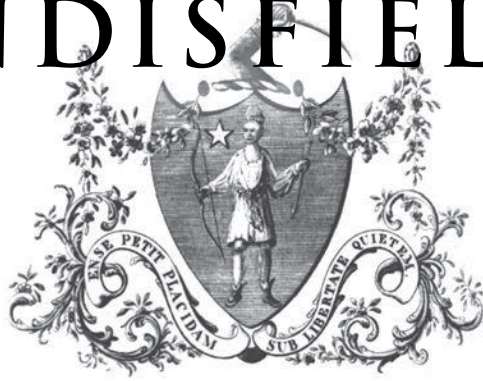


# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

*Tribunus*



*Plebis*

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

*Volume VIII Number 11*

*March 2018*

## Broadband Limbo

### STEPPING AWAY FROM FRONTIER?

*By Times Reporters*

Sandisfield is about where it was in late January, a kind of limbo. In January, Jeff Bye, Broadband Committee Chairman, expected to hear by the end of the month whether Frontier Communications was willing to go ahead with providing broadband to just Sandisfield and Tolland.

Frontier didn't call, and calls to them didn't make headway.

Thus, Select Board Chair John Skrip announced February 21 that he has notified Frontier that the Town will begin negotiations with other broadband providers. He left the door open in case Frontier decides to "come back" with a solid offer, but he is not expecting they will.

Once there were four towns in the mix to build and operate a broadband network, and the deal was much more attractive to Frontier. But when Monterey pulled out, and then New Marlborough, Frontier was left with the two smallest towns, Sandisfield with a population of a little over 900 and Tolland with about 485 and many miles of road to string.

The original proposal supposedly would have saved Sandisfield some \$5 million over the 15-year plan. But when Frontier presented their latest plan last October, the company asked the surviving three town's for a serious up-front tax guarantee that upped the cost significantly.

That's when New Marlborough checked out of the plan.

An important third party in the mix, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, has been working with Berkshire County towns

*Cont'd p.5*



## Moreover...

*"Ah lass, we barely knew you."*

*By Simon Winchester*

It has become an article of faith among those who believe in, or pray for, a vibrant future for our little town that *we need more young people.*

Of course we need the youngish couples who live here now to produce and raise children here, and we hope the attraction of the town will help keep the youngsters here once they have grown. We want youngsters who already live here to be able to afford to live here. But this is not quite what we mean.

What we want is new, out-of-town youngsters – millennials, to suggest one cohort – who presently live in Brooklyn and Hoboken and the coming quarters of Boston and Hartford. We want them to drive out here, come see and then settle here, and bring their energy and their creativity – and yes, their tax dollars – to Sandisfield, and bring some vim and vigor while we old-timers fade away.

There have indeed been some notable new young settlers in recent years. There was the Australian TV anchor who moved to a house on New Hartford Road. The banker-couple from the Upper East Side who bought and have now renovated an old property on Fox Road. The New Zealand lady on Route 57 who paints and dogs-sits and performs a myriad other helpful tasks for the community at large. The math teacher on Cronk Road who is said to harbor Political Ambitions (hurrah if true!). The photographers' agent from Manhattan who spends more of her time nowadays in her large white colonial on South Sandisfield Road.

And then there were the couple who bought the unruly pile on Sandisfield Road that used to be Daffer's Restaurant.

Most of us will remember Daffer's, maybe even a few with great affection. Its hamburgers were said to be the finest; but one dared not venture into the kitchen for fear of what one might see, or find. So there was some sense of relief when it sold, even though the family that moved in first – they kept a couple of cows in the garage,

*Cont'd p.7*



*We Will Miss You*

*Barbara Riiska of Riiska Brook Orchard  
Sandy Parisky, Co-President, Sandisfield Arts Center*



# Offices for Election and Calendar of Events

## OFFICES UP FOR ELECTION

### THIS YEAR:

Office	Term	Currently held by
Moderator	1 year	Simon Winchester
Selectman	3 years	John Skrip
Selectman	1 year	Vacant
Board of Assessors	3 years	Kathi Burrows
School Committee	3 years	Billie Anderson Pachulski
Board of Health	3 years	Roger Kohler
Planning Board	5 years	Willard R. Platt, Jr.

### As of Feb 26, the following have filed to run for election:

Kathi Burrows	Assessor
Billie Anderson Pachulski	School Committee
Charles Pease, Jr.	Selectman 1 year
John Skrip	Selectman 3 years

So far no one has filed for the other offices. Last day to obtain nomination papers is March 19; last day to submit nomination papers is March 22. **The Town Election is May 14.**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 19	Last day to obtain nomination papers.
March 22	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. Registering will be held at the Town Hall Annex from 2:00-4:00 p.m. and 7:00-8:00 p.m.
May 12	Annual Town Meeting, Fire Station #2, Rt. 57 at 10:00 a.m.
May 14	Annual Town Election, Old Town Hall, 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
September	State Primary – Date to be announced.
October 17	Last day to register to vote for the State Election, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. and 7:00-8:00 p.m.
October 22- November 2	Early voting.
November 6	State Election, Old Town Hall, 7:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

# Strike Up the Band!

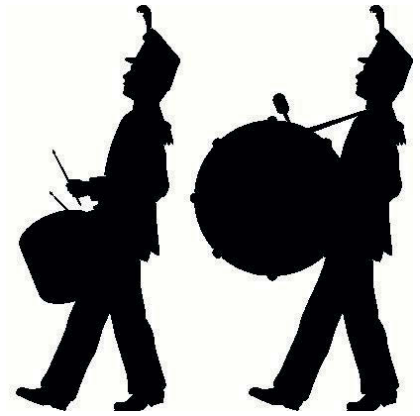
## GOT DRUMS, NEED DRUMMERS

By Ron Bernard

“It is something I have been thinking about for a quite a while,” said Tom O’Gara, who lives in the Sandisfield Center section of town. He was referring to the annual Memorial Day parade and his idea to recruit an ensemble of drummers to march in the parade “as a tribute to our veterans.”

He explained, “I happen to have a collection of drums and cymbals. I’m looking for a few people who would be willing to participate. No experience needed, just a desire to learn how to play a basic street beat, for example, on a snare drum. I have no experience with musical instruments myself, but I know an instructor who is willing to coach us for a few sessions.”

What a great idea. The 2018 parade is coming up soon so if you are interested call Tom now at (413) 258-4537. 📞



# Attention Monterey Readers

Due to the closure of the Monterey Store, additional copies of the Sandisfield Times are available at the Roadside Café and at the library, both indoors and in the outside box near the library. The outside box is courtesy of the Monterey News. 📞

# Rugg Bridge Repair

By Seth Kershner

In a phone interview, Highway Department Superintendent Bobby O’Brien confirmed that the Rugg Bridge’s steel beams weren’t in such bad shape as engineers had estimated. Although the surface had deteriorated and in some places disappeared, the beams had apparently held up. As this issue of the Sandisfield Times went to press, results from a density test on the structures were not readily available.



Photo: Setsuko Winchester

When a reporter visited in mid-February, concrete had been recently poured for the bridge “seats” – a kind of shelf that supports the end of the span – and deteriorating parts of the abutments had been chipped away.

“Everything’s going pretty smooth,” O’Brien told the Times. “They’ve been there every day.”

Whether the project will indeed be finished by June, as originally planned, depends on the availability of the deck, which comes in five-by-four foot prefab sections. O’Brien added that the polymer deck that will be installed is experimental, having been used in only one or two other bridges in Massachusetts. 📞

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## *A Cruel Month*

First we lost Barbara Riiska. Barbara, the matriarch of a large family, died in February. Barbara's warm greeting and smile whenever any of us stopped at Riiska Brook Orchard to buy apples or have coffee at her kitchen table will stay fresh in our memories for years. Working with her husband Bill, Barbara helped build the Riiska farm into a destination orchard for countless families and many busloads of school children.

And then we lost Sandy Parisky, an artist and friend, who also died in February. Sandy and his wife Flora bought a second home in New Boston in 1988. An architect and urban planner, Sandy was involved with the Sandisfield Arts Center almost from the start, serving as the Center's chairman for several years. He cheerfully took on every role that needed doing, from planning events to painting the walls. At his death he was sharing the Center's co-presidency with Susie Crofut, helping to guide the organization through another performance season.

