

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



Plebis

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume VI, Number 11

March 2016

Master Plan Draft Completed NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

*By Eammon Coughlin
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission*

The Sandisfield Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) has completed an important first draft of a Master Plan for the Town.

The Master Plan is a working document addressing a host of factors shaping the Town and its future, from economy and infrastructure to transportation and natural resources, to name a few.

The plan was presented to the Select Board and other town committees at a meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee February 17. The next step is for the MPSC to seek public comment on the nearly 70-page draft plan, after residents have had an opportunity to review it. The plan can be viewed either online or at four locations in town (see below)

The Town will host a public meeting on Wednesday, April 13 at 7 p.m., at Old Town Hall to review the draft plan and help set priorities for implementation.

An important first step towards developing the plan occurred in July of 2014 when the town's Strategic Planning Committee held a public vision meeting — an open discussion with community members on Sandisfield's needs and its future. The public meeting to be held on April 13 is a second meeting in this process.

The MPSC is working with the Sandisfield Select Board, other committees, and town department heads to fine-tune the document and move it forward for eventual adoption by the Planning Board. The completion of this draft is major milestone in a multiyear planning process by the town to help set strategic goals and priorities.

The Master Plan includes basic information about the existing conditions organized by key topics impacting Sandisfield now and in the future. Each chapter lists key issues identified by subject area and the goals, objectives, and actions to address these.

The final chapter – the implementation strategy and action plan – identifies potential leadership and sets a time frame for completion of each of the plan's actions.

Goals and objectives listed in the plan are not legally binding, nor is the town forced to implement them. When a final plan is adopted, it is up to town officials to determine how to best implement and prioritize the plan of action, year by year.

The Master Plan was developed using a broad public process that included a public survey completed by over 130 year-round and seasonal residents. Additionally, many



Rose jumping "Cora" over a barrier at a recent competition

Photo: Nelson family

Not Horsing Around ROSE'S RIDING SCHOOL OPENS

By Ron Bernard

One of the most ambitious and promising new ventures seen here in some time is making its debut in South Sandisfield.

Rose Nelson, daughter of Chuck and Zoe Nelson of Dodd Road, announced last month that her Sunny Rose Farm riding school has begun enrolling students of all ages, beginners through advanced-intermediate.

Rose found her calling early. "Even as a young girl just learning how to ride and to care for horses," she said, "I knew this is what I would do in life. I love everything about these animals, and I want to share this passion I have with others." She added, "But I want to be my own boss."

Rose brings a lot to the cause.

Over nearly 15 years she has acquired knowledge and credentials in the field, including hands-on care for horses under many conditions. She is also an accomplished competitor at prestigious shows and events. Last year

INSIDE page

Offices Up for Election	2
Putting Our House in Order	3
Out on a Limb	4
Capital Plan Presented	5
Conservation Easements	6
Another Heritage Hero	11

Cont'd p.8

Cont'd p.13

Town Of Sandisfield - Office Of The Town Clerk OFFICES UP FOR ELECTION - YEAR 2016

Office	Term	Currently held by	Office	Term	Currently held by
Moderator	1 year	Jean Atwater-Williams	Board of Assessors	3 years	Bethany Perry
Selectmen	3 years	Alice Boyd	School Committee	3 years	John Skrip
Tax Collector	3 years	Edna Leavenworth	Board of Health	3 years	Kim Spring
Auditor	1 year	Ralph Morrison	Planning Board	5 years	Robert O'Brien, Jr.
			Library Trustee	5 years	Kathie Burrows

Mar. 21, 2016Last day to obtain nomination papers.

Mar. 23, 2016Last day to submit nomination papers.

Apr. 4, 2016Town Caucus – Old Town Hall, 7:00p.m.

WARRANT FOR SPECIAL TOWN MEETING 7:00 p.m. • Thursday, March 10, 2016 Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road

Article 1: To see if the Town will vote pursuant to the provisions of G. L. c. 41, sec. 1B to change the position of elected Town Treasurer to an appointed positions; provided, however, that before such a change will take effect, it must be approved by the voters at the 2016 Annual Town Election; [provided further, however, that if this change is approved at the Annual Town Election, any person elected at that election will hold office only until such time as an appointment is made in accordance with G.L. c.41, sec 1B OR the elected incumbent in such position shall hold office until the expiration of their elected term or sooner vacating of office], or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 2: To see if the Town will vote pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 41, sec. 1B to change to position of elected Tax Collector to an appointed positions; provided, however, that before such a change will take effect, it must be approved by the voters at the 2016 Annual Town Election; [provided further, however, that if this change is approved at the Annual Town Election, any person elected at that election will hold office only until such time as an appointment is made in accordance with G.L. c.41, sec. 1B OR the elected incumbent in such position shall hold office until the expiration of their elected term or sooner vacating of office], or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 3: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash a total of \$873 for the Administrative Assistant to the Selectmen’s Salary account.

Article 4: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash \$29,000 for Highways and Bridges Salaries.

Article 5: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash \$12,000 for the Town Administrator’s Salary Account


Article 6: To see if the Town will vote to transfer from Free Cash \$4,677 for Kinder Morgan Legal Fees Account

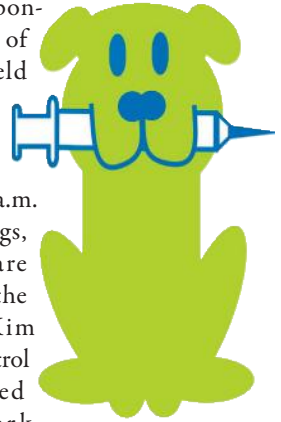
Article 7: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the care, custody, control and management of the parcel of land located at Sandisfield Road, map and parcel 202-39, consisting of a total of 2.835 acres to the Board of Selectmen to be held for the purpose of sale or lease, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to sell or lease said parcel of land owned by the Town upon such terms and conditions as the Board deems to be in the best interest of the Town, and to authorize the Board to enter into any agreements in connection with the above purpose, and to act fully thereon or take any other action thereon.

Article 8: To see if the Town will vote to amend the FY2016 Library Account to read as follows: The Library Account \$13,749: \$11,174 for Salaries and \$2,575 for Expenses and to meet that appropriation raise and appropriate \$11,892 for Salaries and transfer \$1,857 from Library Grants for expenses.

This is to correct the allocation of funds only. No change in the final budget

Vaccinate Your Pets! AND LICENSE YOUR DOG AT THE SAME TIME

A Rabies Clinic, sponsored by the Board of Health, will be held at Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road on Sunday, March 13, from 10 a.m. until noon. All dogs, cats, and ferrets are welcome. Cost of the vaccine is \$16. Kim Spring, Animal Control Officer, announced that Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko would be present to issue dog licenses, “so it’s a great time to get your pets taken care of all at once.” Cost of licensing is \$4 for spayed or neutered dogs and \$10 for unspayed, unneutered dogs. Questions, please call Kim at 258-4450 or 258-4711. 




Hearts Warmed on Frigid Valentine’s Day

By Times Reporters

On a frigid afternoon a large group of people gathered at David and Patricia Hubbard’s home to support the Sandisfield Players’ trip to Cornwall, England, this coming June.

They were treated to a song recital of particularly moving music and poetry.

David Tinervia, a talented young baritone, and Ben Luxon at the piano performed a program which included “Dover Beach” by Samuel Barber, “The Songs of Travel” by Ralph Vaughn Williams, and some much loved and familiar “love songs” by Jerome Kern and Cole Porter.

The concert was followed by wine and a delicious dinner, good conversation, and most of all the good feeling created by music and the pleasure of supporting an exciting adventure. As people started for home even the temperature outside began to warm. 

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Thank You

Thanks again to the more than 100 donors who responded to Founding Editor Simon Winchester's year-end appeal. Your generosity, greater this year than ever, will keep us in good financial shape through most of 2016. We appreciate as well donations that arrive throughout the year in May, July, or whenever we find them in PO Box 584. Thanks also to all of you who sent notes along with your check. We appreciate your kind words, too.

Maple Sugar Time

A new advertiser has joined us this month. The Sugar House at Maple Corner Farm in West Granville, a family farm since 1812, is open Saturdays and Sundays, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., until April 10. The Farm is on Beech Hill Road, not far off Rt. 57. Stop by and watch sap from the farm's maple trees boil down into sugar. Take the kids. Maybe you can help feed the fire. You can have breakfast or lunch. See their ad on p. 18.

Warm temperatures seem to have kick-started the maple sugaring business this spring. Joyce Ripley at the Farm said, "You never know what can happen, but if the nights stay cold and the days warm we should have a good season."

Road advice if you make the trip: Turn onto North Lane off Rt. 57 rather than turning at Beech Hill Road. Then follow North Lane to Beech Hill and avoid the short section of Beech Hill that is not recommended for winter travel. If you can't make the trip, syrup made by Maple Corner Farm is available in Sandisfield at Pigs Fly Farm and in Otis at Papa's Healthy Food & Fuel.

We're grateful to all of our advertisers and encourage our readers to support them. They are important to our success, as are all who have donated over the years.

