

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



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May 2016

Article 97/Pipeline Showdown

COULD THIS CASE GO ALL THE WAY?

By Ron Bernard

For the past 2½ years, Texas energy giant Kinder Morgan and its subsidiary, Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co. (TGP) has worked to install a 4-mile long gas pipeline extension in the Beech Plain section to serve Connecticut customers, the service to begin this November.

KM operates some 90,000 miles of pipelines across North America. How difficult could it be to add a miniscule new line next to an existing right-of-way that dates to 1950?

Turns out, really difficult.

The corporation is used to getting its way because the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the omnipotent bureaucratic child of the 1938 Natural Gas Act, approves these projects “more than 99% of the time,” according to a seasoned FERC staff attorney’s response to a bewildered Sandisfield landowner’s phone call in 2013. This unsympathetic public servant added, “Don’t waste your time [fighting it]. Goodbye.” Nice.

But wait. It’s now the following April 2016, and the new gas line is still not here. Not one tree is down. Why not?

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The Minack Theatre in Cornwall.

The Sandisfield Players to Perform in Cornwall, England

By Bill Price

More than twenty of our friends and neighbors are reviewing their lines, showing up for rehearsals, and packing their bags for their June trip to Cornwall, England, where they will perform the quintessential American play, “Our Town,” for seven performances at the incomparable ocean-side Minack Theatre.

It is a big deal, taking a large group of amateur players and costumes and props and figuring out the logistics to go from Sandisfield to England to perform Thornton Wilder’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play.

For the most of the Players, it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The group of mostly amateurs came into being in 2012 when Sandisfield’s Ben Luxon, a former British baritone, was invited to direct a play in honor of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the town. The result was a witty, charming assemblage of the town’s quirky and interesting history, written and performed by a group of fully engaged non-writers and amateur historians and would-be local actors, including some from neighboring towns.

Realizing that they enjoyed the process of learning, rehearsing, and performing a play in front of an audience, The Sandisfield Players, as they became known, signed on a year later for two performances of “Our Town.” Both sold out.

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Living in Broadband Li(MBI)o

By Jean Atwater-Williams

When MBI Director Eric Nakajima resigned in February, it was hoped there would be a change in both direction and attitude at the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), but the delays – and the top-down, “We in Boston know what’s best for you” posture – continue.


With Governor Baker’s broadband “pause” still in effect, the Administration and the MBI has announced that it is undertaking a wireless study for all 45 underserved towns at a cost of \$500,000. That’s a half a million dollars of the money that was designated for last-mile broadband to study a technology that has already been tested (unsuccessfully) in western Massachusetts and which will not create the robust infrastructure needed for true economic development for our region. This “study” is a waste of money and will just create more delay.

And rather than the universal fiber-optic coverage previously promised, MBI said in a letter dated March 14, “Our goal is to develop and execute a strategy that will provide broadband access to the greatest number of residents possible.” The “greatest number of residents” will be a lot fewer than “universal” would have been.

Since Mr. Nakajima’s bombshell letter last December advising towns not to sign the WiredWest Operating Agreement, WiredWest has worked diligently to make compromises and refine its business plan to address MBI’s criticisms. But despite WiredWest’s good-faith efforts to find a way to move forward in partnership with MBI, MBI remains unwilling to work with WiredWest in any collaborative, meaningful way.

Contrary to MBI’s negatively biased assessments of WiredWest, a number of highly respected consultants have praised the WW model. CTC Technology & Energy, the premier municipal-fiber consulting group in the country, issued a report last December concluding: “The WiredWest financial model has been well designed and depicts a reasonable portrayal of its business, given the model’s underlying cost and revenue assumptions.”

On April 20, the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University published a case study with the subtitle “Western Massachusetts Towns Create a New Model for Last-Mile Connectivity, but a State Agency Delays Approval and Funding.” The study, favorable toward WiredWest and the municipal cooperative approach to solving the last-mile problem, was highly critical of the MBI. Among their recommendations to MBI and the Commonwealth, the authors recommended favoring “the better, long-term solution over the cheaper, short-term fix” and giving “careful consideration, if not deference, to the preferences of local communities.”

In fairness to the Governor (who acknowledges he is not technically oriented), all of the information he is receiving is coming from the MBI. He’s not getting the full story. Governor Baker has never spoken directly with WiredWest, and he is not hearing from those of us out here, the most affected. It’s high time he did. 

To read the Harvard Study, go to https://cyber.law.harvard.edu/publications/2016/wiredwest_case_study

To contact the 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.)




Sunday, May 29, 10 a.m.

Sandisfield veterans, uniforms, flags, marching bands, floats made-at-home in garages and barns by your friends and neighbors, beautiful cars. Kids throwing candy to spectators. You’re missing something if you don’t show up.

The 69th annual parade starts at Old Town Hall and moves east on Rt. 57, pausing at the New Boston Cemetery for an honor

guard salute. At the bridge over the Farmington the parade turns south on Rt. 8, ending at the American Legion Pavilion for a flag-raising ceremony. Refreshments 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 your fine old car, call Fire Chief Ralph Morrison at 258-4742, or just show up at Old Town Hall before 9:30 on May 29. 

Disposing of Used Needles, Old Medication


By John Skrip, Selectman

Sharps (used needles, lancets, etc.) and expired medications are difficult to dispose of properly.

An agreement with Med Waste will allow for the annual disposal of medication and sharps at Fire House #2. The Sandisfield Select Board has set June 18 between 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. as the drop off date/time for medical and sharps waste disposal.

We anticipate that this one day pick-up will allow sufficient time for proper disposal of sharps and medical waste that has accumulated over time. If for some reason you will be unable to dispose of your items on that date please call me at 258-4788 to make other arrangements.

The process will be easy. Residents will drive to the fire house and dispose of sharps (must be in a small plastic sealed container – like a coffee can) and outdated medicine including liquids (properly sealed – in the original medicine container or a sealed plastic bag) to the fire house. The full disposal containers will then be picked up by Med Waste and disposed of properly.

The Select Board thanks the Sandisfield Fire/Ambulance service for funding the program and for Council on Aging members for bringing this need to the Board’s attention. 

Budget, FY2017

DO THE NUMBERS ADD UP?

By Tom Christopher

It can't take effect until the voters have their say at Town Meeting on May 14, but the proposed town budget for Fiscal Year 2017 (July 2016-June 2017) has been released by the Select Board. Voters will be asked to decide yes or no on at least 73 items.

Overall the budget (if approved as proposed) will have shrunk significantly. Expenses for FY2017 are estimated at \$3,186,001, reflecting a \$209,167 decrease in town expenses.

