied Health programs on the second.

Demonstrations at the open house will include interactive activities on pet care and health topics. East Coast Assistance Dogs and Campion Ambulance will provide hands on demonstrations. 

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# Town Systems Streamlined

## NEW BUDGET PROCESS; NEW TOWN MEETING WARRANT FORMAT

By Joe Gelinas, Chairman, Finance Committee

Perhaps you have already seen the warrant for the May 12 Annual Town Meeting and are wondering, "What happened to the 70 or more articles we used to have?"

Here is an explanation of what's different and how we got there. First, what differences do you do see? And second, what changes were made behind the scene?

Sandisfield residents have been asking "Can't we have fewer articles on the annual town meeting warrant?" The warrant presented at the May 2017 Annual Town Meeting contained 60 articles related to the annual operating budgets for town departments, boards, and committees.

The warrant for this year's Town Meeting contains just 26 articles. Twelve are for the same operating budgets, thirteen transfer money between accounts, and Article 26 establishes a bylaw to regulate solar installations.

How was this done? Two things happened.

First, some accounts were gathered together into one larger account. For example, the budget for computer hardware, software, network, and website are now contained in the "Technology" salary and expense accounts rather than listed separately.

Second, accounts were gathered together into groups of related accounts and presented in one warrant article. For example, the Highway Department's nine accounts are now contained in one warrant article. The details are still there. We still show the dollars requested for FY19 for salaries and expenses, but we also show in the same article the amount appropriated for each account in FY18 and the amount that the budget request has increased, decreased, or is unchanged since last year.

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Number of  
Town Meeting articles  
consolidated from 60 to 26.

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Other accounts that were consolidated include the following: Employee benefits and employee insurance is now included in each department's salary request. The salary for the secretary to the Select Board is now included in the Select Board salaries account. Repair of town building was consolidated with operations and maintenance of town property. In all cases the FY18 to FY19 comparison is facilitated by restating the FY18 numbers as if the consolidated accounts had been budgeted as such last year.

The final thing that you see in this new process is that the Annual Town Meeting Warrant was published without the town's Annual Report. The Warrant is now mailed to all registered voters, published on the Town's website and is available at Town Hall. The Annual Report is only available on the Town's website and by request from the Town Clerk.

How will this change the process at the Annual Town meeting?

There will be fewer motions and seconds to those motions. But the ability to request amendments to the proposed budgets will remain the same.

Bottom line. The same information is presented but in a more consolidated form. The process at the town meeting should be simpler and quicker without losing the ability to request changes to any budget request.

What changes were made to the budget process that are not so obvious to the voter?

A new budget calendar was adopted in August 2017 by town administrators and the Finance Committee. This calendar lays out the steps in the budget process and delineates responsibilities for each step.

Next, a budget submission form using Excel was developed. This form was based on the old Word-based request form but required more detail about past expenditures and budget requests. For example,

### YANNER PARK FUNDS

Articles 18 and 19 on the Town Warrant ask voters to transfer \$49,816 to the Yanner Park Stabilization Fund. This money is \$13,816 from the Stabilization Fund (actually the original Yanner Park Fund) and \$35,000 from Free Cash (part of the Yanner Park tree-harvest revenue of \$92,245).

- Bill Price

salary requests were accompanied by a schedule of persons, hourly rates, and hours. In the past, expense requests did include some detail but may also have been submitted "level funded" meaning "we think we can do the same next year." This year the details of past expenses for FY16 and FY17 were calculated and projected forward for the FY19 request.

What does additional detail mean to the taxpayer?

The departments, boards, and committees better understand what it costs to run their operations. The Select Board and Finance Committee can better assess the budget requests and recommend reductions as well as increases to the budget requests.

Going forward all involved in the budget process will be better equipped to prepare and evaluate budget requests. And, the taxpayer can be a bit more comfortable that the requests that they vote on are reasonable.

What's coming in the future?

As soon as the Town Meeting is completed, the new Select Board, the Finance Committee, the Town Clerk, and other interested parties will meet to evaluate this new process and make changes as needed. As soon as Fiscal Year 18 ends (FY18 runs from July 1, 2017 until June 30, 2018), all departments, boards, and committees can document and assess their FY18 spending so that they can begin to think about the next budget cycle. Finally, the Finance Committee and Select Board will develop a process for capital budgeting that will commence in FY19. ♡





Charlie Pease with his wife, Jennifer.

**Background: Charles A. Pease**

*I was born and raised in Sandisfield. I am employed at M.T. Cavanaugh out of Sheffield as a plumbing and heating installer. My wife Jennifer is a history teacher in Springfield. We were recently married and are building our forever home on South Main Street. We are looking forward to raising our family in Sandisfield.*

**STATEMENT: CHARLES A. PEASE**

My family history in Sandisfield dates to the 1700's. Being a lifelong resident, you can be certain I have the best interest of this town at heart. I will bring enthusiasm, honesty, passion, and common sense to the table that will help us thrive in the future while not forgetting to preserve the tradition we all love about this town.

Growing up here, I have always felt a strong sense of community, which we will continue to build on. I look forward to the opportunity to serve this town and the community.

With Rugg bridge, broadband, and the highway department being decided, the next big step in the right direction is rebuilding our infrastructure. Route 57 and Route 183 being the heart of our roads and two main arteries to our town, I feel they need to be addressed sooner rather than later. We need a solid clear plan on how to repair/rebuild all our town roads whether they are dirt or paved. This is critical for new grow within our town.

