

5th Anniversary Issue!

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume VI, Number 1

April 2015

Candidates Get in Line

By Bill Price

Six residents are running for two seats on the Select Board. Issues facing the town are enormous and there is a lot of work to be done.

You may know some of the candidates, but maybe not all six.

You might recognize Patrick Barrett, presently Chairman of the Select Board running for re-election. Another candidate has served as a Sandisfield selectman before and is Sanitation Inspector, so you might know Victor Hryckvich. Another is currently Town Moderator, so you might know John Skrip. Another, Alice Boyd, has served as co-president at the Arts Center. Another, Marty Clark, most recently delivered newspapers for several years in town. And Brian O'Rourke is a home builder who may have built the house you live in.

You'll get a chance to meet them all soon.

This year, voters may be treated to two opportunities to meet

Cont'd on p.5

High-Speed Fiber-Optic Internet Can We Afford to Build It?

by Jean Atwater-Williams

No question about it, this is an expensive endeavor.

The cost to build in Sandisfield has been estimated by the MBI (Massachusetts Broadband Institute) to be \$3.65 million. Costs are especially high in towns like ours that are geographically large with many miles of roads. That, coupled with low population density, is why telecom and cable companies are unwilling to make the investment.

Quite simply, it wouldn't be profitable enough to pay for itself and return dividends to shareholders. But by working with WiredWest (our not-for-profit municipal cooperative) and the MBI (the state agency overseeing \$40 million in state funding for the project) the numbers do work.

In the proposal that will be put to us at Town Meeting on May 16, the State funding to Sandisfield would reduce Sandisfield's \$3.65 million cost by 34% or \$1.25 million (the amount the MBI has ear-marked specifically for Sandisfield). Our net cost would be \$2.4 million.

That's still a huge number for a small town, and yes, in order for Sandisfield to be built-out as part of the regional network, the voters must pass a borrowing authorization in that amount.

The other prerequisite for being built is that participating towns must achieve at least a 40% sign up (take rate) for the network. WiredWest and the MBI want to be certain this network will be financially sustainable, and with only a 40% take rate the financial models – which have been thoroughly examined by experts – show that WiredWest should be able to pay its operating costs, set aside reserves, and reimburse the towns for their share of debt service.

So what is the financial impact on Sandisfield? Because this is a multi-year project, and state monies will be used first, the full \$2.4 million will not be borrowed up front. Notes will be issued as needed, and in the initial years the tax impact will be negligible. By year six, the debt service will reflect the full amount borrowed, but by that time the network will also be generating income.

Cont'd on p.6

INSIDE PAGE

Town Officials Hold Private Meetings with Kinder Morgan	3
Out on a Limb: Electricity Costs Hurt	7
Out on a Limb: Change: About Time.	8
Ode to the New Boston Store When Pete's Was Steve's	10
What's in Store	11

**WiredWest Public
Information Meeting**
April 4, Saturday, 10 a.m. - noon
Old Town Hall

Memorial Day Parade Coming Your Way

The Sandisfield Memorial Day Parade will begin at Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road at 10 a.m., Sunday, May 24, Memorial Day weekend.

The official Memorial Day, the last Monday in May, honors men and women who gave their lives while serving in the military. The Sandisfield parade includes veterans, emergency vehicles from Sandisfield and neighboring towns, the Lee High School Marching Band, and any number of vintage vehicles.

If you want to participate in the parade, call Fire Chief Ralph Morrison at 258-4742 to let him know. The parade is sponsored by the Sandisfield Fire Department and American Legion Post #456. Ralph and Maria Domato, Post Commander, are co-chairs of the 2015 parade.

“We would greatly appreciate,” said Ralph, “that floats in our parade honor our military personnel. We’re hoping to make the parade bigger and better as the years go on.”

Everyone is welcome to simply watch the parade, rain or shine, along the route from Silverbrook Road east along 57, with stops at the New Boston Cemetery for a tribute to fallen veterans and at the New Boston Skilled Care & Rehabilitation facility across from the New Boston Inn where the Marching Band will do its tricks.

The parade then moves down across the new bridge where the parade turns onto Rt. 8 South to the American Legion Pavilion where a second ceremony will honor fallen veterans.

Everyone is welcome after the parade to join the Fire Department and Legion Post #456 for refreshments.



Diabetes Discussion, April 1

The Board of Health and the Council on Aging will co-sponsor a brief discussion on Diabetes, its causes and treatment, lead by Porchlight Home Health Care. Wednesday April 1, 11:30 a.m. At the Council on Aging meeting, Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road.

A small luncheon will follow given by Athena Health Care, the operators of the Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center in Sandisfield. The public is welcome. For more information please call Kim Spring of the Board of Health, 258-4450, or Linda Riiska of COA, 413-288-4816.

From the Office of the Town Clerk

Nomination papers are available for the position of Constable for two years. Sadly Joseph Zeller passed away in February. Joe was an amazing person to work with and a lovely person to call a friend. He served this town for many decades on the Highway Department, as Constable, and on the Fire Department.



Public Meeting Planning Board Tuesday April 7, 6 p.m., Old Town Hall

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A, Section 5 that the Planning Board of the Town of Sandisfield will hold a public hearing to discuss proposed amendments to the town of Sandisfield By-Laws regarding:

- Addition of the Right to Farm By-Law
- Amendment to the Zoning By-Laws by Changes to Chapter IX Zoning Section 6 Special Provisions C. Driveways
- Addition of Chapter IX Zoning Section 6 Special Provisions. Access Roads.

The public hearing will be held Tuesday April 7, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road, Sandisfield, MA 01255.

All persons wishing an opportunity to be heard on said proposed amendments will be provided an opportunity to speak. The complete text relative to the proposed amendments is available for inspection during regular business hours at the following place: Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA 01255, Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Gary Bottoms
Chair, Sandisfield Planning Board

REVISED TOWN OF SANDISFIELD TOWN CAUCUS

The Town Caucus will be held on Thursday, April 9, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall at 3 Silverbrook Rd. Following are the offices up for election:

Moderator	1 year
Selectman	1 year
Selectman	3 years
Auditor	1 year
Assessor	3 years
School Committee	3 years
Board of Health	3 years
Planning Board	5 years
Constable	2 years



Mud Season

It’s back and will be here just about all of April, and maybe part of May.

Steve Harasyko, the Road Superintendent, says to remember, “If you live on a dirt road, mud season is the fifth season.”

Asked what his department was going to do about it this year, Steve said, “We’ll deal with it as it comes, like we did the snow all winter. I think we’ll have pretty much a normal mud season.”

He said the hardest part of this hard winter was not the amount of snow but the cold weather. “The cold just made it harder to do everything,” he said. He shivered, remembering it.

“During mud season,” he said, “one thing we have to watch out for is that the highway department not make a bigger mess trying to fix a muddy spot in the road. Sometimes just getting to the muddy spot our trucks make a bigger muddy spot.”

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

A Present for Our 5th Birthday

You should be pleased – maybe proud – of your local paper.

The Nieman Foundation at Harvard, one of the primary journalism institutions in the country, has featured *The Times* – along with a paper in California and another in Missouri – in an article detailing how community newspapers cover local news ignored by larger dailies.

The author, Barbara Selvin, a journalism professor at Stony Brook University in New York, visited town, interviewed most of us who work on the paper, scrutinized all sixty issues, and now knows a lot about the town's history, culture, and problems.

She described Sandisfield as having “no village green, town center, general store, coffee shop or diner; in short, there are few places to hang out and gather local tidings.” She said that, to a large degree, *The Times* has filled that void.

Selvin wrote that the paper, founded by a local group in 2010, “routinely publishes stories about town officials and the town budget, the state of town roads, obituaries, columns on gardening, and photos of the community as the seasons change. Its first issue had eight pages. Now, it regularly fills 20, covering not just the Select Board but also finance, strategic planning, technology and cemetery committees, its board of health, and the local arts center. It's a robust local report in a place that lacked anything like it.”

In an interview with Selvin, Select Board Chairman Patrick Barrett said, “The paper has been able to bring light into what's going on in town government.”

Selvin also interviewed a few *Times* readers, of whom she wrote: “Longtime Sandisfield residents, many of them hardworking farmers, found little to like in the paper at first. But over time, that has changed.” Selvin noted that one reader, A.J. Riiska, at first felt the paper was “kind of all about what the summer people were interested in.” Over time, though, Selvin wrote, “the paper has earned Riiska's grudging respect. He reads it regularly. ‘It's not a bad old newspaper now,’ he says.”