This year's narratives combine economy with investment for the future. The columns of figures may seem dry at first glance, but dig deeper and they have stories to tell.

Some of the stories are little. But some are big. Spending on the library, for instance, would be just about flat (library expenses would be up by \$155, salaries down by \$29).

The school operations budget is up, however, a big story, reflecting a 4.1 percent increase to Sandisfield of nearly \$56,000. According to Selectman John Skrip, a member of the School Committee, the increase reflects an explosion of the cost of healthcare and tuition expenses, neither of which is within the control of Sandisfield's town government.

The business manager at Farmington River Regional School District, Jane Gleason, reports that health insurance premiums have increased by 10.9 percent and the district pays tuition for approximately 150 7th-12th grade students attending schools in neighboring communities, school-choice students, and special-education students.

Another big story concerns our roads.


Highway Superintendent Bobby O'Brien reports that the budget for the Department of Public Works is down by almost 8 percent, from \$551,883 in FY2016 to \$510,371 in FY2017. The savings if approved by the voters would be achieved by eliminating one position from the town crew (for a savings of \$37,119) and by doing more of the vehicle and bridge maintenance in-house (Maintenance Expenses would shrink by \$5,000).

In the category of "Protection Persons & Property," Police Department expenses

and salaries would both increase modestly (by \$1,000 and \$855, respectively) but that would be matched by a \$3,289 decrease in Fire Department and EMT compensation.

One new item is a requested \$11,232 for salary and \$2,000 expenses for a town accountant. Sandisfield has not previously had a town accountant, but Select Board Chairman Alice Boyd reports that both the Commonwealth and the town auditor informed the town that this was a "must have," that not separating these duties from those of the town treasurer raised warning flags for any outside observer about potential for fraud. In addition, according to Alice, the new position will help the town use its money most economically and effectively.

The town, incidentally will be resuming the practice of an annual audit in FY2017 – the last audit was carried out in 2007. Annual audits are required for Sandisfield to qualify for many grants and for bonding.

One notable difference from the budget proposed for FY2016 is the lack of any allocation for the purchase of a new town truck. That item, for \$150,000, was deleted from the last budget after some heated discussion at Town Meeting in May 2015. Highway Superintendent O'Brien has indicated that members of the town crew possess sufficient maintenance and repair skills to keep the existing vehicles operating at an affordable cost. 

WEEDS

Begin again ... bless me, it's Spring.
Take a green turn
And throw open the door of a dandelion,
Lie down and watch a grasshopper climb a weed.

(He's all knees and elbows,
Needs a boost up to the false blossom
So he can stand up there rickety
As king of the outcasts.)

Sometimes Spring's best ceremony
Is a regiment of buttercups in full dress
Hearing a talk on anarchism
By a common cocklebur.

"Grow everywhere!" he says,
"And blame the florists and philosophers
For your reputation, and look to the proud daylilies
For redemption in a rosie world."

I must add that from time to time
Weeds may paint a mountainside
Like a Cloister tapestry
Dignified.

*Val Coleman
Town Hill Road*




Public Info Sessions

TWO BALLOT QUESTIONS & THE TOWN BUDGET

Do you want to learn more about the ballot questions regarding appointing versus electing the Town Treasurer and Tax Collector?

Or preview the FY2017 town budget and ask questions before the Town Meeting?

The Select Board is sponsoring two information events.

Saturday, May 7, at 10:00 a.m. and Tuesday, May 10, at 7:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. 

Important Dates in May

- Meet the Candidates. Wednesday, May 4
Senior Center, Town Hall Annex basement,
11 a.m.
- Town Meeting, Saturday, May 14
Firehouse #2 on Rt. 57,
10 a.m.
- Election, Monday, May 16
Old Town Hall, Silverbrook Road,
10 a.m.-8 p.m.
- Deadline for requesting absentee ballot,
Thursday, May 12
Noon



Sandisfield Players curtain call after a 2013 performance of "Our Town." Photo: Richard Migot

Sandisfield Players

Cont'd from p.1

With that success, The Players began to see themselves as an amateur stock company and the next year had the temerity to perform Dylan Thomas's difficult "Under Milk Wood." They followed that with a program of not-simple Shakespeare extracts, Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," and, last December, their own rendition of "Hansel and Gretel."

Over a year ago, during a visit to his native Cornwall, Ben found himself in conversation with the director of the Minack Theatre – one of Europe's most renowned open-air theaters built into the cliffs at the southwesterly tip of England, near "land's end." The Minack presents a 22-week season of theatrical presentations between April and October.

During the conversation, the subject of "Our Town" came up and the Minack director invited Ben to bring his "Players" to perform the American play on the celebrated stage, bringing early 20th-century America to the old country.

Ben, who is 79 but possesses the enthusiasm and energy of a kid, said, "Thank you. We'd be glad to."

So, come the end of June all those who can will be on board and on stage, June 27-July 1, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean where the Celtic Sea joins the English Channel.

The Players, in fact, are moving beyond their "amateur" status. Rehearsals for this local "Our Town" revival have already started. Most of the Players will reprise their roles from 2013, but the cast also includes a handful of newcomers.

To help The Players prepare, a pre-trip, full-dress performance of "Our Town" will be performed at the Sandisfield Arts Center on Saturday, June 18, with a matinee at 2 p.m. and an evening performance at 8.

Even if you saw the play on Broadway in the 1930s, performed in it or were in the audience in high school, saw it at the movies or on TV, or even right here in Sandisfield three years ago, it's always worth seeing again.

The stage doesn't get more American than "Our Town," and our friends and neighbors are taking it to England where the forebears of Sandisfield mostly came from. It was a gift to be invited, and it is a gift to be given. ♡

It's expensive to get to Cornwall and back. While it is anticipated that much of the costs of air fare and boarding will be paid for by ticket sales at the seven performances, donations have certainly helped, particularly with fund-raising events like last fall's "Country Treasures" yard sale. The Sandisfield Cultural Council has added to the pot, and the Arts Center has chipped in with some of the proceeds from the Players' earlier performances.

Sandisfield Historical Society



Will We Have to Close Our Doors?

By John Kuzmecz, President

In 1967, a group of 15 residents met at Town Hall to organize the Sandisfield Historical Society. They included long-time residents and newcomers: Lamberts, Smiths, Stokes, Beckers, and at least one member of one of Sandisfield's original families, Emily Clark Vogellus.