Bill Price
West New Boston



The White Birch

*There is a white birch across the road,
An idiotic sentinel,
A faux soldier
Sent to mind my manners.*

*In a high wind
It does the manual of arms,
Snapping its white rifle
Back and forth before a stand of pines.*

*It is my teapot dome, my dictionary,
My barricade ... my little patch of sin.
An ancient talking tree,
The place where all my poems begin.*

Val Coleman
Town Hill Road

Putting Our House In Order

AROUND TOWN HALL

By Alice Boyd, Select Board Chairman

Managing our own money is challenging. Managing the town's money is even more challenging.

Here in Sandisfield we are one of the few remaining towns that elect one of our neighbors to manage our finances of over \$3 million a year. In today's increasingly regulated environment, I question whether this is the best solution for our town.

It's not up to the Selectmen though; it's up to you, our voters.

Let's be clear here. This idea has nothing to do with our current Treasurer who has accepted a full-time job and is resigning effective June 30 or our terrific Tax Collector who is retiring after a long and successful career.

This idea is about managing your tax dollars in the best possible way.

Our goal is to improve the general efficiency of our financial operations by maximizing resources and minimizing costs. Protecting your tax dollar is critical.

And so it seems timely, with both our Treasurer and Collector leaving office, to determine how you, the taxpayers, want to proceed.

Our independent municipal auditor as well as the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) concur that our current system of managing the town's money is problematic. Why? Because we do not have the systems or the "checks and balances" that are required for effective fiscal management. Simply put, the town has not changed as our budgets grew and municipal regulations changed.

I'm advised by both of these resources that the town should move toward separating the accounting process from the Treasurer's role. There has to be a check-and-balance system that Sandisfield simply doesn't have.

This is not an uncommon problem in small towns. For example, in the town of Rowe, with 300 residents, Selectmen called in DOR to evaluate their financial management system. The DOR report stated "in a city of 100,000 or a town of 300 a series of checks and balances are

required to maintain resident confidence." Rowe Selectmen were strongly urged to segregate the Town Accountant functions from the Treasurer. And they did.

The trick is to come into compliance while keeping things simple and inexpensive.

The suggestion from all sources to date is to combine the Tax Collector's responsibilities with the Treasurer's responsibilities and hire a separate Town Accountant to take on much of the current Treasurer's role.

Admittedly, while talking about this at Town Hall, not everyone agrees. And while there may be a few advantages for continuing with an elected Treasurer, the prevailing theory of government is that policy people should be elected and operations people appointed.

Why?

Appointing ensures that the candidate hired has the required skills and allows for a larger pool of qualified candidates. Instead of providing extensive multi-year training to an elected Treasurer the town benefits by hiring someone with experience to do the job.

An elected official does not report to anyone but the voters. An elected official, if they choose, does not have to come to work or have set office hours

Cont'd p.8



Living Out Here, Waiting to Get Wired

An Open Letter to Governor Baker

Last year, at perhaps the largest town meeting in living memory, Sandisfield residents voted overwhelmingly to support installation of high-speed internet.

One after another for an hour, residents stood to say how their woefully inadequate internet service was affecting their lives. Speakers included realtors, parents, home-based businesses, local merchants, writers and designers, and folks that just want to watch movies. After years of talk and promises, people out here are fed up with this situation. That's why they enthusiastically voted for the Wired West cooperative, the only sensible solution for most of the Berkshire towns like Sandisfield.

Private companies refuse to invest in these towns and are content to cherry-pick their opportunities, which makes things worse. They don't care that broadband availability has become crucial to the viability of municipalities.

And they don't care that hilltown schoolchildren are at a serious educational disadvantage. According to national studies and recent television documentaries, broadband-starved rural children are falling behind their contemporaries in developed communities. It is no wonder that the Berkshire school-age population is trending straight down with all that implies. Why should any family move here? Or stay here for that matter.

Many small Berkshire towns are in a slow-death fiscal spiral. There is little growth and few economic opportunities. New businesses, even home-based ventures like writers and designers, won't locate here. They can't. Because aggregate property values are stagnant, a relentless growing tax burden for essential services has to be spread across the same relative few property owners. Ask any realtor here about property values and

home sales prices these days. Internet service always comes up.

So far, 24 cash-strapped towns have approved borrowing authorizations, most based on the concept promoted by their hard working Wired West representatives. They did not vote for MBI's vision of plug-and-play, town-by-town networks, a model which is impractical for us, which we don't want and which is anyway unproven.

Everyone was looking forward to build-out starting in 2016. But then our hopes were dashed in December when MBI advised towns not to sign the Wired West operating agreement. Now people are disillusioned, confused, and cynical. Does MBI understand the fiscal and social realities in these small towns? Does MBI appreciate that many of these towns chose the Wired West model and expect their state agencies to support them, not to sabotage them?


We hope that the recent resignation of the MBI director is an opportunity to reestablish cooperation toward a Community Compact/regional approach, the concept that voters approved. If a different plan is forced on us, re-voting may be necessary. Because the more costly MBI approach has less service, e.g., no television, and especially because it does not allow for pay-back, officials worry that voters will not approve the measure. We could be set back for years, a nightmare scenario.

We need affordable broadband service that also offers an opportunity for reimbursement as soon as possible. The Co-op model has worked successfully in farming and rural communities since at least the mid-19th century, and it is best suited for us today. But there is no time to waste.

Thank you for understanding our needs and respecting our wishes.

Sincerely,

Ronald M. Bernard
Sandisfield, Massachusetts

How to contact governor: Email: www.mass.gov/governor/constituent-services/contact-governor-office. By postal: Massachusetts State House, Office of the Governor, Room 280, Boston, MA 02133. By phone: 617-725-4005 or [toll-free in state] 888-870-7770.) 

Out on a Limb: an op-ed

Subject should be interesting to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents. Send to Editor, Sandisfield Times, P.O. Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255 or by email to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org.

TOWN NEWS

By Bill Price

The Candidates, So Far

Two individuals have taken out papers to run for the 3-year Selectman seat open in May. Select Board Chairman Alice Boyd has announced she will stand for office a second time. She was elected last year to fill a Board vacancy. Opposing her as of press time is Bethany Perry, currently Chairperson of the Board of Assessors. Bethany has also filed to run for another 3-year term on the Board of Assessors. Kathie Burrows is asking for another term as Library Trustee. The last day to obtain nomination papers is March 21, submission deadline of March 23.

Long-Term Town Officials Step Down


Edna Leavenworth, in her 27th year as Tax Collector, will run again this year. Edna has offered to help train a new Tax Collector. Her office will be moved to Town Hall Annex. Asked how she had managed to stay in office so long, Edna said, "Nobody signed up to run, so I just kept going."

Richard Campetti, Chairman of the Conservation Commission, resigned after more than 15 years of service. Clare English, commission secretary, said, "Richard will be sorely missed. He worked very well with everyone and was always fair. He knew the state regulations but always tried to work with the people." Richard has been replaced as chairman by current member Paul Gaudette.

Police Department

Patrolman Adam Gonska has taken a 3-month leave of absence in order to attend a training program for a position with Amtrak. His brother, Jacob Gonska, a police officer in Sheffield, will assist Chief Mike Morrison as interim patrolman while Adam is away.

Pipeline

Following their urgent presentation in November regarding the waiving of Article 97 regulations so that the existing pipeline through a 3.8-mile section of Sandisfield could be expanded, Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co. has been in touch with the town only periodically. Alice Boyd, Select Board Chairman, said, "It seems like we're on their back burner. We will pursue them for the Town's legal bills, which were to have been paid as soon as their agreement with the Town was signed." No action has been taken at the State House regarding the waiver of Article 97, and it appears unlikely that the issue will be taken up during the current session. The project still does not have all of the permits necessary to begin. 

Capital Plan Offered

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORTS TO SELECTMEN

By Tom Christopher

Sandisfield's economic situation came under scrutiny at the Town Hall Annex on February 16 when the Town's Finance Committee presented a 25-page Capital Plan to the Board of Selectmen.

Representing the Finance Committee were members David Hubbard and Kathy Jacobs. In the presentation, the Committee said that the Town is structured well neither for taxation nor for spending. The growing tax burden is spread across some 300 families, with the majority of open land in some kind of tax abatement. Meanwhile, the town budget is mostly locked into school and highway expenses.

The committee laid out several points that should be of general concern:

- ▶ Sandisfield's town budget has tripled since 1998, reaching \$3,000,000 in the last fiscal year. At the same time, town services have been cut back in an attempt to economize.
- ▶ Commercial properties account for just 2.6 percent of the total assessed land value in the town. As a result the tax burden falls overwhelmingly on single family homeowners
- ▶ Since 2011, the average value of a single-family home in Sandisfield has dropped by 10 percent. The committee made the point that Sandisfield is falling behind relative to neighboring towns – that average values here are about \$200,000 less than for equivalent

properties in, for example, New Marlborough. This was referred to as "a value gap." At the same time, the average single-family home tax bill has steadily increased.