The article, printed in *Nieman Journal*, March 18, can be found online at www.niemanreports.org.

Bill Price
West New Boston



The Starry Night

Towards the end, the starry night
Pleads the immortality of things.
It even claims the poetry that dazzle brings
And fills the soul with songs and light.

So I will die listening to a star
And you will let me go, I pray
To walk across the sky and say
How close I was to God, and yet so far.

Terrible old I am to talk this way
Of stars and walks and God and poems
When life thunders by each day.

Take a look tomorrow.

I'll wave and show my light.
There will be no sorrow on a perfect, starry night.

Val Coleman
Town Hill Road



Town Officials Meet with Kinder Morgan

NO AGREEMENTS REACHED

By Simon Winchester

Town officials, though stating their public opposition to the construction of a new gas pipeline through Sandisfield, have engaged in private negotiations with its builder over a proposed “good will” payout of a substantial six-figure sum to the cash-strapped community.

The payment would be made by the Houston-based Kinder Morgan energy giant only if the project goes ahead, after winning federal approval. Lobbyists working for the company believe, however, that financial inducements offered to individual towns – such as this now revealed for Sandisfield – would help ease

passage of the pipeline past federal regulators.

The two state lawmakers for Western Massachusetts, ‘Smitty’ Pignatelli and Ben Downing, have expressed concern that the arrangements under discussion in Sandisfield have not been shared with town voters, as is notionally required under state “open meeting” statutes. They had been expected to call a meeting with the officials to make this and other points, but the meeting – which also should have been open to the public – was abruptly canceled as news of it leaked out.

Patrick Barrett, current chairman of the Select Board, attended the meetings with Kinder Morgan, as did Selectman Jeff Gray and Town Administrator Lisa Blackmer. They had originally asked that the firm, which is valued at more than \$100 billion, contribute \$2.5 million for repair and replacement of all the town's current buildings. Kinder balked at this sum, but eventually offered \$800,000 for the construction of a new town garage – a figure that the three Sandisfield negotiators said to Kinder they were minded to accept.

In a statement Patrick Barrett admitted that conversations about a “potential gift” had been held.

“It is our responsibility for us to look out for the best interests of the community,” he responded in an email. “It would be irresponsible for us not to pursue these discussions as a way to help secure the best possible agreement in the event the project is ultimately approved.”

Barrett said that at all the meetings town officials had continued to express their opposition to the pipeline, had so far not won an agreement in writing, and that the voters would be required to give their final approval to any agreement at a town meeting.

The proposed pipeline is a four-mile long storage tube, planned to be built alongside its existing pipeline in a sparsely populated easement to the north of the town. Kinder Morgan hopes to have gas flowing into the pipe by November 2016; but delays brought about local opposition and the long process of federal regulatory agreement is almost certain to delay it.

Spring Into Fitness in Sandisfield

CALL WITH SUGGESTIONS, IDEAS

By Nina Carr

We feel lucky to be able to offer two high-quality exercise classes to the people of Sandisfield. The classes have the support of the Council on Aging and the Selectmen. The classes will be held at Old Town Hall on days and times to be selected, based on your suggestions.

In an effort to make the classes appeal to the majority of those interested, we would like requests and suggestions from you. When would you like the classes to be held? What kinds of classes? Please call Nina Carr, 258-3314, with your ideas or contact Linda Riiska, 258-4816.

Both of our instructors live in Sandisfield.

Cynthia Badrak lived and worked in New York City for over 30 years and is qualified to teach many different types of fitness classes. A certified Pilates instructor, Cynthia has worked as a physical therapy assistant and has designed numerous classes for New York City gyms and studios. One of the most popular classes has become the Silver Sneakers class, a class designed to allow participants to work at their own level, offering choices of sitting or standing during many of the exercises. If you would like to learn more about Cynthia and what she can teach us, please visit her web site at Pilatesmindandbody.net.

Barbara Muso Penn will offer Tai Chi or Qigong classes. Barbara is certified to teach Tai Chi and Qigong through Tai Chi Healthways and holds certification to teach Tai Chi for Arthritis from Master Lam. She emphasizes the proven health benefits of these practices for students of all ages and physical conditions. Barbara has worked as a holistic life coach and taught meditation for more than two decades. She is currently teaching in Otis and at Berkshire South. Learn more about Barbara at boundlesspotentialliving.com.

So let's get out, get fit, and have fun!

Defenseless Mail Boxes Attacked

By Tom Christopher



*The perp seems to be right handed.
Photo: Ron Bernard*

Between 3:30 and 4:30 a.m., on February 29, a person or persons unknown left a trail of vandalism through Sandisfield.

Sixteen mailboxes in three locations were "totally smashed" with, according to Police Chief Michael Morrison, "a length of pipe or something similar."

One group of mailboxes was located where Town Hill Road joins Route 57, another on South Beech Plain Road, and a third on North Main Street in New Boston. In addition to those

rampages, a window of a car with a USPS sticker on a door was broken.

Another act of vandalism that may have occurred about the same time was a window broken at the New Boston Inn.

Police in Otis reported vandalism the same night.

Sandisfield has seen mailbox vandalism before, notes Chief Morrison, but not on this scale. There are no indications at this time of who committed these acts.



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CANDIDATES GET IN LINE

Cont'd from p.1

the Select Board candidates.

At press time, the Council on Aging and The Sandisfield Times were discussing whether to join forces to present one Meet the Candidates event or to proceed with individual plans for each group to provide a separate venue. The venues differ enough that holding two events may present residents with better opportunities to find out about the candidates.

So far, the COA event is scheduled for April 29, Wednesday, at the regular COA 11 a.m., meeting and luncheon at the Town Hall Annex. All candidates are invited and all residents are welcome. See the COA report on page 15

Susan Galik, for COA, said, "Last year we had a rather large group of forty residents in the audience and we learned a lot about the candidates. The way they answered our questions said almost as much as their actual words."

The Times event, until now unannounced, is planned to be more formal, with a moderator and all six Select Board candidates present. The candidates would be allowed to make a short presentation and answer questions from the audience or from the moderator. This event would be held during the week before the election.

For now, to help introduce the candidates, The Times asked each to comment briefly on why they are running.

The candidates running for the three-year term on the Board are Patrick Barrett, Brian O'Rourke, and John Skrip.

Patrick Barrett, of Rood Road, a high-school history teacher, is running for a third term on the Board. Patrick said that he prides himself "on being visible. I am consistently available to concerned residents during my free time and have forged invaluable relationships with both "Smitty" Pignatelli and Ben Downing that have helped put Sandisfield on the map. I understand the challenges and time commitment of this important position and am proud of my record as a selectman."

Brian O'Rourke, of West Street, is a custom-home builder. Brian said, "I feel passionate about the future of the town. My wife and I have raised our children here for the last ten years. I think with my rural-town roots and 25 years of business ownership that I can make a positive contribution to the future of our community."

John Skrip, of Route 8, a retired teacher and licensed mortgage broker in Connecticut, is currently Town Moderator. John wrote:

"Sandisfield has a budget of about \$3 million. The town needs a selectman who can devote time to the day-to-day activities and be available during the day when most town activities occur. I believe a town the size of Sandisfield – a town facing the pipeline misfortune, a town with a stagnant tax base, a town with increasing expenses – needs more oversight. I am willing to put in the time and effort to address these issues."

Candidates running for the one-year term on the Board to fill the vacancy caused by a resignation are Alice Boyd, Martin Clark, and Victor Hryckvich.

Alice Boyd, of South Sandisfield Road, has been a grant writer for cities and towns in Massachusetts for 25 years. Alice wrote that Sandisfield "should and can plan for its future. We need to set annual goals and review and reevaluate them every year. We need to be more aggressive about finding new sources of revenue. We need to be rigorous in reviewing all our current spending goals and plans. We need to plan our future in a smart and sustainable way, and we can. Towns that work together can be very successful and thrive while keeping their tax rate low."

Martin Clark, of Jamie Lane in Country Circle, is officially retired but in fact still active in the lumber industry. He served 6½ years as selectman in West Stockbridge, six as Chairman. Currently the Animal Control Officer in Sheffield, Marty delivered The Berkshire Eagle in Sandisfield for many years and is renowned for having delivered the Eagle during Hurricane Irene. He said, "We got a lot done while I was a selectman in West Stockbridge. They had a tight budget and no money, like here. We were able to build a new sewer and buy a firetruck. I think I can help the other Selectmen. I have no axe to grind."