Also in February came the terrible events at a high school in Parkland, Florida, events that have, in a way, reached all the way to Sandisfield. We've invited Rita Kasky, a friend and neighbor, to contribute a personal account of that tragedy in this month's Letter from the Editor section.

*Bill Price  
West New Boston*

## Too Close to Home

*By Rita Kasky*

On Wednesday, February 14, at around 6:00 or so I turned on the television news. What I saw brought me to tears.

Lines of young people were being escorted from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, hands up high, fleeing from the terror of a shooting that ultimately killed 17 students and teachers and wounded 14 more. Oh no, not again.

What I didn't realize yet was how close this new tragedy was to Sandisfield.

The next morning my brother called from his home in Florida. Two of my grandnephews, Cameron and Holden Kasky, were in that school that day, locked in a classroom, nervous and scared. To make it worse, Holden is a special needs kid. Cameron held him tight and told him they'd probably be there for a while.

My brother assured me they were safe, at least physically (we don't yet know the emotional impact). Then my brother told me to turn on CNN right away.

Cameron and four of his classmates were on the news. Anderson Cooper was interviewing Cameron, a high school junior. I was speechless as I listened to this young man, straight from a nightmare, pull himself together and talk about a campaign the students had spent the previous night outlining, a campaign to tell the world what they had been through and how the gun laws in this country must be changed.

I heard my nephew, Cameron, say on national news: "Our community just took 17 bullets to the heart. It feels like the only people who don't care are the people making the laws."

Asked by Cooper about politicians who say this is not the time to talk about guns, he answered, "This *is* the time to talk about guns."

Since that first series of interviews, the day after the tragedy, Cameron and his classmates have been on every major news program. I turn on the TV or radio – there they are again. They are relentless,

they are coherent, and they are committed to changing the laws about guns.

I saw a side of my nephew that I had never seen before. Growing up, Cameron (one of three brothers) was the clown. He teased, he horsed around, he was a jokester and, most significantly, he was a free spirit. He and his older brother, Julian, looked after younger brother Holden.

What does a teenager do when traumatized like this?

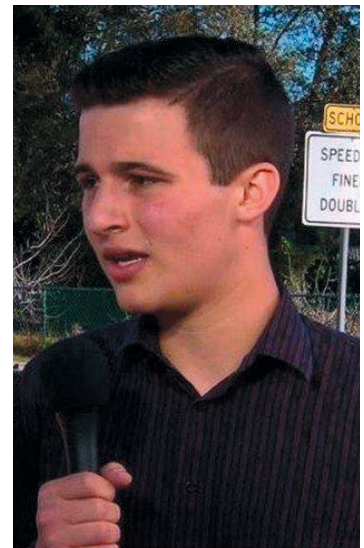
What Cameron chose to do was to stay up all night that first night with several friends and plan a campaign to bring the gun control issue out in the open in a way that hadn't been seen before. These youngsters, part of the school drama club, knew how to speak, how to express themselves, how to be a presence. They went viral!

Now, all of a sudden, I barely recognize my nephew. He's not the rascal I knew, he's a very mature, very articulate, sensitive, and outspoken young man.

The students from Parkland are the future. They are holding congressional leaders who accept many millions of dollars in campaign money from the NRA responsible for all the mass killings that have taken place with assault guns. These kids are heroes.

My nephews have heard gunfire *in their school*, gunfire that was killing their friends. To me, that's close to home. It's personal.

Let's hope it never happens in the Berkshires – or anywhere again. But as we too sadly know, it can happen anywhere. Write to political leaders whose inaction on assault weapons has taken away too many lives already. "This *is* the time to talk about guns." 🍷




*Cameron Kasky, the day after the Parkland school shooting.*



# Fatal Accident on Route 8

An Albany woman was killed in a car crash on Rt. 8 north of New Boston about 7:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 17. Sierra Riccio, 25, was driving north from Winsted when, according to Sandisfield Police Chief Michael Morrison, she apparently lost control of her car on ice. Her car slid across both lanes of the road and struck a utility pole. A report in The Berkshire Eagle said she was alone in the car and wearing a seat belt.

The accident happened near Mile Marker #6. Despite the efforts of Chief Morrison and Fire-fighter Alec Morrison, who removed the victim from the car and began CPR before the Sandisfield ambulance arrived, the victim was pronounced dead at the Charlotte Hungerford Hospital in Torrington, Conn., where she was transported by the Sandisfield ambulance.

The Massachusetts State Police Collision and Accident Reconstruction System is investigating the accident. 


# Help Finish the Job FIRE STATION #1 ALMOST THERE

By Bill Price

The renovation of Fire Station #1 is nearly finished, but needs a push.

The Sandisfield Fire Department bought the former American Legion headquarters on Rt. 8 in 2015 and has been rehabilitating it as a training center for the Fire and EMS departments. Fire Chief Ralph Morrison said the building could also be used as a community center.

As project manager, Ralph has overseen the construction work. "We've had great volunteers. A lot of people donated money to the project, and we're almost finished. But we still need just a bit more."

Tax deductible contributions in any amount are welcome and can be made to the Sandisfield Fire Department, PO Box 22, Sandisfield, MA 01255. Call Chief Morrison at 413-258-4742 for a private tour of the building or to learn more about the need for the center. 

# Solar Bylaw Completed

READY FOR YOUR VOTE AT TOWN MEETING

By Bill Price

The idea of solar energy, or solar anything, has never appeared in town bylaws.

Now, with interest in solar electrical generation increasing and offers being made to the Town to operate solar fields on Town property, the Select Board and the Planning Board thought it was time to write some rules and regulations.

Over the last few months, the Planning Board reviewed solar bylaws that exist in surrounding towns and worked with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, seeking their expertise and suggestions as to what should be included in a solar bylaw. A draft was approved by the Select Board in December and forwarded to KP Law, a legal firm that offers services to public and private sector clients, including municipalities, for review.


A public hearing was held February 13 where the plan was presented to residents for questions. The draft was praised for its thoroughness. At the Annual Town Meeting in May, residents will be asked to vote yea or nay on the new solar bylaw.

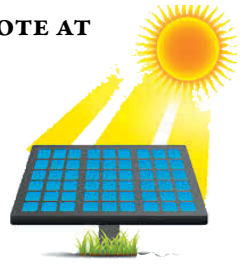
If passed, the new regulations will govern all solar installations. Small-scale installations include roof-, building-, and ground-mounted installations that occupy less than 1/8 acre of land and where electricity generated is primarily for on-site consumption. Large-scale is a system mounted on the ground, occupying more than 1/8 acre, where electricity is generated primarily for off-site consumption.

The bylaw contains five pages of detailed regulations, most of which concern large-scale installations.


Any resident considering the installation of solar panels for electrical generation on a roof or a field near their house should review the brief bylaw section for small-scale installation. It is not complicated.

Where the bylaw does get complicated is in the rules governing large-scale installations. But any company working on large-scale solar installations will have teams of lawyers and engineers to read and parse those details.

The Solar Bylaw draft is available for review at the Town Hall Annex during regular business hours and is on the Town's website at [www.sandisfieldma.gov](http://www.sandisfieldma.gov). Members of the Planning Board are Gary Bottum (Chairman), Tom Jacobs, Roger Kohler, Bobby O'Brien, and Willard Platt. 



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## Broadband Limbo

Cont'd. from page 1.

on a "last-mile funding program" that will provide money for each town. The program seeks to ensure that rural sections of the state, with low population and miles of roadway, have access to high-speed internet.

High-speed internet is now assumed to be a crucial ingredient to the survival of small towns. Skrip was quoted in a Berkshire Eagle article by Heather Bellow in early February as saying "... the situation is critical – low internet speeds are no longer an option for any town. It's like not having a telephone in today's society."

The article continued: "Skrip said he's hoping the MBI will find creative ways of helping the two towns, given their predicament. 'Something's got to give,' he said.

As reported in The Eagle, "...there are other possibilities, like a new MBI funding source, the Flexible Grant Program.

