

# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

*Tribunus*



*Plebis*

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

*Volume VII, Number 11a*

*March 2017*

## Four-Town Plan for Broadband

### STATE SENATOR HINDS OFFERS HELP

*By Tom Christopher*

In his first official visit to Sandisfield, newly minted State Senator Adam Hinds offered political help with the town's pursuit of broadband service.

This has been a long chase, with much hard work by local volunteers and repeated disappointments at the hands of state government. Currently, though, an innovative four-town plan seems to be bringing promise of possible success.

Most recently, the state government in Boston has advocated that small towns in Berkshire County take bids individually from broadband service providers that would install the systems at each town's own expense (with some state aid), potentially incurring a hook-up charge of thousands of dollars to each household or substantial borrowing by the town's government.

Over several months of discussion, representatives of Sandisfield, New Marlborough, Monterey, and Tolland have come up with a possible alternative.

Coming together at the suggestion of Sandisfield Selectman Alice Boyd, the four towns have agreed to integrate into a single larger market in order to use their combined clout to strike a better deal with broadband providers. In particular, their goal is to have the provider install the necessary hardware largely at the provider's expense, with supplementary funding coming from state grants. In this way, the towns could avoid the necessity of taking on debt.

At the February 3 meeting with Senator Hinds in Sandisfield, selectmen from three of the towns expressed the seriousness of their need. Tolland did not send a representative.

*Cont'd p.4*



## *Rest in Pieces*

*Pipeline protesters staged a mock funeral for Otis State Forest and Article 97 outside Berkshire Superior Court in Pittsfield in early February. For eulogy, see page 10.*

## Fiscal Stability in Sight?

### AFTER QUESTIONS, ALL ITEMS FINALLY APPROVED

*By Brigitte Ruthman*

With the town a hair's breadth from falling into state receivership over years of mishandled finances, voters at a packed Special Town Meeting February 21 agreed to restore money to depleted accounts, pay the IRS a reduced penalty fee, boost compensation to their town administrator, and buy the police department some needed software.

Even with the nearly \$80,000 in special agenda items approved, this draft fiscal year's budget is less, at this preliminary stage, than last year's, according to Select Board Chairman Alice Boyd. The town's once empty piggy bank now has better than \$600,000 in "free cash" and just over \$1 million in stabilization funds.

A little primer for those unfamiliar with Treasurer terms: "Free cash" is unspent money, or the remaining unrestricted funds after the books close for the fiscal year and is pivotal to securing a strong credit rating. "Stabilization funds" are rainy-day funds, or a kind of savings account.

The meeting, held at Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road, drew a standing-room crowd of 68 voters, plus some nonvoting observers. Some agenda items received six or seven "Nay" votes, while a couple voters abstained, but all items passed.

The \$35,000 check that will be sent to the IRS will satisfy debts accrued during years of financial mismanagement prior to the

*Cont'd p.3*

➔ **INSIDE** ➔

## **SPECIAL: BROADBAND**

OPPOSING DISCUSSION RE THE TOWN'S BROADBAND PLANS AND RESPONSE FROM SELECT BOARD CHAIR.

SEE PAGES 4-5.

# TOWN OF SANDISFIELD OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK

## OFFICES UP FOR ELECTION THIS YEAR

Office	Term	Currently held by
Moderator	1 year	Jean Atwater-Williams
Town Clerk	3 years	Dolores Harasyko
Selectmen	3 years	Jeffrey Gray
Auditor	1 year	Ralph Morrison
Board of Assessors	3 years	Teresa DellaGiustina
School Committee	3 years	Nick DellaGiustina
School Committee	1 year	Vacancy
Board of Health	1 year	Vacancy
Board of Health	3 years	Victor Hryckvich
Planning Board	5 years	Andrew Snyder
Library Trustee	5 years	Mary Turek
Constable	3 years	John Burrows
Constable	3 years	Nazario Sanchez

## SIGNED UP TO RUN, SO FAR

Listed in order of when candidates took out papers:

Town Clerk (3 years)	Dolores Harasyko
Board of Assessors (3 years)	Matt Sermini Teresa DellaGiustina
Board of Health (1 year)	Matt Sermini
Board of Health (3 years)	Victor Hryckvich
Constable (3 years)	John Burrows
School Committee (3 years)	Nick DellaGiustina
Board of Selectmen (3 years)	Mark Newman

## YEAR 2017

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 23	Last day to obtain nomination papers.
March 27	Last day to submit nomination papers.
April 5	Town Caucus – Old Town Hall 7:00 p.m.
April 10	Last day to object or withdraw nomination papers.
April 24	Last day to register to vote for the Annual Town Meeting and the Annual Town Election. Registration will be held at the Town Hall Annex from 2:00 to 4:00 and 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
May 13	Annual Town Meeting at the Fire Station #2, Route 57 at 10:00 a.m.
May 15	Annual Town Election Old Town Hall 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

# An Honor for Our Reporter

## BRIGITTE RUTHMAN NOMINATED FOR EXCELLENCE AWARD

By Bill Price

Reporter Brigitte Ruthman was nominated for an award of excellence by the New England Newspaper and Press Association (NENPA) for an investigative series she wrote last year for the Republican-American.


Brigitte's series examined the problem of drivers entering the wrong way on the Rt. 8 divided highway in Connecticut, resulting in, too often, deadly accidents.

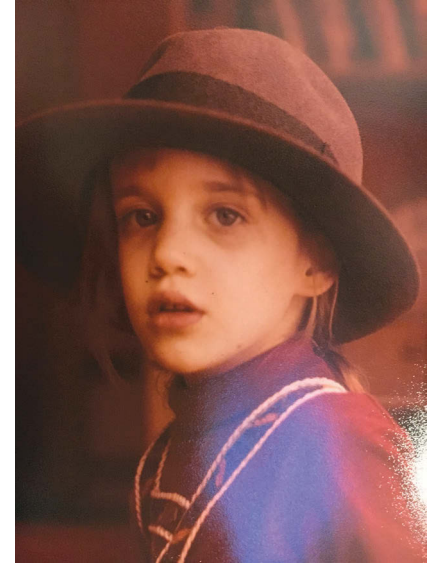
Brigitte has reported for the Republican-American, a major print and web newspaper covering Waterbury, Torrington, and northern Connecticut, since the 1990s. Earlier she worked for The Burlington Free Press's Capital Bureau in Vermont and (as a youngster) The Lakeville Journal in Connecticut. She also owns and operates Joshua's Farm, a 36-acre farm located on Dodd Road in Sandisfield.

As well, Brigitte writes excellent articles as a volunteer for The Sandisfield Times.

NENPA, an organization of newspapers throughout New England, announced the top three nominations for "truly extraordinary work" published in member newspapers between August 2015 and the end of July 2016.

The award presentation will be made at the NENPA Journalism Awards Banquet in Boston, February 25, too late to be reported in this issue of The Times.

The nomination is not Brigitte's first. Two years ago she was nominated in the same excellence competition for an investigative series she wrote about a car crash in Sheffield in which a young woman was killed. Brigitte won first place that year; her competition included stories in major New England newspapers, including The Boston Globe. 




Even at a young age, Brigitte showed an interest in journalism.

# Timber Sales Benefit the Town

On February 17, the town opened bids for the logging of Yanner Park. The high bidder was Jericho Valley Land and Timber, LLC, with a bid of \$108,534.50. Six bids were received for the project, ranging upward from \$51,207. Alice Boyd commented in an email, "We have a good cutting plan and can continue to log every six years or so."

This is the second bid awarded for logging this fiscal year. A previous bid was awarded to William Riiska for \$28,911 for logging at the town cemetery. Forestry plans and logging bids were prepared by Robert Tarasuk, funded partially with a Forestry Management grant funded by the Commonwealth.

Alice wrote: "The Board of Selectmen thanks Sandisfield residents Bob Tarasuk and Adam Brown for their efforts on our behalf and Tom Ryan of the Massachusetts Bureau of Forestry." 



IN SPRING

RIPPLING and gurgling and giggling along,  
The brooklets are singing their little spring song;  
Laughing and lively and gay as can be,  
They are skipping right merrily down to the sea.



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

**W**hen President Trump said, “The media is the enemy of the people,” I thought he meant *The Sandisfield Times*. I thought he meant *us*. Then he said he was referring to the *NYTimes*, NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, and a couple others. Not our *Times*. Not *us*.

So why am I not relieved? Because attacks on the media begin to gnaw away at us all. They make us wary. They put us on edge. Who can we trust? Who can't we trust? Broadside attacks on the media, imperfect though the media may be, chip away at one of the foundations of our democracy. Why am I writing about stuff that seems so far removed from Sandisfield? To tell the truth, it's not really far from our town at all. Ultimately the attacks, though now at a distance, create an unease that will reach our hamlet in western Massachusetts, if it hasn't already.