Victor Hryckvich, of North Beech Plain Road, is currently Sanitation Inspector and member of the Board of Health. Victor did not reply to requests for comment.

Candidates for other offices are:

Constable: John Burrows

Auditor: Bethany Perry

Board of Assessors: Kathie Burrows

Planning Board: Tom Jacobs

School Committee: Sandy Snyder

Board of Health: Margaret O'Clair

The Election Caucus will be at Old Town Hall, April 9. A final chance to get into the race for any of the offices is to be nominated from the floor during the Caucus. The last day to register to vote at the election is April 27. The election is May 18.

OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



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HIGH SPEED FIBER OPTICS

Cont'd from p.1

Table 1 shows the potential impact on the average single family home in Sandisfield (valued at \$245,523). This is the "worst case scenario" and assumes no reimbursement from WiredWest (remember, at a 40% take rate, debt service is expected to be reimbursed in full).

To offset the potential tax impact, most households that subscribe to WiredWest services will see savings in their phone, internet and TV costs. **Table 2** lists average costs in our area for these services vs. expected WiredWest pricing. Many residents are paying much more (e.g., for satellite internet) and could see even more significant savings.

TABLE 1 - POTENTIAL TAX IMPACT

YEAR	TAX RATE IMPACT (in mills)	ANNUAL COST ON AVERAGE TAX BILL
1 (2016)	.02	\$ 5.11
2 (2017)	.04	\$ 10.22
3 (2018)	.53	\$ 129.50
4 (2019)	.56	\$ 136.89
5 (2020)	.59	\$ 144.16
6 (2021)	.87	\$ 213.58

Source: Joe Markarian, former DOR executive and current consultant to MBI

TABLE 2 - POTENTIAL SAVINGS

Service	Current Monthly Average	WW Monthly Cost	Monthly Savings	Yearly Savings
Internet	\$ 51	\$49	\$2	\$24
Phone	\$55	\$25	\$30	\$360
TV	\$81	\$65*	\$16	\$192
TOTAL	\$187	\$139	\$48	\$576

*TV pricing has not yet been finalized.

Source for current average costs: Market Street Research, survey commissioned by WiredWest in 2012

Like electricity and telephone service before it, high-speed internet broadband service has become a necessity. What would our town be like today without electricity and phone service? Would anyone want to live or work here? What will our town be like in the very near future without quality, affordable, high-speed broadband internet service?

To be sure, building this network involves risk, but the rewards are many: better quality of life, better educational opportunities; increased home values; a more vibrant and desirable community with a better tax base; opportunities for young families and home-based businesses; tele-health and home security, just to name a few.

It is up to us. We can ensure the success of this network by our votes and our participation. So the question now becomes "Can we afford not to build it?"

To learn more or to sign up for service, go to WiredWest.net. Jean Atwater-Williams is chairman of Sandisfield's Technology Committee and the town's delegate to WiredWest.

Selectman's Letter

By Patrick Barrett

The Board of Selectmen was saddened to learn of the death of Joe Zeller. Joe worked for many years as a member of the Sandisfield Highway Department and served as town constable. More recently Joe was an important member of the Fire Department as he had experience driving large commercial vehicles. Joe always had a smile on his face and was dedicated to helping our community.

We would like to thank Highway Superintendent Steve Harasyko and the members of the department for their hard work during this long, never-ending winter. The guys on the crew logged a lot of hours keeping our roads clear and safe. We appreciate their dedicated service and hope they get some extra sleep once the weather begins to warm up.

The State has will be giving the town an extra \$49,000 for pothole reimbursement this year. This winter was extremely hard on town roads and the money will help repair some of the damage. Moving forward, town officials will petition the State to drastically increase funding for our town roads. If the State doesn't soon take a more proactive approach to addressing the infrastructure in the Commonwealth, communities will be facing a bleak situation.

The Cemetery Committee continues to work on improving our town cemeteries. A volunteer community clean-up is scheduled for the West New Boston Cemetery next to Carr Field on April 12, Sunday, from 9-2. The Council on Aging will supply coffee and sandwiches. John Field has volunteered the services of his tree company to take down some of the dying trees and Bogart Muller has volunteered the use of his crew. We appreciate John's and Bogart's help on the project. As soon as we have dates for clean-ups at other cemeteries we'll post them in The Times, in town, and on the town's website. Road millings will be used on Sandisfield Center Cemetery road in order to help make much needed surface improvements.

The Select Board has decided to re-locate this years' annual Town Meeting from Old Town Hall to Fire Station #2 on Route 57. We anticipate a large turnout due to major issues on the warrant and are taking a pro-active approach by moving the meeting to a larger facility to ensure adequate seating for all residents who might want to attend.

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The New Cost of Electricity Hurts AND OPTING OUT CAN COST MORE

By *Brigitte Ruthman*

Electricity, as essential to most homes now as running water and refrigeration, just got more expensive. A lot more expensive.

In January, the cost of juicing homes and businesses in western Massachusetts went up 61 percent.

The increase is for the supply side of electrical costs – Eversource Energy, formerly Northeast Utilities and the new parent company of Western Mass Electric Co., still has a lock on the delivery portion of the bill which hasn't changed. But if a rate increase of 8.8 to 14.2 cents per kilowatt hour on January 1 allowed by legislators and the Commonwealth's Department of Public Utilities wasn't bad enough, it gets worse if you want to opt out and enter the economic world of competitive suppliers – especially during winter.

Competition is a good thing, after all, and it's the reason why the DPU allowed the rate increase. The idea was that savvy consumers could do the research and find another supplier offering the same service at less cost.

Great all-American idea, but someone forgot to explain the rules of the game to the players or tell buyers the whole story. What consumers aren't being told is that Eversource will penalize customers who leave by retroactively charging a variable rate for service before a new provider kicks in. The variable rate this winter is about 21 cents a kilowatt hour. Conceivably, a credit would be due in the summer for those who switch when the variable rate is lower. But in that case you're stuck paying the 61 percent increase until June.

It's called a recalculation, and even though they don't like to call it a fee, that's the word Eversource spokesman Priscilla Ress used for it.

Now bear with me here because the utility company is banking on consumers who don't pay attention or have time for the fine print. Or, like my 84-year-old mother, have the patience for lessons in bureaucratic supply-side economics. I would expect to pay about \$160 for a winter electric bill at the old rate – more

because of the 1,500 watt de-icer in the cows' water trough. But usually I am within the realm of the average 500-700 kilowatt hours per month the average customer uses.

Logic would dictate that when you're being bitten by a dog you walk out of the room. My January bill was for \$309. So I spent a half a day like lots of budget-conscious folks researching other companies offering contracts, and I locked into a nine month deal with Con Edison Solutions on Feb. 12 for 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour.

I spoke several times with customer care representatives from Eversource, none of whom uttered the word contract. Then came the February bill – for a whopping \$482. I called again. Eversource said they had the right to charge a variable rate because I had broken a contract. News to me. And I wasn't alone.

Eversource blamed ConEd for not telling me about the added cost. ConEd said that was crazy, they couldn't possibly be responsible for another company's costs.

According to the small print on every electric bill, consumers have the right to dispute charges with the DPU – the state board that regulates electric power, natural gas, and water utilities. And Eversource is required to inform consumers who call with questions about switching. A review of the recordings in my case revealed they hadn't, so they ruled in my favor.

"Someone forgot to explain the rules...."

Eversource was made to deduct \$197 from my bill. David beat Goliath. Ress told me that reversing the fee was a "good faith" move because I'm on a budget.

But Ress said I fell into the unfortunate category of those who would be charged a different rate going back to the beginning of a six-month contract cycle. Switching in the summer would possibly incur a credit. What a coincidence the 61 percent hike happened in the winter.

"Our customer care representatives always strive to give customers the help they need – especially in light of the supply side increase in the cost of electricity our customers are paying," Ress wrote in an email. "When switching to a competitive supplier we always urge customers to do their homework. In this case, our representative was asked about the high bill and therefore, she did her best to guide you through all of the options available to help."

Ress also said Eversource negotiates every six months for a contract with its suppliers and must accept the lowest rate. Well, um, if I could get a lower rate why couldn't Eversource? She also claims Eversource doesn't profit from its sale. Right, and Eversource's CEO Thomas May got a 17 percent pay raise this year and now, according to Eversource, earns a whopping \$9 million pay package.