Our town buildings are outdated and need to be more energy efficient as has been stated in our town's Master Plan, each building needs to be addressed individually with decisions to maximize the efficiency for our town. I believe it is time to act and follow through with our towns Master Plan and to start rebuilding and updating our community. By doing this we will be helping all our local businesses grow and in return our town will grow as well.

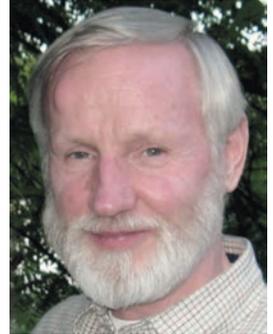
As a Select Board member I feel that the town's people concerns should be addressed with a face-to-face conversation, not a phone call when they're upset and a plan to be devised to resolve whichever concern/issue they may have. The input and concerns of the tax payers is critical of the future growth of our town.

- The ways the Master Plan and my ideas are similar in that:
- We need to rebuild/replace our municipal buildings
- We need to repair or pave our town roads
- We need to capitalize on our town's natural resources to help our economy grow and thrive.
- The Master Plan contains many ideas to help our town grow for the future. 

**All of the candidates were asked to comment on the following:**  
 With recent decisions having been made regarding the rebuilding of the town garage, broadband, and rehabbing the Rugg Bridge, what do you see as the town's major issues? What needs changing? How does the Town's Master Plan fit into your ideas?

**Background: George Riley**

*My wife Annalee and I have lived in Sandisfield over 21 years. We've raised five children and five foster children; all of them are now adults. I've enjoyed a successful career as a nonprofit administrator, grant writer, and fundraiser, and I've been blessed to have acquired considerable experience:*



- *I've been an Executive Director and Director of Development with many organizations, and I know how to manage people and organizations effectively;*
- *I've been on several building committees, planning and supervising multi-million dollar-plus projects;*
- *I serve on the board of directors of several organizations, both local and national;*
- *I have been treasurer of numerous organizations large and small, and know how to read a financial statement;*
- *I am an accomplished grant writer and know how to oversee the construction and submission of a successful grant application.*
- *I'm now semi-retired as a nonprofit consultant with the time and energy to share my skills and experience to help our town and our residents have a fruitful life here.*

**STATEMENT: GEORGE RILEY**

I don't have a preconceived opinion on every issue in town. I believe that one of the most important aspects of a Selectman's work is to listen carefully to our residents, then do the research and homework needed to make an informed judgement. One thing I do know: we can either plan actively for our future, or we can ignore it and let it be done to us, with usually unfortunate results.

A lot of people, including the Strategic Planning Committee, the Master Plan Steering Committee, consultants and many community members, have spent a lot of time, effort, and money to create a Master Plan for Sandisfield, but I see little evidence of it being used to guide our decisions. I know many of our families and retirees are struggling to pay their taxes, and we all know our roads are in desperate condition, and our town buildings need replacing: but I think we must have, and do have, income opportunities to address these critical needs while limiting our taxes.

If we keep putting off the hard choices facing us, we will not just be standing still: we will actually be going backwards. Going forward will cost us time and effort, but doing nothing will cost us far more in the long run.

- Our town can become an even more

vibrant, active and prosperous community, one that we, our children and visitors alike will be proud to be a part of. I believe our Master Plan is an important part of achieving that goal.

- I will work hard to take responsible care of our natural and financial resources. This includes:
- Monitoring how your taxpayer money is spent and insisting on accountability when it is spent;
- Getting more access to grant money and other income;
- Maintaining the traditions we cherish and the sense of community we feel here.

I also believe that serving our community effectively needs integrity, the ability to listen to everyone whatever their point of view, and above all respect for every member. I'm not beholden to any particular group in town, and I feel that what unites us is more important than any differences. I would regard serving on the Select Board as an honor, and I promise that if elected I will work hard to get the job done. Most importantly, I will continue to uphold the ideals of integrity, listening and respect which I have worked for all my life.

If you have any questions, concerns or ideas, please call me at 269-6826. I'd love to talk with you and learn from you. 

**All of the candidates were asked to comment on the following:** With recent decisions having been made regarding the rebuilding of the town garage, broadband, and rehabbing the Rugg Bridge, what do you see as the town's major issues? What needs changing? How does the Town's Master Plan fit into your ideas?



**Background: Jeff Gray**

*For those who don't know me, my name is Jeffrey Gray and I have previously had the honor of serving you as one of your Select Board members for seven years. But I want you to know more about me.*

*I moved here over twenty years ago to build a life and raise my family with my wife Sonja (Annecharico), and that is just what I have done. I now have two children in college and a third finishing up middle school. I know the challenges of building a life and raising children*

*in this beautiful, rural yet challenging part of Berkshire County. I did not move here after having a career elsewhere and raising a family in some other location. I moved here, I set my roots here, and I have never looked back. I have come to appreciate the many positives that Sandisfield has to offer as well as learn the shortcomings and challenges.*

**STATEMENT: JEFF GRAY**

Some of you may wonder why I did not run for reelection the last go-round and why I took a year off. The answer is simple. I needed some rest, and it was clear that my single vote would not be enough to alter the direction the board was going. I was not running from the office or decisions that I took part in as is evident from this new bid for reelection. With two seats up, it is a new day and a new opportunity to make some positive changes. With this I ask for your support this May and welcome your input.

The following are some thoughts on some recent issues that have consumed our town. Sandisfield needs to move purposely and cautiously into the future, but move it must.

The town and its Select Board needs to be systematic and purposeful in its use of taxpayer dollars. The Select Board must also be fair and equitable in its decisions as well. It is understandable that priorities must be set but decisions cannot be made that advance a small group's interest, or focused solely on the dollars, equity must be maintained whether it be maintenance of bridges and roads or installation of new technology that access our residents' property, homes, and businesses.