Persus Stoke, Acting Secretary, noted that Helen Porter had donated \$133 toward the forming of a historical society, money that had been collected at something called the "Silver Tea" held in connection with the town's bicentennial. She also noted that "Mrs. Sauerwein made available the use of a

duplicating machine." Future projects and activities for the society were explored, such as possibility of recording oral histories, house tours, and securing a property for storage and display of materials that might be acquired.

There was interest in compiling "an economic history of the various foreign-born groups who came to Sandisfield in the 19th century."

Good ideas can take a long time. Nearly 50 years later, a group of current residents are compiling just that kind of history of Sandisfield's Jewish farmers and settlers.

Over a generation has passed, and we are still going. But for how long?

I write this article with no small amount of concern that the Historical Society may have to close its doors later this year.

We need to find someone willing to serve as president. I will not be able to serve after my term is over in August. And there seems to be no one in our core handful of members who will or can take this over.

Our members want it known that they will fully help and support a new person or persons willing to step into the role. The president's spot might be the type of job that two individuals could do. Perhaps a couple or two friends would be willing to share responsibility.

We need people to step forward and get involved well ahead of elections, if we are to pass along the rich tradition of this Society. New ideas and new directions are welcome. Call me at 258-4906.

In the interim, we will seek to preserve the material we have at the Society, and we will continue with fairs on July 2 and October 8 which help to pay maintenance and other bills.

Our May meeting is cancelled due to a conflict with Town Meeting the same day. Regular monthly meetings will resume June 11 at 11 a.m. Potluck lunch to follow.

I hope to see more of you there, and that someone will step up to help move the Historical Society into the future. ♡

Hollywood Right Here

A FILM CREW COMING TO TOWN

By Bogart Muller

A few weeks ago when my gardening crew was cleaning up around Old Town Hall I noticed a row of Mercedes parked at the former Silverbrook Café. I hoped that among them was a potential buyer for the property which has been for sale for a year or so. If there was, judging by the cars they rode in on, it would be an upscale buyer.

Pretty soon, people in nice clothes (“I see by your outfit that you’re not from here”) walked toward me. They solved the mystery. They were going to make a movie and the setting would be the Silverbrook.

Did I happen to know a famous actress, Karen Allen, who would be directing the film? Who? I know Karen Allen. I plow snow in her driveway every winter. But I never knew she was an actress, certainly not the actress from “Raiders of the Lost Ark,” “Scrooged,” “Animal House,” and “The Perfect Storm.”

But she was that Karen Allen and she was indeed directing a film to be set at the Silverbrook. Shooting would be early- to mid-June.

Karen picked Sandisfield for the film, primarily because of the Silverbrook. In an email, she told me, “I saw it years ago while driving along Rt. 57 and thought it would be the ideal setting for this story.”

The film is based on Carson McCuller’s short story, “A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud.” Karen wrote, “I read Carson McCuller’s work when I was in my early 20s and when I read this story it affected me greatly and has stayed with me all these years. It is a story about a young boy and an older man who meet by chance on a rainy morning at a bar-café in



Karen Allen will direct the film.


1947. They have a conversation about the nature of love and loss and the wisdom of experience and understanding.”

The age and look of the Silverbrook makes it an ideal set for the film, especially with its proximity to the road. The place will be getting a facelift and some rehabbing 1947-style, as well as electricity and gas turned back on.

With Karen directing, Jeff DeMunn (currently on the TV show “Billions”) will star, along with James McMenamin (now in Netflix’s “Orange is the New Black.”) A 12-year-old actor from Housatonic will play the young boy in the film. Other local actors will play customers in the background.


During the filming, Peter Baiamonte and Midori Nakamura, long-time friends of Karen’s, will put up some of the actors and crew at their home in Sandisfield Center. Peter will serve as official photographer for the film shoot.

Do you have a car from the late-’30s to pre-1947?

The film crew is looking for props for the film and maybe you can help. They need vintage cars from the era and a bicycle from the early ‘40s. If you have anything like that parked in the garage and wouldn’t mind seeing it in the movies, let the crew know at www.atreearockacloudthefilm.com or stop in at the Silverbrook when you see the rehab crew starting to work mid-May. Knock on the door of the Silverbrook. Maybe Harrison Ford or George Clooney will answer it. 

Readers with internet access (those without access can use the Library’s computer) can read the Carson McCuller’s story, “A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud” at karchung/A_Tree.pdf. Or ask for her Collected Stories at the Library’s inter-library loan desk.





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**SAT, MAY 21 / 10AM -
(DONATION)**

**SANDISFIELD'S HISTORICALLY
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Discussion led by local historian Ronald Bernard, and consultant to the Sandisfield Historical Commission, Bonnie Parsons

**SAT, MAY 21 / 6PM \$75
SPRING DINNER &
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Cocktails at 6, followed by a 3-course dinner and a lively auction of goods and services!
Advance ticket purchase required - order online by May 7th.

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



Local Houses Eligible for National Register Listing

By Ron Bernard

The 3-year task of surveying Sandisfield's historic buildings has been completed and filed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

In the opinion of Bonnie Parsons, the state-accredited architectural consultant working with the Sandisfield Historical Commission, about a hundred of our town's houses and structures qualify for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The survey was required as the first step in the application process for listings on the register.

The NRHP also requires public sessions to inform owners and anyone interested.

The first public information session will be held at the Sandisfield Arts Center, May 21, at 10 a.m., where Ms. Parsons and I will explain what is involved and expected from the community or individual owners and answer questions. We will also explain the difference between individual historic properties and district historic properties.

Who should attend? Owners of properties that could be individually eligible for the National Register should definitely attend. Along with owners of older homes and anyone interested in Sandisfield history or early American architectural styles.

A copy of the Sandisfield survey can be reviewed at the Town Clerk's office.

All towns in the Commonwealth are expected to

keep track of their "inventory" of architecturally significant assets, particularly buildings and cemeteries. Sandisfield last completed its inventory in 1979. The current survey brings us up to date, at least for the houses of which there are many of importance in town.

NRHP Application Process




A current survey is also required as the first step in the application process for listings on the NRHP. The MHC certifies applications from Commonwealth towns.

A listing on the Register is prestigious but strictly honorary. Owners are neither obligated nor restricted in any way, with a few rare exceptions.

While most of our eligible properties are part of seven distinct historic districts, 17 individual houses have been deemed eligible for listing, primarily because of their architectural integrity.

Usually individual listings also have substantial historical importance to the town's heritage, for example surviving school houses and church buildings. Sandisfield already has three such listings: the New Boston Inn, the Montville Baptist Church (now home of the Arts Center) and the c.1799 Philomena Sage House in South Sandisfield.

The Sandisfield Historical Commission will inform owners of eligible homes by US mail and email where possible.