But the fact is, I'd rather stick to town news.

This month, I'd rather tell you about “A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud,” which you'll find on page 14. Along with other information and scenes of Sandisfield, the film company's website offers a beautiful short feature about how the movie was filmed here in town last summer. You can find it all online at [www.atreerockacloud-thefilm.com](http://www.atreerockacloud-thefilm.com). Use the computer at the Library if you don't have access. Terry will help you set it up.

This month, I'd rather refer readers to Alice Boyd's ode to the highway department on page 12.

Or list the good individuals who have taken out papers to run for town offices. See page 2.

Or refer you to our story about the town's new Heritage Heroes on page 8.

Or even the Fire/EMS/Police logs on page 15.

Or the Broadband debates covering pages 4-5.

Or the Pipeline, again, see page 10.

Go ahead. Read The Times. Read local. For now.

*Bill Price*  
*West New Boston*

## *That Wednesday Morning*

Desolate.

Like sand-stumbling in a brand-new desert

Where you can't follow the stars

Because night never comes

And the breviary slips from your hand.

The bright old lights of freedom

Are far behind this morning,

Still stabbing the shadows.

Good morning God,

What's the matter?

*Val Coleman*  
*New Boston*

## *Fiscal Stability in Sight?*

*Cont'd from p.1*

appointment of Treasurer Terry Sponholz, an amount negotiated down from an original \$191,000.

“How did we get in this predicament,” Ralph Morrison asked.

“Taxes weren't paid on time and reports weren't properly filed,” Boyd replied.

Unraveling the town's financial mess, more than one town official related, was like “peeling back an onion.”

Town Administrator Willie Morales got a pay raise from his current salary of \$37,000 to \$55,000 to work a minimum 35 hour week. The measure passed with little resistance. A few questions arose about how much time he will need to invest in town finances after the major financial issues are resolved, since the job has been turned over to Treasurer Sponholz.

“Possibly he could cut back to 20 hours again so he won't have to work 40 hours a week until he retires?” Ralph Leavenworth offered.

“With a \$3 million budget,” Morrison said, “I want someone watching my money.”


“He has been pivotal in straightening out the financial situation,” said Chairman Boyd, “and has been working 35-50 hours a week.” Boyd rattled off a long list of improvements at Town Hall which includes a grant for the Transfer Station, upgraded technology, and a new phone system. Hired to work 20 hours per week without health insurance, Administrator Morales also works for the town of Monterey.

Boyd said, “He has brought stability and leadership as we went through fiscal chaos. Our goal this year is to secure a double AA bond rating. It's a wise investment to upgrade the people who manage our affairs.” Great Barrington, by comparison, pays its manager over \$100,000 and Otis pays \$55,000.

She added, “Willie has ruffled a few feathers, but we'll work on that.”

Also approved:

- \$13,815.93 previously raised through donations and fundraisers specifically for the purpose of improving and maintaining Yanner Park was restored. The funds had been mingled with general funds used to pay bills. The property is expected to generate about \$108,000 in income from logging operations this year.
- The town's three-man police department will get \$16,000 worth of new software to enable better communication with other police agencies and the Berkshire County Sheriff's office which dispatches calls to 21 cities and towns.

The system now is antiquated, records are being done “by hand,” and communications are at times like “going blind,” said officer David Beardsley, the town's most recent police hire said. The system will cost \$1,700 annually to maintain. 



# Town Ready to Commit \$Millions to Private Broadband Company?

By Jean Atwater-Williams

Sandisfield's recent Request for Proposal (RFP) reveals that the town of Sandisfield intends to contract for broadband with a private for-profit provider without any public comment or voter approval.

The RFP was issued on January 9, 2017. It states "The joint Town selection committee will ... select the combined proposal that, in its considered judgement, maximizes overall value to the Towns. The selected Proposal will be recommended to each Town MLP [Municipal Lighting Plant] Board for approval and award." (In Sandisfield the Select Board acts as the MLP Board.)

Further, the revised Price Proposal Form for Sandisfield, which is provided as part of the RFP, allows the bidding vendors to exclude Otis Woodlands residences in their proposals.

The responses to the RFP were due on February 23. After being evaluated as defined in the RFP, the bids will be made public, but by then it may be too late. The town may have already awarded the contract. The contract, scheduled to be awarded March 8, could take another several weeks to be finalized because of negotiations.

In May 2014, this town voted nearly unanimously for a plan where Sandisfield would build, own and operate a municipal fiber optic broadband network. The intention then was to band with 30 other towns under WiredWest to allow for economies of scale, relieve the town of the burden of operating the network, and create an asset that could, in time, return revenue to the town. The current plan, hatched behind closed doors after private discussions with Frontier, is something entirely different.

If the proposals received on February 23 are anything like what Frontier submitted to New Marlborough several months ago, Sandisfield would be required to guarantee a certain sum per month per household for a period of years. The New Marlborough proposal required the equivalent of \$30 per household per month for 15 years.

Sandisfield's costs could be different. We have fewer residences and more road miles, so costs could be higher. Still, applying the New Marlborough formula to Sandisfield would be \$30 x 677 premises x 12 months x 15 years = \$3.6 million dollars for a network we will never own. Coincidentally, this is exactly the same amount as the original MBI estimate for building our own network. Section 6 of the RFP states "The Town MLP's acknowledge that they will not gain any residual ownership interest in the network." Our town would never see any potential profits, we would have no control over pricing or offerings and we would never be able to change providers.

There could be some advantages. The town would have no responsibility for constructing, operating or maintaining the network. It would not have to bond (borrow), leaving the town able to borrow for other projects. And a very basic level of internet could be included in the monthly sum – definitely not "free," but paid through tax dollars.

Our towns desperately need quality broadband, but is relinquishing ownership the wisest approach? Susan Crawford, a nationally respected Broadband advocate who works for Harvard's Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society, states in her January 17, 2017 Backchannel article, "Who is Killing the Towns of Western Massachusetts?": "Only those

plucky, scrappy towns that elect to build on their own will escape the grip of unconstrained pricing for awful service. The benefits [of a town-owned regional] approach are obvious. Towns would be able to keep control, keep revenues local, serve the public interest in serving everyone at reasonable costs, lower costs by buying in bulk, and ensure that citizens are provided with fiber connectivity."

So should Sandisfield reconsider owning the network as originally planned and approved by the voters so as to reap the benefits and potential profits of a municipally owned fiber optic broadband network? Or, should the town commit millions to a private company and hope for the best? The town's MLP Board (Select Board) apparently has the authority to make that decision without the people's express consent.

There is no more important decision before our town. This choice will have significant implications for many years and will obligate all citizens to one model. Maybe it doesn't matter if the town owns it or not. Maybe just having broadband is enough. Either way, the final decision should not be made without being brought before the citizenry. Voters deserve a full public hearing and a binding referendum vote on this question.

To view the RFP and Price Proposal forms, as well Susan Crawford's article, go to [SandisfieldTimes.org](http://SandisfieldTimes.org).

*Jean Atwater-Williams has worked on bringing broadband to Sandisfield since 2008. She served on the Sandisfield Technology and Broadband committees, the South Berkshire Technology Committee, as the town's appointed MLP Manager from 2011 until January this year, and, since 2011, as the town's representative to WiredWest.*

## Four-Town Plan for Broadband

Cont'd from p.1

The selectmen pointed out that attracting businesses to the area or even retaining existing ones is virtually impossible without high-speed internet. The lack of high-speed internet is also adversely affecting residential property values, undercutting existing tax bases in the four towns.

They sought Hinds' support in seeking additional state aid that will be needed to close a deal with a provider. Hinds promised his support in this effort. He said, "The bottom line is that it's taking far too long to finish [this connection to broadband]. We need to do everything it takes to finish this and finish it now."

The need for high-speed internet in Sandisfield is real. In a January 24 report on the four-town proposal in The Berkshire Edge, reporter Heather Bellow pointed out that while some Sandisfield residents "can get an adequate connection with Verizon DSL, not all are near a box and Verizon limits those customers, including one who is the chairman of the broadband committee. And many Sandisfield residents simply can't afford an expensive HughesNet satellite dish."

In fact, the need for internet access can be seen almost any evening with a drive past the Sandisfield Library. Even though the building itself is closed, cars will often be in the parking lot. "In those cars," said Boyd, "are people tapping away at phones, tablets, and laptops, kids doing homework, using the library's wi-fi. Hopefully, before long, these people will be able to be connected at home."

The four-town group has issued an RFP, a request for proposals, to broadband providers. At the time of this writing the responses were due on February 23, which was too late for this issue of The Times. The relevant selectmen felt that signs were encouraging and were confident that workable proposals will result. All that will be lacking then will be commitment from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



From left, Alice Boyd, Select Board chair, State Senator Adam Hinds, and Jeff Bye, chairman of Sandisfield's Broadband Committee.

