

# Town Meeting, May 16 • Election, May 18

## THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

*Tribunus*



*Plebis*

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume VI, Number 2

May 2015

### ELECTION FORUM

#### MEET THE CANDIDATES

Thursday, May 14, 7 p.m.

Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road

A second opportunity to get to know the individuals running for the two seats on the Select Board.

### Understanding WiredWest

#### MISCONCEPTIONS CLEARED UP

by Jean Atwater-Williams

At Town Meeting on May 16, our community will decide whether every Sandisfield household and business that wants high-speed fiber-optic service can have it.

Will we choose to be a town competitive with neighboring towns to attract buyers and protect property values? Will we offer our children equal accessibility to what is already standard internet service in so many other places? Will we provide small and home-based businesses this capability and stimulate growth and promote a healthier tax base?

This is a complex project founded on assumptions and estimates. But the plan, nearly 4 years in the

**WiredWest**  
Public Information Meeting  
Thurs., May 7, 7:30 to 9 p.m.  
Old Town Hall

making, was formed by a team with a wide range of experience in technology information as well as municipal finance, marketing, legal, and general management. The plan has been scrutinized by outside consultants and State agencies. Thirty-two western Massachusetts towns are confident enough to place the issue before their voters this month.

We have held several public information meetings to date. During the Q&A sessions attendees have asked questions that suggest confusion exists about some aspects of this program. Misconceptions, if you will.

#### **“I heard that property taxes will increase \$500 per year!”**

This is wildly incorrect. The State’s contribution of \$1.2 million (assuming the warrant passes) will be used first so there will be minimal tax impact, if any. Notes will then be issued on an as-needed basis. The maximum estimated tax impact for Sandisfield at year 6 (2022) is 0.87 mills, or less than \$1 per \$1,000 valuation. But, with even a 40% subscription rate, the WiredWest cooperative is expected to have sufficient revenue to reimburse towns. This is the most conservative scenario because as subscriber participation increases total revenue will exceed total operating costs plus reserves more quickly.

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Kayakers on the Farmington are a sign of spring in Sandisfield.

Photo: Mary Anne Grammer

Cont'd on p.4

## Strategic Planning Reconvenes

The Strategic Planning Committee met mid-April for the first time, said Committee Chair Kathy Jacobs, since “Old Man Winter drove us into our homes with no desire to venture into the cold for any meetings during the dark days of January and February.”

Gary Bottum, Chair of the Planning Board, presented a status report on a pending contract with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. BRPC will help guide the Master Plan process. Gary said the contract had been signed by the Selectmen and the committee will contact BRPC to determine a time-line and schedule of when public meetings will be held.”

Kathy thanks all who attended and reviewed the latest draft of the new Town Hall and DPW buildings. “People had suggestions,” she said, “and we will see if we can accommodate them into the building designs.”

One major issue pertaining to a new Town Hall building is “Where.” Where should the new Town Hall be located? Kathy said, “Away from rivers and brooks, free from ledge, not in a wetlands area, with enough acreage to allow for growth. The location is important – not only are we building a new Town Hall, but a renewed sense of community and the rebirth of a Town center.”

She added that if anyone, that means you, has any ideas where the new Town Hall should be built, either call her at 258-4535 or email to sandisfieldsuggestionbox@gmail.com.

In the next few months the committee will present draft designs of the new buildings to the Selectmen and Town employees. Watch for Select Board agendas for the date and time of this presentation.

Next meeting: May 20, Wednesday, Fire House #2, Rt. 57, 7 p.m. All welcome. 🍷

### Computer Woes?

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## Electricity Choice?

### MAY BE COMING YOUR WAY AT TOWN MEETING

*By Sandisfield Times Reporters*

At the Select Board April 6, Mark Cappadona, President of Colonial Power Group, Inc., made a presentation about Community Choice Aggregation Programs (CCAs) and explained the municipal electricity aggregation process.

Colonial Power Group, a Massachusetts-based energy consulting company, claims that the proposal offers all electricity users in Sandisfield the potential for significant savings on their electric bill. The program is intended to include all Basic Service consumers, although residents can opt out of the municipal plan and select their own power provider at any time without fees or penalties.

Another group, Veridian Energy, presented a different proposal at the Select Board at the end of March, but were not encouraged to proceed, in part because the company charged a fee for residents to opt out of the plan.

The state some years ago deregulated the purchase of electricity, allowing residents to shop around for the best rate. A number of municipalities have

entered into contracts to provide lower electrical rates to their residents and businesses.

Towns and cities can also join together to purchase electricity. New Marlborough and Tyringham, for example, recently joined a 10-municipality electrical aggregation plan with Hampshire Power.

Purchasing power from another provider does not change the utility delivering the electricity — residents would continue to get bills, meters read, and customer support from Eversource, formerly Western Massachusetts Electric Company. Customers would still contact Eversource in the case of a power outage. This program would only address the electricity supply portion of the customers’ Eversource bill.

Any decision to join a municipal aggregation plan would be need to be decided by town meeting. Sandisfield is considering having this warrant article included in the Town Meeting, May 16.

Residents can compare energy prices on their own by going to the website, [chooseenergy.com](http://chooseenergy.com). Energy pricing options are provided by zip code areas. 🍷

## The Blossoming of Villa Mia!

*By Val Coleman*

Dia Klenja, who has owned and operated our Villa Mia restaurant for 14 years, announced this week that she will bring her special gourmet Albanian foods to the Otis Farmer’s Market. The Market is open every Saturday from May 9 to the Columbus Day weekend at the L&M parking lot in East Otis, 9 a.m to 1 p.m.

Dia also told the Times that she is now officially in the catering business. She said, “It’s going to be a wonderful summer.”

Beautiful baklava, made from scratch, half-moon croissants, burek (stuffed with spinach and feta, ground beef and onions) and individual magic cookies will be on sale at the market. So will her “locally famous spaghetti sauce” and her house-made noodles.

Dia, who is much admired for the flowers that surround Villa Mia, has planted 60 extra pots of dahlias which she will also offer for sale in Otis.

Dia is also offering a catering service to residents of Sandisfield and surrounding towns. “I do it all,” she

said, “I’m catering a 60-person affair in Tolland this August. Parties, weddings, formal meetings that need feeding, all are welcome. I’m ready! Let’s go!”

The restaurant, which has always specialized in Italian food, will be open this summer every day except Tuesday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. 🍷





# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## THE TIMES AND REPORTING

Last month *The Times* published a report about negotiations between the Select Board and Kinder Morgan regarding a “gift” to the town should KM’s pipeline expansion be approved.

*The Times* and its reporter have since been taken to the woodshed by Select Board Chairman Patrick Barrett over what he perceives to be the article’s inaccuracies. (See Chairman Barrett’s letter and responses from pipeline abutters in the “Out on a Limb” column, pages 12-13.)

*The Times* stands behind its reporter and the article. The article reported on the negotiations between the Select Board and KM. The fact that negotiations occurred is not in dispute.

The article did imply that the full two-man board had met with KM and such a meeting would have violated the “open meeting statute.” To be clear, the selectmen met individually with KM and in fact no violation of the statute occurred.

*The Times* article also stated that a proposed meeting in March with state lawmakers was cancelled “as news of [the meeting] leaked out.” Subsequently, Chairman Barrett said that the meeting

was cancelled when it became apparent that he could only meet with the lawmakers at his home and the lawmakers felt such a meeting would have been inappropriate.

According to Chairman Barrett, this was the third time that meetings between at least one of our selectmen and our two state lawmakers has been cancelled because of scheduling conflicts.

I would like this much-postponed meeting to take place. Smitty Pignatelli and Ben Downing don’t often get to Sandisfield and very seldom on the same trip. As editor of our paper, I’d even like to be there.

Bill Price  
West New Boston



### Brave Spring

I would hold you in the cup of my hand, Spring,  
So precious is the frail puzzle of you.  
The very tips of my fingers  
Want for the warm touch of your daffodils  
That I found this morning in the old snowbank  
Breasting upwards towards the sun.

Why can't you be brave  
And sue for peace with winter?  
Why are you so innocent this time  
When you could win my heart so easily  
If, like Alexander, you would cut the season's knot  
With your green sword.

Val Coleman  
Town Hill Road

## Early Birds of Spring

By Margaret O’Clair

Long before the leaves are out and the flowers are in bloom our summer birds are arriving.

Everyone associates the sight of Robins on the lawn as harbingers of spring but the Robins come out of the woods when the frost is out of the ground and when there is insect and worm activity on the surface of the soil. Before that happens, however, other species of birds are already here.