The Capital Plan laid out a number of ways to address the Town's financial situation and put the town on a fiscally healthier track. Four of these, in particular, met with a unanimous show of interest from the Board of Selectmen:


1. **Improved Signage:** The Finance Committee recommended establishing white picket signage at major intersections to direct travelers to local businesses and erecting a visitor information kiosk on the town green at the intersection of New Hartford Road and Route 57.
2. **Historic Home Promotion:** This would involve bringing information to potential buyers concerning Sandisfield's exceptional stock of affordable historic homes. By encouraging renovation and up-grading of these structures and boosting the local real estate market, this could expand the Town's tax base and help to reverse the decline in value of Sandisfield's single-family homes.
3. **Outdoor Recreation Promotion:** The Finance Committee called for increasing the visibility of the trail-head

for the Clam River hiking trail near the Town Hall Annex, upgrading the parking area, and installing a visitor information kiosk. This could be the opening of a more general program for the promotion of outdoor recreational opportunities.


The Finance Committee also recommended extending and linking the Clam River Trail with those in Yanner Park and around Spectacle Pond to create a unified system.

Another aspect of a recreation program should be, according to the Finance Committee, working with the State of Massachusetts to obtain access to and amenities for a Sandisfield Town Beach on Spectacle Pond.

4. **The Possible Creation of New Town Center:** Including a new Town Hall and Highway Department Building. Pursuing this, if the Town should choose to do so, would necessitate identifying an appropriate parcel of land, and developing design drawings.


For all or any of this, Select Board Chairman Alice Boyd emphasized, input from town residents would be essential. 

Get Ready for Baseball

South County Cal Ripken League youth baseball free Spring Training starts March 6. No tryouts required; equipment provided. Players (ages 8-12, beginners to all-stars) living in Sandisfield and surrounding towns are welcome at free batting practice indoors at the Farmington River School on Rt. 8 in Otis. Batting practice begins Sunday, March 6, from 2-3 p.m., and again on March 20, April 3, and April 10. After that, outdoor practices and games for players aged 8-10 will be at Greene Park in Monterey. Players aged 11-12 will play and practice at the new field in Great Barrington at the Steiner School. Rookie players aged 5-7 practice and play in Monterey at Greene Park on Wednesdays from 4-5 p.m., once outdoor temperatures warm up. To enroll, contact Jim Edelman at cljvedelman@aol.com or call Steve Graves at 757-269-4632. 

OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Last fall, a **homeowner/resident** (here unnamed) wrote to the Select Board to complain about junk in his tenant's yard. Could the Board enforce a clean-up? The resident was informed that the Select Board's sole authority was over property owners. If the Board took action it would be against him as the owner, not the tenant. The resident/owner chuckled and withdrew the complaint.

Steve Kopiciek of South Sandisfield stopped for lunch at the Roadside Café. He said, "People with a window view watched as a fox meandered its way into the woods. After lunch, as I drove through the town center of Monterey, two ducks stopped traffic (all two cars including me) as they crossed the road just behind the duck crossing sign. There seems to a natural charm to life here, and I hope that those of us who live here appreciate it – and that those of us who do not can smile along with us, at life here. 



Conservation Corner

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

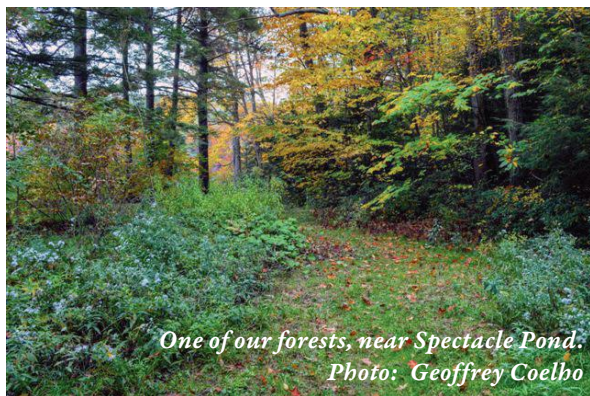
Questions, Concerns, Answers

By Bob Tarasuk

Consulting Forester, License #295

As many are aware, there is a lot of buzz about conservation easements and permanently protecting forests and other unique natural resources, such as wildlife habitat, wetlands, and water resources.

As I decided to take on this topic, it occurred to me that many people, if not most, are unfamiliar with one particular kind of easement: “working forest conservation easements.” This type of easement is designed to allow just about any land management activity except building houses. Its purpose is to encourage forestry, logging, agriculture, recreation, hunting, fishing, or any of the other intrinsic values that come to mind when you really love and care about your land.



One of our forests, near Spectacle Pond.
Photo: Geoffrey Coelho

But, regarding easements, just like you, I ask the same questions.

Isn't there enough protected land in Sandisfield? Do we really need more?

A traditional forestry industry and connection to the land in our area is supported by the land base of forests. But the industry is tenuous and can be driven into extinction if the land base is lost.

So, in this sense, when you ask the question of how much land protection is enough you have to consider that over the long haul, forest land that isn't protected from development now will eventually be lost. I think people in our town have an acute sense of how that happens.

What working forest conservation easements are trying to accomplish is to secure the land base for a variety of reasons but the most central one is to keep the land base intact for a solid industry future, including jobs and the ability of local people to continue to live in and find work in a nice rural community.

Doesn't the town lose tax money on protected land?

A conservation easement can guarantee that the land will always be managed as a working forest, and that it will continue to support a town's forest-based economy.

In addition to benefiting the local economy, working forest easements can financially benefit private landowners and towns. A study from Southern New England Forest Consortium concluded that town revenue from conserved forestlands exceeds the town's service cost. Specifically, for every \$1.00 in tax revenue Massachusetts towns spend an average of \$0.42 on services to conserved forestland (compared to an average of \$1.09 spent by the town on services to residential development.)

Additionally, towns do not lose any direct property tax revenue from properties with a conservation easement.

The majority of the land that benefits from a working forest conservation easement is already enrolled in the Massachusetts Chapter 61 current use program. Land under the Chapter 61 tax use programs are already assessed at a lower value and granting a conservation easement doesn't cause any further change to the landowner's property taxes.

As a Sandisfield landowner, why would I do this? I'll never be able to do anything on my land again!!!

For starters there are many different types of easements; in fact, most are unique in that they almost always incorporate the objectives of each individual owner.

Some want to see the land preserved. Hands off! Leave it in its natural state forever.

Some, maybe most, want to see the land protected as a working land. For instance, the management for forest products, recreation, agriculture, wildlife habitat management, and a whole host of other objectives that are too many to mention. Working forest conservation easements allow landowners to maintain ownership of their land and their individual objectives for their land.

So many landowners come to Sandisfield, fall in love with their land, and our town, and want to see things remain more or less the way it is. There is probably a bit of that in all of us who live in Sandisfield. Clearly one way for that to happen is to protect land in its current state as working forest land. We will never protect it all, and there will always be some land available for development.

When it comes to land protection, and any other decision about private land, it is the owner's right to make the decision. It is, first of all, a totally volunteer act on the owner's part. It is also their right, no different than someone wanting to do whatever they want with their land, like cut all their trees, till up a field, convert forest to pasture, or convert land to houses.

Most feel these acts are the right of the landowner. Then why wouldn't it be the right of the landowner to decide to protect their land? So, in reality, this is not a who's for, or who's against, issue. It's really about landowner rights and doing as they see fit for their land.


Can protected land still be useful?

One conservation outfit that is perfectly aligned with my goals for Sandisfield's forest land is The New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF), the oldest non-profit organization in New England focused on the protection and management of our working forests. Around for 71 years, NEFF works to protect working forests for their multiple values, including keeping forests productive.

With such a forest-based economy in our region, their work helps keep the industry strong and provides long-term jobs for our region, such as timber management and harvesting for logging. They also work to protect forests for values and products we see every day. These working forests provide maple syrup, excellent hunting and fishing, amazing wildlife habitat, and too many recreational opportunities to mention.

NEFF currently holds some easements on privately owned forests in Sandisfield and surrounding towns. I am sure that many of us have heated our homes this winter from firewood cut under forest management programs and purchased lumber for our local needs that were produced from the working forests.

As a local forester operating my business right here in Sandisfield for 35 years, I am personally interested in seeing our forest land base protected for everyone who comes after me.

A workshop on conservation and management options for landowners is coming soon to our area. Included in this workshop will be more information on conservation easements. It will be a great chance to listen to the experts on this topic, and see if conservation is something that fits you and the stewardship of your land. 

Freedom from Fear Project Continues

By Bill Price

Setsuko Winchester's Freedom from Fear project has expanded beyond her initial plan to photograph her hand-made ceramic bowls at the sites of World War II Japanese American internment camps.

Park on Roosevelt Island in New York City. In order to more clearly understand what Setsuko is doing with the memorial project, it helps to see the photographs in color, which we are unable to show in the printed version of the Times, though color may be viewed on our website at sandisfieldtimes.org. To read an interview with Setsuko and see the photographs in color, visit the Park's website at fdrfourfreedomspark.org/blog/2016/2/11/freedom-from-fear-project.