# REBUTTAL: Broadband RFP Process Facts

By Alice Boyd

I was disheartened to read Ms. Atwater-Williams article that targets a legal process and viable solution for Sandisfield to secure broadband services. The article is misleading and casts aspersions on good people who have worked very hard to find a solution for our town.

In early 2016 your Select Board made the decision to move in a new direction regarding broadband Internet for the town following the Massachusetts Broadband Institutes (MBI's) determination that the WiredWest model was unfeasible and flawed, and a model that MBI would never support with grant funds the state had allocated to each unserved town. Sandisfield selectmen reached out to our neighboring towns (Monterey, New Marlborough, Tolland) to see if there was interest in moving forward collaboratively, with the goal of construction and operation of small regional network.

Through this process we met with a wide variety of vendors, looked at towns that had successfully installed fiber and proceeded together to seek a solution. The 4-town regional broadband RFP is the result of those efforts. A register of all vendor attendees at a pre-bidders conference is available to the public.

- **FACT:** Ms. Atwater-Williams states that these efforts were "hatched behind closed doors" with one vendor. This is illegal and libelous. We have met with every qualified vendor with any interest in our four communities, gathering information. We then produced a high-quality RFP (request for proposals), scrupulously following Massachusetts Procurement law 30B and MLP (Municipal Light Plant) regulations.
- **FACT:** Ms. Atwater-Williams states that the town may contract for broadband services without public comment or voter approval. At every Select Board meeting I report on the status of our broadband efforts. I have written articles published in the Sandisfield Times and IF this RFP yields a successful bidder a Select Board meeting will provide an opportunity for public comment. Massachusetts's procurement law requires that a contract be awarded within the time frame described in the RFP, typically 60-days. Optimistically we will have a 2-week window to approve a contract following the vetting of the proposals, insufficient

time to hold a town meeting and a "binding referendum".

- **FACT:** Ms. Atwater-Williams states that the revised price proposal form for Sandisfield allows the bidder to exclude Otis Wood Lands. This statement is intentionally misleading. It was suggested by MBI that we try to establish a cost for wiring the Wood Lands, thus the separate price proposal. We adjusted the scope of the RFP to encapsulate the unique circumstances of the Wood Lands where all utility lines are underground without conduit and will be submitting a request to MBI for additional funding via grant award for the construction once the cost for wiring the Wood Lands has been established. We have been working with the Otis Wood Lands Broadband Committee to secure options for them.
- **FACT:** The regional solution of bidding for broadband "services" versus bidding to have a vendor install fiber for the town to operate our own system, costing millions, was not an easy decision. It was a risk-based decision. A risk assessment was completed by state experts who ultimately determined that WiredWest was a flawed model. Then on September 29, 2016 MBI changed their policy to allow a service contract recognizing that many small towns like Sandisfield could not afford to build a system and lacked capacity to manage one. With this policy change the MBI grant award allocated to the town for network construction will be awarded directly to the selected service contractor.
- **FACT:** Operating a small town-owned broadband network is not a moneymaking venture as demonstrated by towns around the Commonwealth. This is a high-risk venture. We would need to continually invest in equipment, maintenance and staff to support the network. And you, the taxpayer, would be taking the risk and footing the bill. We are seeking a vendor to spend their money, not your money to build this system and maintain it. This is a low risk solution that will acquire high-quality service as quickly as possible, for an affordable price for the subscribers. Most utilities are provided in this manner.
- **FACT:** The service RFP does not require the town to bond and it will likely be less expensive. The bonding cost, provided by Locke & Lord, our bond counsel, was \$5593 per household, to be paid over a 15-year term. Residents who subscribed would also pay a monthly fee ranging from \$60-\$100 month. A service contract requires the selected vendor to participate in the financing and construction of our fiber network, ideally saving the town from bonding

costs and interest. A monthly service fee may be required by the selected vendor or the cost may be born directly by the subscriber. This will be determined when the RFP responses are evaluated.

One would have to question the motivation of Ms. Atwater-Williams in writing her article. We can no longer assume that the push for WiredWest relevance and involvement in small towns is in the perspective of public interest. Some WiredWest members have publically stated that they deserve a paying job for all of their invested time. And just what is left of WiredWest today? Per yet another revised plan, WiredWest is actively soliciting for unserved towns to hire them to manage the operation and maintenance of a network once a town has funded the design and construction. WiredWest would not actually be capable of operating or maintaining a town's network. They will simply hire and manage a contractor that can.

Ultimately a service contract will provide broadband services faster, cheaper and with less risk. Our RFP requires evidence that a very high service level will be maintained. Our four-town group decided that together we could do something positive for our towns. This low-risk solution makes sense. As your Select Board member, I support low-risk and lower taxes. 🍷

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# SArC Hires a Managing Director

By Susie Crofut and Sandy Parisky, Co-Presidents

The Sandisfield Arts Center is very happy to announce the hiring of Anna Konopatskaya as our first Managing Director. After launching a search and receiving seventeen very good applications for the part-time position, we're excited to have found such a highly qualified candidate.

And she lives right here in town: Anna and her husband, Aaron Dennis, bought a house in New Boston just over a year ago and have embarked on fixing it up.

Anna's experience is broad and impressive. She has worked on the executive planning team of the Leningrad Center, a "multi-format" entertainment venue in St. Petersburg, Russia. She also helped to realize the conceptual design and public opening of the Urbo Project at 11 Times Square in New York City. A native of Russia, Anna is a new American citizen.

In the Berkshires, Anna helped to promote a local independent film, "Year by the Sea," starring Karen Allen. Anna served as events coordinator and marketing & communication specialist.

As Managing Director of the Arts Center, Anna is looking forward to taking on several roles. She will be involved with fund raising, researching and writing grants, assisting with administrative tasks, communication, marketing, publicity, and web-site management.

We are looking forward to working with Anna as we begin the 2017 season. Please note in a separate article on this page the first announcement of our rich line-up of attractions. We hope you will all come to Arts Center events this spring and summer and that you soon become acquainted with Anna. 🍷



Anna Konopatskaya

# Xiew from the Arts Center Full Season Planned For This Summer

By Marcella Smith

While the snow piles up outside the Sandisfield Arts Center and the building remains closed, the marketing and programming committees are busy putting together another entertaining season.

The Sandisfield Players will be back on the boards with three productions:

- The Stamp Collection, a play by Val Coleman, Sandisfield's own poet laureate
- Under Milkwood, a radio play by Dylan Thomas
- And for the holiday season, Jack and the Magic Beanstalk.

Free Friday movie nights have been added to the schedule, along with a free karaoke night, a pumpkin decorating party on the Halloween weekend, and a lecture on the restoration of the Alamo.

The work of six very different artists will be shown in the gallery, including photos and pottery by Setsuko Winchester in September. The music of the Gershwins will be presented in an Evening of Song, Tom Christopher will conduct a hard cider tasting in October with music by Moonshine Holler, and Peter Baiamonte will share his photos and experiences of a recent trip to Antarctica.

These are just some of the events taking place at the Arts Center this year. Our printed brochure will be mailed in late March, and as always you can see what's coming in our ads in The Sandisfield Times, and on our website, <http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org>. You can write to us anytime at <mailto:info@sandisfieldartscenter.org>. 🍷

# Cook-Off Finds Great Chili

By Bill Price

MJ Tuckers bar/restaurant on Rt. 8 south of New Boston was packed almost wall-to-wall on Friday evening, February 10.

It was hard to find a place to sit down with 16 contestants in the Farmington River Elementary PTA's Chili Cook-Off – plus the more than sixty eager-and-willing volunteer tasters/judges.

Contestants had to provide a gallon of chili and actually be there to serve it. They had to stand behind their product and look their customers in the eye. It was local, for sure.

The PTA put up \$175 for first-, second-, and third-place winners. But when it came time to vote, the result was a tie for first. The PTA kicked in another \$5 to make it even, and the three winners each took home \$60. The winners were:

- Kids' Café from Farmington River Elementary. "Look at That!" Chili made by Kendra Rybacki.
- Sandra Odell, Falls Village, CT. "Sam's Chili."
- Vanessa Tarasuk, Sandisfield. "Pub-Style Chili with Ale."



Tied for first place: from left, Kendra Rybacki (cooking with Kids' Café recipe), Sandra Odell, and Vanessa Tarasuk.



Money was also raised by the PTA with a 50/50 raffle, a bake sale, and sale of a gift basket donated by the Berkshire Rehabilitation Center to benefit the 6th grade.