"According to the MBI, five companies are offering to serve at least 14 towns that are without access, including Sandisfield. Both Crocker Communications and Westfield Gas & Electric/Whip City Fiber submitted proposals for Sandisfield through this program."

In his column elsewhere in this issue of The Times, Skrip wrote that although Frontier, at least verbally, was still interested in servicing Sandisfield and Tolland, "unfortunately there has been no movement. So I've notified them that we will be attending meetings, along with Tolland, to listen to proposals from other fiber optics providers. I met with the MBI representative and they will support us."

Quotes from The Eagle, February 5, 2018, used with permission.

## Donated Trucks Serve Town

By Tom Christopher

The disastrous December fire destroyed not only Sandisfield's town garage but also destroyed or disabled all of the town's trucks, right at the beginning of the winter snow-plowing season. Neighboring Otis and Tolland generously provided help with clearing our roads, as did the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

To help our highway crew get back on its feet, the towns of Sudbury and Lee lent trucks and equipment. Two other communities made outright donations. The town of Needham donated free and clear a medium-sized truck, while Quincy near Boston gave three old but still serviceable, fully equipped, heavy-duty Autocar plow trucks.

As of mid-February, Highway Superintendent Bobby O'Brien had already put one of the donated Autocar trucks to work. The other trucks, Bobby says, need a thorough mechanical check-up before they can get out on the road. That check-up will have to wait until better weather when his crew has the time to take on that task.

## Big Questions for Garage Committee

By Bill Price

The brand-new Department of Public Works/Highway Department Committee met for the first time February 15 and again on the 22nd. The committee will meet about once a week for "as long as it takes" to figure out how, where, and when the Town should replace its garage and highway trucks and equipment destroyed in the early December fire.

The members are Joe Gelinas (chairman), Tom Jacobs, Select Board member Mark Newman, Bobby O'Brien, and Brian O'Rourke.

Asked if the committee had a deadline, Mark Newman said the committee would "proceed carefully, without an imposed deadline. We're just getting an idea of the direction we want to take. So far, everything is up in the air.

"We want to know if we should rebuild on the same site, which is not an ideal place for several reasons. But it would cost a lot to find another site for a garage. Should we replace all the trucks, all the equipment? How can we best use the donated trucks? How can the Highway Department be improved?

"We've got a lot to figure out. Plus we get to wonder how to pay for it all."

Agendas and minutes of the meetings will be posted.

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ST-MAR 18

# Sandisfield Historical Society

## 2018 Events



### SAVE THE DATES.

By Ann Wald, President

Following is a schedule of our plans for this spring and summer.

May 5. Appraisal Day, bring your antiques to find out what they are and how much they're worth. 10 a.m.-around 4 p.m. At the Old Meeting House on Rt. 183 at South Sandisfield Road. David LeBeau will be the appraiser.

July 7. Flea Market, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at Firehouse #2 on Rt. 57. This event has been growing and the hall now becomes filled with vendors. If you'd like to be a vendor,


we'll make room. Call me or send an e-mail. Number and email address below.

October 6. Annual Apple Fest. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. At the Old Meeting House on Rt. 183 at South Sandisfield Road.

November 10. Come celebrate our veterans with a speaker followed by wine and cheese social. 2 p.m.-4 p.m. At the Old Meeting House on Rt. 183 at South Sandisfield Rd.

December 1. Christmas Fair. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. At Firehouse #2 on Rt. 57, courtesy of the Sandisfield Fire Department.

You may think it's early to think about these dates so far in the future, but planning includes letting people know what we're doing and when things are happening. In the meantime, when the spring actually breaks we will do all we can to bring water into the Old Meeting House, with the goal of installing an actual bathroom.

Contact me with ideas and how you would be willing to help us this summer. I'm at 413-258-4415 or [annaw2@verizon.net](mailto:annaw2@verizon.net). 

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*"Ah, lass we barely knew you."**Cont'd. from page 1.*

and so seemed like fun people – stayed for only a brief while and few of us came to know them.

It was the next couple who came who seemed like an answer to our prayers: Seth Kershner and Sylvie Potashner, bright and energetic and interesting, he a librarian at the community college in Winsted, she a practitioner of alternative medicine with a specialization in the head and the spine.

Sure, they weren't exactly millennials, but they were in their late thirties. They weren't exactly refugees from Williamsburg either. They were locals – well, Seth was, while Sylvie was actually a Canadian from Montreal, though her parents had brought her to West Hartford when she was a fortnight old, after which she ticked all the boxes – Simon's Rock, UConn, then rooming in Lee. That's where she and Seth met, at the Red Apple Chinese restaurant while Sylvie was waiting for a takeout order.

They became a couple and soon bought Daffer's, but didn't move in right away because Sylvie was unwell – though of course none of us knew that at time. All we knew was that the cows had gone. In time, though they were replaced by a couple of goats – Annabelle one was called, then Daisy – though she apparently went to goat heaven – and Daffer, a nod to the past. You'd see the goats in their byres, merrily chewing their cud, or whatever goats do. There'd be cars in the driveway, lights, drapes. And signs of the presence of a dog.

Life, in other words, had come back. There were clearly people in residence once again, and given the visible menagerie, fun people like the cow folks too.

We didn't know who had bought the place until about eighteen months ago when Setsuko, my wife, was invited to give a talk at the college in Winsted. Everything down there was impeccably organized by one Seth Kershner, who ran the journalism course, taught in the library. We took to him immediately – kind, gentle, a fine mind, a winning charm. Where did he live, he was asked. Sandisfield, he said, to our jointly expressed surprise. And then the penny dropped: you're the people who bought Daffer's. Quite so, he said, or American words to that effect. You must come to dinner, we said.

And so he did – but not Sylvie, who was unwell, resting. We expressed the hope it was nothing too serious. Not any more, he said. Getting over cancer. Getting back her strength.

But cancer: a word once heard, impossible to

*Sylvie Potashner*

shake from the mind. We sent our best wishes, of course.

The number of cars outside the house then seemed a measure of what was going on. At first, just two cars, identical silver, his and hers. Then last autumn, another one, dark colored: Sylvie's mother, helping, said Seth. Then Seth's mother or Sylvie's father would also stop by. The two cars had become four, and then around Christmas, five. People would drop by with food, to help walk Ginger the dog, to send greeting. Sylvie was upstairs, resting. She hadn't much of an appetite. There was someone helping her.

The someone was a hospice nurse, we learned later. And that's when it all began to sink in. The weather turned bitter cold. The number of cars increased to six, seven. Lights were on at all hours.

And then on the last-but-one day of January, Sylvie died – peacefully, at home in bed, with Seth beside her. Those who knew her said things that, in summary, suggested that she was just the nicest, kindest, best human being imaginable. I am quite sure that was true.

It is hard to say farewell to someone you never

met. All I know is that Sylvie was robbed of a long and probably fruitful life, Seth was cheated of a long and undoubtedly contented partnership, and our little town, so keen to welcome the young, was robbed too, of a couple who might well have become a part of our communal future.

So we as a town should and will grieve with all those who knew her: Sylvie Potashner, born Montreal August 30, 1978, died Sandisfield January 30, 2018. *Ah lass, we barely knew you, but it's so sad to see you go.* 🍂



# From Your Select Board

By John Skrip, Chairman

As I write this column the temperature is 44° F outside. I hope that it is a sign of an early Spring; you know the groundhogs couldn't agree this year so, we shall see.

## THE DPW

We have had several meetings with the insurance company and are waiting for a final statement on the cause of the fire that destroyed the DPW building. We have received basic quotes for a replacement building. Mark Newman, representing the Select Board, has set up a five-person committee to explore options as to the best way to proceed with replacing the building and items destroyed. The committee will also investigate the workings of the department to get a complete picture of needs. The group will then make a formal presentation

Superintendent Bob O'Brien has submitted a list of all items lost in the fire. The insurance company has been attentive, and they have sent an initial payment of \$50,000 to cover replacement costs for some of the lost items in the garage (this does not include

the trucks). We will have more detail on totals in the next issue of The Times.

My hope is that as you read this, the condition of the River Road detour will have been improved using cold patch. This repair is one of the items that is high up on the DPW agenda.