The 120 bowls placed along the East River at FDR Four Freedoms Park in New York City.

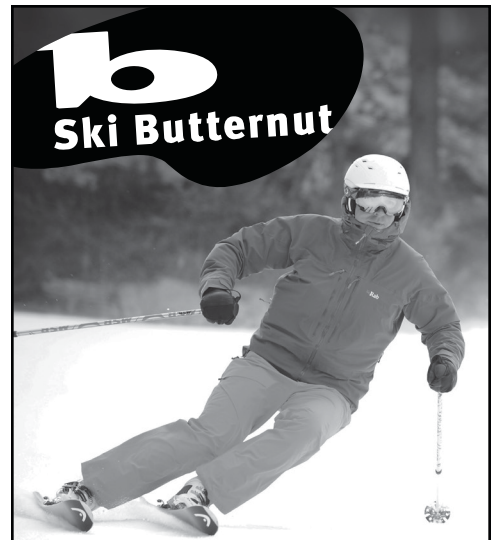
Photo: Setsuko Winchester

She is receiving permission to display the 120 bowls (symbolically, one for each 1,000 internees) at iconic places in the United States which illustrate the concept of Freedom from Fear. January marked the 75th anniversary of FDR's Four Freedoms speech.

In December, she was permitted to display and photograph the bowls at FDR Four Freedoms

illustrations, prevent her from displaying those particular photographs.

She hopes as well to be given permission by the National Parks Service to photograph the symbolic bowls at memorials on and near the Mall in Washington, D.C., "specifically," she says, "at the Memorial to Japanese-American Patriotism in WWII and the FDR Memorial." 



\$25 LIFT TICKETS

Monday-Friday

Excludes all our holiday periods

TUBING



\$20/2hr session

Saturday, Sunday & Holidays

NEW

\$10 Friday Nights

5-8pm (Non-Holiday)


380 State Rd. Great Barrington, MA

413.528.2000

www.SkiButternut.com

22 Trails | 11 Lifts | 100% Snowmaking

2 Terrain Parks | 8 Tubing Chutes



**1873 East Otis Road
East Otis, MA 01029
413.269.4309**

Bruce's HARDWARE

Master Plan Draft Complete

Cont'd from p.1

town staff, officials, and members of local organizations were interviewed to help inform the plan's development and identify ongoing and in-progress work. The MPSC, a sub-committee of the Planning Board, has met twelve times since June of last year to craft the plan and develop its goals and objectives.

The full text of the draft plan can be downloaded at the BRPC website: berkshireplanning.org/projects/sandisfield-master-plan. Hardcopies of the draft Master Plan are available at the Town Hall Annex, Old Town Hall, the Library, and When Pigs Fly Farm for public review. Please send your comments on the draft Master Plan to me at ecoughlin@berkshireplanning.org or by mail at BRPC, 1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA 01201. Please send comments so they arrive by noon on Friday, March 18.

BROAD THEMES

To summarize briefly, the broad themes of the Master Plan that have emerged from the public process so far include:

ONGOING AND IN-PROGRESS WORK

Rather than "reinvent the wheel," the Master Plan strives to identify and support the numerous projects and good work already in-progress by the town.

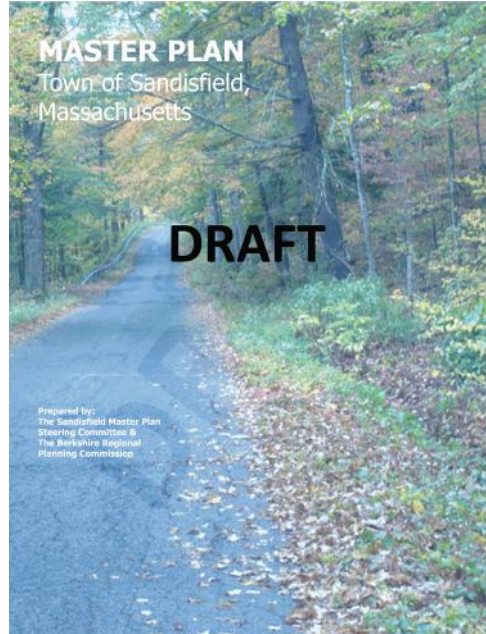
MAKING SANDISFIELD A DESTINATION

The Master Plan includes recommendations to better promote the town's assets throughout the region and make Sandisfield a destination for outdoor recreation, nature, and the environment, history, and the visual and performing arts.

OFFSETTING TOWN COSTS

The Master Plan makes many recommendations

to reduce and offset town expenses, including developing a plan to generate revenue from the sale, lease, or development of town-owned property and equipment. Additionally, the town will look for ways to reduce its expenses and generate additional revenue by sharing services, pursuing grant funding, and hosting events.



SUPPORT FOR LOCAL BUSINESS

The plan includes elements to support its base of small local businesses and independent entrepreneurs through development workshops and training. The plan also seeks to specifically develop opportunities for Sandisfield's tourism, agriculture, and forestry-based businesses.


SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY

The plan makes many recommendations to better support the town's senior citizens and the elderly. These include potential additional services, such as wellness check calls, better promotion of senior transportation options, and development of a long-term plan for senior housing in the town.

TOWN CENTER AND MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

The plan recommends that the town continue to pursue the creation of a "Town Center," a future social and civic hub for Sandisfield, and replace its existing town buildings. Future planning efforts will develop a process and dedicated funding plan to specifically address these issues.

STATE-OWNED LANDS

The plan recommends that the town work with the state to better integrate the town's needs into state management plans and improve areas like the Otis and Sandisfield State Forests. The plan also recommends that the town advocate for changes to state regulations to increase payments from state stumpage fees and PILOT (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes) payments. 



Putting Our House in Order


Cont'd from p.3

or attend meetings or be available to residents or officials. That might mean that they won't be reelected three years later, but that scenario can leave the town very vulnerable.

Also, the DOR's Division of Local Services is no longer coming out to Sandisfield to work on our books as they've done frequently in the past. With this change Sandisfield is now paying a highly skilled retired DOR staff person to come to Town Hall to handle our more challenging transactions. This is critical now, but should not be necessary with an appointed Treasurer.

Finally, the single most compelling argument for appointing a Treasurer (as opposed to electing one) is that failure to segregate duties between financial officers weakens internal controls. In other words, our system of managing the Town's finances provides numerous "fraud alerts."

So how do we make this work without costing the taxpayers a fortune? And why include the Tax Collector? In smaller towns the Town Treasurer's functions are often paired with the Tax Collector functions. One department head and one clerk versus two department heads. We'll still need a separate Town Accountant but this is a more cost effective way to make the transition.

On Thursday March 10th Sandisfield will be holding a Special Town Meeting to ask residents to make a choice. If you agree, the questions will be placed on the ballot for the Annual Town Election to be held at Town Meeting, May 14. This is your decision, not the Selectmen's. And we are committed to working with whatever you decide. After all, it's your money! 



HOMEIMPROVEMENTS

STEVEN SEDDON, SR.

Building and Modifying Homes
in the Berkshires

Since 2001

413 563 1483

sshomeimprovements@live.com

www.sshomeimprovementsma.com

Three Favorites from 2015



Above: June: A Flying Tiger from WWII

This homemade World War II fighter plane was a favorite at last year's Memorial Day Parade. The parade this year will be on Sunday, May 29, starting at 10. The parade, which gets better every year, starts at Old Town Hall and moves down 57 to the American Legion Pavilion on Rt. 8. Ceremonies are held at the New Boston cemetery and at the American Legion Pavilion. Good places to watch: near the cemetery, at the Library, or anywhere along Rt. 8.

Photo: Tom Jacobs



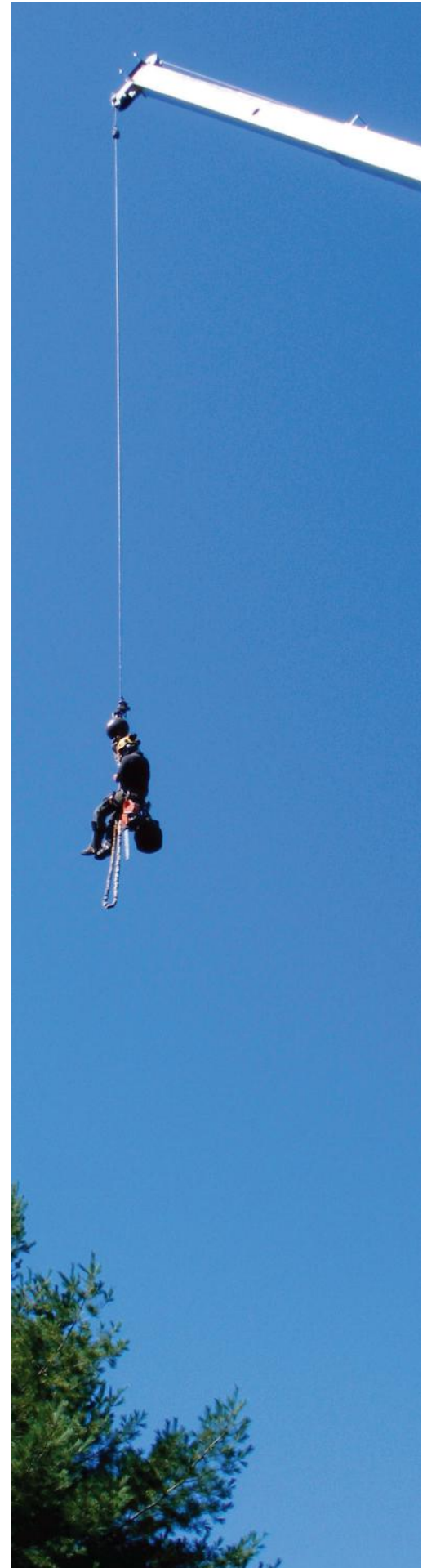
Above: September: Trail Building on the Clam River

Working under direction of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, high schoolers from all over the U.S., with some youths from overseas, chopped and hammered and dug to carve and build and create a trail through the woods from near Town Hall Annex to Hammertown Road. The trail, to be completed this summer, takes off from the Clam River Loop Trail which was finished in 2015. The Loop has become one of the most popular hiking trails in Sandisfield.