Music was provided by Shatterack until everyone was ready to go home. 🍷

# Work of Local Artist Honored

## “YELLOW BOWL PROJECT” AT FDR LIBRARY

By Bill Price

Six images from the series of photographs local ceramicist and photographer Setsuko Winchester made last year are being shown in conjunction with a new exhibit at the FDR Library and Museum, “Images of Internment: The Incarceration of Japanese Americans During World War II.” The exhibit acknowledges the 75th anniversary of President Franklin Roosevelt’s signing of Executive Order 9066 which ordered the evacuation of all people of Japanese descent from the American West Coast during World War II.

Between the winter of 2015 and the summer of 2016, Setsuko traveled to all ten of the former internment camps scattered from Arkansas to California to Idaho where the Japanese, most of them American citizens, were held during the nearly four years of the war. At each of the mostly abandoned sites she set out 120 yellow handmade tea bowls that she had created in her studio on Silverbrook Road. She arranged the bowls in different configurations and photographed them, each bowl, she said, representing “one thousand of the 120,000 Japanese people incarcerated.” She also took the tea bowls to five other locations she considered historically relevant sites.

As quoted on the FDR Library website, Setsuko said, “My project may throw light on a discomfiting part of American history, but I hope not to condemn or blame, but help gauge where we are in this ever-evolving experiment we call ‘America.’”

The exhibit at the FDR Library in Hyde Park, New York, which opened February 19, will run until the end of the year. See <https://fdrlibrary.org/events-calendar>.

Her project will also be shown in an exhibit at the Sandisfield Arts Center in September. It was featured in a front-page article in The Berkshire Eagle, February 10. The report can be viewed at [www.berkshireeagle.setsukowinchester.com](http://www.berkshireeagle.setsukowinchester.com).

Fifteen of Setsuko’s images – ten from the camps and five iconic landscapes – can be seen at her website at [www.yellowbowlproject.com](http://www.yellowbowlproject.com).

Her project was featured in an article in The Sandisfield Times, Jan/Feb 2016, and again in March 2016. The reports are available at [www.thesandisfieldtimes.org/archives](http://www.thesandisfieldtimes.org/archives).

# Need Firemen, EMT Volunteers

By Bill Price

It takes a special person to volunteer as a member of a local fire department. Or to help neighbors as an emergency medical technician.

Fire Chief Ralph Morrison is looking for a few of those special people from Sandisfield. “What we need,” he says, “are new volunteers, fresh blood, men and women.”

After The Times reported on the need for volunteers in September, a few residents called for information but no new member has as yet actually joined up.

While the fire crew is holding steady at thirteen members, Chief Morrison said he would feel more comfortable with a few more.

However, there are only eight EMT members, two of whom are currently on leave. With only six EMTs available to cover medical emergencies in town, “we’re at the point where we need more help,” Ralph said. “And of the six on duty, only two work in town during the daytime.”

Sandisfield is not the only town short of volunteers. A Pennsylvania news article in January reported that “the number of volunteer firefighters has been falling for decades here and across the country.” Recruiting volunteers has become harder as family and work environments have changed. In addition, firefighters used to be able to serve with little training or requirements, but many states, including Massachusetts, “now require them to have a certain number of training hours each year to be certified.” The training for EMTs is even more rigorous.

As The Times reported in September: “Younger volunteers are in particularly short supply, but older ones are welcome, too – there is a job, the chief asserts, suited to everyone. An older volunteer, for

example, may not be up to dragging hoses at a house fire, but could undertake highway safety training and learn to direct traffic at a fire site. Any number of people are needed, and all residents of Sandisfield are potential volunteers.

“The Fire Department (which oversees the EMS ambulance service) offers many kinds of training, most of them on-site. You can learn cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, how to deal with hazardous materials, what to do as a first responder, and many other skills, all without leaving Sandisfield. Ambulance volunteers do have to go to state-sponsored class but graduate as certified emergency medical technicians.

“Modest stipends may be paid to volunteers as well. Ambulance staff, for example, receive a daily fee for weekend days on which they agree to stay home and be on call. Fire Department volunteers are paid for each call in which they participate.

“Volunteerism has been, traditionally, at the core of New England small town life, with civic groups such as the Fire Department and the ambulance service serving as community anchors. This is not only where we safeguard our neighbors, it is where we get to know them, where we form ties to one another.”

To volunteer for the Fire Department or as an EMT, please call Fire Chief Ralph Morrison at 258-4742.

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# Sandisfield Historical Commission

## Heritage Heroes Save Special Cottages

By Ron Bernard

Did you know Sandisfield has its own "Germantown?"



*The Bay Cottage, 1945. Designs by Joe Bay.*

Sandra Snyder at Pigs Fly Farm, retain much of their delightful original character.

The most distinctive is the house and guest cottage at 231 Sandisfield Road, the former home of Joseph and Magda Bay. The place is the current residence of Steven Pincus and his wife, Christine Nadelman Pincus. Steve and Christine were recognized last month by the Sandisfield Historical Commission as Heritage Heroes for their commitment to preservation.

### Why a Germantown?

Germantown was the brainchild of Albrecht Abee, a Bavarian immigrant and evidently prosperous landscape architect from New York City. What attracted him to our town is unknown but in 1932 he acquired 200 acres in a tax sale, intending to settle ten German families in a setting similar to his boyhood home in the old country. He had in mind a group of friends, mostly natives of Bavaria who worked as hotel restaurant waiters. Among

them was Joseph Bay, an interior decorator and talented artist who made a living through commissions from grand hotels such as the Waldorf Astoria. For some reason Abee's only stipulation was that the lucky new owners had to build their own houses.

Joe Bay was born in 1883 in the German Alps village of Schaftlach near Munich. He served in the Landsturm Battalion of the German infantry during World War I. According to family tradition, he may have been detained as a "political prisoner" (if true, more likely he was a POW). This experience belies his reputation as being a very gentle, easy going and likeable man.

In America, Joseph followed his younger brother, George to Sandisfield. George was a gardener by trade, like his benefactor Albrecht Abee who granted him a tract of land in 1933. The family said that George discharged a debt to his brother Joe in 1938 by cleaving off an acre from his own lot.

Which is where, in 1942, Joe built a 2-story home and an adjacent guest cottage in classic Bavarian style. By 1945, the facades, trim, shutters and faux balconies on both structures had been colorfully decorated with fanciful Bavarian designs. In terms of old-world style, there is nothing like it around here except perhaps Henry Kitson's "Santarella" estate in Tyringham.

Sandisfield historian Anne Pinsky Hoffman wrote of Bay and his whimsical cottages: "His remarkable talent is everywhere evident in his house, both inside and out and attracts passing motorists by the score. All the walls in the interior are beautifully hand painted and his drawings and paintings are in a class with the best." Anne may not have known about the hidden compartment behind a built-in bookcase, a playful touch by Joe.

### And Then What Happened?

Dora Hake Oliverio, Joe's German-born grand-niece and only relative, inherited the place in 1975 upon the death of Joe's widow. Dora had spent summers with the couple since 1953.

A retired registered nurse who resides on Long Island, Dora reluctantly put the place up for sale in 2006. Besides original whole-house stenciling and painted surfaces, both units included all of the Bay's 1940s-style everyday furniture and neat accessories and artwork, including even Joe's stencils and his case of professional artist brushes. Dora hoped that new owners would appreciate and retain everything as it had been for almost 75 years.

A visitor remarked that the place seemed stopped in time, the interior reminiscent of a museum display

This turned out to be a tough sale. Neither unit was suitable for year-round or even seasonal living. The basement of the main house was perennially wet, causing dampness and mold upstairs. The septic system and well were problems. With no central heating, during winter ice formed on interior walls.

Dora's neighbors and old family friends, especially Tom O'Gara, kept an eye on the place. But little-to-no buyer interest in this atypical small property prompted Dora's dispirited agents to keep dropping the price until it hit a new low in 2013 - "as is."

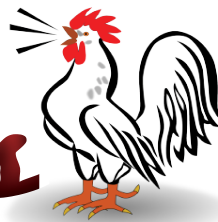
*Early photos: Dora Oliverio*



*Joseph Bay at the Ritz Carleton Hotel, Atlantic City, 1928.*

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While researching and writing *Sandisfield Then and Now* in 2011, I toured the place. I recall thinking that these charming buildings would probably end up in a dumpster, an appalling prospect, not good for the Town.

**Heritage Heroes Arrive**

A Long Island native, Christine Pincus had a life-long affection for this area owing to winters at her folks' Lake Buell log cabin and skiing at Butternut. She says she has "the Berkshire bug" and in 2013 the bug led to a search with husband Steve for a possible cottage of their own.

"We were roaming around Sandisfield when we came by this place. I screeched to Steve, 'Stop! This is it!'"

Steve, a former electrician and handyman, had a different first impression. But Christine was smitten. "It reminded me so much of the Seven Dwarfs' house in "Snow White," she said.