## SHARED EMS SERVICES

I recently attended a shared services meeting at Fairview Hospital relating to the problems facing the residents of Berkshire County. All towns are having difficulties getting volunteers, keeping up with state certification requirements, and covering needed services, particularly in such a large geographical area as Sandisfield and its Berkshire County neighbors.

Our Representative Smitty Pignatelli was helpful in pulling the group together and expressing concerns and offering suggestions. Our Fire Chief and ambulance representatives were also present to share information about our ambulance service.

## TOWN BUDGET

The budget process is going well. As you may recall, we no longer want just a dollar figure needed to run a department but also a justification for said requests. This method allows each department head and the Finance Committee to look at expenses and redundancies.

Both the Select Board and Finance Committee will meet the first week of March to finalize the budgets.

As always, budgets will be subject to the approval of town residents giving the Select Board, Finance Committee, and individual department heads an opportunity to make their case to the people, who will have the final say.

## TRANSFER STATION

We have submitted a letter to the State relating to the clean-up needed at the town transfer station. We'll start that clean-up when weather permits,

## RUGG BRIDGE

The repair of the bridge is proceeding on schedule. It appears that the condition of the structure is not as bad as expected. This was good news and the Board has had regular updates.

## BROADBAND

Although Frontier, at least verbally, was still interested in servicing Sandisfield and Tolland, unfortunately there has been no movement. So I've notified Frontier that we will be attending meetings, along with Tolland, to listen to proposals from other fiber optics providers. I met with the MBI representative and they will support us.

Please feel free to contact me or any Board member with your suggestions and support. Contact information: 413-258-4788 or 203-233-0518 or johnskripjr@gmail.com. 

# Finance Committee at Work

*Contributed from Committee minutes*

This year, particularly, the Finance Committee, working with the Select Board, asked every Town department, committee, and commission to sharpen their pencils.

As John Skrip writes in his column this month, "We no longer want just a dollar figure needed to run a department but also a justification for said requests. This method allows each department head and the Finance Committee to look at expenses and redundancies."

The Finance Committee and the Select Board will meet in early March to finalize the budgets, subject to the approval of town residents at the Annual Town Meeting in May.

Benefits of sharp pencils are already adding up. Both the Town Moderator and the Finance Committee Chairman will forgo their payment for services this year.

To recap the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting January 20:

Discussed the proposed committee to review the scope and purpose of the Department of Public Works. Key points to submit to the Select Board and Town Administrator were:


- Construction of a replacement garage must be started by this spring.
- Two years ago, the Strategic Planning Committee developed a plan for a replacement garage and revised location that should be considered as part

of any new plans. This highway department garage plan was completed as part of a comprehensive review of all town buildings.

- The Strategic Planning Committee also has a roads assessment that was completed by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. That too must be considered in any plan.
- The Finance Committee recommended that Kathy Jacobs (or her husband Tom) be part of this study committee because of their familiarity with building plans, road assessment, and other information that the Strategic Committee developed.

Other business:

- Discussed the possibility that the committee would be able to hire Dawn Lemon as FINCOM secretary. (She was hired.)
- Handed out copies of FY19 budgets received to date. Handed out spreadsheet that summarizes budget submissions. Questions were raised that will be forwarded to Fred Ventresco, Town Administrator. (He received them)
- The Select Board gave a final deadline of February 5 for budgets to be handed in. (Some needed to be revisited)
- The Finance Committee Reserve Fund Policy was discussed and approved by a 4-0 vote. This policy will be forwarded to the Town Administrator and Town Accountant for review and then to the Select Board for formal adoption. The Financial Reserves and Forecasting sections of the manual will be discussed at a later date.

February minutes will be available the first week of March, when approved at that meeting. 





# Before We Build a New Garage

## LET'S LEARN WHAT WE NEED

By David Hubbard

The burning of our highway garage presents an opportunity.

We currently maintain roads in a kind of "as-we-go" system, and we have no standard of service or job description for our Highway Department. We need to learn precisely what the maintenance of our roads really demands, and we need to establish job descriptions and performance standards for the Highway Department.

The opportunity is that before we establish the final plan to build a new garage, replace the equipment, and proceed into the future, the Town should fund an engineering study. It would be irresponsible to spend money without knowledge.

### OUR ROADS AND BRIDGES

The key responsibility of the Highway Department is to repair and maintain our roads. We should determine the condition of the roads and bridges and the capital investments required to repair and maintain them. A consulting engineer should be hired to examine their condition as a foundation for a proper cost/benefit analysis. This will enable the town to vote for a defined level of service, with clear costs to properly scale the new building, equipment, and staff.

Here are some of the questions that need to be answered:

#### Winter

- What level of winter maintenance do we desire, and what are we willing to pay for?
- Do we want our paved roads to be completely clear after a storm? Are we willing to accept some remainder of ice and snow?
- Will we get our dirt roads plowed in the early morning? Or will we accept our current level of service, where many dirt roads are plowed in the afternoon or the next day?

### New Hartford Road

Recently the town invested approximately \$1 million in paving New Hartford Rd. and made three fateful decisions:

1. Adjoining strips of asphalt were butt joined rather than lap joined
2. No stiffening agent was added to the base
3. Only the base coat was put down, resulting in a road that is one-half as thick (strong) as designed

It was not surprising that the road began to fail within two months, as cracks appeared along the road. As water penetrates the cracks and we go through the freeze/thaw cycles, the road crumbles and potholes are formed. Sealing the cracks delays this process somewhat but once this process of deterioration starts it only gets worse as more cracks appear.

We have a million dollars invested in a half-built road that is sitting on a sub-standard base.

- Should we sit back and watch the road fall apart?
- Should we cut out and patch the bad sections?
- Should we finish the road with the topcoat?
- Should we chip seal it?
- What is the cost/benefit of each option?

Only a proper engineering study with cost estimates will give us the information required to make a sensible decision.

### Dirt Roads

Our dirt roads are made of bank-run sand and gravel. This material has minimal capacity to compress and cohere. As a result, when we get heavy rains the roads turn to mud and wash out and during freeze thaw cycles frozen ruts form which can cause a driver to lose control.

From time to time the Highway Department will drop a load of stone in the ruts as a temporary fix. Several times a year the roads need to be graded and rolled.

Should we continue this endless cycle of grade, roll, repeat, or should we invest in fixing the problem so that we can improve the roads and reduce maintenance costs?

### The Highway Department

Determine what we expect from the Highway Department:

- Should we maintain equipment and a year-round staff capable of peak performance in a storm or should we have private contractors on call so that we can "surge" plow during the 15- 20 times a year it snows?
- What do we expect our Highway Department to be doing when they are not plowing roads? Should they maintain town buildings?

### What We'll Learn

The first step is to fund engineers and consultants to provide us with the facts, and this should be funded in the coming year's budget.

An engineering study will provide hard data on:

- Cost/benefit of improving our road base and installing drainage that moves water away from (not just off) the road.
- The equipment, material, and manpower required to maintain, improve, and plow our roads.

We should be presented with detailed Gold, Silver and Bronze plans, and with a defined level of service and cost for each. At that point, the town can vote for the level of service and equipment, building, and staff required to achieve that service. 🇺🇸

*David Hubbard, a member of the Finance Committee, is writing as a resident/taxpayer and not in his role as a member of the Committee.*

#### Out on a Limb: an op-ed

*Subjects should be interesting to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents. Address either PO Box 584, Sandisfield, or email editor@sandisfieldtimes.org*

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# Our Town Needs More Income

## OPPORTUNITIES EXIST, IF WE TAKE THEM

By David Hubbard

Balancing a budget is a difficult task. It is important to focus on both income and expenses.

For some reason the Town of Sandisfield has not been able to do that successfully. Sandisfield operates by cutting expenses, reducing services, and ignoring capital expenses and repairs. We face millions of dollars of inevitable and necessary capital expenditures, and our property taxes have already skyrocketed and likely will again.

The Town needs new sources of income. Opportunities have been presented.

### POTENTIAL NEW REVENUE

One opportunity is the construction of solar fields on Town-owned land at Yanner Park or the Center Cemetery. The town owns the cemetery land outright, so if there are objections to using Yanner Park, the cemetery could be considered as an alternative. The Town owns 60 acres there, only 10 of which are viable for cemetery usage.