Right: October: Clearing Trees from the West New Boston Cemetery.

Donating its services, the John W. Field Tree Service brought a crew of cutters and equipment and rented a crane from the Barrett Tree Service to safely remove four dying or dangerous oaks and pine trees that hovered over the tombstones in one of the oldest cemeteries in Sandisfield. Of the generous donation, John said, "The town trusted me and hired me when I was just starting my business. I wanted to pay some of it back."

Photo: Bill Price



VILLA MIA RESTAURANT & PIZZERIA

413-258-4236

90 S. Main Street, New Boston
Specializing in Italian food.



CLOSED MONDAYS & TUESDAYS
OPEN WED SUN 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Like us on Facebook.

Help Build a Community Center

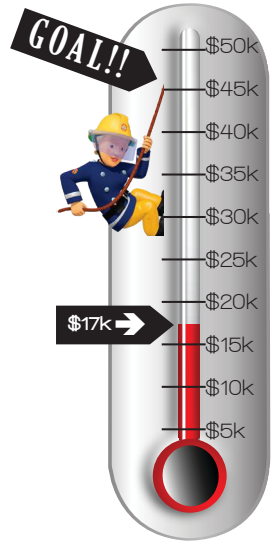
Through mid-February, response to the Fire Department's appeal for donations to help renovate the former American Legion building in New Boston for a new community center has been generally encouraging, according to Chief Ralph Morrison.

"The response rate to our January letter was about 15 percent and brought in a little over \$17,000 which is not bad," he said. "However, every cent has been spent and the pot is dry. I'm asking the community to help out in a bigger way - right now - so that the guys can finish electrical and

plumbing. These are big-ticket items, and we're stalled until more funds come in."

Step up and support this very worthwhile project. The goal is \$50,000 so there is a long way to go. Let's get the all-volunteer crew back to work. We need that community center!

Send your (tax deductible) donations to: Sandisfield Fire Department, PO Box 22, Sandisfield, MA 01255. Chief Morrison especially wants to hear from anyone who can assist in a substantial way. Call him at 413 258-4742.



Close, But No Cigar

Each week The New Yorker publishes a Cartoon Caption Contest: a cartoon with no caption. Readers submit ideas for the caption and the magazine selects three finalists. It's a tough contest to crack, but in February Sandisfield's Val Coleman made the cut. When the winners were published online late February, it turned out that Val's submission came in second. In our opinion, he was robbed.

Below are the three competing captions, in final order:

"My two other wishes were ironically misinterpreted, too."
Submitted by Roy Googin, New York, N.Y.

"You want to sell mustard? Here's how you sell mustard!"
Submitted by Val Coleman, Sandisfield, Mass.

"Your cheeseburger is on the loading dock."
Submitted by Ken Buxton, Ridgewood, N.J.



KWIK^{Color} PRINT INCORPORATED

EXPERIENCE • SPEED • QUALITY

- Full Color Digital Printing
- Full Color Envelope Printing
- Large Format Printing
- High Speed Copying
- Laminating
- Inline Bookletmaking
- Perfect Binding
- Folding
- Perforating
- Mailing Services
- Graphic Design Services

35 Bridge Street
Great Barrington, MA 01230
Ph: 413.528.2885 Fx: 413.528.9220
typesetting@kwikprintinc.com
www.kwikprintinc.com



CORNED BEEF DINNER



To Benefit the
NEW BOSTON
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Sat., March 19 • 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
Firehouse #2 on Rt. 57

Corned beef & cabbage dinner and all the rest. Assorted desserts.

\$12. for adults • \$5. children under 12. | Tickets available at the door. Take-outs welcome.

A Heritage Hero

MONTVILLE ICON GETS A NEW LIFE

By Ron Bernard

In February, Montville resident Theresa Spohnholz was awarded a “Heritage Hero” Certificate of Appreciation by the Select Board for her commitment to preserving a historic Sandisfield building.

The Historical Commission nominated Terry for this award in recognition of the careful renovation of her home, the former James Merrill Store in the center of Montville.

The certificate is awarded to owners of antique properties who in the opinion of the Commission go “above and beyond” to preserve the character of their properties. By preserving valuable historical assets, especially old houses, neighborhoods and towns benefit from property value protection and enhanced community pride. A little extra attention and public awareness about the importance of architectural integrity is essential to the futures of historic New England towns. Sandisfield Heritage Heroes like Terry provide an example of a way to make the town a more appealing and interesting place.

Terry, who previously resided and worked in Maryland, longed to return to her native south Berkshire. The time for action came in 2012. She instructed a realtor to find a place with some character and a pleasing location. Although the search included all of South County, it ended the day Terry visited No. 147 Sandisfield Road.

“I knew immediately that this is where I should be,” she said. “The price was right, and the house is ideal for me. This spot on the Buck River is so lovely.” Her good instincts were rewarded upon learning that the building has a colorful history, an aspect much appreciated by Terry.

She understood instantly that a certain special architectural feature – two beautiful full-length French windows that grace the first-floor façade – are historically significant. And there was a bonus discovery upstairs – vintage salvaged extra-wide (24-inch) floor boards.

In 1864, the nearly 20 year-old Greek Revival-style building was acquired by leading citizen James Merrill as a residence for himself and his wife, Louisa. In 1875, he became proprietor (and postmaster) of the Montville Store across the street. About five years later he moved the store and post office into his home. Most likely the grand windows, a commercial front entrance (removed after 1979), and the covered landing were installed then.

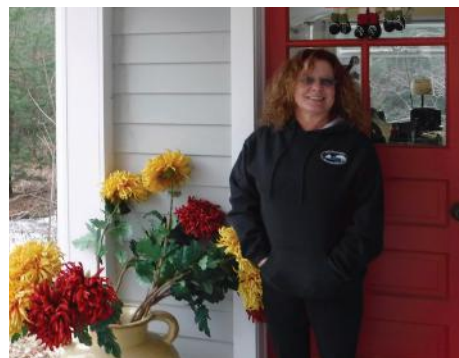
Mr. Merrill died in 1903. In 1907, the property was deeded to the Town which used it as public library until about 1924 when it reverted to private residential use.

The back story about this place includes two near-death-by-fire events, once in 1896 and again in 1989. Only quick responses by fire brigades and an ample water supply from the Buck River prevented disasters. A close look upstairs reveals faint evidence of fire damage. In recent years the house suffered a slow and steady decline as long-time second-home owners visited less often.

By the time Terry arrived, disuse and neglect had taken a toll. But she saw great potential. Together with expert carpenter and family friend, Dave Vittone, she began to methodically restore old fabric and upgrade the interior. The challenge outside was more daunting. Everything was needed – new sills, roof, windows, some siding – the works. Period-appropriate wooden clapboards are painted in a light stone hue, one of two traditional exterior colors for this architectural style.

Terry and Dave also had to deal with the former horse shed on the west elevation. Probably original to the house, the 2½ bay structure was in derelict condition, unsafe and beyond repair. It was carefully dismantled over weeks, and the posts and beams salvaged, cleaned, and preserved. “We reused 90 percent of the shed in the main house, for example, to reinforce exposed beams,” said Dave with satisfaction.

Congratulations and thanks to Terry for recognizing the importance and potential of this house and to Dave for his skill and vision to make that happen. After more than two years of patient work, the tastefully renovated James Merrill House stands proud in Montville once again. So, next time you pass through the village, slow down a bit and take a good long look and appreciate No. 147. 🏡



Top, the house as the new town library, 1907.

Middle: as seen in 2010.

Bottom: the home today, following renovation.