*The Bay cottages today.*

Christine knew that for what they will ultimately spend they could have built a new cottage and avoided many problems and unknowns. But then there would have been no adventure.

They would not have known the story of Joe and Magda Bay or about George or Dora. And they would not be living vicariously in Bavaria. Maybe they'll visit Schaftlach one day.

Life is short. Do something important. Have fun doing it.

Christine and Steve are interested in local history and preservation. They hope to retire here in a few years and take part in the community. Meanwhile we residents thank them for their vision, skill and commitment to save two of the most charming buildings in town and thereby enriching life in Sandisfield.

A roadside marker now proclaims 231 Sandisfield Road as the "Seven Dwarfs House." We're sure that Joe and Magda would be delighted. Dora is. So next time you pass by, slow down a bit, take a good look and mentally transport yourself to Bavaria. 🇩🇪



*Selectman John Skrip presents the Heritage Hero Award to Steven and Christine Pincus at the Select Board meeting, February 13. The award, introduced by the Historical Commission in 2015, recognizes exceptional efforts by residents to preserve and protect Sandisfield's architectural and historical heritage.*

Recognizing the challenge, Steve remembers keeping his thoughts to himself. The real estate agent came by and after a tour the couple said they wanted to make an offer. The incredulous agent said, "Really?!"

Since then Steve estimates that he has averaged three days a week working at the house. "The first winter," he said, "we had to deal with two feet of water (ice) in the basement. The only way to dry out the house was with electric heat which cost us \$1,500." The couple was determined not to second-guess their decision. "We were committed," said Steve.

Today this splendid cottage and guest house are rehabilitated with original fabric intact, once again fit for full-time residence.

One can imagine however that the purchase price was merely an ante in the rehab game. Steve and



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R.I.P.

## MASSACHUSETTS CONSTITUTIONAL ARTICLE 97 1972-2016

Article 97 was brought forth almost one-half century ago by forward-thinking State legislators who recognized that certain lands are special, precious, and deserving of the highest level of protection. Those Representatives could not know the nature or timing of assaults and challenges to their resolution but they knew tests would come.

They knew that development would be relentless and that some proposals would promise benefits to society which would be very tempting. And they knew that well-funded proponents would apply great pressure on the system in order to get their way. So when Constitutional Article 97 was enacted and approved by the people it was a prescient, courageous, and momentous event.

Today an industry giant that is used to getting its way is being allowed to trample and destroy for all time some of the most beautiful and environmentally sensitive land in the state.

Kinder Morgan is relentless in its determination to install a 4-mile long underground gas storage loop through supposedly permanently protected lands of Otis State Forest. It matters not that the fossil fuel infrastructure they seek to impose upon us provides no local benefit or that it will be obsolete in the foreseeable future. The damage will be done.

Sadly, the Commonwealth has failed to defend its most important constitutionally protected land. It has betrayed the public's trust for pieces of silver. Who now would donate land to the Commonwealth to be protected supposedly permanently. The spirit of Article 97 is dead. May it forever haunt those who allowed it to perish.

Rest in Pieces.

## Pipeline Decision Process Drags Along

*By Times Reporters*

Last month's mock funeral in Pittsfield for the demise of Article 97, although colorful and attention-getting, may have been a little premature.

Kinder Morgan, cheered and encouraged by recent court rulings and state bureaus, still faces significant obstacles before the chain saws and excavators wreak havoc across northern Sandisfield.


While the saws could rev up almost any moment, still unresolved are a few legalities: water regulation permits, legal maneuvers by STOP and others,

issues of sacred places raised by Native American groups, and even a stack of Sandisfield ConCom conditions.

And all the time, demand for natural gas in Connecticut keeps dropping.

And all the time, the clock keeps ticking. According to environmental law, clear cutting is restricted after March 31, the beginning of nesting season. At this writing it seems unlikely that crews and a cutting plan can be in place in time.

And there's a new wrinkle. The company had banked on getting final approval from FERC on February 9. The commission is governed by five presidential appointees but for some time only three have been in place. So when the chairman resigned on February 9, (leaving no quorum) doubts about the legality of a vote were raised by opposing lawyers.

We'll all see what happens. 



Moreover...

## Winged Messengers

By Simon Winchester

There are many things to love about Sandisfield: the Post Office, housed in its spectacularly unlovely brick building, is perhaps not one of them.

But over the fifteen years I've lived here, I have come to be incontinently fond of the little place. I meet good people there; and good things seem to happen to me there.

Once, for instance, when Karen was our Postmaster, she delivered a letter to me that had been addressed simply *SW 01255 USA*. A smart-alecky British friend, a scientist at a base in Antarctica, had scoffed at the whole American *neither snow nor rain and gloom of night* thing and had decided she'd try to outfox the system.

Her effort was a Major Fail, as our new leader would have it. Our couriers got through with the completion of their appointed rounds, and swiftly too: my friend's letter took only a week to make the 13,000 miles from Adelaide Island to Silverbrook Road. And how? *I knew it was you*, said Karen. *Who else would cause such trouble?*

Much the same sort of thing happened at the end of last year, with Geoff Coelho standing in on temporary duty.

You may recall that I am a fan of the so-called *what3words* way of creating addresses: the world can be sliced up into 57 trillion ten-by-ten-foot squares, and each of these has been assigned a unique combination of three English words. Our house here happens to be *Evidently. Supplements. Setback* – and I was both delighted and surprised the other day to find a letter in my box, duly stamped and franked, mailed to *Simon Winchester, Evidently Supplements Setback*, and nothing more.

It had been sent by some friends in Boston, but they didn't put anything so old-fashioned as 'Boston' as their return address – instead they wrote their own assigned three words: *Oldest. Buck. Turkey*.

I promptly took a photograph of the envelope and Tweeted it. The image ricocheted around

the world. Incredulous hordes wrote in, asking: *The USPS has really adopted what3words?* Others said, *World-changing if true. Epochal! Brilliant!* Only Mongolia and Ivory Coast have adopted the system. Surely America, which can't even use the metric system (along with only Liberia and Burma) wouldn't be so up-to-date?

And indeed, it isn't. There was a much simpler answer. Geoff in our post office saw the letter, duly stamped it as federal law requires, but instead of sending it across to Springfield (to where, astonishingly, most Sandisfield-destined mail goes to be sorted and sent right back) he simply handed it to the nice delivery lady and off it went, straight to Silverbrook Road.

And how did Geoff know? *Of course*, he said. *Who else would cause such trouble?*

And now there has been a third reason for my admiration with the quality of mail services for 01255.



This time it occurred under the benign invigilation of the blessed Amy Carriveau – a cheerful young woman, a new mother to boot, who single-handedly has changed our local post office run from a chore into a near-vacation.

This all began when I had an anguished email from a man, quite unknown to me, who taught English in a remote school in western Iran. He had heard good things about one of my books, but try as he might, he wasn't allowed to buy it, for real or on-line.

Could I perhaps surreptitiously send him a link to a site somewhere in the world so he could read it, away from prying eyes?

I responded that I'd send him a physical book. No chance, he replied, the secret police would steal it. Besides, weren't there sanctions? I'd do my best, I replied: just send me your address.

And so he did: eight long lines of an address with phrases like House Number 17, Lane 33, behind-such-and-such a mosque in village X ten miles outside Isfahan, Iran.

I consulted Amy; she consulted her Bible, a battered copy of the *USPS International Mail Manual*. (Required reading for postal nerds: it tells you what you may and may not send in the mail to every known country. No single playing cards to Germany, for example. You can't send a bale of hay to Ireland. Nor used bedding to China (Drat!) And woe betide you if you try to mail plastic flowers, dolls, wooden spoons, shoe cream, or suitcases to Peru: I'm told that teams of llamas will track you down relentlessly for your crime.)

Amy turned to Iran. Second on the list of banned items: Books. Except, if you then read the small print, books only if they are of "a seditious or immoral nature."

Is yours? asked Ms. Carriveau, putting on her official face.

No, certainly not, declared this postal customer. Well, she said, let's give it the old college try.

And six dollars and change later, away went the very moral book to Springfield, then to Boston, then London, then Teheran, then Isfahan, then the lane and the mosque and the house ...

Two weeks later, from my teacher, came these halting words:

*I cannot go believe for a second that I got your book today.*

*Thank you so much. Words are just not enough to thank you, I really did not expect to get it. But I did.*

*This morning my mom told me someone had posted something to me. I was so surprised to find it was your novel.*

*Thank you once more.*

*Peace.*

*And it came with a Sandisfield postmark. Where is this Sandisfield?*

One day, maybe, when the madness is over, and Iranians can come in again, I'll show him.