Kim Spring, who keeps meticulous records, reports seeing Turkey Vultures and Red-winged Blackbirds on March 12 this year. Not the earliest date, according to her records, but you may recall that mid-March this year we were still in the grip of a really hard winter. There must have been precious little for them to eat, but somehow they survived.



Great Blue Heron  
Photo: commons.wikipedia.org

As soon as the ice melts, first on moving water, then on the lakes, the water birds appear. A Great Blue Heron down by the library, Canada Geese, Mallards, several pair of Hooded Merganser as well as several groups of colorful Wood Ducks along Rt. 57. Also a single but significant American Black Duck have been spotted in town.

Kim and I each spotted the Black Duck on two separate occasions in the swamp at the intersection of New Hartford and South Sandisfield Roads. Although there are still good-sized flocks of American Black Duck along the mid-Atlantic coast it is a species in sharp decline and for once this decline is not entirely due to human destruction of habitat. Black Duck are similar to Mallard Duck, in size, habits, and habitat, and they often commingle in flocks. The male Mallard is extremely sexually aggressive and the male Black is not, so the Mallard breeds with the female Black. The resulting hybrid offspring are less fertile, often unable to reproduce at all. No big deal for the common Mallard but disaster for the American Black.

Other early species spotted in town include Phoebe and Olive-Sided Flycatchers, Woodcock, and Fox Sparrow. The other Sparrows will be here shortly. In May we can expect the Warblers, Grossbeaks, and all our other avian visitors including everyone’s favorite, the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird.

Don’t forget to put up your hummingbird feeders. The little guys usually arrive the first week of May, and they are hungry and exhausted. A mix of 1/4 cup sugar diluted in 3/4 cup water will do wonders to revive them.



## Welcome Otis Observer

Greetings to our new neighbor newspaper, the *Otis Observer*, on the occasion of its initial issue this month. The *Observer* is a happy addition to the papers that serve the small towns across southern Berkshire County.



## Memorial Day Parade COME OUT AND HONOR VETERANS Sunday, May 24

Come watch veterans, fire departments from Sandisfield and neighboring towns, a marching band or two, and some beautiful cars in Sandisfield’s Memorial Day Parade. Kick-off is at 10 a.m., at Old Town Hall. The parade proceeds east on Rt. 57, then south on Rt. 8 to the American Legion Pavilion for a flag-raising ceremony. Refreshments will be provided by the American Legion, Post #456, and the Sandisfield Fire Department, parade co-sponsors. If you want to march in the parade or drive a vehicle or ride horseback, call Fire Chief Ralph Morrison at 258-4742, or just show up before kick-off.

# SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER



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## may

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Photos by Geoffrey Coelho

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Opening Reception

**SAT, MAY 2 4PM**

BFWW Spring Reading in  
Honor of May Day on the  
Theme of LABOR

**SAT, MAY 9 7PM**

Second Annual  
Spring Dinner & Benefit  
Auction

**SAT, MAY 16 7PM**

Sally-Jane Heit  
For A Woman Her Age!

**SUN, MAY 24 4PM**

Music by Brahms and Mahler  
(The Ferris Burtis Music  
Foundation)

**SAT, MAY 30 10AM**

Reading Local History  
talk with Ron Bernard and  
Gary Leveille

Funded in part by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and  
Local Cultural Councils

## Understanding WiredWest

cont'd from p.1

### “What happens if there is a surplus?”

With the municipal cooperative governed directly by participating towns, the Board of Directors has the authority and the intention to eventually reallocate surplus revenue back to the towns, creating a potential new revenue source.

All residents understandably fear any new taxes, no matter how small. But the fact is that if Sandisfield does not figure out how to grow its tax base, the burden of increasing costs for roads and schools will continue to fall on the existing small base of property owners. Worse, valuations could remain stagnant and even fall. By default, therefore, taxes will increase whether we like it or not. WiredWest represents the single best opportunity to improve the economic fortunes of Sandisfield with virtually insignificant investment and no environmental impact.

### “Why should we help this company to get established?”

WiredWest is not a private enterprise. It is a municipal cooperative. It belongs to and is run by the people, like a town. Costs are low because among other factors the co-op is tax-exempt. Unlike a private company there is no need to pay dividends to shareholders. The mission of the co-op is to serve the people. Period.

### “What we’ve got is fine.”

In reality, our existing internet infrastructure is obsolete and expensive. The dramatic increase in internet traffic exceeds the speed limits of DSL and the capacity limits of satellite and cellular systems. The DSL equipment installed here is second-hand, previously used in the Boston area, and much of it is no longer being manufactured. It is not even available in much of the town. It is only a matter of time before Verizon and others are unable or unwilling to maintain their copper networks. Verizon has publicly announced plans to phase out DSL in favor of more expensive cellular.

### “What’s wrong with wireless?”

Wireless works poorly in hill towns. The capability of these systems is fixed and is limited. If the Town is forced into wireless (or satellite), people will pay more for less service.

### Only full-time residents or registered voters can sign up for WiredWest.

Not true. All residents, including renters and property owners in any of the 32 towns currently enrolled in the “Fiber Town” campaign, may sign up to receive WiredWest services. This includes

full-time as well as part-time residents. Renters will need the permission of the property owner prior to future installation. You do not need to be a registered voter to sign up.

### Not a misconception, but reality ...


Building a state-of-the-art, regional, fiber optic network, accessible and affordable to all, cooperatively owned and locally operated, would fundamentally change the prospects for our communities.

The substandard nature of the internet infrastructure in Western Massachusetts today disadvantages our businesses and institutions, our workers, our students, our medical professionals and their patients, our health and safety efforts, and our governments. In turn, that affects the vitality of our communities and our ability to attract top talent, foster new businesses, and keep young people in our communities is compromised. Property values are depressed and homes don’t sell.


WiredWest will not only provide vastly superior, truly high-speed service compared to what is available commercially (8 times faster than DSL), but it will also come with significant savings. Surveys indicate that for “mid-level” or typical service Internet/Phone/TV households here spend, for example, about \$175 per month with Verizon and \$225 per month with Hughes Net. The equivalent estimated total cost with WiredWest would be \$159 per month with better service.

At this writing, we are about three-quarters of the way towards the goal of 40% of household sign-up. In other words, a WiredWest network in Sandisfield would be cost effective if 40% of total potential households (about 250 customers) sign up. To date nearly 200 residents have subscribed. We will easily beat the minimum goal. Towns with the highest take rates are going to get priority so don’t wait! Sign up today at [www.WiredWest.net](http://www.WiredWest.net).

Vote FOR the warrant on May 16!

If you have more questions, come to the WiredWest Public Information Session on Thursday, May 7 at 7:30 p.m. at Old Town Hall. 

## A Campetti Correction

Last month I confused the relationships of the Campetti family in the sidebar to The Times’ story about the New Boston Store, “When Pete’s Was Steve’s.” Mary Lundgren, who ran the store while Steve was serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, was Steve’s sister, not his aunt. In 1977, Steve sold the store to Sue Murray and her husband, Pete. Sue was Steve’s niece, not his sister. 

-B.P.



# Emergency Vehicle Needs a Tow

By Sandisfield Times Reporter

In April an ambulance from out of town, carrying a Town resident home, drove into a washout on the upper end of Silverbrook Road. Unable to get out, the driver called for rescue. Two vehicles that came to help also got stuck, requiring a back-up ambulance and another tow truck.

While Steve Harasyko, Road Superintendent, says the roads held up pretty well over the winter, "there are some exceptions." Upper Silverbrook was one of the exceptions. Near the end of the asphalt portion of upper Silverbrook, washouts have

created enormous gaps with crumbling edges that span the road. "It's what happens to asphalt in the spring at high altitudes after a very harsh winter," said Setsuko Winchester, a neighbor. "It was never this bad with the dirt road because it was fixed in a couple of days with grading."

"It was a dangerous winter," she continued, "but one that Sandisfield veterans could handle. The spring has been a different story. The danger is not for the folks who live here, but for people who don't - UPS, FedEx, emergency vehicles that venture down our roads following GPS and don't know what's ahead."

Meanwhile, said Steve, the washouts have been temporarily filled with gravel. "We'll start repairing the blacktop soon. We've been waiting on the asphalt plants to get fired up, and they're usually ready to go the end of April."