Power generators use natural gas to produce the electricity that National Grid and Eversource buy for their customers. The utilities claim a lack of pipeline capacity as the main reason electricity rates went up this winter. Company VP Jeff Kotkin said New England's largest utility underinvested in gas transmission, and now aims to spend \$3 billion (that's a "b") to make up for it.

The higher rates are applied to the cost of power purchased by the utilities, or the supply side of a consumer's bill.

In Hadley, a grassroots organization called Everyone Needs Utility Fairness (ENUF) has been launched to offer homeowners a means of working together to achieve what they believe to be fair electricity rates and a better way of disputing them.

As it turns out, lots of customers have complained they weren't given an explanation and were blindsided by unaffordable rate hikes.

ENUF's founder, Peter Schoenberger, claims Eversource is charging customers for a projected increase in the cost of natural gas that was predicted in the fall, but never came to be. He cites a Feb. 26 Boston Globe article reporting that wholesale electricity prices are around half of what they were last year.

The DPU and the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office has received a number of complaints. Deputy Press Secretary Jillian Fennimore said they have encouraged the DPU to educate and protect consumers considering alternatives offered by competitive suppliers.

"Encouraged?"

Right. I'm buying candles and planning to build a windmill.

Politicians Rebel

On March 23, the DPU issued a press release stating that it is "unacceptable" for consumers to be surprised by a recalculation fee and asked electricity suppliers to better inform customers. In a letter to suppliers and distributors, the department wrote that it had "received numerous reports regarding customers who have made a switch to competitive supply but who were unaware of the bill recalculation provision." Local Rep. "Smitty" Pignatelli and colleagues in Boston took it a step further by proposing legislation to rescind the archaic 15-year-old regulation because so many residents have complained that they knew nothing about the pricing contracts which run from January 1-June 31 and July 1-December 31 and have suffered hundreds of dollars in additional fees in one of the worst winters in memory.



Change: It's About Time

By Rita Kasky

Back in the 1960s and 1970s there were many rallying cries for Change in our country.

There were cries to end the war in Vietnam, for racial equality, from feminists seeking economic equality, and much more. One could hardly miss these rebellions. The constant theme was that we need Change, both socially and politically. The way to bring about Change was to speak out, join with other people who were motivated to bring peace, equality, and transparency to the fore. In other words, take action and start at the grass roots level.

Why am I telling you this? As a "retired activist" I find that old habits die hard. I've been trying to help Change some practices right here in Sandisfield. We deserve to see our town progress. We need to be certain our leadership and the town personnel know how to take care of business.

This time, perhaps because age has caught up with me, I'm not out on the streets demonstrating with a bullhorn, and besides, it's too darn cold. So the route I've taken for the last several years has been to try to convince our town leaders that they need to pay attention to how they manage the town. I won't bore you with lots of statistics and other jazzy stuff. I will however, shed some light on a few of the things that come to mind today.

One of my sore spots with the town has to do with a request the Finance Committee (on which I served for a number of years) made in July 2014 that the Select Board consider installing a Biometric Time Card system to record weekly work time with the possibility of integrating it into the payroll processing system and management of staff time. The Finance Committee was told that we would have to wait until the next union contract negotiations (in three years). I

reviewed parts of the union contract and came upon Article IX, Management Rights, paragraph 9.0: "The management of the employees and the direction of the working force, including the right to plan, direct and control operation; etc.are the recognized and reserved rights of the Employer." I wonder why we need to wait for the next round of negotiations before the Biometric System can be considered.

Then there is the summary from the February 17, 2015 Select Board meeting that appeared in The Sandisfield Times (the actual minutes have only been available sporadically on the website so we've had to read a reporter's summary) that

**"Why am I telling you this?
.....old habits die hard."**

states: "There were about 30 people present. The meeting, which had not been posted, was held at Old Town Hall, which caused some confusion and traffic driving from Town Hall Annex." Why wasn't it posted? This was a meeting that included a representative from the proposed Athena nursing home. At the same meeting there was an agenda item calling for "attending meetings outside Town Hall." Again, according to the summary, "this discussion was generally unhelpful and reached no agreement."

A couple of years ago the town voted funds for a town website, a really good idea. The thing is that it hasn't been kept current. Each time I've inquired about it the buck gets passed around: "So and so is doing it" or a different "So and so is supposed to be doing it." Why has no one followed up to find out why the Select Board minutes aren't regularly posted and most weeks the current agenda doesn't show up until the day of the meeting or often not at all. I understand we have hired a website coordinator and hope that person will be given the information on a timely basis so that he can post the agendas and minutes and other essential information.

Our town leaders do not appear to be concerned about these lapses nor do they seem to be holding people accountable for seeing that these glitches do not occur. How do employees get a valid evaluation when they aren't held to generally accepted performance standards?

Did you know about the opportunity town residents missed to join an Electricity Aggregation Program? Back in May 2012, the town of Sheffield voted to join with other Berkshire County towns to accept a bid from the Hampshire Power Company to purchase electric power for residents at a greatly discounted rate.

Why wasn't Sandisfield part of this aggregation? I brought it to the town's attention back in December and was told it was too late for us to participate. I asked if we could be part of, or even organize, another aggregation. It's now being looked at and might be put to our town folks at the Annual Town Meeting in May. Why wasn't the town on top of a money-saving venture like this long ago?

I won't go on and on, although I really could. Please just try to understand that while our Select Board (with a current membership of two) means well, what we really need is a Change in leadership - I believe we need leaders with management, financial, and leadership skills.

There are many small towns such as ours in Berkshire County and across the country that engage the citizenry in finding solutions to economic issues, environmental issues, social issues, and more. We in Sandisfield need to be more collaborative, more creative, and very serious about addressing issues that compromise our well-being. We need to say we are proud of our accomplishments. I know from the past that grass roots organizing works and I'm willing to do my share to help Sandisfield flourish by supporting candidates who have management experience and guts. I hope you will join me in that effort.

The Snows of 2014-15



Snowfall in Sandisfield in inches, measured by Ron Bernard

November	18
December	8
January.	22
February	39
March	10
For the Season	97



THE SANDISFIELD LIBRARY

By Laurie Foulke-Green, Librarian

The Winter Book Sale is still going. And Library Patron cards are ready to be picked up during regular library hours.

NEW BOOKS ON ORDER

100 Things Every Homeowner Must Know/Editors of Family Handyman

"War Bonds"/Cindy Hval

Early Warning/Jane Smiley

Last One Home/Debbie Macomber
Emma/Alexander McCall Smith

The Liar/Noah Roberts

Hot Pursuit/Stuart Woods

Miracle at Augusta/James Patterson

The Alpine Zen/Mary Daheim

Aunt Dimity and the Summer King/ Nancy Atherton
Bittersweet/Susan Wittig Albert

Every Fifteen Minutes/Lisa Scottoline
Gathering Prey/John Sandford

House of Echoes/Brendan Duffy

The Melody Lingers On/
Mary Higgins Clark
Memory Man /David Baldacci

Your Next Breath/Iris Johansen

A Desperate Fortune / Susanna Kearsley

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When Pete's Was Steve's

Some (Possibly Flawed) Memories

By Johanna Garfield

When my parents bought our house in Sandisfield in 1938, there was even less to do in town than there is now.

On our weekend trips up here, the only entertainment was the occasional square dance in the basement of the town hall. The Arts Center wasn't even a gleam in anyone's eye. A rare trip to Torrington, to the one movie house in the area, was about as exciting as it got.

So one excursion I really looked forward to every weekend was our visits to the store known years later as "Pete's." In those days it was "Steve's." Steve Campetti was a good-looking cowboy type – rugged, with a slightly lined dark face, dark brown hair combed back without a part, and an easy manner. He usually wore a red plaid shirt with suspenders, which enhanced the Western effect.

Steve was not only the proprietor of the store, but the local postmaster, which was the reason we were there so often. The post office was at the left rear of the store. When you came in to

packet to a grilled window at the front of the interior office and hand it to you with a smile.

Steve smiled a lot – especially when my mother came in. "Morning, Clae," he'd say.