And I'll introduce him to Amy, who made it all happen. 📧

## AROUND TOWN HALL

# Oh, Those Roads...

By Alice Boyd, Chairman, Select Board

I'm writing as the mid-February snow falls, ears perked for the sound of the plow.

We have five trucks on the road and five good men driving those trucks. Two highway department employees, the highway superintendent, and two "on call" drivers, each following their routes before the school buses set out. Before many of us are awake.

The early winter was difficult with 50-degree days followed by 20-degree nights. Without a deep frost, plowing our dirt roads was problematic. Drop the plow blade to the road surface and you destroy the road. Raise the plow blade and it makes for sloppy driving. Until the ground froze in late January we could not use salt without worsening the situation. With over 90 miles of roads, many of them dirt, it was challenging.

Public safety is our primary concern. Admittedly we are watching our pennies because few want higher taxes, but when it comes to your safety on the roads, we're sending out the trucks and paying the overtime. We've been getting both compliments and complaints. We're trying.

Neighboring towns have more than twice our budget for snow and ice, more and newer trucks, more manpower and fewer road miles. Some spray calcium chloride on their roads, very effective but a hazard to our aquifer and wells. Here in Sandisfield we're striving to live within our budget constraints while being considerate of our environment.

There have been other changes. We now make more equipment repairs in-house. We're renting an excavator for a month and completing all projects rather than buying one.

And we're planning for the future.

The Finance Committee is working on a Capital Improvement Plan that will set aside funds annually for the scheduled purchase or replacement of equipment. This will require a bylaw change but will ensure that our equipment meets the needs of the town. And we are investigating sharing resources, including equipment, with our neighboring towns.

We have a 5-year plan for our roads. We'll be doing more "oil and stone" surfaces and less paving. "Oil and stone," sometimes

known as tar and chip, provides a strong surface that lasts longer and can be easily repaired. It's cheaper than paving and costs less to maintain. An additional benefit is that we can do this in-house, so our dollars go further and we can tackle more road miles with our limited funding. Here in the Commonwealth many towns are moving in this direction.

Finally we're making progress with the Rugg Bridge on Rt. 57 near the Library. Our engineer states that pending the Department of Transportation's final approval we should go out to bid in April and construction could start this summer. A light will control traffic on the detour (River Road) and larger trucks will not be allowed. Disturbing the residents of River Road is an unfortunate necessity and we ask everyone to be respectful of the folks who live there.

Your Select Board is very concerned with the safety of our residents. If you have a problem to report, please call Highway Superintendent Bobby O'Brien on his cell: 413-717-7627. Bobby will get back to you or simply address the issue that you have reported.

Managing our roads is complex but we're listening, learning, and doing our best to keep you safe and your road smooth. 🇺🇸

## Council on Aging



March 15: Pizza and cards, noon. Everyone welcome.

March 22: Blood pressure clinic, 11:00 a.m.-12 noon

March 29: Five Wishes with June Breen of HCIB (Hospice) 11 a.m. Come and make your own end-of-life decisions.

April 4: Footcare Clinic. Call 258-4816 for appointment.

April 10: Flower arranging. 2:00 p.m. \$10 fee. Call 258-4816.

April 26: Annual Meet & Greet Candidates.

Blood pressure clinic, 11:00 a.m.-12 noon.

Join us for lunch and stay to meet the candidates for town election at 12:30 p.m.

Reminder: Volunteer drivers available on Tuesdays. Call 258-4816. 🇺🇸

## OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

TV and film actress **Mary Tyler Moore**, who died in New York in January at the age of 80, was daughter-in-law of **Irving and Marion Levine** of Hammertown Road. While visiting the Levines, Mary could be seen on walks along nearby roads.



**Berkshire Rehabilitation** held a social in honor of National Pie Day. Residents and staff, along with members of the Sandisfield Council on Aging, sat down together and had a piece (or two) of pie on January 25. A wide variety of homemade pies were presented, but the favorite of Fruits of the Forest Pie. The Center reported that everyone had a good time sampling the pies and having tea and coffee. 🇺🇸

## Author/Illustrator Visits FR Elementary

In late January, students at Farmington River Elementary School were treated to a visit by Jarrett J. Krosoczka, an author/illustrator who visits schools to share his message that dreams can be reached while encouraging students to read, draw, and create. His picture books include *Punk Farm*, *Punk Farm on Tour*, *Baghead*, and *Max for President*.



At an assembly, Krosoczka related stories about how he became an author/illustrator and drew pictures for students. Grades 4-5 met separately with him to learn how he develops stories and helped create a story "mountain" about a character the students created and named "Laser Cat."

In preparation for Jarrett's visit, students made art inspired by his books, directed by art teacher Laura Catullo.

His visit was made possible through PTA funds and in part by grants from the Sandisfield and Otis Cultural Councils. 🇺🇸



# Welcome to Spectacle Pond ... But Don't Do Anything

By Ron Bernard

A sign appeared at the boat launch two or three summers ago. Nailed high on a tree, it declared in big red letters:

Danger!

No Swimming

Danger? Really? What danger? A vicious undertow unknown for the last 260 years? Piranhas? Poisonous snakes? A former pet alligator lurking underwater? I gotta know because I go there all the time. Or is this a case of bureaucrats covering their you-know-whats?

Common sense is in short supply, in my opinion.

People have been swimming and wading in Spectacle Pond since the 1750s. To my knowledge there has been only one recorded drowning, and it had nothing to do with swimming. It happened one-hundred twenty-seven years ago. According to the news account the victim was Town Hill Road resident, Joel Twing, 53. On April 21, 1890 at one o'clock in the morning, Twing was fishing with a companion, one "Mr. Pinney." Twing fell out of the boat and drowned. We can only speculate about the circumstances but fishing at 1 a.m., doesn't seem like a smart thing to do even when sober. Maybe a sign like "No fishing after midnight" would have dissuaded them.

One day in July, 1973 there was a possible near-drowning. Thelma Esteves, long-time resident of Beech Plain Road, was passing by and noticed a young man, a visitor from New York, in some distress. She helped him out of the water, averting a possible tragedy.

The pond was in the care of the Adams-Hawley-Rowley family from about 1760 until 2007 when the former farmstead of more than 900 acres, with the pond, was incorporated into Otis State Forest under the care of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). A family member, Nancy Rowley Loring, told me that other than the

1973 episode, the family is unaware of any water accidents either in living memory or from 20th century family tradition.

I have to think that this no-swimming sign was conceived by some killjoy in Boston who has never been to the Berkshires, let alone to Sandisfield, and who has nothing better to do than to post edicts for us country subjects to obey.

Generations here have sought respite from summer heat at Spectacle Pond. People came as well just to experience one of life's little pleasures, a quick dip at water's edge to cool off and enjoy a delicious moment in a beautiful, clean place. Most of us do not have air conditioning. There are no public pools or beaches in proximity.

But since this unfortunate sign appeared, summer day visitors to the pond have dropped significantly.

We loved to see families and little children with water-wings and floats splashing happily alongside their parents. Not anymore. The placard has done its job.

"No Swimming" means "Go Away." And they have. I've seen people stop, read, and leave.

Once in a while someone will wade in anyway, risking arrest or at least a humiliating warning from the constabulary. This pond should be an enjoyable, inviting place, not a disappointment.

I got to thinking. If the state has acknowledged that this place is in fact dangerous, why has nothing been done about it? Why no fence or barrier to prevent swimmers from entering. No life guards. No police on hand. Boaters and kayakers are at risk too, presumably. This is serious.

Then, last year, more scary notices were nailed to this hapless tree which is now full of directives.

And posters are being attached to other trees. Poorly designed, nearly unreadable notices and rules are all over the place.

One sign that is very clear reads, "Welcome to Otis State Forest." But it is followed by a litany of unwelcoming No's.

NO FIRES. NO CAMPING. NO ATVs. NO ALCOHOL. NO SWIMMING. HIKE ON DESIGNATED TRAILS ONLY (there are no designated trails). NO LOOSE DOGS. NO TRASH OR DOG WASTE. DO NOT FEED THE WILDLIFE.

This notice concludes, absurdly, "Please Enjoy Our Beautiful Park."

Of course I agree there have to be some rules and reminders for proper decorum, for health reasons, and for consideration of others.

But such rules can be helpful and respectful and posted in a professional way, not in-your-face and in disarray on random trees.

Problems at Spectacle Pond are virtually unheard of. But things have gone too far.



It is not reasonable to outright prohibit swimming and wading at this place.

Hey, Commonwealth, how about a sign that says, "Swim At Your Own Risk"

More thought by the DCR needs to be given to rule-making. They should make sense and be as few as possible. People should be respected and given credit for intelligence and good citizenship. We know how to behave, be respectful to others, and how to leave nothing but footprints after a visit to the woods.