Photo: Setsuko Winchester



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# Bearing Weapons of Grass Destruction

By Bogart Muller

We couldn't have asked for a more beautiful day. By 9:30 close to thirty people were jammed up on coffee with doughnuts, wandering around to destroy whatever brush with weapons of grass destruction. There were chainsaws, pruning tools, tarps to drag away debris, the Town truck and giant chipper, and, best of all, attitude.

The West New Boston Cemetery never saw it coming. The place was transformed from overgrown to almost naked. We discovered headstones no one knew were there. Every plot was assessed and anything growing out of control was quickly annihilated. Brush and sometimes whole trees were dragged by manpower and woman power to the pile that the tireless Town crew chipped and hauled away. Three giant dump truck loads moved out through the course of the five-hour session. That's a lot of debris!



We now have a project that is done. There were no politics, no agendas, no bosses. Everyone naturally fell into a rhythm and strived for one common goal, getting the place cleaned up. But this was not a "sprucing" up. It was more like a no-nonsense effort to show each other that we can do what we said we could do.

Many thanks to the COA for the delicious food, Kathie and Barbara for steering the helm, and most of all, Mother Nature for the finest weather this year. ❧

❧



# The First Cemetery Clean-Up Day a Success

## A ROUND OF THANKS

Kathie Burrows, Cemetery Committee Chair

The Cemetery Committee thanks all thirty residents who helped at the Volunteer Cemetery Pruning Day at the West New Boston Cemetery, April 12, a bright warm Sunday.

We are very thankful to Billy and Jordan from the Highway Department who pushed everything through the chipper and hauled away three trucks full of chips. Thanks to Steve for setting it up.

Thanks to Council on Ageing for providing everyone with Dunkin' Donuts and coffee for breakfast and sandwiches later on. It was a beautiful picnic and no one went away hungry.

And thanks to all the townspeople who came with their pruners, loppers, snipers, rakes, tarps, wheel barrows, carts, and chain saws. We had participants from 7 to 75, and part-time residents and full-time residents all working side by side. It was a very good day!!!



As you pass by the cemetery, it's near Carr Field – slow down and take a look at our accomplishments. We may have time to go back to do some fine-tuning or even paint the fence before the Memorial Day Parade on Sunday, May 24.

As one of committee members said, "One down and four more to go!!!" ❧

## A Word from the Commissioner

Ben Campetti, Sandisfield Cemetery Commissioner, reported that he was "really pleased with the number of people who came to help. I admitted at the Selectmen's meeting how surprised I was. I've been involved in a lot of things like this, and it's always the same six people who show up. I give the committee credit for getting all these people out." And, he added, "more kept coming as the day went on."

He was pleased that the workers dug up and threw out most of the barberry bushes. "They have pretty blossoms in the spring, but they also have cactus-like thorns. Farmers used to plant them along the stone walls to keep cattle from going over the walls. People liked them and started planting them at grave sites, but they'll just take over if you don't trim them."

Ben hopes the same dedication can be repeated, with even more help, at the other four town cemeteries. "Maybe one or two this fall and another two next spring." ❧

Photos: Kathie Burrows and Bogart Muller





# CEMETERY RULES APPROVED BY THE SELECT BOARD, April 13, 2015

Each of our cemeteries will have a sign which will read:

"Welcome to our Cemetery. Please be respectful of others while visiting here and follow our Guidelines.

- 1 - The cemetery is open when weather permits.
- 2 - No shrubbery or plants will be planted on any plot that exceed 2 feet tall or that spread outward by 2 feet.
- 3 - Flowers, wreaths, and other memorial items placed on the gravesite must be placed within 24 inches of the headstone and must be removed when they become unsightly, intrusive, unsafe, or inconvenient to good ground maintenance.
- 4 - No Grave Stone Rubbings.
- 5 - All motorized vehicles are to stay on the roadways.
- 6 - Please leash all pets and clean-up after them."

For the complete set of these rules see our Town Clerk or our web page on [www.sandisfield.info](http://www.sandisfield.info).

Our written rules will include 1-6 as on our sign, as well as 7-10 below:

- 7 - We will keep the grass mowed, but families are responsible for maintenance of their plantings.
- 8 - Already-established gravesites that are currently well maintained by family members or friends will be considered exempt, by the decision of the Select Board.
- 9 - Individuals may request an exemption by writing to the Select Board.
- 10 - We reserve the right to make exceptions or modifications to any of our rules or guidelines.



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# Julian Muller and Justina Golden, in Concert

The Ferris Burtis Music Foundation, The Berkshire Taconic Foundation, and the Sandisfield Arts Center will present a concert for the benefit of the FB Foundation on Sunday, May 24, at 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center.

Featured will be Julian Muller, brilliant young cellist, who has been aided by the Foundation in his studies at the Cleveland Institute of Music from which he will graduate this spring. He has performed at the Arts Center several times before.

Justina Golden, a wonderful mezzo-soprano who studies with Mr. Burtis, has her own vocal studio in Florence, Mass.

Music of Brahms and Mahler will be featured.

Tickets are \$20 at the door, or send a check, made out to Ferris Burtis Foundation, to Herbert Burtis, 53 Rood Hill Road, Sandisfield, MA 01255 for a reservation.

If you would like to make a more significant gift to the work of the Foundation visit our site: [ferrisburtisfoundation.blogspot.com](http://ferrisburtisfoundation.blogspot.com). Gifts of \$100 or more will receive two tickets plus having your name in the program.

The Foundation is currently helping five talented musicians from the Berkshire Taconic area. ♡



## THE SANDISFIELD LIBRARY

By Laurie Foulke-Green, Librarian

The library is open Wednesday nights, 6:30-8:30. We hold our Genealogy Assistance Class the last Wednesday of each month.

Our book sale continues.

### New Books on Order

Ashley's War/Tzemach Lemmon

Your Next Breath/Iris Johansen

The Forgotten Room/Lincoln Child

Robert Parker's Kickback/Ace Atkins

Hunt the Fox/Don Mann

The Guest Cottage/Nancy Thayer

Miracle at Augusta/James Patterson

The Seven Sisters/Lucinda Riley

The Sound of Glass/Karen White

The Body in the Birches/Katherine Hall Page

Bone to be Wild: A Sarah Booth Delaney

Mystery/Carolyn Haines

Murder on Amsterdam Avenue/Victoria

Thompson

14th Deadly Sin/James Patterson

Solitude Creek/Jeffery Deaver

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# Council on Aging



By Susan Galik

You'll have to wait until next month to find out what happened at our Meet the Candidates on April 29.

But before that, what a busy April we had.

Six of our members went to the MMRHS play, "The Little Shop of Horrors." Close to a dozen attended the St. Patty's Day dinner, put on by the New Boston Congregational Church. Over a dozen participated in our flower arranging class. They produced beautiful bouquets that still look good several weeks later.

Finally, at least 30 people showed up to help clean the cemetery down by Carr Field. We thank When Pigs Fly Farm for the donation that paid for almost half of the food and drinks our members made available. Thank you also to everyone who participated. We need more community activities like this.

Meanwhile, if you didn't get the message ... Line Dancing classes are happening in May at the Old Town Hall. \$2 per class. See notice on page 19 for dates and times. Everyone is welcome and you can show up for any class. If there is interest, we will talk about continuing the sessions.

For those in wheelchairs or who find it difficult to stand for even short periods of time ... Qigong classes dedicated to people who are mobility impaired will be held on Mondays at 11 a.m. at Old Town Hall. An entrance ramp can help you get into the building. Classes will be geared to strengthening what mobility we still have.

Cost is \$2 per class. Please just show up. Every Monday in May (except no class on Memorial Day) and the first four Mondays in June. Last class is June 22. Classes are open to anyone. If you wish to continue beyond June, let us know and the board will discuss it.

We will host our third "Talk to an Elder Lawyer" forum on May 13. Gregory Wolf will be at the COA meeting at 11a.m. to speak to us about wills, durable power of attorney, and health proxies. Please come with your questions. We have learned much in the past two years because of these forums.

On July 1, one of our board members will retire. Shirley Spring has been a fantastic secretary for the past four years. Barbara Cormier, our treasurer for the past four years as well, is also considering retiring. Wendy Slater's term is up and she also may not continue. If anyone out there is interested in serving on the board of the Council on Aging, please contact Linda Riiska, at 258-4816. Our board currently meets on the first and third Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. If you join our board the meeting times can be changed to whatever suits those who will continue after July 1. Be part of the future of how the elders in this town help themselves and others to maintain a healthy and active life. Anyone age 55 and older is eligible to serve.

As always, the COA meets every Wednesday at 11a.m. to chat, 12 noon to have a pot luck lunch followed by bingo. With two cards for 25 cents, bingo at COA is very reasonable.