In September 2015, the Town received an offer from SunEdison to construct solar fields at both sites. At that time, the incentive structure would have enabled the Town to earn \$418,000/year from a ground lease. The Town did not respond and the offer and the incentive structure expired.

In May 2017, the Town received a proposal from ForeFront Power. The incentive program this time has a maximum possible ground lease of \$225,000/year. A formal proposed lease agreement was sent to the Town last September. To date the Town has not responded.

The financial viability of solar fields depends on the subsidies provided by the State and Federal Government. Over the last few years the incentives have been reduced.

On April 1 this year, all parties interested in subsidies must submit their applications to the

Commonwealth. The submissions are complicated and time-consuming and must contain:

- 1) An executed ground lease option
- 2) An interconnection agreement with Eversource. Eversource requires a signed lease option in order to process an interconnection agreement, which can take six months to finalize.

If the Town does not sign the Lease Option ASAP and work with ForeFront to get the Interconnection Agreement, we risk being shut out of this round of subsidies. If we are, we will likely lose forever the option to generate income since any solar project will have to undertake the cost of stringing 3-Phase Power over one mile. Without the maximum incentives and scale to offset those costs, the project is impossible to underwrite.

### Increase the Grand List

Without alternative revenue sources, the ever rising cost of replacing Town facilities will have to be paid for by increased property taxes.

The Grand List is a record of all taxable and tax exempt property in a taxing jurisdiction as of the assessment date. The real estate market does not judge Sandisfield as a desirable location, and we do not rank high on the Grand List. The median price for a house here is about \$200,000 less than a comparable house in Monterey.

The home value gap can be attributed to Sandisfield's structural deficits:

- No village center
- No town beach (or other amenities)
- High taxes/ few services.

Closing the home value gap by 10 percent would profoundly impact our tax base and add about \$178,000 per year to the Town's revenue. Sandisfield can't improve the market, but we can meet the market's expectation.

**Village Center:** We need to build a new Town facility, and there is no room to do that on Town-owned land. It makes sense to build the building on a piece of property that is large enough to enable a village center to grow up around it, as lots are sold off to private enterprise. The frequently discussed 20-acre site on Route 57 (across from Firehouse #2) is near Sandisfield's historic center and has approximately 800 feet of road frontage. The site has had six successful perc tests, has an approved septic design, has installed underground electricity, and currently has 15 acres of cleared and grubbed high meadow. This constitutes about \$110,000 of necessary site improvements already in place. We need to put that site under agreement.

**Lake Amenity:** The Commonwealth will work with the Town to allow creation of a town beach, camping facilities, and trails that would run from

Spectacle Pond to Yanner Park, connecting to the Clam River Trail and terminating at the Town Hall Annex. This will provide a town amenity and an attraction for outdoors enthusiasts to hike, go fishing, ride snowmobiles, hopefully swim. Signage at the various entry points could direct visitors to local merchants for food and lodging, injecting money into the local economy.

In order to build the trails and beach, we have to draw up a Master Plan for Spectacle Pond. That will cost \$75,000, of which the Commonwealth will pay \$50,000 and Sandisfield \$25,000.

### Decisions


The Town has important decisions to make. And they have to be made soon.

- Will we execute the proffered Solar Ground Lease so that all of these capital costs will not require taxpayer funding?
- Will we join hands with the Commonwealth and contribute \$25,000 to hire a consultant to draft a Master Plan for Spectacle Pond?
- Will we allocate funds to purchase the 20 acres and secure a location for a new Town building that has the capacity to support the growth of a village center?

We can no longer run this town by avoiding opportunities that are presented to us. Inattention and drift is not a good management strategy. The opportunities to execute the solar lease, to create amenities at Spectacle Pond, and to secure a location where we can build the necessary consolidated Town building and begin to create a Town center are crucial to the future economic vitality of Sandisfield. But all of them will disappear if they are not accomplished within the next few months.

Now is the time for the Town to act. Think about the future as you make decisions regarding the budget and our next member of the Select Board at the election in May. Ask the candidates two questions:

**What is the plan? How will we pay for it?**

**And ask the same two questions of the current Select Board members.** 

*David Hubbard, a member of the Finance Committee, is writing as a resident/taxpayer and not as a member of the Committee.*

### Out on a Limb: an op-ed

*Subjects should be interesting to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents. Address either PO Box 584, Sandisfield, or email editor@sandisfieldtimes.org*



# THE CONSERVATION CORNER

## Harvesting Yanner Park



### AND THE INCOME GOES WHERE?

By Bob Tarasuk and Adam Brown

As anyone who has driven along Town Hill Road the past few months has noticed, the Town is conducting a timber harvest on the 275-acre Yanner Park property.

This parcel of land was given to the Town in 1995 by the estate of Merwin “Jack” Yanner (who died in 1990) as a bequest “for the purpose of establishing a public park or public recreational area in memory of John, Mary and Jack Yanner.” Thanks to the foresight of Merwin Yanner, Sandisfield will benefit in a variety of ways from this property – both now and in the future.

A long-term forest stewardship plan, funded by grant money from Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, was written for the property in 2016 by Bob Tarasuk of Tarasuk Forest Management, with assistance from resident conservationist Adam Brown.

The plan outlined the Town’s goals for the property and also took into consideration the amount

and value of merchantable timber on the property, potential recreational resources, wildlife habitat, and other notable features. Once the plan was completed, Bob put the job out to bid and the Town received \$92,254.32 for the marked timber.

The western part of the property, along Town Hill Road, features 100 acres of mature white ash trees that are at risk of being lost due to the invasion of a forest pest called the Emerald Ash Borer. This insect is predicted to cause 99% mortality to ash trees in the region.

Keith Larson, a local logger, was awarded the contract by the winning bidder, Jericho Valley Land Services of Stephentown, New York, to salvage the stand. Keith is doing a fine job during this year’s tough non-winter weather. This is a two-year job and Keith works when the ground is frozen or dry enough so as not to put ruts in the skid trails. When the job is complete, this approach will leave the trails usable in the future for a variety of recreational pursuits by town residents. The remainder of the property, a beautiful 175-acres of northern hardwood forest, will be thinned in order to increase productivity and generate long-term income to the town. Keith reports that he is about halfway finished with the entire job.

While Yanner Park is an example of how the Town is able to manage one of its natural resources in order to provide income, it also is a reminder that the economy of Sandisfield relies heavily on the forest products industry.

Many families in town make their living from the management, harvesting, and processing of wood

products. This harvest is no exception – it is providing two local firewood businesses with 1,000 cords of firewood that they can then sell to local residents, as well as 500,000 board-feet of timber that will be sold to a variety of markets.

As of the writing of this article, it appears that money generated by the timber sale has been deposited into the Town’s general fund which means that it can be used for anything the Town needs. We feel that in order to fulfill the donor’s wishes for the property the money from the timber harvest should be set aside to help develop Yanner Park.

Previous fundraising efforts for the park, spanning 2004-2009, resulted in some \$18,000 being raised but eventually efforts halted due to a lack of realistic funding as well as the need for an open-space plan. Since neither seemed forthcoming at the time, efforts stalled.

Now Yanner Park has been included as a goal in the Town’s Master Plan, and the Town has a significant chunk of money available. Funds for site planning or to compete for matching grants for improvements to Yanner Park (through the MA DCR Recreational Trails program) will be necessary to turn Yanner Park into a recreational resource for the benefit of residents and visitors. It would be wise for the town to plan for these future expenses accordingly.

*Both authors are Sandisfield residents. Bob Tarasuk is a licensed forester and owner of Tarasuk Forest Management. Adam Brown holds a M.S. in Park and Natural Resources Management and works as Conservation Stewardship Manager for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.*

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# A Good Eye for Nature's Beauty: Focus on Sandisfield

By Ron Bernard

Cynthia Flint Ragusa's professional-grade, close-up images of birds and wildlife and natural scenery in Sandisfield regularly appear in *The Times*. We asked her what drives her to photograph nature in the Berkshires.