I don't know how they'd reached that first-name basis, which wasn't as common then. Sometimes he'd wink at me, and I was thrilled. My mother was a glamorous figure, often said to resemble the popular '30s actress Dolores Del Rio. And indeed both had beautiful, expressive brown eyes, dark hair, aquiline noses, and wonderful erect carriage, though my mother, to her lifelong regret, was short. Even walking on the dirt roads of Sandisfield she always wore platform shoes, a rarity in those days, as were the hand-made pants suits she wore – almost unheard of for women then. Her name, "Clae," given to her in childhood as an abbreviation of "Clara," was suitably unusual.

While Mom harmlessly flirted with and charmed Steve, as she did most people she met, I'd survey Steve's wares. This was an interesting assemblage, ranging from food-stuffs – mostly canned or cellophane wrapped – to bags of chicken feed to candy bars.

Of most interest to me were some dust-covered cheap toys hanging from a rotating metal stand near the door. I usually spent part of my allowance on a set of jacks or one of those games you hold in your hand and gently move around till the little metal ball fits into the tiny hole. These were neither rare nor particularly desirable toys – I had both at home – but because they came from Steve's, in that remote store in that remote town, they had a special appeal. I always studied them with deep concentration, only making my decision after considerable thought.



Above: The New Boston Store, about 1944

Right: Steve Campetti and Zoe Pratt, engaged. They married after the war in December 1946.

Photos: Courtesy of Theresa Campetti Koszalka

collect your mail, Steve would step from behind the counter to unlock the door to that section, where he'd sorted the envelopes into a bank of gray metal boxes. Nobody had individual keys to their boxes, or seemed to worry about their privacy. You just got your mail from Steve, whose key opened all of them. He'd then bring the

The store was especially cozy in the cold, snowy winters because of the wood-fed stove in the corner opposite the post office. When I tired of studying the toy rack, I'd stand near it, getting warm and watching the customers who came in. Like Pete's, the store was the hub of whatever life was in the town and everyone who lived in the area came in eventually.



The New Boston General Store, captured in a watercolor sketch by Sandy Parisky. In the foreground is the old "green" bridge that was replaced in 2013. The image was previously published in *The Sandisfield Stories*, by Val Coleman, in 2008.

I especially remember one man who walked in holding his small daughter's hand. After he bought a bag of chicken feed, he put the feed on one shoulder and the little girl on his other and walked out into the snow.

Fascinated, I begged Steve to tell me about them. "He's a city guy who came up here to farm," Steve told me confidentially, even though I was a kid. "He's not doing well. Fact is, they can't afford a truck. He's going to have to walk back to their house. End of Viet's Road," he added, shaking his head sympathetically.

I knew Viet's Road because it was off Fox Road, where our house was. So I also knew it would be a long uphill



WHAT'S IN STORE ...

For the Old New Boston Store?

By Sandy Parisky

It's been more than two years since that early morning in October 2012 when an eight-wheel dump truck heading down the long steep hill from Tolland crashed into the New Boston Store.

The collision caused part of the building to collapse and its owners, Sue and Pete Murray, were forced to abandon their home above the store. The structure, which dates to about the year 1850, was subsequently deemed unsafe and partially demolished.

Since the accident and with Pete's death in December 2013 following a period of failing health, the store's future remained in limbo. Town residents and motorists crossing the new bridge at Routes 8 and 57 have speculated what might become of the remaining portion of this Sandisfield landmark. Opinions ranged from demolishing the property to renovation. Some suggested bringing the store and residence back, others visualized an art studio, gallery, tea room, and convenience store.

Now, with the settlement of the estate and insurance issues, Sue Murray plans to begin renovations to return the structure to a private residence on the Farmington River. We'll be glad to have her home.



Photo : Setsuko Winchester, 2012

trudge through thick snow for the man and his daughter.

We on the other hand were ordinarily driven to Steve's in our black Packard with a blue light mounted on the front by my pal, our longtime chauffeur, Al. I knew enough to realize that the car was ridiculously – and to me embarrassingly – opulent for New Boston and hoped nobody who came in would associate the car with my mother or me.

I don't know why, but I don't think my brother or I ever walked down to Steve's, as my kids did regularly to Pete's years later, although it was a manageable walk even for an eight-year-old – about three miles. I just thought you went to and from Steve's store in the car. Now I wished that instead of driving us home, Al would carry me there on his shoulder.



Steve Campetti, U.S. Army, 1943

Oddly, since I was quite intrigued by Steve, I never wondered or asked about whether he was married or had kids. All I knew was that he ran the store alone and lived above it – also alone as far as I knew. I never saw any evidence of a wife, girlfriend, or kids. If

I thought about his life at all, I thought of him as sitting in a living room above us surrounded by the aunts, uncles, and cousins of the Campetti clan, of whom I'd heard there were many in the community.

I must have been away during the years when the store became Pete's, because I don't remember hearing anything about why Steve was no longer there, beyond a vague rumor that he and Pete's wife were related. Later on, though my husband Les and I came up with our children, my parents had grown old and could no longer make the trip. The Packard was long gone, as was Al. He went to work for the Sperry-Gyroscope Company when World War II broke out.

There was a separate post office for Sandisfield by then, and the store, now Pete's, no longer carried chicken feed. The wood stove was gone, and though it was still very much a country store, it now had a freezer and ice cream, cold cuts, and the occasional New York Times.

Maybe a new generation built the kind of relationship with Pete we had with Steve. We never did. In any case, with both Steve and Pete now gone and the building they lived and worked in so suddenly and disastrously destroyed, one of the things that made Sandisfield what it was was destroyed as well.

Steve's Store

Long before "Pete's" was "Steve's," the New Boston Store belonged to Sanford Brown, Sr. That was prior to 1800. The store ownership changed many times during the next couple centuries, including for awhile one of the Demings, until Steve Campetti bought it in 1940 and assumed the role of storekeeper and postmaster.

Steve's sister, Mary Lundgren, ran the store while Steve served in the U.S. Army during World War II. When he returned he took over the store again, operating it and the post office for a couple decades until 1977 when he sold it to his niece, Sue, and her husband, Pete Murray.

The simple, direct name of the place – the New Boston Store – described exactly where and what it was. According to local historian Ron Bernard: "Through two and one-half centuries, in hard times and good, the venerable New Boston Store was a dependable provider of essential products as well as a friendly meeting place. It was also a national treasure, and may have been the oldest continuously operated store of its kind in the country."

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Arts Center Season Begins

CELEBRATING NATIONAL POETRY MONTH WITH CHARLES FIDLAR'S EXPLORATION OF WALT WHITMAN'S POETRY

By Sandy Parisky

The Sandisfield Arts Center kicks off its 2015 season on Saturday, April 25, at 4 p.m. with Charles Fidler reading the poetry of Walt Whitman.

What happens when you "hear" a song while simultaneously reciting a poem? How does the song's rhythm and melodic contour affect poetic declamation. Charles Fidler explores these questions through Walt Whitman's poetry.

Charles Fidler is a graduate of Cornell University and the New England Conservatory, with doctoral studies at Stanford University (conducting/voice). He was formerly the assistant conductor of the Grammy-winning San Francisco Symphony Chorus; assistant conductor of the Rhode Island Philharmonic; artistic director of the Providence Opera Society in Rhode Island, and general manager/artistic director the Harford Dance Theatre, Bel Air, Maryland, where he produced and staged a dozen operas. Locally, Charles is a member of the Sandisfield Players and took part in the recent productions of "Under Milk Wood" and "A Christmas Carol."

Charles lives in Norfolk, Connecticut, with his wife, Marilyn Davidson, and two cats, Bubbie and Nellie Battell Stoeckel.



MAY EVENTS

May 2 from 2-4 p.m. GALLERY OPENING for June Wink & Geoffrey Coelho Art Exhibit

May 2 at 4 p.m. WRITERS' READINGS, Berkshire Festival of Women Writers

May 9 at 7 p.m. ART CENTER'S 2nd ANNUAL DINNER & BENEFIT AUCTION

May 16 at 7 p.m. Sally-Jane Heit, For a Women Her Age: Acts & Sings

May 30 at 10 a.m. WRITERS' READINGS, Local History, Ron Bernard and Gary Leveille

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Nice Old House, Nice New Owners

By Ron Bernard



Emily Melchior and Calvin Rodman, at home in Sandisfield

The fact that sales of historic houses in Sandisfield occur infrequently makes such events newsworthy. Plus it is a good way to greet new neighbors.