Dues to join the Friends of the Sandisfield COA, are due in June. The cost is still \$5 and goes towards dinners out and other activities. The more people who join us on a regular basis ... the more activities we will be able to offer.

# Candidates for Offices

## FROM THE OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK

The Annual Town Meeting is Saturday, May 16, 2015. The venue has changed this year. The meeting will be at Fire Station #2 on Route 57. The doors will open at 9:30 and the meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. We anticipate a large attendance which is why the change in location.



The Annual Town Election is Monday, May 18, 2015. The polls open at 10:00 a.m. and close at 8:00 P.M. at the Old Town Hall.




Absentee ballots are available after April 22, 2015. There are three reasons for obtaining an absentee ballot. They are: (1) absence from the town during normal polling hours; (2) physical disability preventing you from going to the polling place; (3) religious belief. You will need to fill out an absentee ballot application before getting the ballot. You can call for an application or stop in at Town Hall Annex. You can also make an appointment to vote absentee in person.

These are the candidates you will be voting for in May.

- Moderator:** Jean Atwater-Williams
- Auditor:** Ralph E. Morrison
- Board of Assessors:** Kathleen Burrows
- Selectmen 1-year term:** Alice B. Boyd, Victor Hryckvich
- School Committee:** Sandra Snyder
- Selectmen 3-year term:** Patrick Barrett, Brian C. O'Rourke, John Skrip, Jr.
- Board of Health:** Margaret O'Clair
- Planning Board:** Thomas Jacobs
- Constable:** John Burrows

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# The Select Board Elections

As finalized by Town Caucus April 9, five official candidates and one write-in are running for two spots on the Select Board. Three candidates are running for a 3-year term: Patrick Barrett, Brian O'Rourke, and John Skrip. Two

candidates are running for a 1-year term: Alice Boyd and Victor Hryckvich. The 1-year seat has a third candidate, Martin Clark, the write-in candidate.

The Times asked all six Board candidates to submit a written statement about themselves. Victor Hryckvich and Martin Clark did not submit a statement.

## Three-Year Candidates: Patrick Barrett, Brian

### Patrick Barrett

The residents of Sandisfield have been a pillar of support to me and my family over the past six years, and I have enjoyed the opportunity to give back to this important community.

I pride myself on being visible: I attend all scheduled meetings, am consistently available to concerned residents during my free time, and have forged invaluable relationships with both "Smitty" Pignatelli and Benjamin Downing that have helped put Sandisfield on the map.

I am proud of the positive change that I have effected in town. During my time as a member of the Board of Selectmen I actively sought to knock down two dilapidated houses on Route 8, pushed for a town website, and most recently fought to protect Sandisfield from the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Expansion Project.

Hearing concerns from town residents, our board created the Strategic Planning Committee to assess the condition of town buildings and put long-term planning in place for addressing our future building needs. We also authorized a Cemetery Commission with a mission to put in place guidelines and a maintenance plan for preserving and



protecting these important sanctuaries. If re-elected I will work with town officials to secure funding for a new town municipal building and highway garage. These items need to be addressed but the burden can't fall on the shoulders of our tax payers. The Sandisfield Board of Selectmen will continue to seek STRAP Grant funding as a means to help fix our deteriorating roads. I will also be applying for a grant to build a series of recreational trails at Yanner Park with the hope of connecting them with the Berkshire Natural Resources trails.

I understand the challenges and time commitment of this important position and am proud of my record as selectman. I look forward to the opportunity to continue building a community in which I am proud to live.

Cemetery, our community is capable of doing wonderful things.

With the serious situation we are facing with the towns' infrastructure we need to harness this spirit now more than ever. Working together to finalize plans for a new municipal complex and town highway garage and lobbying for grants to pay for these projects is essential. As a community we need to put more pressure on the State to give us the proper Chapter 90 monies needed to properly fix our roads. These are major issues facing our community and my six years of leadership have prepared me to successfully handle the challenging years ahead. ♡

### Barrett's Response

Sandisfield's biggest liability is the deterioration of our town infrastructure. Our town buildings are in need of serious repair, we need a new town highway garage, and the paved roads throughout town are rapidly deteriorating. As the state continues to cut municipal funding, more and more of the economic burden is falling on financially strapped towns.

Sandisfield's biggest asset is the wonderful people who make up our community. When our residents unite behind a cause, whether that be a family in need, the 250th anniversary celebration, or cleaning up the New Boston

### Brian O'Rourke

I am pleased to announce my candidacy for the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen.

My family and I have lived in Sandisfield since July 2004. I have owned my own construction business since 1990. While building a home for a client on New Hartford Road in 2001, I realized how much Sandisfield was like the area I grew up around in upstate New York. It was then that my wife and I decided to purchase land and make Sandisfield our family home.

I decided to pursue a seat on the Select Board due to the fact that I have a strong passion and sense of duty to serve the town that my family and I have grown to love. I have seen a pattern of increased taxes and spending in town; yet our infrastructure continues to deteriorate. From 2010 to 2015 our tax rate



has increased over 50%. There are several large expenditures coming up in the next few years and I think my business experience can be advantageous in helping make the right choices regarding these items.

I believe in our town and its residents. Together with strong leadership and common sense, we can lead our town toward a solid future.

### O'Rourke's Response


To answer one or both questions, I feel we should discuss the liability that is facing our town. To exploit our assets as a town without first having a plan to gain control of our liabilities is a sign of poor leadership and a bad business decision. Our liabilities will eventually grow to consume our assets, something we are experiencing right this moment as a community.

One of the biggest liabilities we face today is our deteriorating infrastructure. Our bridges, roads, vehicles, and town buildings have gotten to a point where maintenance will no longer sustain them. We need to adopt a solid maintenance program for all town owned matters rather than a "waiting to fix it until after its broken" attitude. This way of doing business has gotten us to where we are today. I feel we need to identify the priority items and develop a plan to acquire them without simply raising taxes to do so. I believe in the future of our community, and with the valuable input from our residents we can create a plan to prosper. ♡





Candidates were also invited to respond to two questions: *What is the town's biggest asset and how can we profit from it? What is the town's biggest liability and how can we minimize it?* Their responses are below their candidate statements.

Election is May 18 at Old Town Hall, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. For absentee ballots, call Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko at 258-4090 or stop in for an application. Or you can visit Town Hall Annex and vote absentee in person. 

# O'Rourke, and John Skrip

## John Skrip

I have been a resident of Sandisfield for approximately 20 years and in that time have served as Town Moderator and presently serve on three committees: Farmington River Regional School Board, Cultural Council, and Strategic Planning.


My wife Rosanne and I have been married for 45 years, and we have one son who lives in Natick, Mass. I hold a Notary and a Justice of the Peace license which I have had the privilege to use many times for Sandisfield residents.

I am a graduate of Sacred Heart University BA, Worcester Polytechnic Institute MNS, and Southern CT State University 6th year Educational leadership. I have been a teacher, department chairperson, and a high school vice principal. I retired from education in 2003 but still teach chemistry at community colleges in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

So what does this have to do with running for a town office? I am also a licensed bonded mortgage broker in the State of Connecticut. I started a company in 1979, American Realty and Mortgage LLC, that still exists today. I have a broad background and the interest in using my skills in moving Sandisfield into the future.

## Skrip's Response

Sandisfield is the second largest land mass in MA. It is a tranquil town where nature's beauty is obvious. We cannot lose this character but we must promote sensible development. We need to promote our town to second homeowners and find a way to encourage seasonal recreation as a means of increasing our tax base. Someone once joked that in Sandisfield we Stop for Turkeys. I think that's a plus. Sandisfield is still a town where a hand shake is as good as a written contract.

I feel our biggest liability is not enough revenue and too much expense. I feel that each department head needs to justify their budget yearly; not just increase by X percentage but use a zero base budget concept to account for expenditures. We need to have a sensible combination of lowering expenses and increasing our grand list. 



Sandisfield is a town with a budget of about \$3 million. As such I feel it needs a selectman who can devote time to the day-to-day activities; a selectman who can be available to the people and town employees during the day when most town activities occur; a selectman who has the time to watch the expenses that impact the budget on a day-to-day basis.

As a retiree I have the time necessary to be your selectman; the time to contact our elected officials in Boston and keep them up to date with the happenings in Sandisfield.

I believe a town with a budget 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.

I am asking for your vote on May 18. Win or lose I will work with the town any way I can.

# One-Year Candidates: Alice Boyd, Victor Hryckvich and Martin Clark

NOTE: Victor Hryckvich and Martin Clark did not submit a statement.