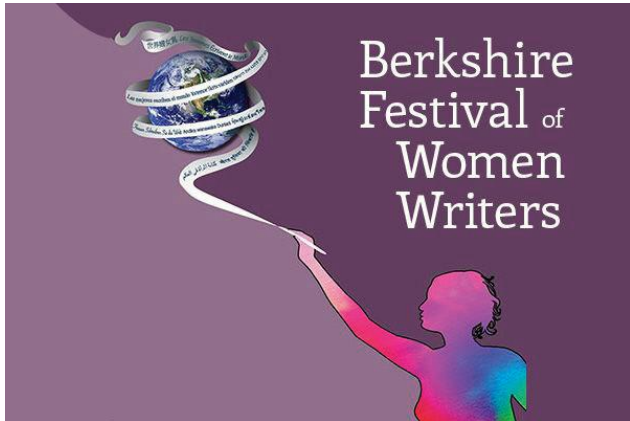
Left: Terry Spohnholz

Photo credits: Ron Bernard


A Coincidence or Fate?

James Merrill in 1880 reserved one upstairs room for a lending library. His daughter, Ella, was librarian. After Merrill died the Town, taking over the house, continued the tradition and operated a public library until about 1924. Is it a coincidence that new homeowner Terry is Sandisfield’s new librarian? Or was this meant to be?

Local Festival Honors Women Writers



The Berkshire Festival of Women Writers will begin its sixth season on March 12 with conference-style events at the Eastover Retreat Center in Lenox. During its nine-day festival, BFWW will offer more than 30 separate venues for women writers throughout the Berkshires. The festival will continue until March 20, with over 60 nationally known and local women writers presenting workshops, discussions, readings, and performances in various towns, including Great Barrington, Lee, and Stockbridge. Half- and full-day events will be held weekends and individual events during the week. While many events are free, some require pre-registration and tickets. For complete schedule of events and registration information, visit www.Berkshirewomenwriters.org.


BFWW is a partial sponsor of a program that will be held at the Sandisfield Arts Center May 7. "Writing Out Loud: A Performance-Based Revision Workshop" will be led by local authors Courtney Maum and Hallie Goodman using live reading as a revision tool. With creative input from participants, the two authors will help fiction and non-fiction writers understand their work and how it can be tightened and improved. More information will be available closer to the event date. 

Two Events at BRSCC in Downtown New Boston

The Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center, located on Sandisfield Road across from the New Boston Inn, held two recent events that included Center residents as well as members of the community.

The first, in January, was a "painting social." With teacher Pat Navarino, the founder of Renaissance Art & Wellness Center of Great Barrington, attendees learned to paint wintery scenes in oil. Pat teaches visual arts with a focus on developing technique and skill. She uses a "one on one" mentoring technique, but conducted this event more as "one on fifteen." The BRSCC hopes to make the "painting social" an annual event.

A Mardi Gras Celebration Fat Tuesday Pancake Luncheon was held in February for residents and Sandisfield seniors. It was a festive celebration, and Valentine presents were provided for all of the attendees.

Berkshire Rehabilitation and its residents extend sincere appreciation to American Legion Post #456 in Sandisfield, St. Mary of the Lakes Church in Otis, and Winsted Post 296 (VFW) for their generous gifts during the holiday season. The BRSCC is managed by Athena Health Care Systems. For information, visit their website at athenanh.com/Berkshire. 

WHETHER IT'S A NEW HOME, ADDITION OR COMPLETE REMODEL

TOLLAND MOUNTAIN BUILDERS ^{INC}

HIL #144855 MA LIC #38268

"When Quality and Professionalism Are a Must"

"We Handle All the Details"
Local references available.

Nick DellaGiustina 413-258-2821 Steve DellaGiustina 413-258-4996

NEW BOSTON CRANE SERVICE & SLEDS

Snowmobiles, ATV's, Generators, Trailers,
Lawn & Garden Equipment, Log Splitters

Parts & Service available for most
bikes, ATV's & snowmobiles




  • Husqvarna • Timberwolf •  • STIHL • 

OPEN: Tues - Fri 9am - 6pm / Sat & Mon 9am - 3pm
Sun 9am - 1pm / closed Mon (Nov 1-April 1)

Route 8 / P.O. Box 691 Sandisfield, MA 01255
www.newbostoncrane.com

413-258-4653
fax 413-258-2884
nbcss@verizon.net

Local Film Available Online

"Bob and the Trees," the award-winning film written, produced, and filmed in Sandisfield, is now available for rent or purchase online. It can be viewed or purchased on Video on Demand through iTunes, Google Play, or Vudu. The film was featured at nearly a dozen film festivals in the U.S. and Europe and won numerous awards. For information, contact Rob Christiano at bobandthetrees@gmail.com or visit the film's website: www.BobandtheTrees.com. 

Not Horsing Around

Cont'd from p.1

Rose became a licensed Certified Instructor by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. She has valuable practical experience over years of summers and weekends working at horse farms and riding programs in Connecticut and Massachusetts. For the past three years Rose has been a veterinary technician at a practice in Norfolk, Conn.

Bottom line: this is one busy, focused, and competent young person, well prepared and eager for a big new challenge.

Sunny Rose Farm, which is located at Looking Glass Gardens, the Nelson family's nursery, wedding venue, and landscaping business, is about much more than riding lessons.

Rose said, "We've been planning for over a year now. In February we cleared and graded about an acre for an indoor riding facility." Construction of that 8,400 sq. ft. building starts this spring. Also planned is an attached 15-stall horse barn plus riding trails (walk to



"Cora" with her owner, Rose Nelson, at the corral. Photo: Ron Bernard



Rose Nelson coaches a young riding student.

Photo: Nelson Family

gallop) around their scenic 50-acre hill-top property with trails connecting with Sandisfield State Forest. Together with existing corrals and support buildings, the complex promises to be the finest of its kind in this area.

Fellow South Sandisfield resident, Katie Rocco,

a life-long equestrian and expert trainer herself, has mentored Rose for several years. "Rose cares so much about the animals," she said, "and relates very well to the owners too. From what I see, her facility design is just right. There's been nothing like it around here for many years, and it is definitely needed. In fact, I'm going to be a client there."

Once the barns are up, hopefully by this fall, owners can board horses part-time up to year-round. Boarding is expected to become a significant part of the business. Rose believes Sunny Rose Farm will satisfy a currently unmet need, especially for out-of-state and seasonal-resident owners.

Having taken good notes at college business courses, Rose has a business-like five-year outlook. "We are very flexible and intend to offer a full range of services. We'll start this spring with riding lessons, particularly for beginners. There will be training in basic categories including indoor 'Eventing' which includes jumping, Dressage (horse-rider connection with patterns and rhythms) and cross-country maneuvering," she said. Her beloved easy-going companions, "Cora" and "Storm," are accustomed to the regimens as well as riders up through advanced. "The idea is to prepare students for competitive events. For beginners, we are bringing in 'Princess' a former thoroughbred racing horse, and we'll start out little kids on our miniatures, 'Shaggy' and 'Scrappy,'" Rose said.

Rose went on, "This is such a beautiful property. It is like a big park. There is so much potential. For example, pony rides and maybe events like hay rides in the fall. Why not?"

Why not, indeed. We can't wait.

The Nelson's have made a significant investment in Sunny Rose Farm. It's a natural fit with rural Sandisfield, and the concept complements the main family business. Chuck and Zoe are confident in their daughter and her vision.

Watch for a grand opening event this fall. For more information, contact Rose at (413) 446-4944 or by email at sunnyrosefarm@yahoo.com.



Be Careful Out There

By Times Reporters

Like other newspapers, The Times receives press releases from a wide variety of sources. Usually the releases tell us about things of little interest to us here in the woods north of Winsted and west of Tolland. Once we did hit the big time with an offer of a column from Karl Rove, a political strategist, but we didn't run that one either. Last month we received two releases that in fact seem pertinent to our friends and neighbors. We're running the items here, in spite of our usual reluctance to fill the paper with them.

Watch Out, from the IRS

If you receive a phone call from someone claiming to be from the Internal Revenue Service, hang up. It's not the IRS. It's a crook calling to see if you can be persuaded to send him or her some money.

The agency's press release said that the IRS will never call you about taxes owed without first having contacted you by mail or having mailed you a bill.

The crooks are calling phone numbers at random. The caller may threaten you with arrest or court action to trick you into sending them a check. They may tell you that you're entitled to a huge refund. Just hang up. The crooks want to engage you in conversation and eventually they will tell you that you need to send some amount of money to either pay off the payment or collect the refund. Just hang up.

If you get one of those random calls, you can report it to the IRS by calling 800-366-4484, but they get a lot of those reports. Best thing: just hang up and make some coffee.

Generator Safety

The Propane Gas Association of New England sent the following tips for homeowners and businesses that rely on propane generators to heat their homes or fuel other equipment and structures during power outages:

Since generators can produce high levels of carbon monoxide, never use a generator indoors or in enclosed or partially-enclosed spaces. They should always remain outdoors.

Keep the generator away from the house and entry points (e.g., windows, vents) on a level, dry surface, protected from weather, dirt, and debris.

Know how you plan to use your generator and hook up the power accordingly. A heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cord is appropriate to power 1-2 appliances or a few lights. Make sure the cord is free of cuts and tears and that its plug has three prongs and a grounding pin.