Anyone with questions may contact me at home at 413-269-0012 or cell 860-324-3669, or by e-mail at ronbernard@aol.com. 


Free Landowner Workshop

SATURDAY, MAY 7, 10 A.M.-NOON

The workshop, "Your Land, Your Community," will provide information about land stewardship and conservation in Sandisfield. Sponsored by the New England Forestry Foundation, the program will be held at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road.

The session is designed to help landowners achieve their goals for their property while benefiting the regional community. Topics will include forest management, conservation easements, wildlife habitat management, and the availability of funding and tax incentives for landowners.

Workshop leaders will be Betsy Cook, Land Protection Manager for the NEFF; Laura Marx, Forest Ecologist with The Nature Conservancy; and Tom Ryan, Service Forester for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

RSVP to Betsy Cook by phone at 978-952-6856, ext. 106 or email at bcook@newenglandforestry.org. 

The View After One Year

CHANGES NOT EASY

By *Brigitte Ruthman*



*Alice Boyd at home.
Photo: Brigitte Ruthman*

Change does not come easy in a small town.

Steeped in history as a tough, stark, Norman Rockwell hill town built on Yankee ingenuity and thrift, Sandisfield is now struggling for its life against the rising cost of everything from aging buildings and bridges that have gone undermaintained for years to negotiated wage contracts it can't reign in.

About the only thing that didn't loom financially larger this past, relatively tame winter was snow removal.

Costs have risen 62 percent

over the past 10 years, now a roughly \$3 million budget footed by a mostly residential tax base that is hardly growing.

Enter Alice Boyd, chairman of the Board of Selectmen during the past year who has proposed and delivered sweeping changes to overhaul the way town offices and the highway department are structured, and brought her career experience as a grant writer to the table as a new "town father."

Together with fellow Selectmen Jeff Gray and John Skrip, Boyd has faced intimidating town obligations: maintaining 90 miles of roads, many of them dirt; repairing infrastructure and redefining the nuts and bolts of a master plan that moves toward a sharing of services; adding technology to tax collection; and tapping income from nontraditional sources.

"We have to lower costs," Boyd said recently in her renovated cottage that overlooks a shallow pond. The pond is quintessential Sandisfield with geese and ducks, and an occasional deer and moose, but reminds Boyd of the Cape Cod shoreline she and her husband Paul left years ago to move here full-time.

Part of the effort of lowering costs is to educate without alienating some in town who resist change and the challenge of taking on an education budget that includes a \$56,000 increase this year.

Boyd wants to cut the highway department from five to four workers, and have the option of hiring laborers outside of a union contract. She wants to assign them additional tasks, including bridge maintenance not included in their job descriptions.

The proposed hiring of a town accountant is on the ballot for the Town Meeting in May. The post is needed, Boyd explained, to eliminate "audit fraud alerts" raised by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and the town's independent auditor eight years ago. The next audit is scheduled for July.

Delivering Broadband Internet, as essential now to commerce as roads, is a priority for brick and mortar businesses that have bypassed the town, and home-based businesses that need it to compete.

Boyd, who traces her roots to Lee, Mass., is drawing from her business skills. Educated at Endicott, Radcliffe, and Skidmore Colleges and the University

of Massachusetts, she and her husband raised two children on Cape Cod, where she formed Bailey Boyd Associates. The firm currently administers projects in 17 towns who receive \$5 million in annual grants for aging infrastructure, community projects, affordable housing, and child care.

The FY2017 budget is down \$197,908 from \$3.34 million to \$3.14 million. The bottom line reflects the income already delivered by the 20-30 hours Boyd spends weekly on funding and management – all for a Selectman's \$4,000 annual salary.


The budget includes a Small Town Rural Assistance Program \$991,650 grant to repair the Rugg Bridge on Sandisfield Road, the equivalent value of \$1,800 per taxpayer.

Under a Forestry Stewardship Grant, the income from logging will maintain Yanner Park. Grants are also being sought to repair Town Hall, the town's Senior Center, a new playground, and affordable housing projects.

Another \$1 million is being sought as part of a community benefits agreement from Kinder Morgan, the builders of a gas pipeline that might be authorized over the objections of local residents. An Energy Aggregation Project promises to save residents and the town on the cost of electricity.

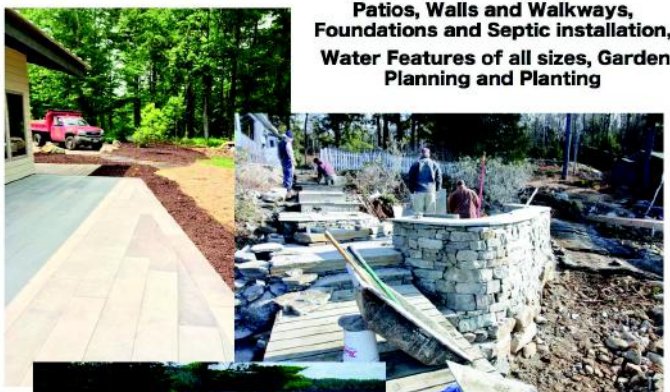
Without change, some residents could be paying more in taxes than mortgages within a few years.

"I have seen other towns go through this," said Boyd, who is matter of fact about the challenges that must be met while realizing the rifts it causes. Walking into Town Hall where some changes are resisted before they are embraced isn't always easy.

"It's painful and difficult," Boyd said, "but it comes out better. Municipal financing is changing, and we haven't kept up." 



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Drinking While Driving in Sandisfield

By A Resident

I grew up in Sandisfield and now own a home and have a family in my hometown. I love it here. My kids have fresh air and good schools and everything else that has made this area so appealing. And for the most part they are safe in our community.

But for many, many years something has been troubling me.

My road is fairly quiet – as most roads are here – and we walk and ride our bikes almost daily. My concern is that there are several inhabitants along these roads that drive drunk.

Being a native I've seen my fair share of stumbling, slurred speech and reckless driving. But these are also native residents and their activities are familiar to many besides myself.

I fear for the safety of my family knowing these cars pass my house several times a day. But who do I call? I'm afraid a call to the local police may fall on deaf ears. I've heard tales of local authorities pulling drunken drivers out of snow banks with no ramifications.

It's very unsettling and honestly it needs to stop. But who am I? Not a lawyer, not a police officer, not a relative. Just a person who has picked up too many empty vodka bottles in my own backyard. 🍷



Within a one-mile walk along only one side of West Street, near West Lake, the author reported that twenty 2-litre bottles of vodka were picked up. "That does not include the pints," the author wrote. "It was sickening. Someone drinking that much alcohol in their cars and driving past all our houses."