Whether our initiatives advance public safety, economic development, or education, equity must be served. We cannot afford to treat any one sector above the other as we are all in this together as taxpayers. We cannot afford to sacrifice what we have in pursuit of the grandiose.

Yes, we have a Master Plan. This document has a wealth of information and outlines a direction for us, but we need to remember this is a living document. We should be mindful of its contents work towards its recommendations, but remember it is an advisory document and does not impose regulations upon us.

I implore all to become active or at the least make your voices heard. I know it is hard to find the time in our busy lives but involvement comes in many forms the simplest of which involves only a moment of your time on voting day. 🗳️

**Background:**

**Brian O'Rourke**

*My wife Sadie and I first discovered Sandisfield in 2000. We fell in love with the area and decided this was the place we wanted to raise our six children so we purchased land on West Street and built our house in 2004.*

*There is a strong sense of community in our "spread out" little town and I feel compelled to do my part and run for Select Board. I believe that with my 33-plus years in construction with over 27 years owning my own company that my experience will be an asset to the town. We are embarking on some of the largest construction projects the town has seen in years and having someone with experience maintaining schedules/budgets is crucial to the financial well-being of our town. I have that experience.*

*I feel that every resident's questions/concerns should be heard and addressed with respect and the desire for understanding. I want to thank you in advance for your vote of confidence in the May election.*



**STATEMENT: BRIAN O'ROURKE**

Some of the major issues still faced by the town beyond the new DPW garage, broadband, and the Rugg Brook Bridge are:

The deteriorating infrastructure of our other town-owned buildings, they lack both in space and technology what is required to properly and efficiently run our town. The buildings are not energy efficient and the cost to upgrade them would far outweigh the savings created. This is discussed in the Master Plan created for the Town; I believe we need to begin planning for how and when we fund these improvements/replacements.

The second major issue I believe our Town is facing is the condition of our roads. Route 57 is facing major undertakings in cost and time to get it paved and have proper drainage installed to add longevity to the paving job. This coupled with the conditions of our dirt roads and the facts that New Hartford Road was never completed are projects we need plan for.

What needs changing?

We need to make sure our DPW has the proper staffing and equipment needed to perform the tasks our Town requires of it.

We need to explore ways to secure grants and funding available to help us with such duties and make sure we have a clear understanding of what it takes to accomplish this.

We need to capitalize on the natural resources available to us by attracting outdoor enthusiasts to kayak and fly fish our waters and hike our trails, hopefully encouraging them to spend time and money in our restaurants/taverns.

Town's Master Plan:

I believe the Town's Master Plan and my ideas are very similar in several areas:

- The upgrading or replacing of municipal buildings to be efficient and effective for governing our town
- The repair of drainage and paving of our roads to create a better roadway system throughout town
- Capitalizing on the natural resources and assets of our town to help create a better financial future for our town
- These are but a few of the very important aspects of our Master Plan and how we can build a better future for our town. 🗳️



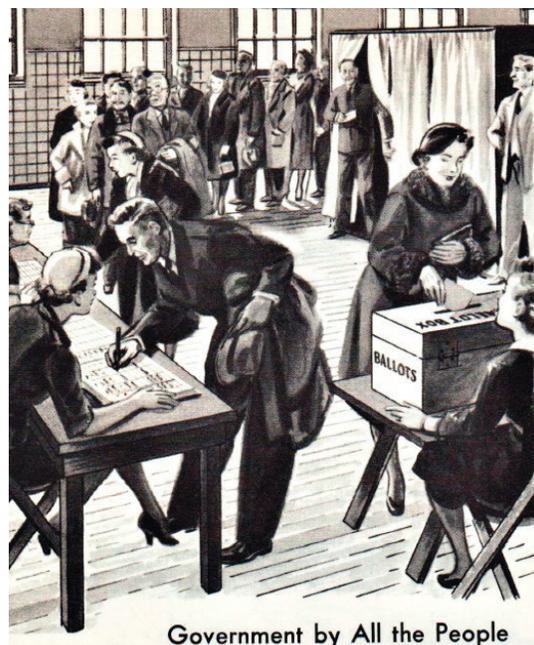
### Background: John Skrip

Originally from Waterbury, I moved to Sandisfield with my wife Rosanne in 1998. We have a son John who resides in Natick, Massachusetts, with his wife and their two children. I'm a retired educator who has served as a chemistry teacher, science department chair, and assistant principal. I've also been an adjunct faculty chemistry teacher at local colleges since 1981. I still teach chemistry at NVCC in Connecticut and at BCC in Great Barrington.

I received my BA from Sacred Heart University in 1968, my Masters from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in 1980, and my Master in Educational Leadership from Central Connecticut State University in 1981.

In 1978, working with two partners, I started American Mortgage and Realty LLC, a state-licensed and bonded mortgage company. American Mortgage, located in Waterbury, is still an active mortgage company.

I've held several leadership positions in Sandisfield, including school board member and chairperson, cultural council member and chairperson, town moderator, and recently Select Board Chair. I recently served on the broadband and shared services committees. I'm a member of the board of directors of the Sandisfield Arts Center.



### STATEMENT: JOHN SKRIP

I feel that there is still work to be done and discussed this in the annual report. I will state some of the items here as well.

There are several irritating issues that have been identified and brought forward that need to be addressed; examples: residents failing to purchase dump stickers, illegal use of trailers on property, etc. We need to establish formats, procedures on how to take care of these violations, as we know letters to residents don't work to solve the problems. Task forces made up of departments that have the authority to deal with these issues will be formed to analyze and recommend to the public their suggestions. Then, what is put into place must be followed consistently to make noticeable changes.