**CR:** I have been taking pictures of nature as long as I can remember. I suppose it started when I was 8 or 9 and a family friend gave me a little box camera. My dad, Charles Flint, was a real outdoors type. He knew everything about nature and taught us kids very early to appreciate and to respect the environment long before it was fashionable. Dad would show us so many things about the forest and wetlands and the plants and animals. It was amazing and I started taking pictures of everything and have continued all these years. I probably have several thousand images of mushrooms.

**Times:** You seem to concentrate on Sandisfield. Why?

**CR:** There are several reasons. First, although I grew up in East Lee, I have family roots in Sandisfield. My grandfather, Lyman Flint, was a carpenter and mason who worked all over town. He died in Sandisfield in 1966. My two favorite aunts were Alice (married to Joseph O'Brien) and Helen (Bill Lasch). I was very close to them and spent weeks at a time with them.

In 1971, dad bought an old cottage on Cold Spring Road and we made it our family summer camp. I lived there full-time for several years and that was when I really bonded with the stretch of beaver ponds and wetlands there, filled with life, an enchanted spot. (See *Sandisfield Times*, December 2014, p.10).

By the way, my brothers Dan and Charles also share this hobby (nature photography). [Charles Flint is the well-known antiquarian from Lenox].

**Times:** You have a good eye as they say. Is this a natural talent or did you have formal training?

**CR:** I'm not trained in that sense but I have years of experience and good equipment (a Nikon, best for close-ups and a Canon for distance). My father was also a pretty good sketch artist which inspired me to draw and paint too, so I think it runs in the family. Photography is also art, the other side of the same coin.



Cynthia Ragusa at Work Photo: Ron Bernard

I love taking pictures of beautiful things in nature. For me it is a very relaxing and rewarding pastime. It never gets old because the land and the subjects are never the same. I have favorite walking trails and water falls, streams, and ponds. There are so many around here. From spring through fall I go out every day. Something always catches my eye. In the winter I am out at least weekly. Winter is best for photographing birds, always close-ups, of course.

**Times:** There is so much wildlife here. Are there any creatures that you have not yet photographed?

**CR:** Believe it or not, I have never photographed a fisher cat. And I want to get a mountain lion since everybody says they are around. There are always new migrating birds, too.

**Times:** What's next for you?

**CR:** I am building up a special flower garden using certain plants that attract particular types of birds and bees. I'm also always looking for new places. Areas in Tyringham and Lee are interesting. Northern Litchfield County in Connecticut is also great. I plan to resume doing drawings, in pastels, but my subjects will be from my photographs so that should be a fun challenge.

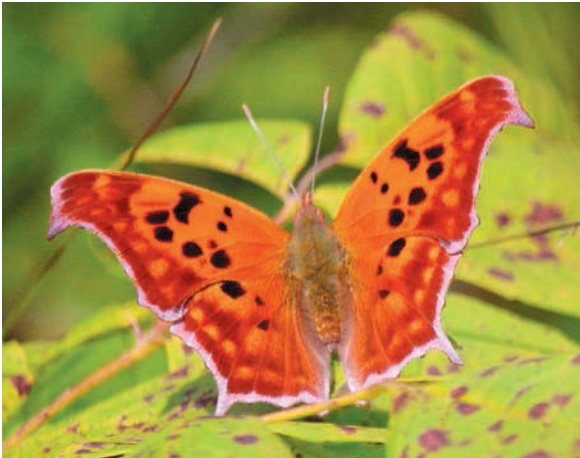
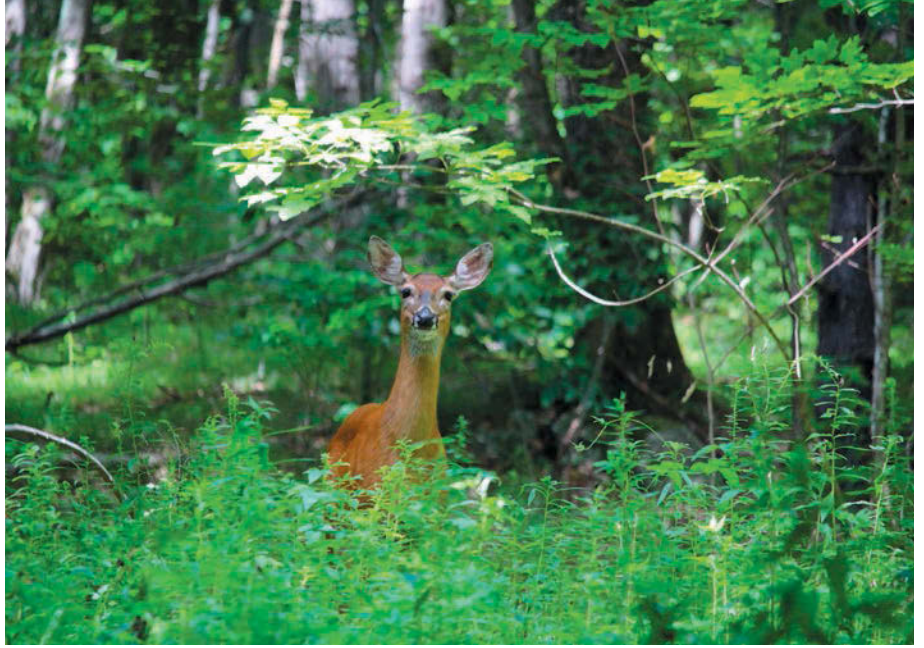
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Cynthia at this point has no plans for selling her work. She enjoys sharing her pictures in *The Times*, and they are regular items during weather segments on Channel 10 in Albany. "They have used at least 30 of my shots," she said.

Cynthia lives in Otis with her husband, Tom Ragusa. He is also close to the land, having just retired after 42 years with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Tom has devoted many years to researching and mapping the Knox Trail as it runs through Sandisfield's Beech Plain section and Otis and is considered the expert on the subject.

We look forward to many more of Cynthia's delightful photographs. 



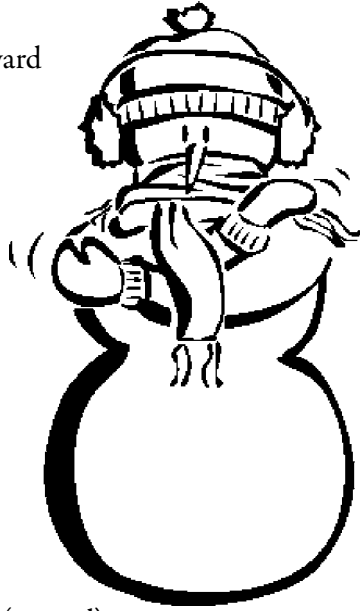




# Winter Snowfall and Extreme Temperature 2017-2018 To Date

Snow measured/estimated at a Beech Plain back-yard weather station, as of February 24, 2018

Nov 2017 . . . . .	2.0 inches
Dec 2017. . . . .	12.0
Jan 2018 . . . . .	15.5
Feb 2 . . . . .	3.5
Feb 4 . . . . .	2.0
Feb 7 . . . . .	2.5
Feb 18 . . . . .	4.0
Feb 22 . . . . .	1.5
February to date . . . . .	13.5
Season to date. . . . .	43.0 inches



Jan (season) low temperature -16 degrees on Jan 7 (revised)  
Feb low temperature -4 degrees on Feb 3  
Feb (season) high temperature 73 degrees on Feb 21



*Alex Bowman of New Hartford Road in South Sandisfield sent this January photo of a fox trotting across the same field as the coyote he captured on film last October. Like the coyote, the fox was caught by Alex on an I-phone through binoculars.*

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## Farmington River Regional School, Otis Preschool Registration and Screening

### NEW STUDENTS ONLY

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2018**

The Farmington River Regional School District will be accepting registrations and scheduling screenings for 3 and 4 year old children for our public preschool program for the 2018-2019 school year. Children who are residents of Otis or Sandisfield and who will be 3 years old before October 1, 2018 may be eligible for this program. Residents of neighboring communities are also invited to apply.

For the upcoming school year, our tuition-based program will offer families the following options:

- 5 half days a week 8:30-11:30 for all 3 year olds (minimum of 3 days required) Must turn 3 by October 1, 2018.
- 5 full days a week 8:30-2:30 for 4 year olds (must turn 4 by October 1, 2018)
- Sliding fee scale for eligible families
- The screening will be conducted in the areas of speech and language, fine and gross motor development and learning skills. Screening is required for all new enrolling children. Children currently enrolled in our program do not need to be screened.
- We strongly urge any preschool student to be potty trained by the start of school in September.