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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. The Times does not accept Out on a Limb contributions submitted anonymously, but if the author identifies him or herself to the editor and asks not to be named in the article we may agree to withhold the author's name on a case-by-case basis.

Send to Editor, Sandisfield Times, P.O. Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255 or by email to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org.

Sandisfield Historical Commission



By Ron Bernard

Historical Markers to Honor Veterans of Early Wars

There are many of your honored Revolutionary soldiers buried in [Sandisfield] with no markers to designate them as veterans.

– Elizur Yale Smith, 1948

Historian Elizur Smith wrote those words in *Sandisfield: An Intimate History and Some Comments*, his history of this town which the Historical Commission published for the first time in 2014.

Smith, a Lee native with deep roots in Sandisfield, was passionate about the need for proper respect and remembrance of our interred veterans. In 1932-33 while living on New Hartford Road he transcribed inscriptions from hundreds of gravestones in the five cemeteries which he later published.

Smith was disappointed that the graves of Sandisfield's soldiers, particularly for Revolutionary War veterans, were not marked. At that time he made several proposals to the Town but to no avail. He tried again in 1947-48 after the Sandisfield American Legion Post #456 was organized.

Elizur Smith died in 1950. Since then most veterans' graves have been marked although original stone inscriptions may be faded or are illegible.

Historical Commission and Cemeteries Committee member, Kathie Burrows decided that more needed to be done. In 2014, she persuaded the Commission to sponsor a veterans' historical marker project which the Select Board approved.

This original-research challenge was long and daunting. Cemetery records from those periods are unavailable or not useful. So Kathie consulted secondary sources like genealogical histories, US War Department archives, US Census records, Massachusetts militia and regimental records, and Smith's invaluable compendium.

Soldiers' name, rank, and unit, if available, were compiled for those who served in the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War and who are known to be buried in town cemeteries. Late last year the Commission signed off and five permanent historical markers were designed and fabricated in cast aluminum.



| NEW BOSTON CEMETERY | | | | | |
|---|------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| IN HONOR OF ALL VETERANS WHO SERVED THIS NATION | | | | | |
| KNOWN VETERANS BURIED HERE WHO SERVED IN | | | | | |
| THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, THE WAR OF 1812 OR THE CIVIL WAR | | | | | |
| SECTION I | | | SECTION II | | |
| SOLDIER | RANK | UNIT | SOLDIER | RANK | UNIT |
| THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR (1776-1780) | | | THE WAR OF 1812 | | |
| Caleb, Burr (1765-1847) | | | Abbey, Henry C. (1791-1867) | Captain | New York |
| THE WAR OF 1812 | | | THE CIVIL WAR (1860-1865) | | |
| Widcor, Josiah (1785-1859) | Brig. Gen. | Mass Militia | Bekler, Alfred D. (1841-1872) | Private | Co. H, 49 th Mass |
| THE CIVIL WAR (1860-1865) | | | Case, Nelson M. (1840-1863) | Corporal | Co. H, 49 th Mass |
| Burdman, Henry (1816-1877) | Major | Cann 1 st Cavalry | (Killed At New Orleans) | | |
| Deland, Edmund C. (1816-1893) | Colonel | Co. I, 49 th Mass | Chandler, William (1838-1915) | | Co. C, 22 nd Mass |
| Dowl, Henry M. (1834-1864) | Private | Co. B, 32 nd Mass | Cowles, Henry W. (c.1843-?) | Corporal | Co. B, 37 th Infantry |
| (Killed At Walkers, Virginia) | | | Deming, Henry T. (1821-1910) | | Co. H, 49 th Mass |
| Gorman, Michael (c.1820-?) | Private | Co. B, 49 th Mass | Deming, Burton D. (1831-1863) | Lieutenant | Co. H, 49 th Mass |
| Hamilton, Chester E. (1846-1916) | Private | Co. D, 20 th V.R.C. | (Killed At Port Hudson, Louisiana) | | |
| Ingram, Edward R. (1821-1890) | Private | Co. D, 2 nd Infantry | Gafoel, Lorain S. | | Co. H, 37 th Mass |
| King, William J. (c.1821-1903) | Private | Co. C, 12 th Regiment | Norlown, John A. (1843-1921) | Private | Co. H, 49 th Mass |
| Lafogg, Nelson S. (c.1838-1881) | Private | Co. C, 52 nd Regiment | Richard, James M. | | Co. H, 49 th Mass |
| Parsons, Edwin L. (1842-1862) | Private | Co. B, 37 th Mass | Spring, John H. (1835-1912) | | |
| Phelps, Edgar N. (1843-1863) | Private | | Whitlsey, James | | Co. H, 2 nd Conn |
| (Killed At Sully's Creek, Virginia) | | | Williams, Burr L. (1836-1916) | | Co. D, 57 th Mass |
| Proper, Lafayette (c.1826-1893) | | Co. LG, 1 st Cavalry | Williams, Charles K. (1841-1905) | 1 st Sergeant | Co. D, 57 th Mass |
| Ryder, Hiram A. (1834-1907) | | Co. E, 36 th Mass | Wilcox, Joseph B. (c.1839-1863) | Ortl. Sergeant | Co. H, 49 th Mass |
| Smith, Ephraim B. (1836-1863) | | Co. H, 49 th Mass | (Killed At Port Hudson, Louisiana) | | |
| (Killed On Murrells' Chert At Mississippi River) | | | Wood, Harken P. (1844-1863) | Private | Co. E, 49 th Mass |
| Titus, Sylvester (1821-1883) | Private | Co. C, 13 th Conn | | | |

We may never account for all the veterans buried in Sandisfield from our major early conflicts, but at least now each cemetery will prominently display names of those who are known. Mr. Smith would be glad to know that thanks to Kathie's determination the service of Sandisfield's patriots will be properly recognized.

The Sandisfield Highway Department and the Cemeteries Committee will arrange installation in time for Memorial Day services this year at the New Boston Cemetery, and possibly at the Center, Beech Plain, Roberts Road, and South Sandisfield cemeteries. Please attend the traditional memorial ceremony on Sunday, May 29. And when you can, please stop by the other burying grounds to pay respects to our own soldier heroes.

Thanks to Kathie Burrows and the Cemeteries Committee, to designer Tina Sotis, and to the Ghi Sign company of Canaan, Conn., for excellent work and services.

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ELECTION 2016 SELECTBOARD ELECTIONS

ALICE BOYD



Who I Am

For over 25 years I've worked with cities and towns helping them secure grants, manage projects, and move their initiatives forward.