Without a doubt it is time to see that all our By-Laws are in place; that they are clear, and the documentation is consistent with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts laws.

The Select Board, with the DPW staff, will set aside time to develop a plan to systematically fix our roads. We need permanent solutions, and we need to start with the worst of these roads and move forward until we have a town where houses can be accessible with reasonable safety.

Three of the major points in the Master Plan deal with Infrastructure, Economic Development and Housing. Although work is progressing on some of these, the next few years we need to focus on creating task forces to move forward on increasing our tax base and revenue stream and to continue to research elder housing. We have begun talks with Construct, Inc. We continue to gather data on how, where and when to pursue these identified needs.

I've enjoyed my three years as Selectman and Select Board chair and look forward to working for all residents and taxpayers of Sandisfield. ♡



## For Re-election, Unopposed ELECTION, MONDAY, MAY 14

Moderator, 1 year  
Simon Winchester

Board of Health, 3 years  
Roger Kohler

Board of Assessors, 3 years  
Kathleen Burrows

School Committee, 3 years  
Billie Anderson Pachulski

Planning Board, 5 years  
Willard Platt

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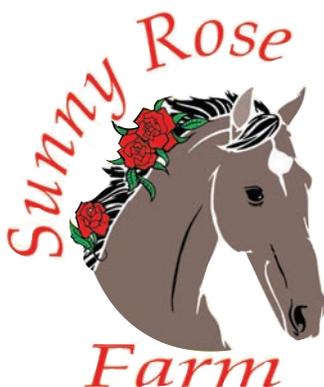
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## The Librarian's Corner

By Terry Spohnholz

**Library Hours:** Monday and Tuesday, 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Wednesday, 2:00-5:00 p.m.; Thursday, 5:00-7:00 p.m.; Saturday, 9:00 a.m.-noon.

*Spring drew on ... and a greenness grew over those brown beds, which, freshening daily, suggested the thought that hope traversed them at night and left each morning brighter traces of her steps."*

—Charlotte Brontë

Spring where are you? It seems that those lush green buds and green grass pushing through the patches of brown are taking their time this year. But the days are getting longer and warmer, so spring brings the hope of riotous colors, grass that beckons naked toes, and, of course, the warbling of songbirds. So cuddle into a comfy chair with warm sunlight bathing you in its golden rays, find a book or two, and indulge. You deserve it for having survived another New England winter.

### New Books in the Library

*The Escape Artist* by Brad Meltzer. An exciting thriller. The plot twists and turns, is full of amazing characters. Treat yourself to this gripping novel featuring Nola Brown, the Army's artist-in-residence who is supposed to be dead after having left a secret military base in Alaska. But she is not. She is on the run.

*The House of Broken Angels* by Luis Alberto Urrea. Laugh and cry your way through the story of the de La Cruzes. A powerful and unforgettable portrait of one Mexican-American family and the American dream.

*Shattered Mirror* by Iris Johansen. Forensic sculptor Eve Duncan is thrown into a deadly game of intrigue when she receives a package containing a skull and a two-sided mirror. This is an explosive, high-stakes thriller.

*The Fallen* by David Baldacci. Baldacci is a wonderful storyteller who incorporates great characters into baffling conspiracies. He takes on small-town America, capturing both good and bad elements, demonstrating why these small towns are worth saving. He has explored this before, but it still has potency and relevance.

### Happenings at the Library

**Every Monday morning from 9:30 to 11:00: Community Play Group** in the Sandisfield Community Center (below the library). Free play and table top activities and trip upstairs for story time in the library

**Saturday, May 12 at 2:00 p.m., "Under One Sky"** with storyteller Davis Bates. The Sandisfield Library will celebrate spring, reading, and the diverse heritage of the New England Region. The program will involve the audience in a variety of cultural traditions with sing-alongs, playing music with spoons, and folk tales. Supported by the Sandisfield Cultural Council.

**Arts and Crafts with Lynn Rubenstein Saturday, May 19, 10 a.m.-noon.** It's always clever and fun for ages 2-12. Call the library for more information: 258-4966.

**Saturday, June 30 at 1:30 p.m., Ed the Wizard** returns for his Rocket Building Workshop. Learn the basics of flight, and test your skills. Workshop is geared for Grades 1 and up, limited to 30 patrons; please contact the library for more information: 258-4966.

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Moreover...

# Thinking About the Post Office Café

By Simon Winchester

An idea is born, and so far as I can tell just about everyone thinks it a rather good one.

We're going to try and open a small café in the Sandisfield Post Office, and at long last have somewhere in the village where we all can meet. A social center, if you like, for a community that sorely needs one. And if perhaps not in the loveliest building in town, then at least the most conveniently located, and the one place – aside from the dump – we are almost all regularly obliged to visit.