## Alice Boyd

I am running for Selectman because I am confident that I can use my skills to help Sandisfield move forward with its plans for the future while limiting new taxes.

As a grant writer for Massachusetts communities for the past 25 years I've assisted many towns as they tackle issues critical to their future.

Like many of you, my husband and I live here because we love the woods, ponds, marshes and wildlife. My grandparents lived in Lee and then in Winsted; they're buried nearby and I have family throughout the area. Although I was not born here in Sandisfield – we chose Sandisfield as our home and we consider that to be one of the best decisions we've made. Sandisfield is truly special.

It is also true, however, that our town has issues that must be dealt with. Our roads are in desperate need of repair; our town buildings don't meet code; we have no commercial tax base; we have too much land off the tax

## Boyd's Response

What is the town's biggest asset and how can we profit from it?

Our biggest asset is the abundance of our land, purely and simply. This encompasses the natural beauty of our woods, streams, ponds and wildlife. Our woodlands offer privacy, food, warmth and peace. For some they provide a source of income, and I feel it is important that they are able to do so without the interference of larger out-of-the-area commercialization.

I want to see our town compensated for the woods that the state logs as well as for the land it has taken for recreational purposes. If Kinder Morgan does succeed in expanding




roles. Many of our residents struggle to pay their taxes.

It is time to take action. We can't ask our struggling families and retirees to pay even more, so to tackle these issues we need to find new funds. We must move forward, plan and manage Sandisfield's future. Once we are on sounder footing (and that is entirely possible!) we can implement the plans that are developing as a result of ongoing collaborations with our residents.

I have the skills and will make the commitment to do this. If elected I will be fair, transparent and hard-working. And I'll get the job done.

the pipeline I want to see them pay us annually for the land they usurp based on a good valuation of the pipeline for tax purposes. Kinder Morgan also needs to contribute to our community for the pipeline they already have.

What is the town's biggest liability and how can we minimize it?

Our tax base cannot easily support the needs of our town in the long term. We have 90 miles of roads plus town services and infrastructure to pay for. We need to: secure grants; bring new families and small businesses to town to increase the tax base; provide services that will attract people here; secure full payment from the state for logging our woodlands. 



## Responses to Town/KM Negotiation

### Is This Journalism?

#### SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT!

A response by Patrick Barrett, Chairman, Sandisfield Board of Selectmen

I want to correct the serious flaws in the article "Town Officials Meet with Kinder Morgan," as written by Simon Winchester, in the May Sandisfield Times.

This article called into question the integrity of the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator Lisa Blackmer. This time of year town officials should be focusing on budgetary matters and moving the town forward, but due to the serious allegations made in the article a response is necessary to set the record straight.

Prior to publication, Simon asked for a written or verbal statement from me regarding meetings between the selectmen, Lisa, and officials from Kinder Morgan. This statement was not published in its entirety thus lost much of its meaning. The full statement read:


The Sandisfield Board of Selectmen has been and continues to be fully opposed to the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Expansion project. The Sandisfield Board of Selectmen has actively voiced their opposition to this project in numerous public forums, in letters to the editor, through phone calls with state and federal officials as well as in letters to state and federal agencies whose fate will ultimately decide if this project moves forward. Officials at Kinder Morgan have publicly stated that if this project is approved they intend on giving a gift to the town as a gesture of good will to the Sandisfield community. As elected representatives of the town, the two most recent chairmen of the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen along with Town Administrator Lisa Blackmer have had conversations with Kinder Morgan officials in regards to a potential gift. As town officials, it is our responsibility to look out for the best interests of the community and it would be irresponsible for us to not pursue these discussion as a way to help secure the best possible agreement in the event that this project is ultimately approved in spite of town opposition. In these meetings

Sandisfield officials have continued to state their opposition to this project and officials from Kinder Morgan have repeated their desire to help out Sandisfield in the event that this project ends up impacting our community. To date, Sandisfield officials do not have any agreement in writing, and any gift to the town will require the approval of residents at a town meeting.

The Sandisfield Board of Selectmen and Lisa were encouraged by officials to engage in discussions with Kinder Morgan in the event that this project was approved. Sandisfield officials never engaged in any illegal meetings with KM as implied in the article. When Jeff was chairman, he and Lisa had a couple of meetings with officials from KM. As chairman, Lisa and I had two meetings with a KM official. At no point was there a majority of the board, thus no open meeting laws were violated.

The article also implied that a scheduled meeting between State Representative William "Smitty" Pignatelli and State Senator Benjamin Downing with Lisa and me was a secret illegal meeting that "was abruptly canceled as news of it leaked out." Representative Pignatelli's office contacted me to set up a meeting with Senator Downing and Lisa in order to get an update on the pipeline. This was a business meeting that did not include a majority of our board and was never intended to be an open public meeting. On two earlier occasions this meeting was canceled due to the busy schedules of Representative Pignatelli and Senator Downing. The weekend before the scheduled meeting my daughter was admitted to Boston Children's Hospital for a procedure. I was in Boston on the Monday of this meeting and was traveling back to Sandisfield while my wife was heading back to Boston in order to relieve me. I had no coverage for my two other kids who would be coming home from school at the time this meeting was scheduled to take place at the Sandisfield Town Annex. I asked if we could meet at my house so that an adult would be home for my children and was later told that Senator Downing and Representative Pignatelli didn't feel comfortable with this arrangement so the meeting was rescheduled.

In an article on small town newspapers written by Barbara Selvin, Simon explained the motto of the Sandisfield Times as being "Tribunus Plebis," or "The Guardian of the People," and "Reliable. Regular. Relevant." Slandering honest public officials with shoddy journalism and forcing them to divulge private family matters in order to clear their names isn't consistent with the motto of this paper.

Town officials work really hard on behalf of the residents of Sandisfield and deserve to be treated fairly by the press with reliable, regular, and relevant journalism. 

See Letter from the Editor, Page 3.

### A De Facto Town "Bribe"?

By Jeffrey Friedman, M.D.

I am sure our representatives are well intended and believe that they have Sandisfield's interests at heart, but I and other residents have grave concerns about the negotiations by the Selectmen and Town Manager for a "gift" from KM.


We believe their actions are damaging to the interests of the citizens of Sandisfield who summarily rejected the pipeline by overwhelming referendum. The Selectmen seem not to appreciate the adverse consequences of Sandisfield's acceptance of monies, designed by KM to influence our public officials in their decision making.

We believe that our representatives are inadvertently accepting what is a de facto town "bribe" (KM does not make "gifts" out of goodness of their heart) in order to advance KM's position with FERC and Massachusetts politicians. We know that KM now publicly advertises their past gifts to organizations such as BNRC or Berkshire towns in written materials to show what a "good corporate citizen" they are. This advances the interests of KM at the expense of my fellow easement landowners and Sandisfield citizens who voted against the project. This undermines our citizens' interests by giving KM "talking points" to advantage them in discussions with political representatives, such as the crucial upcoming discussions with state reps across Massachusetts regarding Article 97, where we hold a current advantage as State Representatives Pignatelli and Senator Downing are opposed to an Article 97 variance.

We realize Sandisfield is pressed for money. But our Selectmen's assertion that it is "irresponsible" to not benefit Sandisfield if the pipeline is coming is naive. I repeat: by negotiating in this way, our representatives are sending the message to politicians at all levels that the Town is prepared to "live" with the pipeline. This, in fact, is worse than "irresponsible." It is undemocratic in directly contravening the expressed will of the people.

The costs for our town couldn't be higher and way exceed the reported measly \$800,000 payoff from KM. The expanded easement will seriously damage the future value of real estate in Sandisfield, for which each of us will pay. I and other landowners on the easement are having as much as a tripling of an already massive right-of-way, from 75 to 220 feet, including "temporary" easement on which we will never see those trees in our lifetime. There are serious environmental threats to public land (The Audubon Society is vehemently opposed) and KM plans to empty out a million gallons from Lower Spectacle Pond. What toxins will be put back in when they return the water? Our roads will be seriously damaged by large vehicles they were never designed to support and the risks of explosions and terrorism have never been assessed or adequately reviewed.

For our representatives to say they'll demand a vote on it after dangling a deal from KM in front of us is little consolation from a democratic point of view. The damage will have been done; KM will have advertised this negotiation in their Article 97 discussions at the State House. If KM truly wanted to make a "gift," let them make it after FERC has given the go ahead, and after the Article 97 decision to avoid conflict of interest. They'll never agree and never make such a "gift" of "goodwill." You know why? Because they want to influence our Selectmen, the Massachusetts representatives, the US Congress, and FERC to grant them this pipeline. They know that and our Selectmen know that and that is what our representatives are trading on to get their contribution before FERC has approved the pipelines.