Over the past twelve months as a member of the Select Board I've been able to spend over 20-hours each week working for you and completing projects that will improve services here in Sandisfield.

My experience as a public official and participation on over a dozen non-profit boards has helped me understand how to get things done. My relationships with state and federal officials have been helpful in gaining access to decision-makers. And my love of our town has motivated me to work hard and address some difficult issues.

Serving as a Selectman is not easy, and it cannot be done effectively in a few hours each week. I have been and remain committed to putting in the time to attend day and night meetings, drive to Boston to knock on statehouse doors, and do the work that will move our town forward.

Representing you will continue to be my privilege and priority as we work together to reign in taxes and improve the quality of life for all residents.

Why I Am Running

One year ago I ran for Selectman because I was confident that I could use my skills as a municipal consultant and grant writer to help our town. I promised to do three things: (1) bring in grants, (2) keep taxes down, and (3) plan for the future. I have delivered on each of these promises.

We've been awarded approximately \$1 million in grants with more to come. Our FY2017 budget is lower, keeping taxes steady. The draft of the Master Plan is far along in planning for the town's future

We've advanced many important initiatives including electric aggregation that will benefit all residents, a Community Compact opening the door for more grants and state-funded services, a restructuring of our financial services to insure transparency and accountability, and many other important projects.

Our tax base cannot easily support the needs of our town so it is critical that we bring in additional sources of revenue, including grants. I will continue to be productive in this area.

My goal is to help keep our town an affordable, productive, and better place to live. And, most importantly, to keep taxes down. 🇺🇸

BETHANY PERRY



Who I Am

I am Bethany Riiska Perry.

I started my banking career in 1991 and have loved it ever since. Since I am a Berkshire Bank Branch Officer of three South County locations managing 20 individuals, I am a seasoned leader.

Banking has taught me how to hire the right people and how to budget each branch like it's a town or household with little tolerance for overspending. I believe in making decisions with integrity, honesty, and experience.

I first moved to my family's farm on New Hartford Road with my now husband in the fall of 2000. After we got married we built our house across from the farm to start our life forever here in Sandisfield.

While I was pregnant with our first child in 2004, I won as a write-in candidate for the Board of Assessors. As the new kid on the block, I had a lot to learn about the town, politics itself, people, and what helps and or harms a small town like ours.

Since I have worked for the town for over 11 years, I know how vital it is for the taxpayers to always be aware of what is really happening and educated on how it will affect them directly.

As the youngest of six children, standing up for what I believe in comes naturally to me. Being a mother of three, the community's future is one of my biggest concerns.

I served on the Sandisfield Then and Now Committee and am currently a member of the Sandisfield Scholarship and Recreation Committees.

I care about Sandisfield and hope all of you can come out to vote and show your support.

Why I Am Running

There are many reasons why I am running for the Board of Selectman this year.


Since I have been an Assessor for this town, I have learned a lot about the town's finances. I have seen the mistakes that have been made in the past and the present that put the town at risk. As being part of the financial sector of this town, it is obvious we need to be conscious of the entire town's status at all times.

I feel it is important to make sure the taxpayers and voters in the town are fully aware of what is happening.

I am very outspoken but in an honest and loyal way. I have no hidden or personal agendas for being Selectman.


I base my decisions and votes for what would benefit the town and its people.

I have strong deep roots in this town and plan on being here even longer. It is extremely important for me to make sure this town is financially stable and its leaders are crystal clear, honest, and always working within the town's best interest.

I want to make Sandisfield a better place for the families that live here by being a voice of reason and reliability. 

Who Else Is Running and For What

The result of the Town Caucus on April 4 was that there are two candidates for one 3-year spot on the Select Board: Alice Boyd and Bethany Perry. Those seeking to run for other elected positions either filled out nomination papers or were nominated at the caucus. There is only one candidate running for each position and all are incumbents, except for Lisa Leavenworth who is running for the office of Tax Collector recently vacated by her mother-in-law, Edna Leavenworth.

The Times contacted the State Ethics Commission regarding the fact that Bethany Perry is an incumbent running for another term as Assessor as well as for a position on the Select Board. We asked if there was a conflict of interest issue and there is not. Since the candidate is running for elected positions as opposed to seeking a position as a municipal employee one position will not influence compensation, thus no conflict. 

Moderator (1 year):
Jean Atwater-Williams, incumbent

Tax Collector (3 years):
Lisa A. Leavenworth

Auditor (1 year):
Ralph Morrison, incumbent

Board of Assessors (3 years):
Bethany Perry, incumbent

School Committee (3 years):
John Skrip, incumbent

Board of Health (3 years):
Kim Spring, incumbent

Planning Board (5 years):
Robert O'Brien, Jr., incumbent

Library Trustee (5 years):
Kathie Burrows, incumbent.



OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



Katrina Campetti, daughter of Richard and Robin Campetti, was presented with a silver key by the Boston Globe for winning Second Place in the 2016 Scholastics Art and Writing Award conducted by the School of Fine Arts in Boston. Katrina was cited for "Excellence in Writing" for her short story, "What Lurks in Dark Halls." There were 2,500 competitors in her category.



The Berkshire Jewish Voice for April 3-May 14 featured an article by **Flora Parisky** on Sandisfield's Jewish farmers and the transformation of their synagogue to the Sandisfield Arts Center.



The same issue of the Voice featured, as well, Sandisfield's When Pigs Fly Farm and the challenges and hard work owners **Andy and Sandra Snyder** confronted over the last 13 years building their successful farm and farmstand.

Town Resident Wins Championship

In a remarkable feat, after taking part in only four American Kennel Club shows, Tobey Penn won the AKC Club Championship at the Raleigh, NC, dog show in late March.

As reported in the Times in January, Tobey, a 3-year-old Old English sheepdog who lives on Hammertown Road in Beech Plain, needed to earn six more points to reach the magic number of fifteen points for his Championship. A dog is judged on conformation – how close they are to the standard of the breed. Tobey got more than the six points.

Pictured here, Tobey is congratulated by owner/guardian Barbara Penn's nephew-in-law, Tim Carroll, and daughters Olivia and Charlotte.

Congratulations, Tobey. Sandisfield is proud of you. 



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Article 97/Pipeline Showdown

Cont'd from p.1

Was it hubris? Arrogance? Did the company expect landowners and this small town to roll over? Did they underestimate the impact of relentless state-wide grassroots opposition and the political support it would get all the way to the State Attorney General's office?

Were they contemptuous of the 1972 State Constitutional Article 97 that permanently protects Spectacle Pond conservation land because they expected a rubber-stamped FERC permit to "preempt everything?" Did they think their \$500/hour lawyers could recruit out-of-county lackeys in the State House to ram through a waiver to the law?