If you want to power appliances that cannot be unplugged from your home's electrical circuits, such as a furnace, or if you want the generator to run all of your lights, then you will need a transfer, or bypass, switch. Transfer switches should always be installed by a licensed electrician.

Never plug the generator into a house wall outlet in an attempt to power the house or you could be electrocuted.

And before refueling your generator, shut off the generator and let it cool down. ⚠

Winter 2015-16 Snowfall



As measured/estimated at a Beech Plain backyard weather station

December 2015.	1 inch
January 12.	1½ inches
January 16.	1 inch
January 17-18.	2½ inches
February 5.	5½ inches
February 8.	5 inches
February 9-10.	1½ inches
February 16.	2 inches
Cumulative to Feb. 23:	20 inches

EXTREME TEMPERATURES

February 15 At 6 a.m., -20F, -41F wind chill
February 16 At 6 a.m., -14F



The Hillside Garden Inn

An intimate B & B, offering gracious hospitality and charming, immaculate accommodations in the historic c. 1784 Elijah Twining house.

The perfect place for your out-of-town guests!

Innkeepers
Rosanne Carinci-Hoekstra
Steven Hoekstra

3 Tolland Road
Sandisfield, MA
413.258.4968
www.hillsidegardeninn.com

BEER ★ WINE ★ LIQUOR

Domaneys



Fine Wine ★ Unique Beer ★ Discount Liquors
Temperature Controlled Wine Room ★ Cigar Humidor

66 Main St. Great Barrington, MA 01230
p. (413) 528-0024 ★ f. (413) 528-6093

www.domaneys.com



Ice Fishing on Lower Spectacle Pond

Ice fishing enthusiasts from the greater Washington D.C. area spent a Sunday in late January on Spectacle Pond. Every winter a dozen or so friends come to the Berkshires with a local professional tour guide to fish on frozen lakes and ponds. This was their first visit to Sandisfield, and they reported good fishing and said they enjoyed their time on the pond, despite slightly thawing ice conditions. One fisherman estimated the ice at about 8 inches.

Photos: Ron Bernard



Now accepting new students!

Group or private riding lessons available at your home or on our Sandisfield farm.

Lessons available for all ages.

Specializing in Eventing, Dressage, and Hunter-Jumper lessons

•

Rose Nelson, Instructor and Owner

•

Massachusetts certified,
Pony club eventing participant and USEA eventer
Email: sunnyrosefarm@yahoo.com • Phone: (413) 446-4944

**Orchid Blossom
Healing Arts**

Lauren Paul, Dipl. Ac

413-258-4296

Acupuncture and Shiatsu



The Librarian's Corner

By Terry Spohnholz

A good library will never be too neat, or too dusty, because somebody will always be in it, taking books off the shelves, and staying up late reading them.

—Lemony Snicket

March is upon us, which means winter is entering its declining months. The days are longer and the air is warmer (usually? hopefully?) And spring is only weeks away – at least according to the calendar. I am sticking with daffodils in pots inside for a while yet and perusing the gardening books in the library for inspiration while dreaming of sun-caressed gardens.

Thanks to a grant from the Sandisfield Cultural Council, the library will be expanding the children's and juvenile section of the library with more culturally diverse and modern books to delight children ages 0 – 17. Expect to find new and refreshing additions in that area. But we will be keeping the classics that continue to bring joy to both the reader and the listener – Dr. Suess, Shel Silverstein, and J.K. Rowling.

Arts and Crafts in the Library

Looking for children of all ages to celebrate the coming of spring with fun activities and a story-telling event on March 19 from 12:30 to 2 p.m. Come join Amy and Terry for some spring-time frolics.

Hours to Change, March 1

The Library will be open Wednesdays from 2-5 p.m. and Thursdays from 5-7 p.m. All other hours will remain the same. The change will allow those who attend the Council on Ageing to visit the library on any Wednesday. The Library will be closed on Saturday March 26 for the Easter weekend.

Books for Cora

Donate NEW children's books or contribute to the fund to buy new children's books in honor of Cora Barrett. Celebrate the life of a beautiful young girl by honoring her love of books. To celebrate Cora, we are adding materials to the libraries she was part of. Please donate at the Sandisfield, Otis, or Farmington River Regional School Library.

New Books, New Books!!!!

Murder, thrills, and mystery....

- *After She's Gone*, by Lisa Jackson
- *Murder Most Malicious*, by Alyssa Maxwell
- *The Past*, by Tessa Hadley
- *Runaway*, by Peter May
- *The Yid*, by Paul Goldberg
- *Red Icon*, by Sam Eastland
- *The Crooked House*, by Kent Christobel

Non-Fiction


- *Shark Attack*, by Peter Jennings
- *City of Thorns*, by Ben Rawlence
- *NYPD Green: A Memoir*, by Luke Waters
- *Political Animals*, by Rick Shenkman
- *The Road to Little Dribbling*, by Bill Bryson

A Reading Challenge

A friend sent me this challenge. I found it quite inspiring and thought I'd share it. I hope to check them all off! What about you?

In 2016, read:

- A book published this year
- A book you can finish in one day
- A book you have been meaning to read
- A book recommended by your librarian (or book seller)
- A book you should have read in school
- A book chosen for you by a spouse, significant other, friend, child
- A book published before you were born
- A book that was banned at some point
- A book you previously abandoned
- A book you own but have never read
- A book that intimidates you
- A book you have already read at least once.

So enjoy our amazing winter wonderland we call home, stomp the snow off your boots, and step into the Sandisfield Library and discover or rediscover new adventures, people, and places. See you there!!! 

Council on Aging



By Susan Galik

Line Dancing begins March 3. We are offering two classes. New-to-Line Dancing is from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Advanced classes from 5-6:00 p.m. Classes will be held at the Old Town Hall on Thursdays. \$2 suggested donation.

Qi Gong classes start March 14. Mondays and Fridays from 11a.m. to noon. Old Town Hall. \$2 suggested donation.

Kate Alexander, Consumer Mediator, will be here to talk to us about Scams/Frauds and Identity Theft on March 9, 11:00 a.m.-noon. Lunch will be served afterward.

Flower arrangement class will be held March 21, Monday, from 2-4:00 p.m. Cost is \$10, and we already have a list started. Call Linda Riiska, 258-4816.

Foot Care Clinic, April 5, Tuesday, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Please call Linda for appointment and information.

Meet the Candidates, May 4, Wednesday, from 10:30 a.m. Candidates for Select Board and other town offices. Lunch will follow.


Monument Mountain Regional High School should be having their play sometime in May. We don't have a date yet.

Applications for Volunteers are available at the COA. Elder Services needs help with companionship, transportation, grocery shopping.

We gather on Wednesdays at noon for lunch. Board meetings are held during winter months on the first Wednesday of each month.

A Blood Pressure Clinic is held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 11 a.m.

With a change in Library hours to be open Wednesdays from 2-5 p.m., all who attend COA can visit the library any Wednesday.

We could use some volunteer drivers. Call Linda Riiska at 258-4816 to coordinate. 



❖ Comings & Goings ❖



Jim at the Silverbrook

Photo: Courtesy of the Soden family

JAMES N. SODEN 1939-2015

Jim Soden, who owned and operated the Silverbrook Café for more than a decade, died in Florida on October 16, last year. He was 76.

Jim and his wife Betty, bought the Silverbrook Cafe in 1989. They continued and built on what previous owners, the Rondeaus, had introduced – regular and lively weekend bands and dancing. In the section on the café in *Sandisfield Then and Now*, the Sodens made the place a “well-known, fun venue that drew loyal patrons from as far away as Hartford and New York State.” One Sandisfield resident, recalling those days, summed it up: “The Sliverbrook,” he said, “was a happening place.” It did live up to its spirited little motto: “The Best Little Honkytonk West of the Clam River.”

After selling the Silverbrook in 2003, Jim and Betty moved to Bushnell, Florida. Betty died a few years ago. Bob Batters of Waterbury, formerly of Roosterville Road, informed *The Times* about Jim’s death, adding, “They are sadly missed by local folks here [in Waterbury] and up north.”

A native of Waterbury, James N. Soden was the son of Alexander and Angeline (Linsalata) Soden, and the loving husband of the late Betty (Herriman) Soden. He leaves behind his three children, James and his wife, Terri, and Thomas, and Rhonda Soden; his grandchildren, who he loved dearly, Britt, Jake, and Malissa Soden; a great-grandchild, Jazella Barnes; and many dear friends.

Jim was a longtime member of the Waterbury Deep Sea Fishing Club. A former U.S. Marine, he was a member of the American Legion, Local Post No. 101, in Florida, and a member of Operating Engineers, Local 478.

An obituary was published in the *Waterbury Republican-American* in November. It reported that Jim was “a former owner of the Silverbrook Café in Sandisfield, Mass., where he will always be known for his exceptional clam bakes. He lived life to the fullest, and loved riding his Harley.”

A graveside service was held in November at the New North Woodbury Cemetery in Woodbury, Connecticut.



Smitty Staying Put

By Times reporters



With the decision of State Senator Ben Downing not to run for another term, State Representative Smitty Pignatelli, a likely candidate to succeed Downing, had a decision to make.