I urge our citizens to immediately contact our Selectmen and Town Manager and demand that discussions along these lines be stopped. 



## An Open Letter to the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen:

### THANK YOU FOR SELLING ME OUT

By Heather Morriral

I am a property owner in the town of Sandisfield who is in the fight of my life with Kinder Morgan. While every pipeline abutter in Sandisfield will be directly, horrifically, and permanently impacted by this pipeline expansion project, I enjoy the unique distinction of standing to lose the value of my land in its entirety.

Land that I bought with my hard earned money, have paid taxes on for a decade, have spent tens of thousands towards improvements, where I have looked forward to building my retirement home – will be worth virtually nothing.

With this in mind, I would like to address allegations leveled at Sandisfield's Board of Selectmen in a recent Sandisfield Times article. It was said that they

## Beware of KM/TGP Bearing Gifts

By Thelma Esteves

KM's TGP Limited Liability Corporation is presenting probably the greatest threat ever faced by Sandisfield. Their latest attempt to divide the town by asking us to retract opposition to their new pipeline in exchange for a one-time "gift" is another confirmation of why they cannot be trusted.

I have read KM's four enormous volumes describing their project. They are replete with errors, omissions, and lies that can be independently confirmed. Their latest filing with FERC this month only now admits they will have to cut out huge turnarounds on our

## Town Officials Ignore the Will of Their Constituents

By Barbara Penn

At a very large Town Meeting turnout in May 2014, the people of Sandisfield passed a resolution opposed to the proposed Kinder Morgan/TGP pipeline — so-called the "Connecticut Expansion" but really the Sandisfield third pipeline, a "pipeline to nowhere" that brings nothing but harm to the town.

This vote was an overwhelming majority vote. No pipeline expansion! Not here! No way!

At this meeting Select Board members assured residents that they would press our state representatives to "do all they can do to block, or delay or modify the project."

Last month's Times included a report that Town leaders have been holding private conversations with KM officials and expressed a willingness to accept a

are in active negotiations, discussions – whatever -- with Kinder Morgan regarding a potential "gift" of \$800,000 that the company intends to bestow on the town of Sandisfield as a token of "goodwill" for destroying our town.

On its face, these negotiations are nothing more than Kinder Morgan attempting to bribe our town officials into relaxing their position against the pipeline project. It is sheer folly to believe that they have any remorse whatsoever for the destruction their project will wreak on our town, let alone the compunction to make a good-will \$800,000 donation to town coffers.

Truth be told, the fact that Kinder Morgan would try to sway the opinion of our public officials doesn't surprise me at all. What surprises me is that our Board of Selectmen would even entertain a conversation with these people, after the adamant and passionate rejection of the project during a town meeting on the subject, and the subsequent resolution formally rejecting it.

Mr. Barrett has written, "As town officials, it is our responsibility to look out for the best interests of the

roads and wetlands for their heavy equipment to carry sections of the pipe on Cold Spring, Hammertown and Beech Plain Roads.

We have challenged them and have made headway in gaining support from respected environmental groups. We have seen Massachusetts's agencies (i.e., MEPA) and organizations (i.e., BEAT) validate our criticisms of KM. We have stopped KM from fast-tracking the approval of their massive project to enhance their economic prospects. However, their plans still threaten our future.

Every independent analysis comes to the same conclusion. Their claim that there is a need for this expansion in order to increase energy for Connecticut, New


"gift" from KM should this pipeline go through.

I don't doubt the sincerity or integrity of these individuals – they are good people. I do question both their judgment and their knowledge in this case. Even if they thought they had the best interest of the town in mind, to carry on these conversations unilaterally undermines the progress that has been made to stop this devastation to Sandisfield.


It seems to ignore that fact that citizens – some directly affected, some not but still passionate protectors of Sandisfield - have worked tirelessly to get KM to provide missing impact information, have already delayed certain milestones — again unprecedented. Why did they not wait to see if FERC will grant a permit for this project – a project whose need has been undercut by falling energy prices and increasing supply? If the Selectmen think their actions may be misinterpreted by their constituents, imagine how much more they will be misinterpreted by KM who will present this as an endorsement to undermine the will of the town and the work of our neighbors!


community and it would be irresponsible for us to not pursue these discussions as a way to help secure the best possible agreement in the event that this project is ultimately approved in spite of town opposition."

This type of maneuver certainly projects the wrong message to stakeholders and players in this battle alike. The town is caving. And all it takes is a few bucks. United as a community, we have a shot at stopping this project; divided we will likely fail.

Further, are we to believe that securing a gift of this nature is in the "best interests" of our community? First of all, on the backs of whom? The relative few who are going to see their property values decimated? I'm going to be forced to sacrifice my land, my resources, and the rest of the abutters forced to do the same – so Sandisfield can get a one-time gift? A gift that represents pennies on the dollar for what is being taken from us? It's not immoral enough that the federal government and a multi-billion dollar gas/pipeline company can come take my land from me, now my neighbors are negotiating to profit from my complete loss? 

York, and probably export, is highly questionable. But the presence of KM-TGP's new pipeline will, beyond a doubt, undermine land values, reduce our tax base, and seriously undermine our quality of life both in the short-run and forever after.

I strongly urge our town officials not to engage in discussions with this company about "gifts." We know they will use their company's "gift" as a strategy to gain favorable press. In the volumes of paper they have filed are lies, distortions, and omissions. We know we cannot trust them. Do not forget what History tells us: "Be aware of enemies bearing gifts." 

If the pipeline goes thru there won't be a town to make "whole" — it will have collapsed under the weight, before the pipeline goes through, of incredibly heavy vehicles on our roads. Taxes for all will be raised as more and more Sandisfield citizens are forced to leave, and, by KM's own estimates, we will have fifteen years of broken and collapsed roads before (and if) they can be fixed. 

**TOWN MEETING,  
MAY 16**

**TOWN ELECTION,  
MAY 18**



### The Lion King

The Farmington River School District's production on April 11 was a sold-out performance. Sandisfield and Otis students were proud to represent their towns with their artistry and interpretation of the African Savanna.

Photos: Mary Anne Grammer

## HONOR ROLL Farmington River Regional School 2014-15 Second Trimester

### Grade 3

- Thatcher Berman
- Avery Carr
- Erin DeCelle
- Zeb Drenga
- Noelle Nolan
- Aengus Pigott
- Danica Poirier

### Grade 4

- Adrianna Ciccotelli
- Ava Consolati
- Madison DellaGiustina
- Willa Dunaj
- Alana Guidette-Bocchino
- Sophia Krans

### Grade 5

- Maggie Avery
- Mia Ciccotelli
- Catherine Consolati
- Kelly Couch
- Braxton Crandall
- Collin Parks
- Liam Pigott
- Haven Westcott

### Grade 6

- Joseph Beardsley
- Dylan DeCelle
- Sophia Howard
- Samuel Kresiak
- Cole Margraf
- Alec Morrison
- Konstantin Stanmeyer
- Amber Stearns



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## Town Business.

Because of space limitations this month, summaries of the minutes of Select Board meetings will be postponed until the June issue.

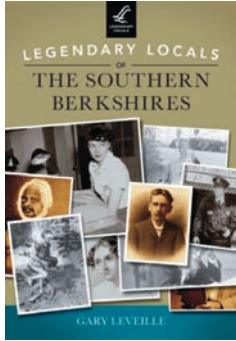
Official minutes are available at Town Hall and online at [www.sandisfield.info](http://www.sandisfield.info).



# Local Historians Present New Berkshire Histories

Are you working in the garden Saturday morning, May 30? Save it for the afternoon. First, come to the Arts Center at 10 to be amused, entertained, and informed with amazing stories about old-time Sandisfield and the Berkshires.

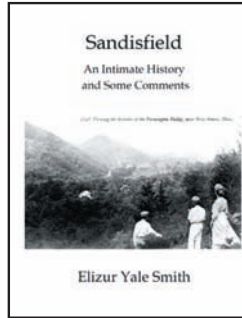
Gary Leveille's *Legendary Locals of the Southern Berkshires* features some 150 biographies of Berkshire personalities – past and present – who made lasting impacts on their communities, the nation, and some even the world. Thanks to historian and author Gary's careful research, the accomplishments of earlier notables, including some Sandisfielders, have been reclaimed from obscurity. He will present examples and vintage photographs. His audiences are often amazed at these stories. You will be, too.