So, welcome to Emily Melchior and Calvin Rodman, new owners of the very old and venerable Horace & Susan White House on Fox Road.

Emily works on Wall Street while Calvin is an attorney with the City of New York. Last year the couple sought a place of refuge from demanding schedules. Calvin, a native of Newton, Mass., was already aware of the Berkshires so he aimed the search this way. "We wanted something relatively close but with character and privacy," he said. Sandisfield seemed to fit the bill. "The town really has a sense of place. This is also important because we intend to stay for a long time." Emily is excited to learn all about the property's past.

Here's a head start on her quest.

Horace C. White (1809-96), a native of nearby Winsted, was the probable builder. Land records suggest that a young Horace was self-confident and very active. He also had the good sense (and

the courage) in 1838 to ask for the hand of Susan Wolcott, daughter of Gen. Josiah Wolcott (1785-1859), one of the most prominent figures of the day.

Built about 1839, the house is a fine example of a conservative Greek Revival-style that retains some of the earlier Federal style's features. By 1845 White had assembled a farm of 145 acres close to his famous father-in-law's farmstead on what is now Elk Road in the Free Quarter section.

There is a connection here with Sandisfield's role in the Civil War. Susan's nephew, Joseph Wolcott, then 22, was resident in 1860 before he enlisted in the storied Mass 49th Regiment. He



The Horace & Susan White House, eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places

Photo: Ron Bernard

died along with many others from the Berkshires in the Battle of Port Huron, La., in 1863. The family buried Joseph next to his famous uncle Josiah in the Wolcott family plot with its grand monument in the West New Boston cemetery. About that time the Whites moved to Colebrook and sold the farmstead to the Fargos, a major established family here at the time.

Some of the earliest mills were in this section, thanks to the streams that tumble through the rugged topography. One stream runs through the property. Well-preserved walls and a probable dam support local tradition that a substantial millworks was here. The history of the mills of Sandisfield has not been written. Perhaps this is a place to start the research.

In 1885, the Sandisfield Assessor counted 900 "sugar trees," one of the larger operations around. A few trees or perhaps descendants, survive as legacies of the late 19th-century period when Sandisfield was the largest producer of maple sugar in the area.

The Fargos remained until 1923. They were followed by several owners until 1949 when J. Willard Roosevelt took title.

A grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, Roosevelt was an accomplished composer and pianist who performed in New York concert halls. His home was a place of many gatherings of his large and close family which included five children. Tragically, after two sons died in separate auto accidents here in Sandisfield, Roosevelt lost interest in his beloved retreat. The family sold most of the property by 1992.

We asked Emily and Calvin if there have been any surprises at their new old house. They are thrilled to know the house is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. And one more thing. "Well" she said, "we discovered after the sale that internet service is sub-standard. It is a problem. Our jobs require reliable high-speed connections. Hopefully the situation can be improved soon."



A nuthatch welcomes the new owners.

Photo: Emily Melchior

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TOWN BUSINESS

Reported by Bogart Muller

Edited by Bill Price

SELECT BOARD, March 2, 2015

Present were Selectmen Patrick Barrett and Jeff Gray, Town Administrator Lisa Blackmer, Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko, and about five residents.

Highway Department. Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko reported two truck breakdowns, one repaired on the fly but the other requiring a tow to be repaired under warranty. Questions were raised by the Finance Committee over the requested purchase of a ten-wheel dump truck, including "Do we need such a huge truck?"

New Hartford Road. Town Administrator Lisa Blackmer presented different costs for New Hartford Road, comparing them to other costs and options. Discussion of doing some repairs this year and more next. One resident mentioned that parts of the road repaired in 2013 are already crumbling and what would prevent this from happening again?

Budgets. Dolores reviewed budgets for the Finance Committee. She has streamlined the process in order to save time and to provide a better understanding of how the boards operate. A discussion ensued regarding the Fire, Police, and EMS budgets requesting a 28% increase. Patrick suggested Police Chief Mike Morrison attend next week's meeting to explain the increase. There was discussion regarding the fact that few people see our policemen and no tickets vouch for their existence. Residents suggested tickets could be a source of revenue but no one is being pulled over for speeding.

Part-Time Hours/Benefits. The part-time work policy was settled. If a Town employee works more than 20 hours a week, the employee receives benefits such as paid vacation; less than 20 hours a week, no paid time off unless there is a contract signed by the Select Board allowing this.

Town Administrator. Lisa reported her discussions with Morton, our road salt provider. There are logistic problems at the Port of Albany with ships coming in and not everyone is getting their share of road salt, including us. She has more MMA meetings to attend where she exchanges ideas from other small towns facing similar issues to Sandisfield.

Select Board summaries are presented as a courtesy to residents. They are intended to keep readers up-to-date regarding the work of the Board and do not replace official minutes prepared by Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko. Official minutes are available at Town Hall and online at www.sandisfield.info.

WiredWest. Wired West will host a Public Information meeting on April 4 at Old Town Hall. Technology Committee Chairman Jean Atwater-Williams said WiredWest officials would lay out the plan, cost, and services to be provided. She added that without proper internet connections and high-speed capability, the Town could fall behind as a place to live and raise a family. One resident claimed she bought a new "Smart TV" and it almost required this type of connection.

Helping Tolland. Our neighbor to the east has temporarily lost its highway superintendent due to health issues and a couple other employees. Steve and Dolores have offered services to help with paperwork and other issues until Tolland can "get back on its feet."

Senior Tax Work-Off Program. We have seniors who could use a break on their taxes but state law says they must provide tax and income information in order to prioritize who needs help the most. Pat suggested people be allowed to do work anyway, just by showing up at Town Hall and asking for a break would be good enough for him. Jeff agreed. Lisa will see if we can make the changes to allow people who want to help to take a little something off the tax bill. The work off program pays minimum wage towards your tax bill and Dolores said she has a truckload of paperwork begging to be sorted out.

Kinder Morgan. A contract was signed for legal services regarding Kinder Morgan hosting a community agreement. This will make KM have to pay for any legalities we might face during this event.

SELECT BOARD, March 9, 2015

Present were Selectmen Patrick Barrett and Jeff Gray, Town Administrator Lisa Blackmer, Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko, and about nine residents.

Joe Zeller. Patrick honored the passing of Joe Zeller. "Joe served his community with pride."

Police. Police Chief Mike Morrison present to swear in new officer Adam Gonska. This patrolman is granted 20 hours work per week and is an active EMT in Monterey and Becket. Regarding last week's complaint that few if any tickets are written for speeding, Mike explained that it costs the Town more

money if a ticket is fought in court because the officer is paid while waiting in court, and the cost of that is more than the ticket would bring.

Highway Department. Highway updates included two trucks broken down, one with a snapped frame and the other with a blown rear end.

Budgets. The Finance Committee sent a strong message to the Selectmen about not associating WiredWest with Town budget woes, that WiredWest needs a separate meeting to provide residents with the fundamentals of its project without the complications of other budget issues. Finance Committee member David Hubbard discussed how highway department spending is out of control with no way of monitoring truck and man-hours. Without an accurate and reliable monitoring system, for instance, Fleetmatics, David felt the Town should not spend \$200,000 on a new truck because one person says we need it. He feels we need to trend this information over time and have better records of how money is used in the department.

Town Administrator. Lisa has gathered information from Boston about Chapter 90 money and new "pilot" grants that have been set aside for small towns with aging infrastructure to help cut costs and provide tax relief.

Energy Expenses. The Energy Aggregate idea of lowering homeowner costs comes with a price. The entire Town must opt in for Sandisfield to join the 5-month waiting list. Lisa will look into more details of this possible savings.

SELECT BOARD, March 16, 2015

Present were Selectmen Patrick Barrett and Jeff Gray, Town Administrator Lisa Blackmer, Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko, and about 15 residents.

WiredWest. Wired West presented their financial numbers and what they meant. Questions were asked if hardware would be supported over the next few years. While the hardware may have to be updated from time to time, for now the technology is in place and won't change soon. The fiber itself has a 30-year life.

Exercise Classes. Anina Carr asked to develop a plan to use Old Town Hall for exercise and Pilates classes during work days and early evenings. Pat and Jeff motioned this effort to move forward.

Planning Board. Planning Board Chairman Gary Bottums presented a Master Plan which includes a new Town Hall and DPW garage, along with a new roof for the Annex building. Pat would like to hear from the residents on this plan. Anyone can voice an opinion.