The Pond needs more visitors, not fewer. But the many and sometimes thoughtless signs create an unwelcoming atmosphere. Worse yet: arbitrary, unfair or unnecessary rules erode public respect for authority generally.

To its credit our local DCR team does a really good job managing this jewel with probably inadequate resources. But as for rules, policies, and signs, it could do better.

## 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.



# The Librarian's Corner

By Theresa Sponholz

*"It doesn't matter. I have books, new books, and I can bear anything as long as there are books."*

—Jo Walton, *Among Others*

That being said, I can even bear the thought that it is still winter. In 21 days (as of this writing) the calendar will say SPRING, but somehow, I know, deep in the bones, that if you choose to live in this enchanted place called Western Massachusetts, Winter is not done yet. That there is false spring, look its 50 degrees out, let's break out our shorts and green plants. Wrong, inevitably a Nor'easter will blow in dumping a foot or two of white stuff.

So if you are tired of the white stuff, tired of grey skies that do not look anything like spring might be coming, there is a warm place to escape. It has coffee, tea, and hot chocolate. It has wonderful librarians like Kathy, Vickie, Pauline, and myself who will chat, point out great books to read, and lament that spring has not quite arrived.

The place is called "The Sandisfield Free Public Library." It even has books you can escape into and forget that the Cabana boy or girl is not holding a tray of marguerites while you bask in the sun on the beach. Instead you can travel to those places with no passport, no luggage.

## New Books ...

- *The Beautiful Dead*, Belinda Bauer
- *Death of a Ghost*, M. C. Beaton
- *Unpunished*, Lisa Black
- *Moonglow*, Michael Chabon
- Blake Crouch's Trilogy – *The Pines*, *The Last Town and Wayward*. (If you like science fiction you will love this trilogy.)
- *The Whistler*, John Grisham
- *The Midnight Bell*, Jack Higgins
- *Bone Box*, Faye Kellerman
- *Thus Bad Begins*, Javier Marias
- *Small Great Things*, Jodi Picoult

We always try to order what we think you might like, but if you find we are not hitting that target and there is a favored author that we are not aware of, do tell us and we will rectify that.

## Events ...

In case you thought the library just did books:

- There is always Card Making and Etching. Kathi Burrows has the details – give her or the library a call and we will let you know the times.
- Save the date – On April 1st – no fooling!! Lynn Rubinstein will be graciously hosting a fun arts and crafts activity for children ages 2-102. We will be making bunnies, chickens, and ladybugs followed by a springtime story. Time is from 9-noon. Please come and join us.

So bundle up, stay warm, and READ.

# David Walpiansky's Last Ride

By Lorraine German

In 1904, David Walpiansky and his wife, Minnie, bought 190 acres of land and an 18th-century house from John O. Northway on what is now Sears Road.

Like his neighbors Jacob Goldberg and Elias Lipsitz, the 52-year-old Walpiansky had moved from New York City to Sandisfield as part of The Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Society's plan to colonize a farming community in the Southern Berkshires.

A few years later, the Walpianskys sold their New Boston farm to Victor Linkovich and moved to West Street in Montville where they raised dairy cows. Their new neighbors included fellow dairy farmers Solomon Pollock and Samuel Kaplan, two of the colony's earliest settlers.

Sometime afterward, Walpiansky became ill with tuberculosis. He died in May, 1914. Instead of burying him in the Pittsfield cemetery, where other Jewish families interred their dead, Walpiansky's family chose to have his body shipped from Great Barrington to a Jewish cemetery in Queens, New York.

Unfortunately, poor Walpiansky had had the misfortune of dying during mud season. The road from his house in Sandisfield to Great Barrington was so wet and muddy the undertaker refused to come to Montville to pick up the body.

Undaunted, his friends obtained a car for the drive to Great Barrington. They propped Walpiansky in the back seat where he sat between two of his friends while another friend drove.

According to reports, the sight of a dead man riding through the main street of Great Barrington caused quite a stir among those who witnessed the episode.

David Walpiansky's unconventional transportation got him safely to Great Barrington, but the spectacle of his ride was so extraordinary that accounts of it were printed in newspapers across the country.

*Note: This story will be included in a book planned for release in Spring 2018 entitled Soil to Shul: The Untold Story of Sandisfield's Jewish Farm Colony. Principal researcher and author, Lorraine German and her husband Steve reside in Granby, Conn., and the Montville section. Lorraine contributed chapters to Sandisfield Then and Now and contributes articles about local history to The Times.*



# A Tree. A Cloud. A Rock

## UPDATE ON MOVIE FILMED HERE

A note from the director and producers of "A Tree. A Rock. A Cloud," which was filmed at the former Silverbrook Café and along North Beech Plain Road, reports that the film has been accepted and will have its world premiere at the Manchester Film Festival in England on the festival's opening night, March 5.

The director, Karen Allen of Great Barrington, will be a featured speaker on the Women in Independent Cinema panel at the festival.

The film has also been submitted to other festivals and will participate this year at events at the Carson McCullers Center for Writers and Musicians.

Viewers can see the recently completed trailer of the film, a "Making Of" video, and event schedules at the newly redesigned website, [www.atreearockcloudthefilm.com](http://www.atreearockcloudthefilm.com).

If possible, The Times will alert readers if arrangements are made to show the film locally.

# Fire/EMS/Police Logs

## Fire:

### January, 2017

- Building Fire, 1  
Mutual aid to  
New Marlborough
- Potential Accident, 1  
search for aircraft (unfounded)

## EMS:

### January, 2017

- Medical Calls 8
- Motor Vehicle  
Accident 1
- Dispatched and  
cancelled en route 1

## Police:

911 Calls by Sandisfield Residents

Submitted by Michael Morrison, Chief

Note: North Main is Rt. 8 north of the intersection with Rt. 57. South Main is Rt. 8 south of the intersection.

### January 2017

- Jan 1. Structure fire, mutual aid, New Marlboro
- Jan 2. Medical call, mutual aid, Otis  
Animal call, Bosworth Rd
- Jan 3. Medical call, West St
- Jan 4. Missing person, Sandisfield Rd
- Jan 6. Medical call, Tolland
- Jan 10. Medical call, Slater Lane
- Jan 12. Medical call, North Main St

- Jan 14. Medical call, mutual aid, Otis
- Jan 15. Citizen assist, Sandisfield Rd  
Motor vehicle accident, Tolland  
Noise complaint (gun shots),  
Town Hill Rd
- Jan 16. Abandoned motor vehicle,  
Roosterville Rd
- Jan 17. Medical call, Sandisfield Rd  
Citizen assist, Otis Woodlands
- Jan 18. Burglar alarm, Gremler Rd
- Jan 20. Medical call, Tolland
- Jan 22. Domestic disturbance, Sandisfield Rd  
Medical call, Sandisfield Rd
- Jan 23. Burglar alarm, Otis Woodlands
- Jan 25. Burglar alarm, Dodd Rd
- Jan 27. Medical call, Sandisfield Rd
- Jan 28. Citizen assist, Dodd Rd
- Jan 29. Well-being check, Clark Rd



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# Firehouse #1 Renovation Can Use a Little More Help

Significant construction progress is evident inside the former schoolhouse/American Legion building in New Boston. Fire Chief Ralph Morrison, the project coordinator, said, "We are about 80 percent finished inside, including insulation, electric, and mechanicals. I am grateful to Sandisfield contractor Steve Seddon and his crew (SS Home Improvements) who installed the sheetrock. This was a lot of volunteer work and they did a fantastic job."

Ralph also commended volunteers Richard Hamilton and Jay Reynolds and members of the Sandisfield Fire Department for participation.

Planned as a training center for the Fire and EMS Departments, the building can also be used as a community space. Ralph said that the department could use a bit more financial help. "We need about \$12,000 in donations to complete the interior. With that, we could open Memorial Day."

Please send your tax-deductible donation to:  
Sandisfield Fire Department,  
PO Box 22, Sandisfield, MA 01255,  
or call Chief Morrison at 258-4742.



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# South County Youth Baseball

## BATTER UP FOR AGES 4-12

Sign-ups for Sandisfield, Otis, Monterey, Great Barrington and surrounding towns' youth baseball players have started.

Kids between 4 and 12 are invited, and there is room for all. The season will begin around May 1 and run to the end of June.

Four teams will be set up, one each for players ages 4-7 beginners, 7-9 rookies, 8-10 experienced players, and 11-12 Major League players.

Except for the Majors, all activities will be at Greene Park on Rt. 23 in Monterey. The Majors practice and play at the Steiner School in Great Barrington.

Cost per season for each player is \$50, with a maximum of \$75 per family. Financial assistance is available.

To sign up, please send name, address, age, phone number, and email address with payment to South County Cal Ripken Baseball League, PO Box 11, Monterey, MA 01245 Attn: Jim Edelman. For more information, send an email to sgraves8@yahoo.com.