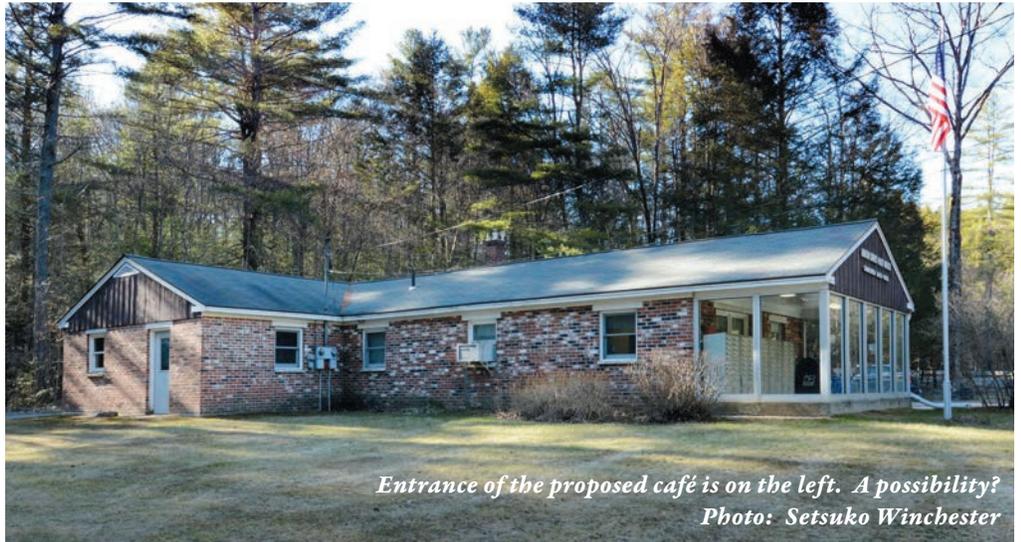
It was the Annecharico family who built the T-shaped brick building at 83 Sandisfield Road some twenty-odd years ago, on spec. The US Post Office entered into a lease five years later, taking the long upright of the T for its mailboxes and sorting room and the counter behind which dear Amy now sits, all good cheer and conversation, to dispense stamps and weigh parcels and print money orders.

Behind her, at the western side of the building, is the crossbar of the T, which has been empty and unused ever since it was built.

But maybe not any more. My wife Setsuko and I recently asked the Annecharicos for the key and took a look – and entered a surprisingly spacious room, four hundred square feet or so, framed out and fully wired, but otherwise raw and unfinished. We realized in a second that, without a doubt, we could construct inside an ideally-sited place to have coffee and baked goods, and maybe a good deal more.

The owning family have since agreed in principle that we could rent the space; and so ever since seeing it, we have developed the beginnings of a plan.

Start simple, we think. First, and employing the services of a local contractor, finish and decorate the room, install a furnace, a bathroom, and a utility room (the space for both already framed out), and create an awning on the sunny side of the building, for when the weather is suitable. Have one of our many local carpenters create one long main communal table, a few smaller tables and any number of chairs. Have local artists festoon the walls with pictures, and a local ceramicist provide cups and plates and tableware. Buy a simple coffee machine, a source of boiling water, supplies of the best locally-roasted



Entrance of the proposed café is on the left. A possibility?  
Photo: Setsuko Winchester

coffee we can find. Get in a selection of teas. Have a small refrigerator for milk, both to be used within and to be bought by the quart for those who've not Got Milk and don't wish an expedition to town.

Then, have local suppliers (unnamed in this wish-list, to spare blushes) arrange to showcase and leave their produce for sale in the café: we'll have flowers and garden plants from South Beech Plain Road, raw milk and butter, eggs and frozen pork from the organic farm on Dodd Road, lettuce and sprouts and carrots from the smallholding on Route 57, apples from Riiskas, soups frozen and fresh, from the legendary Soup Lady in Southfield.

And then, of course, the baker. We have identified a young lady who is eager beyond belief to bake for us, and to help, once her children have left for school, run the place. Staff will be tricky to find, we know, and questions remain as to whether we pay someone, or ask for volunteers, or simply have no staff at all – just a cash box, or a credit card swipecard thing, and ask people to launder their own cups once they're done. Much, in other words, to be decided.

Most notably: how to pay for all of this?

Well, first we need an estimate, and to that end I have asked a contractor – still no names just now

– to take an educated look around and offer up a figure. Then there will be the additional cost of provisioning the kitchen, jumping through all the licensing hoops that the town may require of us, and then dealing with the inevitable hiccups – will the building be ADA-compliant, for example? – that accompany the making of any publicly available space.

But should we get started? Is this a good idea? Do we want such a thing? Do we need such a thing? If we build it, will people come? And shall we raise the necessary monies by forming a village co-op, or by opening a crowd-funding website?

Let me know, please: sandisfieldpostofficecafe@gmail.com should reach me, and once enough of you have expressed an interest we'll meet physically, later this summer, and in the space itself, and decide how best to proceed.

I hope you think, as we do, that this a fine idea. And if it comes into being then there is one thing I will definitely pay for myself: a neon sign outside, proclaiming during open hours in bright orange and blue *Post Office Café*, lest there be any doubt that a community meeting place for Sandisfield has finally and at last been born. ☺

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# SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER



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SANDISFIELDARTSCENTER.ORG

## MAY

In the Gallery  
APRIL 28 - MAY 27  
Erika Crofut

SAT, MAY 5 6 PM \$88  
A BLACK & WHITE  
EVENT

*The Piano and the Building that  
Houses All 88 Keys.*

Enjoy cocktails at 6, followed by a  
delicious dinner prepared by our very  
own chef, Adam Manacher.

To benefit the Sandisfield Arts Center  
(reservations required)

SAT, MAY 12 4 PM \$10  
Sarah Jackson on  
Age and Beauty

SAT, MAY 19 7 PM \$15  
children under 12 - \$5

Family Cabaret with  
Anni Crofut

Featuring acts by performing artists  
from the Berkshires. All proceeds  
support the Arts Center 2018 season  
of programs.



These programs are supported in part by a grant  
from the Sandisfield Cultural Council, a local agency  
which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural  
Council, a state agency.