By January there was a hint of trouble. Since tree cutting in the right-of-way might not happen before March 31, the fish and wildlife agency's deadline to prevent harm to nesting birds and endangered bats, the company insisted that an extension to May 1 be granted or it would suffer "irreparable harm." Instead, the Massachusetts Attorney General filed a motion to block tree cutting because several critical permits were still missing.

Then TGP's troubles got worse.

On April 15 TGP argued to Berkshire Superior Court Judge John Agnostini that because they had a FERC permit, they could seize Otis state forest land by eminent domain. The company's lead attorney said, "It is automatic" because the gas act trumps state law. A well-prepared Assistant AG, Mathew Ireland, took 45 minutes to counter-argue that the US Supreme Court in 1991 allowed for an exception because the obligation of a state to protect the welfare of its citizens was more important in this kind of situation. Moreover, he said, the legislature has not ruled on a waiver for Article 97 and, because it is in session until July, still could.



Are we heading for the U.S. Supreme Court?

Judge Agnostini acknowledged what legal experts were saying: that if the legislature does not take up a waiver bill or if it votes a bill down (a "super majority" of a 2/3 vote of approval by both houses is required), this case would have to move up the legal system.


In fact, the judge said that regardless of his decision to grant or refuse the injunction sought by the company, the losing party will appeal to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. He turned to the TGP team and said, "Don't expect a quick decision from them."

But he promised a speedy ruling about the more narrow issue before him. On April 22 the parties were told that the judge would have a decision "within 10 days to 2 weeks."

As The Times goes to press, the possibility is growing that this case may eventually wind up before the US Supreme Court as a major, perhaps unprecedented, test of federal supremacy vs.

states' rights. If it does, Sandisfield will make national headline news. Actually, we already have: On April 19, the national news service, *The Huffington Post* published this story under the headline: "The Supremacy Clause and the Pipeline: Case May Go To SCOTUS."

Then, on April 21, in a stunning development, Kinder Morgan announced that it was suspending all work on its ambitious "Northeast Energy Direct" project, a proposed new pipeline, hundreds of miles long from New York State through northern Massachusetts and New Hampshire. They cited weak demand and financial reasons for the decision. Wall Street analysts were told that the company would "write off" \$100 million in sunk costs. It is unclear if this decision will affect the company's intentions to pursue the Sandisfield expansion.

Decisions are being made even as we print this story. The final results can only be referred to as "to be continued." 

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*April. Just ridiculous.
Photo: Ron Bernard*

WINTER 2015-2016 SNOWFALL

AS ESTIMATED FROM A
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WEATHER STATION

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| DECEMBER 2015 | 1" |
| JANUARY | 5" |
| FEBRUARY | 17" |
| MARCH | 1" |
| APRIL 3 | 3.5" |
| APRIL 4 | 5" |
| TOTAL SEASON | 32.5" |

LOW TEMPERATURES IN APRIL

| | |
|---------|-------|
| APRIL 5 | 9 F. |
| APRIL 6 | 10 F. |

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Kestrels, Come Back, Come Back

By Margaret O'Clair

Last winter I read an article about the decline in the American Kestrel population here in the northeast. The reason: the usual suspect, loss of habitat. In this case the loss of open space and the reforestation of farm land.

The Kestrel, also called the Sparrow Hawk, is the smallest of the Kestrel family and was once commonly seen hovering in midair over hayfields before diving onto its prey, usually large insects or meadow mice.


A cavity nester, Kestrels make use of hollows in trees or recycle woodpecker nests. The article said the Kestrel would also nest in man-made boxes if they were correctly built and sighted. This led me to think of several properties in town that still maintain hay fields which would be ideal for nest boxes.

I approached Steve Kopiec who has made Bluebird boxes for me and Steve was very enthusiastic about the project. After quite a bit of internet research Steve figured out what Kestrels were looking for and built four beautiful boxes.

The Cemetery Committee gave us permission to put up one of the boxes in the Sandisfield cemetery in the open field, away from the headstones. The other three are on private property.

We may have left it a little late for a nesting pair to find out cavity boxes this year. But we are operating under the Field of Dreams theory – "Build it and they will come."

At press time, Margaret sent an email that read::

"Steve just phoned from the cemetery, saw a Kestrel sitting on the box!!!" 



Hope springs eternal. Steve Kopiec installing a home-made birdhouse built to Kestrels' specifications.

Photo: Susie Crofut

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The Librarian's Corner

By Terry Spohnholz

In the nonstop tsunami of global information, librarians provide us with floaties and teach us to swim.

—Linton Weeks

Rumor has it summer is coming soon to the Berkshires. Time to play in the garden and dream of summer flowers, hike in the woods, take a kayak or bike ride or, better yet, simply bask in the sunshine with a pile of books and contemplate doing all those things.

HAPPENINGS AT THE LIBRARY

Card Making

It was so much fun we are doing it again! Join us on May 7 and get creative. Call the library for details. Better yet, come visit and ask in person.

Art and Crafts in the Library

Looking for children of all ages to celebrate the coming of summer with fun activities and a story-telling on May 21 from 12:30-2:00 p.m. Join Amy, Terry, and Finn the dragon for some silliness.

Movie Night

Show time 7 p.m. on Wednesday May 11. No, we don't know what the movie will be ... yet. But it will be family approved and recent. So bring your popcorn, candy, and drinks.

And Back to the Future

EBOOKS

We are edging closer to Ebook access. Stay tuned as we do some fine-tuning and hopefully before summer you can open the doors to a vast kingdom of ebooks.

INFO MANIA

The Library is working on putting together resources on hiking trails, bike trails, and the historical and cultural activities in the area. This project is in its infancy and anyone with ideas or thoughts to help this along please share with us.

Passes

Don't forget we have passes to the Clark Museum, State Parks, and discount coupons to the Connecticut Science Center in Hartford.

Summer Reading Program

We will kick off the summer reading program on Saturday, July 9 with Ed the Wizard (magical and fun) followed by an ice cream social.

NEW BOOKS

MURDER, THRILLS, AND MYSTERY –

Blood Orange, Susan Wittig Albert

Darkness, Karen Robards

The Widow, Fiona Barton

Cometh the Hour, Jeffrey Archer

Family Jewels, Stuart Woods

Theory of Death, Faye Kellerman

Septimania, Jonathan Levi

ROMANTIC COMEDY

Miller's Valley, Anna Quinlen

NON-FICTION

Pretty Jane and the Viper of Kidbrooke Lane

FAVORITE AUTHORS

Blue, Danielle Steel

NEW AND INTERESTING

The Past, Tessa Hadley

The Summer Before the War, Helen Simonson

So drink in the sunshine and toast life. It's all good.