Animal Control Officer. Kim Spring was re-appointed as Animal Control Officer.

Town Administrator. Lisa attended the Berkshire Managers Meeting and discussed topics such as how other small towns manage cemeteries and perpetual care. She also contacted Athena Health Care to stay in touch. She gathered information on how to implement a FleetMatics system as well as legal aspects of buying a used truck instead of new one. She spoke with Happy Bangas' representative, Ron Fortune, who said there were a few more hurdles with the State before they can submit a permit to build.

Trash on 57. A Town resident spoke of trash on Rt. 57 left from people failing to carefully secure their weekly rubbish. There was no answer as to who cleans the roadside in the spring.

**SELECT BOARD AGENDA,
March 23, 2015**

- Dominic Konstam and Berkshire Natural Resources Council in to review Mr. Konstam's plans for conservation easements on his property, current and future
- Veridian to provide a presentation on opportunities for reduced electricity rates
- John Burrows requesting appointment as Constable until the May election.
- Review FY2016 warrant
- Town Administrator Report.

Council on Aging



By Susan Galik

Meet the Candidates, April 29

AND A BUSY MONTH OF MAY

No April Fools. At least we hope not.

Meet the Candidates. April 29, Wednesday, 11a.m. We hope all those who are running for office in the May election will stop by and chat with us as to why they want the position and what they plan to do to help the town. This is an important opportunity to meet the candidates and for them to explain their reasons for running for office. All residents are welcome. Town Hall Annex, in the basement. April 29, Wednesday, 11 a.m.

Last year we had a rather large group of forty residents in the audience and we learned a lot about the candidates. The way they answered our questions said almost as much as their actual words. It was a very informative meeting and I expect this year it will be even more so.

We are working on exercise classes for the coming months ... so that we can Spring into health.

On April 1, Wednesday at 11 a.m., a visiting nurse from Porch Light will speak to us about diabetes and various ways to help control our sugars. The nurse from last year was very personable and set realistic goals for us. The class is sponsored by the Board of Health and will include luncheon after the presentation.

April 8, Wednesday at 11 a.m., a representative will visit us to talk about home improvements for the elderly and discuss a program that helps seniors and disabled persons add safety features to their homes such as ramps and walk-in showers. The rep will inform us what we need to qualify for the program and what sort of loan we can arrange to have the work done. I believe that qualified applicants are eligible for a zero-interest loan. The event will be followed by our usual pot-luck luncheon.

Don't forget, the Sandisfield COA provides rides on Tuesdays to older adults year-round.

May is Older Americans Month. The theme of this year's celebration is "Get into the Act," to focus on how older adults can take charge of their health, get engaged in their communities, and make a positive impact in the lives of others.

Throughout the month, the Sandisfield COA will present a series of programs, including tips on how to access legal aid through elder-law attorneys, a registered nurse who specializes in preventing initial cardiac events – and how to prevent another event, nutritional classes on lowering your sodium intake, and exercise classes designed to maximize the ability of elders to lead a healthy, active, and productive life in their own homes.

As always... we are here every Wednesday at 11am. We have a potluck at noon ... and then most of our group ends up playing bingo. Occasionally we can convince our group to play right/left/center. Please join us. The more active members we have, the more activities we can plan.

In addition to the COA "Meet the Candidates" in April, The Times is organizing an Election Forum to allow the candidates an opportunity to discuss their candidacy and answer questions. Time and location to be determined.

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Willard in Winter

MAKING IT THROUGH A COLD SPELL

Story and photo by John Kuzmecz



As we feel the relief of surviving a rough Sandisfield winter and pat ourselves on the back for whatever routines we took to stay warm and sane, special credit goes to the resilience of Willard Platt, 84, in Roosterville.

As the replacement work on the Clark Road Bridge continues, a temporary narrow foot-bridge is Willard's only access to his house on the west side of the Farmington River. He crosses it every day to get back and forth to his jeep. The house is 112 yards from where the jeep was parked on the far side of the frozen Farmington. Imagine walking 337 feet in the winter wind every day to get to your front door.

Sometimes Willard used an ancient Craftsman riding lawnmower, which he sees no reason to upgrade. He pulled groceries behind it via a large cart, the type seen at lawn and garden centers. Willard's Yankee ingenuity was observed by the bridge construction supervisor last summer, and the Maximillian bridge team then bought their own pull-cart to transport rebar across the river using a similar system.

Willard does not use oil or electricity for heat

and relies solely on heat produced by his coal stoves, which he deems as superior to wood. On a cold winter day in February, he found he needed more coal. He and his son Butch transported 2,000 pounds across the river.

Although he had planned for the winter by storing coal near his house, this year he ran low. The usual method of the delivery before each winter was loose coal in the back of a pick-up driven across the bridge. This time he had it bagged and delivered to the edge of Clark Road. He then made numerous trips using his lawnmower and pull-cart, towing up to nine bags per trip. Each bag was 40 pounds and, of course, he loaded and unloaded them from the cart by himself.

He said he was looking forward to it for a few days, before the coal was delivered. Afterwards he said in his usual Platt optimism, "It was a fun experience. Not something many people get to do."

The only challenge on the whole trip was an icy incline near his home where he spun the wheels a bit, even though the tires were chained.

Sandisfield Historical Society

By John Kuzmecz



Our first meeting of 2015 will be April 11, Saturday, 11 a.m. We don't have a speaker on the agenda. Instead, we'll have a business meeting to plan for speakers and events for the year. Followed by our potluck meal, as usual. At the Meeting House on the corner of Rt. 183/Sandy Brook Turnpike and South Sandisfield Road. If you have ideas/thoughts about the Society and can't be at our meeting, call me at 258-4906.

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Comings & Goings



HELENE LINKOVITCH KOKOSZKA
1923-2015

Helene (Linkovich) Kokoszka, 91, of Meriden, Connecticut, died Saturday, March 14, after a short illness. She was the wife of the late Julian "Whitey" Kokoszka and sister of Walter Linkovitch of Sandisfield.

Born in Sandisfield on March 28, 1923 to William and Rose Linkovich, Helene graduated from Lee High School. She was married to "Whitey" for 59 years. Residing in Meriden most of her adult life, Helene was employed as a bank teller at Connecticut Bank and Trust for 29 years prior to her retirement.

She is survived by her daughter, Donna (Kokoszka) Guidi of Meriden; and son and daughter-in-law William and Eileen Kokoszka, of Meriden. Helene was a truly wonderful and loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. She leaves six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Helene is also survived by her brother, Walter Linkovich of Sandisfield. She was predeceased by her brothers, Stanley and Michael Linkovich. She is survived by sisters-in-law, Agnes Baur, Sophie Ostasiewski, and Helen Weitrak; and brother-in-law, Stanley Kokoszka and his wife, Carolyn.

A funeral service was held in Meriden on March 17. The family extends a heartfelt thank you to the staff at MidState Medical Center and Masonicare Hospice for the wonderful care they provided to Helene during this difficult time. Contributions in her memory may be made to the Meriden Humane Society, 311 Murdock Ave., Meriden, CT 06450.



BETTY ARNOLD AND BOB MINERY

The Times learned at press time of the deaths of Betty Arnold, 83, of Becket, and of Bob Minery, 82, of Cold Spring Road. Both were long-time Sandisfield residents. Ms. Arnold's funeral was March 28; burial will be in Sandisfield at a date to be announced. Mr. Minery's funeral will be April 8, 11 a.m., at the Kelly Funeral Home in Lee. Obituaries for both will be published in The Times in May.



JOSEPH P. ZELLER, JR.
1949-2015

Joe Zeller died March 4 at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield. Joe was in his third term as Town Constable and was a long-time highway department employee.

A memorial service will be held April 18, 3 p.m., at Fire Station #2. Reverend Don Peet will officiate.

Born in Torrington, Conn., October 2, 1949, Joe was the son of Joseph and Mary Elizabeth (Nadeau) Zeller. He grew up in Harwinton, attended local schools, and was a graduate of Lewis Mill High School. He worked for Zeller Tire and Allied Grocers before he moved to Sandisfield in 1986.

Joe's wife, Karen, said that Joe loved Sandisfield with a passion and was happy to have his few acres here. "Working for the Highway Department for almost 20 years, he got to know the town well and most of the people in it." She added, "Joe had a big smile which he shared with everyone he met. He enjoyed helping people and often went out of his way to do something for someone else."