Interested families should call or email Teresa DellaGiustina at: 413-269-4466 or [tdellagiustina@frrsd.org](mailto:tdellagiustina@frrsd.org).

## Nonprofit Honorees to be Awarded

### NOMINATIONS ACCEPTED THROUGH MARCH

The Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires is launching an annual awards program to recognize people who serve the Berkshire community in the nonprofit sector. In partnership with The Berkshire Eagle, the NPC will present the first annual Berkshire Nonprofit Awards breakfast May 22 at the Country Club of Pittsfield.

Liana Toscanini, former Sandisfield resident and founder of the Nonprofit Center, believes many who work in the nonprofit sector go unrecognized for their accomplishments and commitment to their organizations and the community. "This event is long overdue," she said, "especially in our county where nonprofits are a huge economic driver and contribute so much to the quality of our lives."

Nominations are being solicited from across the Berkshires in seven categories: Executive Leadership, Board Member, Super Staffer, Unsung Hero, Volunteer, Rising Star, and Lifetime Achievement. Finalists and winners will be selected by a committee of business leaders. The nomination form is available online at [npcberkshires.org](http://npcberkshires.org). Submission deadline is March 31.

The NPC is currently seeking sponsors for this celebratory event. To date, major support comes from The Berkshire Eagle with additional support from Berkshire Bank as well as Adelson & Co., Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, and Lee Bank. For more information visit [npcberkshires.org](http://npcberkshires.org).

## Comings and Goings



**SYLVIE POTASHNER**

**1978–2018**

Sylvie Potashner, 39, died peacefully on January 30, 2018 with her partner Seth Kershner at her side after a two-and-a-half-year struggle with gallbladder cancer.

Sylvie was born on August 30, 1978 in Montreal and at two weeks of age moved to West Hartford, Connecticut. After graduation from Simon's Rock College and The University of Connecticut School of Social Work, she trained in craniosacral therapy at the Upledger Institute. She worked at the CHP Family Network and The Kip Rockwell Family Center and had a craniosacral practice.

Sylvie was insistent about recognizing and respecting her own feelings and she dedicated her life to helping others to do the same. She was a rescuer of people and animals and an ardent vegan.

Sylvie had many natural gifts. She was extraordinarily creative, as an artist, painter, musician, photographer, dancer, creator of crocheted rugs and many other craftworks. Her original children's toys were beloved by her nieces.

Two years ago Sylvie and Seth moved from Lee to a home on Sandisfield Road.

In addition to Seth, Sylvie leaves behind her parents, Susan and Steve Potashner; brother, Ira Potashner and his wife, Eva Urtasun Sotil; nieces, Amaia and Eliana Potashner; uncle Michael Caplan and aunts Pearl Caplan and Ronney Hellinger; cousins Leslie Caplan, Amy Grossman and Steven Caplan; Seth's mother, Barbara Kershner and many dear friends, especially Vicky Linscott, Farah Kidwai, Kelly Pitts, Anne Thalheimer and Sarah Thornton. There are also her beloved goats Daffer and Anabelle, dog Ginger, and the late goat Daisy and late dog Lucky.

The family is very thankful for the wonderful care provided by her mother Susan, her partner Seth, and dear friend Vicky Linscott; the helpfulness of Alex Tinari; and the care provided by the staff of the Berkshire Cancer Center and HospiceCare in the Berkshires.

A memorial service is being planned.

Donations may be made to HospiceCare in the Berkshires, Maple Farm Sanctuary, Peaceful Prairie Sanctuary or Goats of Anarchy c/o Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home, 426 Main St., Great Barrington, MA 01230. To send remembrances to her family please visit <http://www.finnertyandstevens.com>.

# Comings and Goings



## BARBARA RIISKA

1940–2018

In the early morning hours on Saturday, February 3, the Riiska family of Riiska Brook Orchard said goodbye to their beloved matriarch.

Barbara Riiska, born January 19, 1940, died peacefully in the comfort of her home, surrounded by family.



*Barbara with preschoolers, fall of 2016.*

*Photo: Dawn Lemon*

Daughter of the late Edwin M. and Margaret Robstock Dyer, Barbara was married to the love her life, William A. Riiska, for over 48 years. Barbara was the mother of six children, eleven grandchildren (Melissa, Andrew, Nicole, Katrina, Thomas, Eric, Scott, Maggie, Emma, Valerie, and William) and four great-grandchildren (Maleki, Mitchell, Rory and Charlie).

Her entire life revolved around her friends and family and those she loved dearly. Barbara is finally reunited with her eldest daughters: Valerie Wrba (Larson) and Karen McPhillips (Larson) who predeceased her over a decade ago. She leaves her daughters; Suzanne Riiska Avery of Otis and Bethany Riiska Perry of Sandisfield, and her sons: Randy Larson of Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, and Keith Larson of Sandisfield; as well as her brothers: Edwin M. Dyer of Lenoire, North Carolina, and William Dyer of Otis.

Barbara was a life-long resident of Southern Berkshire County, having lived in Otis for most of her life until moving to Sandisfield fourteen years ago. She and her husband, Bill Riiska, started planting trees at the family farm in Sandisfield in 1991. Today, Riiska Brook Orchard has over 2,500 apple trees and 800 blueberry bushes where people come from near and far to pick their own apples and blueberries each season.

Barbara was a beautiful, strong woman with a most distinguished voice and an embrace that warmed your very soul. Barbara loved the Orchard, which she referred to as her healing place after the passing of her daughters. She was a master in the kitchen and could whip up a hearty feast for a crowd in the blink of an eye. She baked pies, made jam, and canned fruits and vegetables each season.

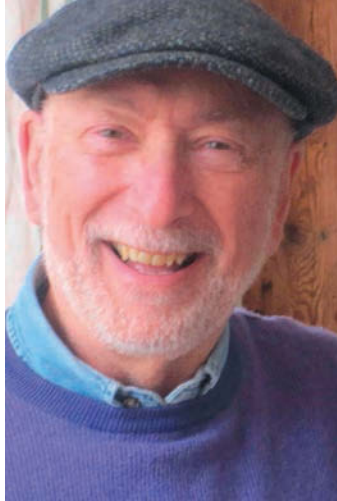
Before retiring to the full-time life of farm living, Barbara was a staple in the town of Otis where she worked at Berkshire Hardware Store, Farmington River Country Store, Otis Ridge Ski Camp and drove the Otis School bus. She was a mother figure to an entire generation of Otis kids, many of whom now visit the Orchard with their families each apple season. The highlight for Barbara every year was to watch the preschool children come to pick apples during their annual field trip.

Barbara spent her life caring for others and saw to it that her parents, her husband's parents, and her dear friend Audrey were able to spend their last days at home in the comfort of her care. Barbara was a true believer in the good of people and the concept of paying it forward. She was a salt of the earth woman who will be dearly missed by so many.

Funeral Services for Barbara were held February 9 at the Kelly Funeral Home in Lee with the Rev. Roger Zimmerman, officiating. Burial in the Otis Cemetery will held in the spring. Those wishing to do so may make a donation to HospiceCare in the Berkshires in care of Kelly Funeral Home, 3 Main St., Lee, MA 01238. If you would like to leave a message of condolence or share pictures, please visit [www.kellyfuneralhome.net](http://www.kellyfuneralhome.net).



# Comings and Goings



## SANDY PARISKY

1940-2018

Sandy Parisky of New Boston and Hartford, co-president of the board of the Sandisfield Arts Center, died February 19 in Boston.

In announcing his death, the Arts Center described Sandy as a talented and generous man who “gave his warmth, imagination, and humor to all those lucky enough to know and work with him. His parting is a great loss.” Sandy was involved in the Arts Center almost from the beginning of its transformation from a former synagogue to the vibrant arts destination it is today.

Born Irwin Sanford Parisky and raised in Toledo, Ohio, Sandy completed a degree in architecture and urban design at Washington University in St. Louis. A European fellowship led him to begin his career in Europe with projects in Copenhagen and Paris.

Sandy and the former Flora Bowles were married in 1968 in Denmark.