## A Black and White Event

ARTS CENTER DINNER/  
BENEFIT, MAY 5

By Marcella Smith

The theme for this year's Dinner and Benefit Auction at the Sandisfield Arts Center is *The Piano and the Building That Houses all 88 Keys: A Black and White Event*.

The Center needs to replace its current baby grand piano, which after serious use and drastic summer and winter changes in temperature is unplayable and beyond repair. A friend and neighbor has offered to donate a Steinway baby grand, but it's in need of repair and restoration to bring it up to concert performance standards.

The Center has received a grant to cover a portion of the costs for repair, tuning, and transporting the donated Steinway. Proceeds from the benefit auction will contribute to the repair of not only the piano, but the building, which is over 175 years old and always in need of repair and maintenance.

## Come to the Arts Center

MORE COMMUNITY AND  
FAMILY EVENTS THAN EVER

By Rosanne Skrip, Co-President

The Sandisfield Arts Center is proud of its offerings this season. All of you – members, community, and volunteers – contributed ideas for a program we hope has something for everyone.

Free movie nights (with old-fashioned popped popcorn) hosted by Bogart and Tina Muller begin Friday, June 8. The movies start early so kids can enjoy and still get to bed at a reasonable hour.

A big hit last year, the free Pumpkin Decorating event returns Saturday, October 27 at 11 a.m.

Throughout the season, performances with family interest usually have special children's prices.

## OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Neighbors at the **Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center** on Sandisfield Road hosted a pie social on April 3. Residents and staff and members of the Sandisfield Council on Aging sat down together to have some pie and coffee (or tea). The COA members baked the delicious pies and

everyone enjoyed sampling each one. Apple pie was voted the favorite.

This summer, for the fourth year, residents and staff at the Center are looking forward to participating in the All Out Adventures Cycling Program. This program is offered to veterans of all ages and abilities through support from the Veterans Administration in Leeds, Massachusetts. During the

The evening will begin with hors d'oeuvres, cocktails, and a raffle in the Art Gallery, followed by a dinner upstairs prepared by Chef Adam Manacher. A live auction will take place after dinner.

Bidders will have the opportunity to buy their favorite keys or a chord or two if they wish during the cocktail hour. Gary Miller of the Release the Penguins Jazz Quartet will entertain on the vibraphone.

The dinner/benefit will be at the Sandisfield Arts Center at Hammertown Road near Sandisfield Road (Rt. 57) at 6 p.m., Saturday, May 5. Tickets are \$88 (the number of keys on a piano) and may be purchased at [www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org).

The Arts Center is funded primarily by private donors and with grants from the Massachusetts and local Cultural Councils. Operating mostly by volunteers, the Center serves as a community hub and as an arts destination for the wider tri-state region. It offers free community gatherings and events, concerts, theatre performances, art exhibits, and other arts-related events from April through December. ♡

Monthly art shows in the Gallery are always free. Leading off the season, artist Erika Crofut's imaginative, engaging work runs through May.

Local authors will be featured on several Saturdays, including Miriam Karmel and Tom Christopher on Saturday July 14, at 4 p.m., and the ever-popular Simon Winchester on Saturday, November 24, 4 p.m.

We're especially proud to celebrate the publication of *Soil and Shul in the Berkshires* with a special event with author Lorraine German and Klezmer music, Saturday September 29, 7:30 p.m.

This year we're also starting a new volunteer program and hope more of you, our Sandisfield neighbors, will join our committees and help us plan for the future. We look forward to seeing you at the Arts Center and encourage you to pick up a season brochure at one of our local advertisers, including Villa Mia, the New Boston Inn, or A&M Auto. ♡

summer, a few residents and staff members will spend an afternoon together every other week cycling on trails at Look Park or the Norwottuck Rail Trail in Hadley. The program is designed for participants to enjoy the outdoors while getting exercise. Tandem tricycles are set up for a resident and staff member to cycle together. The Center reports that it is happy to participate in this wonderful activity. ♡

# From Your Select Board

*By John Skrip, Chairman*

May is an important month for Sandisfield. It typically brings us sun and flowers and warm weather; no guarantees this year.

It is also a month for the Annual Town Meeting and this year an election. I ask all our residents to attend the annual meeting to be held on Saturday, May 12, as the Town Hall staff members have worked hard to put together the necessary items for review. It is the time to hear about your town.

You will note that the presentation of the budget will be in a new format allowing for more transparency. To give you a clearer picture and better understanding of each department there is a format change to show a consolidation of expenses and there will be fewer articles. I think you will appreciate the revised presentation.

The Finance Committee will be conducting a de-briefing in June to assess the new budget process put in place. (See a detailed outline of the new budget processes by Finance Committee chairman Joe Gelinis on page 8.) The committee will review what worked and what needs improvement for next year. They have gathered input from committee members, town hall staff, and department heads.

The election will be held in Old Town Hall on Monday May 14. Please exercise your right to vote.

I look forward to hearing from you; continue to contact me at 413-258-4788 or by email at johnskripjr@gmail.com. 📧

## Sandisfield Historical Society



*By Ann Wald, President*

### Sandisfield "Antiques Roadshow"

We will be hitting the ground running this year with our own version of the popular PBS Roadshow – Appraisal Day.

Bring that old mantle clock, your grandmother's diamond pin, your dad's old rifles and pistols, your uncle's favorite chair to the Historical Society's meeting hall on May 5 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. David LeBeau, a noted local appraiser, will offer his estimate on the



value (or not) of your possessions. David is a tough but fair judge.

Since this is a fund-raising event – roofwork and bathroom and kitchen – we'll charge \$5.00 per item. Baked goods and coffee will be available for purchase. At the Society's meeting hall on Sandybrook Turnpike (Rt. 183) at South Sandisfield Road.