Joe retired from the Highway Department in 2012. Road Superintendent Steve Harasyko remembered that Joe often stepped up as acting superintendent during rough times. "He was a benefit to the town and had the town's best interests at heart. If we needed something, Joe could always be counted on to get things done."

Joe recently joined the Fire Department as a volunteer. Fire Chief Ralph Morrison said he would miss Joe. "He was a nice, happy man. He was always smiling." Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko remembered, "Joe was an amazing person to work with, and a lovely person to call a friend."

Karen Zeller said that with retirement, "Joe was happy to watch the snow and ice out of a window from his house instead of from a town truck. He still continued to serve his beloved town by being a constable and volunteering for the fire department. Joe was proud to be a part of Sandisfield."

Along with his wife, Karen (Calvanese), Joe is survived by his son, Jody Zeller of Florida, and a sister, Deana Ord of Harwinton, Conn.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Alice Boyd Tosses Her Hat in the Ring

I'm a grant writer for cities and towns. For 25 years I've watched municipalities across the state tackle issues critical to their future. I've spent time in their town halls, attended their Select Board meetings, and sat through their Annual Town Meetings.

While the needs and challenges for each town vary, all communities inevitably deal with issues in one of two ways: by spending money or by smartly planning for their future.

In Sandisfield, we have our own problems. Our roads are in desperate need of repair, our town buildings don't meet code, we have no commercial tax base, and we have too much land off of the tax rolls.

Complicating matters, many of our residents are struggling to pay their taxes. That makes raising taxes extremely difficult. We can't ask our families, and retirees who are struggling, to pay even more.

Still, we can plan for our future.

First, our Selectmen need to set Annual Goals, review them throughout the year, and reevaluate them every year. Second, we need to aggressively seek additional sources of revenue, whether from grants, state reimbursements for logging our forests, or other means. Third, and just as important, we need to rigorously review all of our current spending goals and plans. We need to pursue all of our options.

It's time to take action. But to tackle our issues, we need to get the funding. We need to move forward and plan Sandisfield's future in a smart and sustainable manner. This is why I'm running for the Select Board.

Alice Boyd
South Sandisfield Road

HELP SAVE A POTTERS' KILN

For those of you who love the arts, ceramics in particular, or just care about our local arts organizations, I would like to ask for your support. A group of potters from IS183 Art School of the Berkshires has banded together to raise money to help rebuild the school's deteriorating soda kiln. IS183 in Stockbridge is a unique non-profit resource for local ceramic artists.

The group, of which I am a member, has launched a Kickstarter campaign that gives us one month to reach our fundraising goal. The deadline is April 24. If we don't reach our goal by the deadline, we will forfeit all the proceeds and contributions will be returned to donors.

Please visit the website <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/601830564/save-our-soda-kiln> to learn how you can help. And please pass the request along to those who care about ceramics, the arts, arts organizations, or the Berkshires!

Setsuko Winchester
Silverbrook Road

New Boston Church in Spring



Weather permitting, the New Boston Congregational Church will open for spring on Easter Sunday, April 5, at 10 a.m.

The following month, the church will open again on Sunday, May 10, for Mother's Day, also at 10 a.m.

Following the services, anyone who would like to stop by the New Boston Inn would be welcome.

Church members report that the corned beef and cabbage dinner in mid-March at Firehouse #2 was a great success. Everyone enjoyed the dinner and meeting their neighbors after the long winter. The members send thanks for all the generous support.

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NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.

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

APRIL EVENTS

Diabetes Counseling sponsored by the Porchlight Visiting Nurse Association on Wednesday, April 1, at 11:00 a.m. at the Sandisfield Council on Aging, Town Hall Annex (basement level), Route 57. Co-sponsored by the Sandisfield Board of Health.

WiredWest Public Information Meeting on April 4, Saturday, 10 a.m.-noon, at Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road.

Easter Sunday Church Service on April 5, at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church on Route 57. An informal gathering will take place at the New Boston Inn following the service at the church.

Home Improvements for the Elderly Discussion on Wednesday, April 8, at 11:00 a.m. at the Sandisfield Council on Aging, Town Hall Annex (basement level), Route 57. This program will help seniors and disabled persons add safety features to their home, such as ramps and walk-in showers. There will be information provided on zero-interest loans. A potluck luncheon will follow the program.

Town Caucus on Thursday, April 9, at 7:00 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road.

Sandisfield Historical Society Meeting on April 11, at 11:00 a.m. at the Meeting House on the corner of Route 183/Sandy Brook Turnpike and South Sandisfield Road. A business meeting to plan for 2015 speakers and events, followed by a potluck luncheon. For information, contact John Kuzmech (258-4906).

Volunteer Cemetery Clean-Up Day on Sunday, April 12, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at New Boston Cemetery, Rt. 57 (next to Carr Field). Coffee and sandwiches provided by the Council on Aging. Call Kathie Burrows to be included. 258-4943. Rain date, April 19. We hope to have additional volunteer clean-up dates at each of our cemeteries through the good weather.

Memorial Service for Constable Joe Zeller on Saturday, April 18, at 3:00 p.m. at Sandisfield Fire Station #2 on Route 57. The Reverend Don Peet will be the officiant.

Poetry Reading on Saturday, April 25, at 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. The Arts Center celebrates National Poetry Month with Charles Fidler's exploration of Walt Whitman's poetry.

Last Day to Register to Vote at the Annual Town Meeting and for the Election is April 27, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex.

Meet the Candidates on Wednesday, April 29, at 11:00 a.m. at the Sandisfield Council on Aging, Town Hall Annex (basement level), Route 57. Candidates for town offices will provide insight on why they are running this year and their plans of what to do to help the residents of Sandisfield.

APRIL EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Fifth Annual Kops N Kids Camp from Wednesday, April 22 through Friday, April 24 at the Otis Town Hall. Friday will feature a visit to Howe Caverns in New York. The camp is open for children ages 5 to 12. Children over 12 can apply to be Junior Counselors. Space is limited and preference will go to children from Otis, Sandisfield, and Becket. Interested parents should visit the Otis Police Department Facebook page and follow the link to the online form.

Call for Vendors: Otis Cultural Council Tag Sale will take place on Saturday, May 23, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Otis Ridge parking area on Route 23. If you would like to be a vendor, call 413-269-4008 or visit townofotisma.com/culturalcouncil.

ONGOING EVENTS

Select Board: every Monday at 7 p.m., Town Hall Annex.

Farmington River Regional School District, first Monday of the month, 7 p.m., Farmington River Regional School, Rt. 8, Otis.

Planning Board, second Tuesday of the month, 6 p.m., Old Town Hall.

Board of Assessors, second Tuesday of the month, 5 p.m., Town Hall Annex.

Conservation Commission, third Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m., Town Hall Annex.

Board of Health, first Monday of the month, 7 p.m., Old Town Hall.

Council on Aging, every Wednesday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Senior Center, Town Hall Annex. Pot luck lunch at noon, bingo at 1 p.m. Free blood pressure screening every fourth Wednesday.

Finance Committee, second Saturday of the month, 9:30 a.m., Sandisfield Library.

Strategic Planning Committee, third Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m., Fire Station #2 on Sandisfield Road.

Sandisfield Public Library Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Thursday, 2-5 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m.-12 noon. Phone: 258-4966.

Historical Commission: First Wednesday, 7 p.m. at Town Library.

COMING NEXT MONTH

New location for the Annual Town Meeting. Fire Station #2 on Rt. 57. (Not at Old Town Hall.) Due to major issues on the warrant, the Select Board anticipates a large turnout. Saturday, May 16, 10 a.m.

May 18, Annual Town Election. Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Rd., 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Lotta Bull

Travelers on South Beech Plain Road one day last fall encountered a formidable gatekeeper, name of "Red Bull." This handsome fellow took his job of protecting Vic Hryckvich's grazing cows very seriously. Eventually Mr. Red, who we are told is harmless, allowed a car to pass – albeit grudgingly – around him. He moved not an inch.

Photo: Jean-Atwater Williams

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The Sandisfield Times is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization staffed by volunteers from the Sandisfield community and funded by individual and business sponsors. Its mission is to connect the community through reliable, regular, and relevant information. The paper is published 11 times each year, with a joint January-February issue and monthly issues thereafter.

Donations of all sizes are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper. Please send checks to: *The Sandisfield Times*, P.O. Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255 or donate online at our website: www.sandisfieldtimes.org.

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