Oops!

Last month, the caption for the photo with The Librarian's Corner misidentified the young lady reading to local children. We wrote that the lady was Librarian Theresa Spohnholz. Not so. The young lady was Amy Carriveau of the Post Office. Here we offer, with apologies, the real Amy and the real Terry.

— Bill Price, Editor



Terry



Amy

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Newborn Bernie Sanders-field.

Bernie was born 3:30 a.m. on April 17. He's ¼ Guernsey, ¼ Jersey: entirely English. A bull calf, Bernie needed to be pulled because Puppy, his mother, isn't quite big enough to birth the boys and this was her first. He was wobbly at first, but in a few hours was romping around, trying his darndest to get attached as someone's pet. Mother is doing fine. She is a star.

*Brigitte Ruthman, Joshua's Farm
Dodd Road*



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NATIVE AMERICANS IN SANDISFIELD

Since you brought up the subject of Native Americans, last month we came back from New Mexico and became acquainted with the history of the Pueblo Nation.

After 100 years of being enslaved and forced to give up their traditional ways by Spanish Conquistadors, the Pueblos revolted in 1680 in what is known locally as the first American Revolution. For twelve years, they remained free until once again they were reconquered by the Spanish. In 1844, their territory changed hands again, during the Mexican-American War. Despite attempts to assimilate the Pueblos to American culture, they managed to maintain their traditions, language, culture, and religion.

Unfortunately, eastern Native Americans have not fared as well. According to Ron Bernard's book *Sandisfield Then and Now*, colonial Sandisfield, a "howling wilderness," was such an inhospitable place that not even Native Americans settled here. Perhaps if they were still around, we could have learned from them.

Larry Dwyer
West Road

Editor's Note: Larry Dwyer's letter refers to Simon Winchester's "Moreover" column last month. Simon suggested that Sandisfield follow the lead of cities in New Zealand and Australia by briefly acknowledging "the original settlers of this land" at the beginning of public meetings. If that were done here, Simon wrote, it would serve "as a reminder, a courtesy, a small symbolic repayment of a long unsettled debt" to the Indians who had been on this land for centuries.

Alice Boyd of the Select Board and Marcella Smith of the Sandisfield Arts Center have both expressed interest in developing an acknowledgement of that kind.



The Stone Bridge Farm Fox

In June 2014 George Wheeler and Michele Marincola sent a photo of fox kits that were living under their huge barn at Stone Bridge Farm. In April this year a grown fox visited, maybe one of those kits all grown up, a survivor now of a couple Sandisfield winters and the rifle sites of Sandisfield chicken farmers.



Looking for Love

This Tom Turkey spotted a potential Lady Fair on Cold Spring Road in April. Whether his display of feathers won her over we don't know. Ron Bernard and Jean Atwater-Williams, after taking the photo, closed the curtains.

NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro. Please send notices for Now Hear This! to calendar@sandisfieldtimes.org.

MAY EVENTS

Qi Gong Classes on Mondays, from 11:00 a.m. until noon at the Senior Center, basement of the Town Hall Annex on Route 57. Suggested donation \$2.

Line Dancing Classes on Thursdays, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. (beginners) and 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. (more advanced) at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Join in anytime. Suggested donation \$2.

Meet the Candidates on Wednesday, May 4, at 11:00 a.m. at the Senior Center, basement of the Town Hall Annex on Route 57. Luncheon follows.

Conservation Workshop: Your Land, Your Community on Saturday, May 7, from 10:00 a.m. until noon at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. The workshop is designed for landowners interested in learning more about land stewardship and conservation options. The event is sponsored by the New England Forestry Foundation and The Nature Conservancy.

Public Info Sessions on Sandisfield Ballot Questions & Budget on Saturday, May 7, at 10:00 a.m. and Tuesday, May 10, at 7:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Do you want to learn more about the two ballot questions regarding appointing versus electing a Town Treasurer and Tax Collector? Or preview the FY17 town budget and ask questions before the Town Meeting? The Selectmen are sponsoring the events. Please attend.

Writing Out Loud: A Performance-Based Revision Workshop presented by the Berkshire Festival of Women Writers on Saturday, May 7, at 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. Please bring one page of writing to read out loud. \$10.

Church service on Sunday, May 8 at 10 a.m., at the New Boston Congregational Church, 4 Sandisfield Road, Rt 57.

Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, May 14, at 10:00 a.m. at Fire Station #2 on Route 57.

Town Election on Monday, May 16, from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road.

Sandisfield's Historically Significant Homes on Saturday, May 21, at 10:00 a.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. Ron Bernard and Bonnie Parsons will review the official survey of the town's architecturally and historically significant assets. Donations requested.

Spring Dinner & Benefit Auction on Saturday, May 21, at 6:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road. The evening begins with

cocktails at 6, followed by a three-course dinner, wine, and an auction with Mary Anne Grammer and Linda Mironti as guest auctioneers. Advance ticket purchase required by May 17 at www.sandisfieldartscenter.org. \$75.

MAY EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Colonial Encampment on Saturday and Sunday, May 21-22, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Farmington River School, 555 N. Main Road, Otis. Free, sponsored by Otis and Sandisfield Cultural Councils. Ye Olde Towne Lebanon Militia, one of the one of the largest Revolutionary War re-enactor groups in the Northeast, will be helped by 5th-grade apprentices. Military demonstrations, musket firings, cooking demonstrations, games for kids. Much more. Special event: Saturday night, 8 p.m., candlelight tour.

Tag Sale on Saturday, May 28, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Otis Ridge Parking Lot on Route 23. Space rental is \$10 for Otis residents and \$15 for non-residents. Call 413-269-4008 for more information.

May Art Exhibit, Otis Library & Museum, 48 N. Main Road at the Town Square. Alice Gage will exhibit her artwork during the month of May. She paints in pastels, oils, and watercolors.

Otis Library Summer Crafts & Country Fair. Call for artists, craftsmen, and other non-food vendors. The fair will be held on Saturday, July 9, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on the lawn in front of the Otis Town Hall. The fair features more than 50 quality vendors from throughout the Northeast. Space is available on a first-come, first-served basis and sells out fast. The cost is \$40 before June 1 and \$45 afterward, if space remains. Send payment, email address, phone, and product information to The Otis Library, 48 N. Main Street, Otis, MA 01253. Call 413-269-0109 for more information.

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.

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

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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.

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