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# Comings and Goings



**CORA LOUISE RORABACK**  
1922-2017

## TOWN LOSES A LINK TO AN EARLIER TIME

Cora Roraback passed away at the age of 94 on January 19 at Fairview Commons Nursing Center, Great Barrington.

Cora had been out and about during the day, and returned home and was having a cup of hot chocolate and reading a newspaper when she suddenly suffered a massive stroke.

A lifelong resident of Sandisfield, Cora was a descendant of one of the town's earliest families. Born August 18, 1922, the daughter of Howard and Isabelle Crocker Spring, Cora was the 2nd great-granddaughter of Henry Spring, who operated a tavern at Upper Spectacle Pond beginning in the 1760s. At a presentation at the Sandisfield Historical Society in 2014, Cora said, "I don't think there ever was a time in town with no Springs here."

When Cora was born, the family was operating a farm on South Beech Plain Road. She and her six siblings were all born in the birthing room in what Cora referred to as the "new" house. The house, a colonial built about 1780, hadn't been "new" for over a century. While Cora was growing up, she recalled, the house was heated with three wood stoves, one in each of the house's main rooms. "Our indoor plumbing," she said, "was a hand pump in the kitchen sink. There was no hot water. No electricity."

Her family harvested maple syrup from nearly 100 trees on their farm, using a horse and sled. While some of the maple sugar was poured into candy molds, most went into 50-gallon drums. Asked what the family did with so much syrup, Cora smiled. "We shipped it to Vermont."

She was educated at the one-room West New Boston School on Silverbrook Road. Every school morning, Cora and her sisters and brothers walked down steep Beech Plain Road and back up in the afternoon. The family sold the farm and moved to West New Boston in 1941, to a home where, Cora said, "We had indoor plumbing. That was such a treat."

Cora married Earl J. Roraback April 22, 1950. In 1965 they moved into what had been the parsonage of the New Boston Congregational Church in New Boston. A homemaker and mother of two children, Cora worked

locally as a housekeeper. Earl died in 1990. Cora lived at the same location, but in a new home, with her grandson and granddaughter, Rodney and Laurie Loring.

She was an active member of the New Boston Congregational Church and, with her daughter Sandy's help, cleaned the building between services. She also was active in the Council on Aging, the Lions Club, and the Sandisfield Historical Society.

Cora loved to read and took bus trips to various places with friends. She collected stamps, made quilts, and enjoyed flowers, card making, and also taking "road trips" with Rodney her grandson and Laurie her granddaughter. She participated in and was a fixture at almost all community events.

She is survived by two daughters, Sandra Morrison and her husband Ralph of Sandisfield, and Evelyn Loring and her husband, Joe, of Otis. She also leaves her grandson, Rodney Loring and his wife Laurie of Sandisfield.

She was predeceased by her husband, Earl, her three brothers, Arthur, Oliver, and Homer, and three sisters, Helen Genung, Fanny Hamilton, and Mabel O'Brien, and by her grandson, Joseph Loring, Jr. Before their deaths, Cora's sisters, Helen, Fanny and Mabel, lived nearby in West New Boston. Many extended family members reside in or near Sandisfield and across southern Berkshire County: the Springs, Rorabacks, Hamiltons, O'Briens, Margrafs. All are long-time Sandisfield family names related directly or by marriage to the Springs of Spectacle Pond and the Beech Plain farm.

Funeral services were held at the Kelly Funeral Home in Lee, with the Reverend Toby Quirk officiating. Burial will be at the Center Cemetery in Sandisfield in the spring. Those wishing to make a donation in Cora's name to the New Boston Congregational Church may send a check in care of Kelly Funeral Home, 3 Main Street, Lee, MA 01238.



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## DOING MORE WITH LESS

My hat is off to Sandisfield's roads crew for excellent service this winter.

As of mid-February they have dealt with at least a dozen significant snow and ice events. Working at all hours and under tough conditions they have kept the roads clear and safe despite being down one member and contending with aging equipment. Drivers always have a smile and a nod or a wave and they slow down for dog walkers.

Keep up the good work, fellows.

Ronald Bernard  
Cold Spring Road

## FROM SNOW FARM

We are happy to announce that enrollment is now open for our 2017 Floral CSA. This season we have a few new things to tell you about.

First off, we have teamed up with Fuel conveniently located in Great Barrington to offer Saturday pick-up for your flowers. Pick-up will still be available of course at Snow Farm on Beech Plain Road.

Secondly, we've added a Spring share to our offerings. After the long winter months we know the joy that those first colorful blooms bring to your life. As such, we have selected some unique double tulips and fragrant narcissus for your enjoyment.

We look forward to sharing another beautiful season of flowers with you. Please hop over to our website to check out our share options and to enroll. [www.snow-farm.com/csa/](http://www.snow-farm.com/csa/)

Kind regards,

Lindsey Noble Smith & Susan Tarasuk

## February Snow and Ice

The second month of 2017 was tough on drivers and bikers, but good for skiers and photographers.

Photo by Tom Jacobs.



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## Winter Snowfall and Extreme Temperature 2016-2017



Snow, as measured/estimated in inches at a Beech Plain back-yard weather station

Oct-Dec . . . . .	46.5
Jan 4-6 . . . . .	2.0
Jan 7 . . . . .	2.5
Jan 8 . . . . .	2F low temp
Jan 18. . . . .	ice storm
Jan 24 . . . . .	2.5
Jan 31. . . . .	2.0
January. . . . .	9.0
Feb 7 . . . . .	ice storm
Feb 9 . . . . .	9.0
Feb 10 . . . . .	2F low temp
Feb 11 . . . . .	2.0
Feb 12 . . . . .	7.0
February (as of 2/16) . .	18.0

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# NOW HEAR THIS!

*Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.*

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

## MARCH

**Pizza and Cards** on Wednesday, March 15, at 12:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging Meeting Room, downstairs at the Town Hall Annex, Route 57.

**Corned Beef & Cabbage Church Dinner** on Saturday, March 18, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Fire Station #2 on Route 57. The dinner will benefit the New Boston Congregational Church. There will be corned beef cabbage, carrots, potatoes, and assorted desserts. The cost is \$12 for adults and \$6 for children under 12. Takeouts and tickets are available at the door.

**Blood Pressure Clinic** on Wednesday, March 22, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging Meeting Room, downstairs at the Town Hall Annex, Route 57.

**Five Wishes** with June Green of HospiceCare In the Berkshires on Wednesday, March 29, at 11:00 a.m. at the Council on Aging Meeting Room, downstairs at the Town Hall Annex, Route 57. Come and learn about making your own end-of-life decisions.

## SAVE THE DATE



**Arts & Crafts for Children**  
Ages 2-102! on Saturday,

April 1, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Library.

Lynn Rubinstein will be hosting a fun arts and crafts activity for all! Participants will make bunnies, chickens, and ladybugs, followed by a springtime story. Please come and join your neighbors!

## EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

**Earning the Rockies: How Geography Shapes America's Role in the World** on Sunday, March 5, at 4:00 p.m. at the Stockbridge Library. Author Robert D. Kaplan will discuss his new book. Free.

**Living Downstream – Women, Nature & Toxicity Documentary** on Friday, March 10, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Bartholomew's Cobble in Sheffield. The documentary features the life of Dr. Sandra Steingraber, a famous scientist who left her career to find the relationship between environmental toxins and cancer after her own battle with the disease. Members of the Trustees of the Reservation, \$5; non-members \$10. For more information, call 413-298-3239, ext. 3013.

**Eat Drink Man Woman Film** on Tuesday, March 14, at 5:00 p.m. at the Stockbridge Library. Free food-themed film, open to the public. For more information, visit [www.stockbridgelibrary.org](http://www.stockbridgelibrary.org)

**Winter Photography in the Woods** on Saturday, March 25, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Bartholomew's Cobble in Sheffield. With a fine-art photographer as your guide, walk the trails at Bartholomew's Cobble and capture the light with your film or digital camera. Members of the Trustees of the Reservation, \$9; non-members \$15. For more information, call 413-298-3239, ext. 3013.

**History of Monument Mills by the Great Barrington Historical Society** on Wednesday, March 29, at 7:00 p.m. at the Claire Teague Senior Center in Great Barrington.



## Wanted: Poker Players

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Call John at 413-258-4788  
or email at [johnskripjr@gmail.com](mailto:johnskripjr@gmail.com).  
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**Donations of all sizes are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper.**

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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.

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*Editor: Bill Price*

*email: [w.billprice@gmail.com](mailto:w.billprice@gmail.com) or cell 413.429.7179*

*Advertising/Subscriptions: Ron Bernard*

*Graphic Design: Tina Sotis*

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