At the same time/place, Marsha Patterson and Terry Ignace's TerMar Triangle Farmstand will be open across the road for locally grown bacon and pork roasts, applesauce, maple syrup, and honey. No vegetables yet, for sure.

On Saturday June 6 we'll begin our regular monthly meetings at 11 a.m., at the meeting house. Stay after the meeting for a potluck lunch. Everyone is welcome.

Contact me with ideas and how you would be willing to help us this summer. I'm at 413-258-4415 or [annaw2@verizon.net](mailto:annaw2@verizon.net). 📧

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# Watch Out for the Turtles!

By Ron Bernard



A wood turtle crossing a Sandisfield highway, slowly.  
Photo: Cindy Ragusa

It is May and if you are a female turtle it is time to search for a place to lay your precious eggs. This is precarious business. Practically everything with four legs is a predator that wants to eat your eggs and maybe even you. Raccoons are a particular menace.

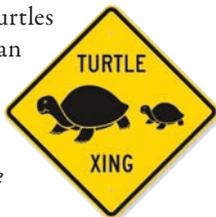
But an equally serious peril is road traffic.

Sandisfield has an abundance of great habitat for turtles, yet our 90 miles of roads that pass through those natural habitats are a terrible dilemma for these creatures which are considered so important to the health of the land.

Perhaps the most common species in this area is the wood turtle. Scientists are worried about the declining wood turtle population in the northeast due to loss of habitat, increasing predators, and, sadly, from being run over by cars, a cause of a large number of deaths every year.

Did you know that turtles are intelligent and can live to be 40 years or more? How incredibly sad it is to encounter one smashed on the road. Not only is that a life lost but consider the loss of generations of potential offspring. In each case would a little more attention by a driver have averted the tragedy?

Starting now and for the next few months, please be on the lookout for these amazing gentle creatures as they inch along on their quest to reproduce, so exposed on our roads. Don't be afraid to help one to cross the road. Even snapping turtles are basically harmless. You can easily move smaller species out of harm's way. *However, it is very important to orient them in the same direction they were heading.*



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# Comings and Goings

## Jason Skrip

Shown here with his older brother Jaden, Jason Skrip was born March 31. He was already 9 lbs., 7 oz., and 21" tall. His parents John Skrip and Zhu Lei, live in Natick, Massachusetts. His grandparents, John and Rosanne Skrip, live on North Main Street (Rt. 8) in Sandisfield.



## MARIE "GiGi" BESANCON

1923-2018

An obituary published by The Berkshire Edge announced that Marie "GiGi" Besancon of Otis died March 29 at the age of 95.

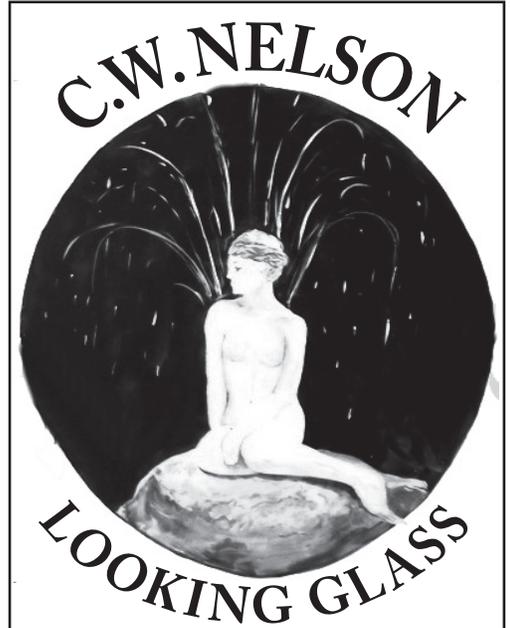
GiGi, who served as bookkeeper at Otis Ridge Ski Area for 60 years, was well known to many Sandisfield and Otis residents. She was active in the Otis Congregational Church and involved in many fundraising groups for the church, the town, missions programs, and church suppers. She will be remembered by many former students as the collector of lunch money for many years at the Otis Consolidated School.

GiGi's obituary reported: "She was a sweet woman who never changed throughout her dementia and she died peacefully and gently with her family all around her, very well taken care of and very well-loved."

She was predeceased in 2009 by her husband of 66 years, Fred Besancon. Among her survivors are her daughter, Anne-Marie Besancon and Paul Adams of Otis; her granddaughter, Christine and John Christinat and great-grandson Jacob Christinat, all of New Marlborough.

As well, the obituary reported, as "her faithful companion, Max the Yorkie, whose name she never forgot even when she didn't know her own."

Her funeral will be Saturday, May 5, at 11 a.m. at the First Congregational Church of Lee.



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ST - APRIL 18

# Building Community

Excerpt from *Soil & Shul in the Berkshires: The Untold Story of Sandisfield's Jewish Farm Colony*

By Lorraine German

The cooperative spirit that had developed between Jews and non-Jews in Sandisfield could be seen any number of ways. Farmers helped each other when weather threatened their hay crops, and they united to work toward common objectives. When a storm caused a washout on Town Hill Road in April 1936, Samuel Steinbauch, Max Margulies, and Benjamin Weiss joined Sandisfield native Charles Phelps and the other egg and dairy farmers along the road to write a strongly worded letter to the county commissioners after their complaints to the town selectmen fell on deaf ears.

Neighbors also looked out for each other, especially when times were hard. Alford Rowley, who owned a farm on Town Hill Road, knew that Ida Linder depended on summer boarders even more than usual during the Depression because her husband was so often out of work. When he heard she hadn't been able to rent her rooms, he sent a family with two children down to see her and they ended up renting for the whole season.