Sandisfield's own Ron Bernard has followed his comprehensive and encyclopedic town history, *Sandisfield Then and Now*, with an equally important, if stylistically opposite, account of

the past and development of Sandisfield from its earliest days through the mid-20th century. The unpublished manuscript, written in 1948 by the military historian and Lee native, Elizur Yale Smith, was discovered in early 2010 stored for safe-keeping in the Otis library.

Smith's title was *Sandisfield: An Intimate History and Some Comments*. Deeply respectful of Sandisfield's hard working and patriotic settlers, Smith saw the Town's founding and development as a reflection of the development of the new American nation. And he understood the heritage of the town better than almost any previous observer and any that came later.



Everything about this story – from manuscript rediscovery through its preparation, as well as the author's life – is fascinating. We are all lucky that Smith's remarkable and personal account of his adoptive Sandisfield and his beloved Berkshires was saved for posterity and has been printed not only on paper but today's electronic media.

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# VOTERS!

## SUPPORT FIBER OPTIC BROADBAND INTERNET FOR SANDISFIELD!

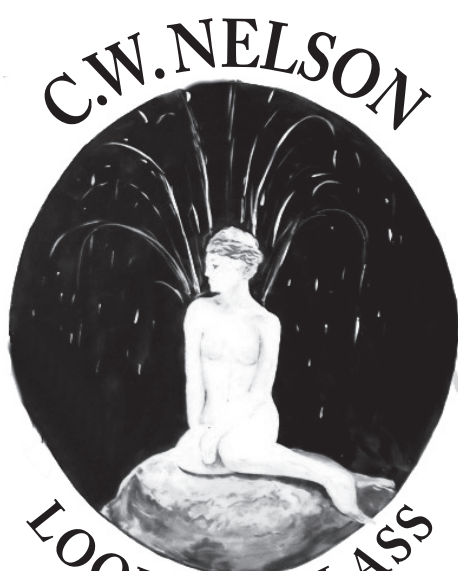
Super Fast High Speed Internet is critical to our future.

Vote **YES** for warrant article at the Annual Town Meeting on May 16th.



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Comings



**BETTY  
ARNOLD**  
1932-2015

Betty Arnold, 83, died March 20 at Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield. A long-time Sandisfield resident, she lived most recently in Becket.

Born in Greenwich, Conn., on January 28, 1932, Betty was the daughter of Earl Leighton and Lucy (Janke) Shaw. Her early years were in Connecticut until the family moved to Florida, where she graduated from Clearwater High School. She married and raised her family in Florida, moving to Sandisfield in the early 1970s.

In Sandisfield, Betty worked at the New Boston Nursing Home for 18 years. She also owned and operated the Tollgate Inn for 25 years.

She enjoyed gardening, traveling, crafting, and especially painting.

Betty is survived by one son, Edward of Becket, one daughter Betsy Arnold and partner, Jeff Johnson, of Great Barrington, one brother, Earl Shaw of Longs, S.C., and a sister, Lois Christie of Tallahassee, Florida. She was predeceased by two brothers, Edward and Robert Shaw. She leaves five grandchildren, Shana, Jeffrey, Bryan, Samantha, and Jordan, and five great-grandchildren, Lila, Will, Abigail, Jackson, and Maci.

Memorial donations can be made to the Otis Ambulance Squad, c/o Birches-Roy Funeral Home, 33 South St., Great Barrington, Mass. 01230.

**MARVIN  
MIROCHNICK**  
1922-2015

Marvin Mirochnik, 92, a former resident of Sandisfield, died April 21 at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. For the past four years Marvin has lived in Weymouth, Mass. to be closer to his family.

Born December 19, 1922, Marvin was the son of Abraham and Jennie Mirochnik. A veteran of World War II, Marvin served with the U.S. Army from January 1, 1943 until he was honorably discharged on December 12, 1945.

He is survived by his son, Mark, his daughter-in-law Diana Clarke, his son-in-law Dennis Cormier and his grandchildren, Neil Mirochnik, Aviva Cormier, Michael Mirochnik, and Julia Mirochnik.

Marvin was predeceased by his wife of 54 years, Tillie (Rubin) Mirochnik, on April 6, 2004. The couple was married on February 25, 1950 in Bronx, New York. He was also predeceased by his daughter Linda Cormier on September 12, 2011.

A graveside service was held on April 23 at the Sandisfield Center Cemetery, conducted by Rabbi Kaya Stern-Kaufman. Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home in Great Barrington was in charge of the service. To sign the guest book or send remembrances to his family go to [www.finnertyandstevens.com](http://www.finnertyandstevens.com).

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# & Goings

## ROBERT A. "BOB" MINERY

1932-2015

Robert Minery, 82, of Cold Spring Road in Sandisfield, died Sunday morning, March 22 at Berkshire Medical Center. Bob was born in Sandisfield on April 21, 1932, the son of Julius and Marion Goddard Minery.

Educated in Sandisfield schools, Bob was a farmer all his life. He enjoyed flying and took lessons towards getting his pilot's license. He is survived by two sisters: Josephine Blanchard of Dalton, Mass., and Virginia Coburn of Monson, Maine. He is also survived by several nieces and nephews. Bob was predeceased by his brothers: Henry, John and Erving Minery and his sisters, Elizabeth Spring and Celestine Jackson.



## Remembering Bob

By Ron Bernard

Did you ever wonder what happens to old bed springs? That might be the kind of question the late comedian George Carlin would pose. But seriously, where *do* bed springs go when they die?

I think I know. My neighbor, Bob Minery, collected them for years, hundreds of 'em, to fence in his cow pasture. For as long as anyone can remember both sides of Cold Spring Road as it snakes through his farm on the border between Sandisfield and Otis have been lined with rusted bed springs, tied together, propped up, one after another. Bob salvaged them from the former Otis town dump which was on his property and which he operated for decades. Bob died in March and that dump is just memory, but some of his bed springs are still on duty. The remaining segments are a curious legacy from perhaps the last authentic, most fiercely independent, totally practical Yankee farmer in these parts.

You see, Bob did not have much use for money. Why pay for a fence when springs work just as well?

He was 19th century Sandisfield. Lived with his mother, Marion, in the place that he built himself about 50 years ago, as plainly as is possible, just like his ancestors.

Bob was almost completely off the grids of modern life. Electricity? "Nah, overrated." Running water? "Got a good dug well right here." Central heating? "Plenty of firewood." Telephone? "Don't need that." A car? "Nope. Have my bike." At least a radio? "Well, okay, this transistor thing keeps me company and ya gotta be informed." What about friends? "Got all the friends I need – a dog, my cats,

my cows." A little eccentric? Aren't we all.

Bob Minery was nobody's fool. He was really smart and had a prodigious memory, especially about Beech Plain in times past. When I was researching and writing *Sandisfield: Then and Now*, Bob would amble over from his place about a mile away and tell me stories at the kitchen table about the old days. *And stories that he'd been told* – priceless stuff. Beech Plain's prominent people and the colorful characters. He knew them all. That newspaper guy, George Sokolsky? "Got along with him pretty good. He knew my father." Karp Kolesnik down on South Beech Plain? "O those Russians!" The New Haven lumberman, George Etzel Sr.? "Used to do work for him when I was a kid. He was fair." The flamboyant couple affectionately known by everybody as "the boys," up from New York on weekends in their Rolls? "Too fancy, ridiculous," he thought. You want to discuss the big issues of the day? Pick a topic. Bob was up to date. Had an opinion.

Nancy Rowley Loring, Bob's life-long Cold Spring Road neighbor to the west, got a kick out of Bob enjoying his swims in Spectacle Pond. "He would go in fully clothed!" she recalled. "Bob got his mail at the Otis post office [at least five miles away]. He used to push his wheel barrow all the way. He was one of a kind, really tough but always a gentleman," said Nancy.

The system did not know what to do with Bob Minery. Property taxes? "They can collect what they want after I'm gone. I don't take no services so what's the big deal?" When Bob was picked for jury duty, he refused. Not gonna do it. "Let them arrest me," he reportedly said. And they did, too. The State Police paid a visit. He had to go to court in Lee ... more than once.

I'll never forget the time I spotted him on Tyringham Road. He was making his way back (17 miles) on an old bicycle. He was 70, at least. Do you realize how steep and long that hill between here and Tyringham is?