In a press release sent to Berkshire County newspapers, including the Times, Smitty wrote that he had been “on an emotional roller coaster ever since Ben’s announcement.” He added: “I have spent considerable time reflecting on my fourteen years of service as your State Representative for the Fourth Berkshire District

and what we have achieved, together.” Stepping off the roller coaster, he said: “The opportunity to serve in the Massachusetts State Senate is, admittedly, very tempting. However – “I love the House! I am honored to serve!

“In that spirit and in the best interest of my family and the district that I call home, it will be an honor for me to run for re-election to the House of Representatives. Together with each of you and with the Berkshire Delegation, we will continue to make the Berkshires great.”

CONFUSED IN THE WOODLANDS

I must have missed something.

I remember going to a town meeting about two years ago at which the pipeline was discussed and overwhelmingly rejected. But now I read in the last issue that the Sandisfield Conservation Commission issued a permit to Kinder Morgan’s subsidiary for expansion of four miles of new pipeline. So a project that I thought was killed (at least as far as the town was concerned) appears to be proceeding despite the sentiment against it.

Others I have talked to are equally confused. Please explain.

Joan Stern Kiok
Otis Woodlands (Sandisfield side)

Editor’s Reply: The Explanation Is ...

Dear Ms. Stern Kiok: Where have you been? What have you been reading? The Times has published stories about the pipeline controversy in every issue since that town meeting in May 2014, often on the front page. We’ve printed so many stories about it that the eyes of many readers glaze over at the very sight of the word “pipeline.” Anyone who wants to see the stories again, or for the first time, can find them on our website: www.SandisfieldTimes.org, go to Archives.

The Town Meeting vote was not a vote to stop the pipeline expansion, but a vote that the Town opposed the expansion. The town could not stop the project by itself. State and Federal governments are the only powers that can say “proceed” or “stop.” In the meantime, the Conservation Commission imposed appropriately strict guidelines on the work in the event it proceeds, thus the “approval.” The issue is still in doubt.

Former Town Administrator Named President of MMA

Lisa Blackmer, who served as Town Administrator for Sandisfield from December 2013 until September 2015, was elected to a one-year term as president of the Massachusetts Municipal Association’s board of directors.

The MMA, an umbrella organization for the Massachusetts cities and towns, advocates for municipal interests on behalf of policies and positions that benefit local aid, school funding, Chapter 90 funds to repair roads and bridges, and local decision making. Lisa said that two issues facing small towns in the coming year are securing local aid and confronting the opioid crisis in Massachusetts. She will continue to serve as North Adams City Councillor.

MAPLE CORNER FARM
Beech Hill Rd-W. Granville
(From Rt. 57 East, Left on North Lane, follow signs to above Cobble Mountain Reservoir)
413-357-8829
It’s Maple Sugaring Time!
Visitors welcome to our Sugar House -
Come watch the maple sap boil!
• Pancakes,
• French Toast,
• Ham,
• Bacon,
• Sausage
Served weekends
Now thru April 10
8:00am-2:00pm

HELP WANTED

Diet Aides, part-time
Contact Richard Locke
Tel 413 258-4731

Berkshire Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center
7 Sandisfield Rd
Sandisfield, MA 01255

Fleur de lis Housekeeping
A fully bonded & insured company
Suzanne Hoynoski
Owner
(413) 258-4070
(860) 309-6598
A “Full Service” Company



NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.

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

MARCH EVENTS

Presidential Primary on Tuesday, March 1, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road behind the Silverbrook Café.

Special Town Meeting, Thursday, March 13, 7:00 p.m., at Old Town Hall. See Warrant on page 2.

Rabies Clinic, sponsored by the Board of Health, for cats and dogs on Sunday, March 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Cost of vaccine, \$16. Dog licenses available at the same visit.

Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner, sponsored by the New Boston Church, on Saturday, March 19, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Fire Station #2 on Route 57. Potatoes, carrots, bread, dessert, and beverage are included. \$12 adult, \$5 under 12. Take-out and tickets available at the door.

Flower Arrangement Class, sponsored by the Council on Aging, on Monday, March 21, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the basement at the Town Hall Annex on Route 57. \$10.

Easter Services. New Boston Congregational Church, Sunday, March 27, 10 a.m. Route 57 near the New Boston Inn. Weather permitting.

April 13. **Public Meeting**. Review Draft of Sandisfield Master Plan. Opportunity for public comment on the working document that addresses factors shaping the town and its future. 7:00 p.m., Old Town Hall.

MARCH EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Live Music Every Friday from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. at Gedney Farm in New Marlborough, 34 Hartsville-New Marlboro Road. \$5 cover to support our local musicians. For information, call 413-229-3131.

Songwriting Intensive on Monday, March 7, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Monterey Public Library. Open to songwriters of all ages and skill levels. Work on polishing old creations and creating new songs. Hosted by Robin O'Herin. A concert/open mic closes the series on Friday, March 11 at 6:30 p.m.

Berkshire Strings Fiddle Jam on Saturday, March 12, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Rudolf Steiner School, 35 W. Plain Road, Great Barrington. An open invitation to guitars, mandolins, banjos, bass players, and fiddles. \$10 suggested donation. RSVP at 413-528-5739.

Snowshoe Sundays on Sundays through March 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Bartholomew's Cobble in Ashley Falls. Snowshoe rentals available. For information, call 413-229-8600.

Smartphone Photography on Sunday, March 13, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Bartholomew's Cobble in Ashley Falls. \$15 members, \$20 non-members. For information, call 413-229-8600.

Family Birding at the Cobble on Sunday, March 20, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Bartholomew's Cobble in Ashley Falls. \$5 members, \$10 non-members. Children free. For information, call 413-229-8600.

ONGOING EVENTS

Select Board, The Select Board meets at the Town Hall Annex on Mondays. Regular meetings are held at 7 p.m. and working sessions at 2:30 p.m. See posted agendas for meeting schedules.

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, 6 p.m., Old Town Hall. Chair is Kim Spring, 413-717-7034.

Cemetery Committee, second Monday of each month, 6 p.m., Town Hall Annex.

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 Rd.

Sandisfield Public Library Hours: Monday/Tuesday: 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; All Wednesdays: 2-5 p.m.; Thursday: 5-7 p.m. The Library will be closed on Saturday, March 26, for the Easter weekend.

Historical Commission: First Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m., Rt. 57 Firehouse.

RALPH E. MORRISON

413-258-3381



A & M AUTO SERVICE

COMPLETE AUTO & TRUCK CARE
IMPORT AND DOMESTIC

24 HOUR HEAVY DUTY & LIGHT TOWING & RECOVERY
FLAT BED SERVICE

ROUTE 57/EAST

SANDISFIELD, MA 413-258-3381



THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

P.O. Box 584

Sandisfield, MA 01255

www.sandisfieldtimes.org



*We acknowledge with gratitude
donations from the following:*

Michelle Arnot & Roger Brown

Bob & Mary Ann Gacek

Charles & Elizabeth Meier

Sandisfield Arts Center

Joseph & Sally Salzano

Marcella Smith & Linda Mironi

George Wheeler & Michelle Marincola



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.

Copies of *The Sandisfield Times* are available in Sandisfield at A&M Auto, the Arts Center (in season), the Transfer Station, Post Office, the New Boston Inn, New Boston Sleds, Villa Mia, MJ Tuckers, When Pigs Fly Farm and Town Hall. Copies are also available in Otis at Berkshire Bank, Bruce's Hardware, Katie's Market, Papa's Fuel, Otis Library, Farmington River Diner, and Otis Poultry Farm. Locations in

Monterey include the Library, the Store, and the Roadside Cafe. Available also at the Southfield Store in New Marlborough. Back issues are available for purchase.

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

We welcome submissions, comments and suggestions, including letters to the editor **BY THE 15TH OF THE MONTH PRIOR**. We may edit for space, style or clarity. We will try to publish Public Service Announcements when we have room, with priority given to Sandisfield organizations. No portion of the *The Sandisfield Times* may be reproduced without permission.

Editorial Staff

Editor: Bill Price

email: w.billprice@gmail.com or cell 413.429.7179

Advertising/Subscriptions: Ron Bernard

Graphic Design: Tina Sotis

Website: Jean Atwater-Williams

Now Hear This!: Laura Rogers-Castro

Founding Editor: Simon Winchester

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

To have the *The Times* mailed to your home, please complete the information below and send a check for \$25 (annual subscription fee for 11 issues) made out to *The Sandisfield Times* to:

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

PO BOX 584, SANDISFIELD, MA 01255

Name _____

Address to where *The Times* should be delivered:

City, State, Zip _____

Email address: _____

Phone (only used if paper is returned by USPS) _____

How to Contact Us

Letters to the editor: . . . letters@sandisfieldtimes.org

News, ideas, tips & photos: . . . editor@sandisfieldtimes.org

Advertising questions: . . . advertising@sandisfieldtimes.org

Entries for calendar of events: . . . calendar@sandisfieldtimes.org

Birth, marriage, and death notices: . . . registrar@sandisfieldtimes.org