Better relations meant better outcomes when innocent mistakes and misunderstandings occurred. One of the more humorous misunderstanding involved David Pollock, who had partnered with Nathan and Hyman Pinsky to buy some property in Montville in 1915. Shortly afterward, David went out to mow the grass. Not knowing the exact boundaries of his property, David accidentally cut an acre belonging to his neighbor, Herbert Fargo, as well. Herbert was good-natured about the blunder, happy to have one less acre to cut.



## Appraisal Day!

Sandisfield Historical Society  
Kick-off of Spring Fund Drive

Appraiser **David LeBeau**

Bring your ceramics, weapons, furniture, and everything else

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Fireside Dining

# Now Hear This!

*Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.*

*Please send notices for Now Hear This! to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org.*

## MAY

**Playgroup** on Mondays from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m., ongoing at the Sandisfield Library Community Room (below the library). No pre-registration necessary. Suitable for children up to age 5 with their caregiver. The playgroup features a story time in the library. Led by Nina Carr.

**Qi Gong** on Mondays and Fridays at 11:00 a.m. Contact Linda (258-4816) or Nina (258-3314) for more information on location and to verify class is being held.

**Meet the Candidates** on Wednesday, May 2, at 12:00 p.m., at the Council on Aging meeting area, basement level at the Town Hall Annex, Route 57.

**Appraisal Day** on Saturday, May 5, at 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., at the Old Meeting House on Route 183 at South Sandisfield Road. David LeBeau will be the appraiser. \$5 an item.

**Annual Spring Dinner and Benefit Auction** on Saturday, May 5, beginning at 6:00 p.m., with cocktails, followed by a delicious dinner prepared by Adam Manacher at the Sandisfield Arts Center on 5 Hammertown Road, off Route 57 in Sandisfield. Ticket, \$88, must be pre-purchased at sandisfieldartscenter.org.

**Annual Town Meeting** on Saturday, May 12, at 10:00 a.m., at Fire Station #2 on Route 57.

**Under One Sky with Storyteller Davis Bates** on Saturday, May 12, at 2:00 p.m., at the Sandisfield Library. Celebrate spring, reading, and the diverse heritage of New England with sing-alongs, music, and folk tales. The program is supported by the Sandisfield Cultural Council.

**Age and Beauty Lecture/Discussion with Sarah Jackson** on Saturday, May 12, at 4:00 p.m., at the Sandisfield Arts Center located on 5 Hammertown Road, off Route 57 in Sandisfield. Sarah is a Jungian psychoanalyst, visual artist, and writer. This presentation is part of her developing work on the different aspects of beauty. \$10.

**New Boston Church Service** on Sunday, May 13, at 10:00 a.m., at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57. All are welcome.

**Annual Town Election** on Monday, May 14, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road.

**Crafts with Lynn at the Library** on Saturday, May 19, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Crafts are designed for children ages 2-12. Story time in the library at

9:30 a.m. Please call the library (258-4966) for more information.

**Ham & Scalloped Potatoes Church Dinner** on Saturday, May 19, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., at Fire Station #2 on Route 57. \$12 for adults, \$6 under 12. Tickets at the door and takeouts will be available.

**Family Cabaret** on Saturday, May 19, at 7:00 p.m., at the Sandisfield Arts Center located on 5 Hammertown Road, off Route 57 in Sandisfield. This entertaining evening features acts by performing artists from the Berkshires and beyond. Anni Crofut produces and directs the show designed for all ages. \$15.

**Blood Pressure Clinic** on Wednesday, May 23, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., at the Council on Aging meeting area, basement level at the Town Hall, Route 57.

**Memorial Day Parade** on Sunday, May 27, at 10:00 a.m. To join the parade, meet at the Old Town Hall, Silverbrook Road, or view from Route 57 down Route 8 south to the American Legion Hamilton's Grove. The Recreation Committee is looking for children to decorate and ride their bikes in the parade. There will be a prize for the best adorned bike! Contact Billie Pachulski (413-652-0252 or therapy@bap.hush.com) for information on the children's bike activity.

## OTHER MAY EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

**Rediscovering the "Great Road" a.k.a. the Historic Knox Trail** on Thursday, May 10, at 6:00 p.m., at the Otis Library. Take a journey with Otis historian Tom Ragusa back to the 18th century following in the footsteps of Patriot Surveyor Nathaniel Austin of Sheffield. Tom will unravel facts and misconceptions about the notorious 1764 road survey of the trail through Otis and Sandisfield. For more information, contact Tom (269-7209 or TomnCin14323@aol.com).

**Tag Sale** on Saturday, May 26, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at the Otis Ridge Ski area parking lot on Route 23. Sponsored by the Otis Cultural Council.

**Concert and Opening Celebration: A Silver Dagger, Exploring Women's History Through Folksongs with Diane Taraz** on Sunday, May 27 with a concert at 3:00 p.m., at the Bidwell Museum, 100 Art School Road in Monterey. No charge but donations are welcome. A reception will follow the concert. May 28 is the Opening Day for House Tours offered from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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who have donated this month.*

*William Pinney*



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Diner, Otis Poultry Farm, Otis Woodlands (May-September), Knox Trail Inn, and the Laundromat. Locations in Monterey include the Library and the Roadside Cafe. Available also at the Southfield Store in New Marlborough. Back issues are available for purchase.

The Times can be mailed to your home by paid subscription (see form below left) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at [www.sandisfieldtimes.org](http://www.sandisfieldtimes.org).

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