In the United States, Sandy worked in San Francisco, New York City, and Connecticut to ensure that public green spaces were refurbished for future generations and remained as accessible as they were majestic.

After establishing Parisky Associates and the Bushnell Park Foundation in the early 1980s, Sandy partnered with Quennell Rothschild Associates in the celebrated restoration of the New Haven Green and Hartford’s Bushnell Park.

Since retirement, Sandy embarked on a new career of painting, pursuing constant study, and exhibiting widely. He continued his involvement with the Arts Center where he volunteered in many ways, always bringing his clear mind and willingness to join in and tackle all sorts of tasks.

Sandy would “roll up his sleeves,” said Susie Crofut, co-president with him at the Center, “rake leaves in the spring, clean up coffee cups and wine glasses after an event, search out wonderful talent to bring to the stage, and get on the stage himself with the Sandisfield Players. Sandy and his wife Flora were part of the cast of almost every production starting with *Rascal and Others*, then *Our Town*, *Under Milk Wood*, *Shakespeare Scenes*, and *A Christmas*

*Carol*. A highlight, of course, was traveling with the Players to the Minack Theatre in Cornwall, England in 2016 where, like everyone else, they clambered down the 95 steps to the stage looking over the sea and back up for seven performances.”

Sandy’s deep love of art, good design, travel, and, above all, his family was unmistakable to those who knew him. But so many more continue to enjoy his lasting work as they stroll or play through the green spaces and parks Sandy worked so hard to rejuvenate.

Sandy is survived by Flora, to whom he was married fifty years, and four daughters: Katherine, Elizabeth, Jennifer, Rebecca; nine grandchildren: Neviah, Liam, Andrew, Silvia, Alexander, Xavier, Anna, Brenna, and Cory.

A memorial service was held February 25 at Temple Sinai in Brookline, Massachusetts, attended by many of Sandy and Flora’s Sandisfield friends. Memorial donations may be made to the Sandisfield Arts Center, 5 Hammertown Road, Sandisfield, MA 01255.

A celebration of Sandy’s life will be held this spring at the Arts Center.



*Sandy helping to break ground for the Sandisfield Arts Center, May 2002. Photo: Richard Migot*



## Letters to the Editor



### YET ANOTHER ROCK STAR

I saw the article from Gerald Bethge last month about the time Aerosmith came to town and rented a house off West Street. They are not the only rock stars that visit that area. I bring my good buddy Johnny April, the bassist from the rock band Staind, out fishing in my canoe at West Lake. He's a cool guy. Here he is with a catch out back in the cove there. We practice catch and release, so the fish may still be swimming around the lake.

*Fran Lewis  
West Springfield*

### THANKS, BOBBY

I would like to commend Bobby O'Brien for his responsiveness to my call for help on behalf of two guests coming to our house for the first time. Coming from South Egremont, they were unfamiliar with the detour on Route 57 and turned up Silverbrook Road rather than crossing the bridge onto River Road. They continued up the hill, realized their mistake too late and were afraid to move forward or back due to the sheet of ice lining the road. To make matters worse, they were in a small car without 4-wheel drive.

At Dolores' suggestion, I called Bobby who responded within five minutes, called the stranded guests to reassure them he would be there as soon as possible, and then sanded the road so they could drive down safely. They were at my house within a half hour.

Thanks, Bobby. We are all very grateful to you.

*Ellen Croibier  
New Boston*

# Preparing Habitat for Cottontails

## TOLLAND SITE TO BE CLEARED


*Submitted by Mass Audubon*

The New England cottontail, the imperiled native Massachusetts rabbit, continues to be at risk, having lost nearly 90 percent of its range in the Northeast over the past 50 years. Tolland is one of a few locations in the state that have been designated as New England cottontail recovery areas, and cottontails have been confirmed nearby.

As part of a continuing effort by state agencies and conservation groups to help the species survive, Mass Audubon in March will create a patch of young forest at its 108-acre Richardson Brook Wildlife Sanctuary off Route 57 in Tolland.


The work will involve removing most trees from a 13-acre patch of white pine and hardwoods, while retaining some trees for wildlife and seed production. The project will include construction of large brush piles in the cleared area to provide cover for rabbits and birds.

Although a 150-foot buffer will be left between Rt. 57 and the site, the transition from forest to shrub land may appear shocking. The project will involve the use of chainsaws and heavy logging equipment. Stumps and downed tree tops will be strewn over the project area, and remnant trees will appear scattered and thin over the slash.

However, within a growing season or two, the cleared area will start to form the dense cover favored by shrub land-related species, including songbirds such as chestnut-sided warbler, indigo bunting, and eastern towhee, in addition to New England cottontail. Black bear, moose, and white-tailed deer will doubtlessly also find food and shelter in the cleared area. Within a few years the site will be a prime habitat for these species and more. 

## The Kids Go Tubing

In early February the Farmington River Elementary School sent students and teachers tubing at Butternut Ski Resort near Great Barrington. Taj Richard of Sandisfield, above, had a great time. "It was a beautiful winter day," said Wendy Berman of the PTA. "Reports were that 'it was the best day ever!'"

The PTA's annual Cash Calendar Fundraiser is now underway with 33 chances to win. Daily drawings continue until March 31. List of winners sent via email at the end of each week, as well as posted on the school's website ([www.frrsd.org](http://www.frrsd.org)) and PTA Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/frrsdpta/](http://www.facebook.com/frrsdpta/)). The Cash Calendar is our most productive and fun way to raise money for the PTA, which provides Farmington River students, families, and staff with a host of activities throughout the year. 







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\$12. for adults • \$6. children under 12. | Tickets available at the door. Take-outs welcome.



# Now Hear This!

*Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.*

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

## MARCH EVENTS

**Playgroup** on Mondays from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m., ongoing at the Sandisfield Library Community Room. Pre-registration not necessary, just come in. Suitable for children up to age 5 with their caregiver. The playgroup features a story time in the library. Also, children will be introduced to skills they will need when they begin school. Led by Nina Carr.

**Crafts with Lynn** at the Library. Date TBD. Please call the library, 258-4966.

**St. Patrick's Day Corned Beef & Cabbage Dinner** on Saturday, March 17, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at Fire Station #2 on Route 57. The dinner is sponsored by the New Boston Congregational Church. Tickets are available at the door and take-outs are offered. \$12 for adults; \$6.00 children under 12.

**Games & Pizza Party!** on Wednesday, March 21, at 12:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level of the Town Hall Annex, Rt. 57.

**Nomination Papers for Elected Offices due by Thursday, March 22.** Please submit to Town Clerk's Office.

**Spring Flower Arrangement Class** on Monday, March 26, at 2:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging meeting area, basement level at the Town Hall Annex, Rt. 57. \$10.

**Blood Pressure Clinic** on Wednesday, March 28, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging meeting area, basement level at the Town Hall Annex, Rt. 57.

## SAVE THE DATE

The next **Church Service** is scheduled for Sunday, April 8, at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church, Rt. 57.

## OTHER MARCH EVENTS

**Garden Planning for 2018** on Saturday, March 10, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Monterey Community Center, 468 Main Road. A panel of experts will answer questions.

**Soil and Shul in the Berkshires: The Untold Story of Sandisfield's Jewish Farm Colony:** A Talk by author of the forthcoming book, Lorraine German on Sunday, March 25, at 2:00 p.m. at the Hartford Armory, 360 Broad Street in Hartford, Connecticut. The talk is part of the Connecticut Spring Antiques Show, which charges \$15 admission. For more information visit: [ctspringantiquesshow.com](http://ctspringantiquesshow.com) or contact Lorraine at [madriverrantiques@aol.com](mailto:madriverrantiques@aol.com)

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*Alexandra Tinari*

*Ray Stollerman*



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Donations of any amount are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper. Please send checks to: The Sandisfield Times, P.O. Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255 or donate online at our website: [www.sandisfieldtimes.org](http://www.sandisfieldtimes.org).

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Diner, Otis Poultry Farm, Otis Woodlands (May-September), Knox Trail Inn, and the Laundromat. Locations in Monterey include the Library and the Roadside Cafe. Available also at the Southfield Store in New Marlborough. Back issues are available for purchase.

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