I stopped. "Bob, where you been?" "Lee Court House." "Do you want to throw that thing in the back and ride home with me?" "No, thanks, need the exercise," he said. Tour-de-France competitors need that kind of exercise. What Bob needed was his independence – to be left alone, to live life his way and no apology for it. He told me he had once been a pilot or had taken flying lessons. Really! Figure that. After a serious medical condition slowed him down a few years ago, he somehow came to possess a little pickup truck. He didn't drive it much. "Gas is too expensive," he said.

When Jean and I were married in 2006, Bob came to our wedding. We had a nice ceremony in the backyard attended by all the neighbors. The way Bob saw it this was a promotion for Jean, whom he formerly termed as "Bernard's woman." He had a moniker for everyone he liked, it seemed. Mine was "Wall Man" because for a couple of years I was always working on the old stone walls at my place. I am honored to be Wall Man.

Our common neighbors, Ted and Judy Goldsmith knew Bob much longer than I had. Judy said it best. "Bob was a sweet, quiet and unpretentious soul. He always had a smile and a wave for you and he loved to talk about things. He was a fixture around here. We'll miss him."

I hope they never take down that gnarly old bed-spring fence.

So long, Bob. 🍷

# Sandisfield Police: A Clarification

By Michael Morrison, Sandisfield Police Chief

I would like to respond to some questions asked at a March Select Board meeting and reported in the Times pertaining to the Police Department.

The police budget only increased the 2% (salary) recommend by the Select Board.

Staffing levels at the department were greatly affected by the resignation of Officer Messina and Officer Sanchez having a change in his full time job which affected his availability to work at the department. This was a 50% reduction in our staffing level for a period of time.

To help with the staffing level a new officer was hired, pending approval of the Select Board/Legal Counsel which has been in process for over a month.

Adam Gonska was the officer hired. Adam comes with experience in area towns as a trained police officer, also as a member of the US Army Reserve, and an EMT-B. He is available to work daytime as well as night hours on a regular basis. Being an EMT-B was a deciding factor as it provides the town with another EMT while he is on patrol which has already proven to be a benefit to the town.

Police visibility versus other towns that surround Sandisfield also has been a subject of discussion. But you have to compare apples to apples, as they say:

Sandisfield budget, \$58K, no full-time officer

New Marlborough budget, \$117K, one full-time officer

Monterey budget, \$200K, two full-time officers

Otis Budget, \$80K, no full-time officers

State Police, \$100K per Trooper, plus benefits

Citations should not be considered as a funding resource. There can be no quota put onto an officer for the number of citations that they issue. An officer cannot profile on who is stopped or is issued citations. It is at the officers' discretion as to how citations are issued when a vehicle is stopped. The citation can be a fine, written warning, or a criminal complaint issued. Our officers do issue citations during patrol hours as the officer deems necessary. The town receives a very small percentage of any fine, most of the proceed go to state and court systems.

If you have a concern or a question, please contact me at 413-441-2129 or at chiefspd1956@gmail.com.

## POLICE LOG

Police Chief Michael Morrison reported 21 items of police activity in December, including three motor vehicle accidents (MVAs), two hunter complaints, two complaints of unknown persons, stolen items, and wires down, among others.

### January

- 3 Motor vehicle accident, North Main
- 5 Assist Connecticut State Police
- 6 Suspicious vehicle, Lower West St
- 7 Wires down, Sandisfield Rd
- 8 Assist Tolland Police Department
- 8 Road condition, North Main
- 12 MVA, North Main
- 13 MVA, Hubbard Rd
- 18 Disabled motor vehicle, area roads
- 20 Domestic complaint, Dodd Rd
- 25 DMV, Tolland Rd
- 28 DMV, Tolland Rd
- 30 House check, Cronk Rd
- 30 House check, Town Hill Rd

### February

- 9 Assist Tolland Police Department
- 10 Court
- 14 Alarm, Otis Woodlands
- 15 MVA, North Main
- 17 Alarm, Hammertown Rd
- 17 Snowmobile complaint, Sears Rd
- 17 Suspicious vehicle, Bosworth Rd
- 28 Alarm, Fox Rd
- 28 Vandalism, River and Sandisfield Rd

### March

- 1 Motor vehicle accident, Tolland
- 3 Landlord/tenant issue, Sandisfield Rd
- 5 911 Hang up, Roosterville Rd
- 8 MVA, South Main
- 14 Wires down, Sandisfield Rd
- 14 Road hazard, Tolland Rd
- 18 Alarm, Sandisfield Rd
- 18 Wires down, Sandisfield Rd
- 27 Domestic complaint, Dodd Rd

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# NOW HEAR THIS!

*Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.*

*Please send notices for Now Hear This! to [calendar@sandisfieldtimes.org](mailto:calendar@sandisfieldtimes.org).*

## MAY EVENTS

**Gallery Opening Reception** on Saturday, May 2, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. The Gallery will feature works in clay created by June Wink and photos by Geoffrey Coelho.

**Berkshire Festival of Women Writer's Reading on Labor** on Saturday, May 2, at 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. (\$10)

**Workshop: How to Certify a Vernal Pool.** Sunday, May 3, 1-3:30 p.m., Berkshire Community College, Susan Anthony Building, Bartlett Room, 1350 West St., Pittsfield. Field trip to two vernal pools. Donation will be asked for. Pre-register with Jane at 413-230-7321 or at [jane@thebeatnews.org](mailto:jane@thebeatnews.org).

**Qigong/Tai Chi for the Mobility Impaired** on Mondays (May 4, 11, 18) at 11:00 a.m. at Old Town Hall. \$2 donation to the Friends of the Sandisfield COA. Drop-ins welcome.

**Line Dancing** Thursdays (May 7 and 14, 6 p.m.), May 21 and 28 (7 p.m.) at Old Town Hall. \$2 donation to the Friends of the Sandisfield COA.

**WiredWest Public Information Meeting** on Thursday, May 7 from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. Old Town Hall.

**Sandisfield Historical Society Meeting** on May 9, at 11:00 a.m. at the Meeting House on the corner of Route 183/Sandy Brook Turnpike and South Sandisfield Road. A potluck luncheon follows the meeting. For information, contact John Kuzmech (258-4906).

**Spring Dinner and Benefit Auction** on Saturday, May 9, at 7:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Advanced ticket purchase (\$75) required by May 4, [www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org).

**Mother's Day Church Service** on May 10, at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church on Route 57. An informal gathering at the New Boston Inn following the service.

**"Elder Lawyer Forum"** on Wednesday, May 13 at 11:00 a.m. during the Sandisfield COA meeting, Town Hall Annex, basement level.

**Election Forum for Select Board Candidates** on Thursday, May 14, at 7:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall. Sponsored by The Sandisfield Times.

**Annual Town Meeting** on Saturday, May 16, at 10:00 a.m. at Fire Station #2 on Route 57. Note location.

**For a Woman Her Age! with Sally-Jane Heit** on Saturday, May 16, at 7:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. One-woman show with Musical Director Uel Wade. (\$25)

**Annual Town Election** on Monday, May 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road.

**Memorial Day Parade** on Sunday, May 24, at 10:00 a.m. beginning at Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road and continuing east along Route 57 with stops at the New Boston Cemetery for a tribute to fallen veterans and at the New Boston Skilled Care & Rehabilitation facility. Parade continues to the American Legion Pavilion south on Route 8 for a second ceremony. Refreshments at the pavilion.

**Ferris Burtis Music Foundation Benefit Concert** on Sunday, May 24, at 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. The event will feature cellist Julian Muller and mezzo-soprano Justina Golden with pianists Clifton J. Noble and Anne Chamberlin. (\$20)

**Local History Readings** on Saturday, May 30, at 10:00 a.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center. Ron Bernard on Elizur Smith's Sandisfield History manuscript; Gary Leveille on notable historic personalities of southeastern Berkshire County (\$10)

**Flea Market/Swap Meet** on Sunday, May 31, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the American Legion Pavilion on Route 8. Something for everyone. Vendors pay \$20, no pre-registration required. For more information, call Steve (413-269-6139) or Maggie (413-309-6166).

**Social Justice in Action** on Sunday, May 31, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. BRIDGE Flashbacks presents real stories of living Berkshire history. Testimonials, short videos, slide show and book signings. Part of a Berkshire-wide program. A celebratory, powerful form of social justice.

## EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

**Call for Artists: 8th Otis Arts Festival** will take place on Saturday, July 25, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Farmington River Elementary School. To apply, visit the website at [townofotis.cultural](http://townofotis.cultural).

## 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; Wednesday evenings, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Phone: 258-4966.

**Historical Commission:** First Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m., Town Library.

**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.**



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