

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

Volume X, Number 2

May 2019

A REVIEW OF THE FY2020 TOWN WARRANT

How Do You Want to Spend Your Treasury?

By Tom Christopher

Annual Town Meeting is fast approaching (May 18 at Fire Station #2) and in preparation the town has published the warrant of the articles to be considered by the voters. As last year, the town has consolidated the articles into fewer, more comprehensive warrants. This year there are just 27.

But these 27 make interesting reading for you, the taxpayer.

We've summarized a few articles here, but to see the full Warrant or for more information, readers can obtain a copy at Town Hall or download a copy from www.sandisfieldma.gov/node/44/agenda/2019. Copies will be available at the Town Meeting, May 18.

Most notable is Article 16, the proposed School Operating Budget which the Select Board unanimously opposes. The Finance Committee was evenly split, voting 2 to 2.

Cont'd p. 6

The Return of the SilverBrook?

By Simon Winchester

A faint but distinct glimmer of hope for Sandisfield's hungry and thirsty: the lights seem likely to come back on in the SilverBrook Café, our venerable and somewhat troubled watering-hole down



by the old town hall, across from the narrow bridge over the Clam.

A young Connecticut couple has bought the property for a bargain-basement price of \$80,000. They will spend the summer taking stock of what they have purchased, but will then do their best, they promise, to bring the faded property back to life, probably as a bar and restaurant – much as it has been for most of its near-ninety year history. It will also change its name, if subtly: allow us to introduce, therefore, The SilverBrook Tavern.

And the scent of barbecue is in the air.

Melissa Gabso and Seth Fritch are both in their mid-thirties, from New Hartford and Colebrook respectively. Melissa is a formidably talented artist and designer and organic-farm marketing executive; Seth is a marine engineer, currently working on a 60-days-on, 60-days-off rotation on a boat that supplies oil drill-ships, in Trinidad. Because of Seth's unusually demanding job, work on restoring the SilverBrook won't begin properly until the early summer, and then will proceed in a somewhat halting fashion. But he and Melissa previously worked together refinishing and refreshing two forlorn old houses in Connecticut, with Melissa often doing an extra portion while Seth was at his job offshore. The couple's shared construction and carpentry experience brings a sound understanding of realities to their new project up here.

And there is no doubt that the creaking old SilverBrook needs owners with a firm grasp of the realities.

The recent price history of this 170-year-old, three bedroom, 4,000 square-foot building has the look of a flier's death spiral. Back in 2010 it was listed for sale at a staggering \$496,000, a price that was then cut to \$469,000, then \$350,000, then \$295,000 – the figure slipping month by month as owners grappled with a vast range of problems – some structural, some related to hygiene, some to the simple lack of passing trade.

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DRIVERS: PLEASE WATCH OUT FOR TURTLES IN MAY!



Say It Isn't So!

VILLA MIA CLOSES AFTER 18 YEARS

By Bill Price



Photo: Ron Bernard

“Oh no,” we said when we first saw the big sign in front of Villa Mia. But, regretfully, it is “Oh yes.”

Dia Klenja, a co-owner and for many of us the face of Villa Mia, told the Times that her Italian restaurant closed as of the end of

March when her husband, Tasim, known as “Tommy,” retired after 45 years operating restaurants. She said, “It was time for changes.”

Most of us in Sandisfield know Dia as “Dia.” Her name is in fact Dije.

Originally from Albania, Dije and Tasim met in Connecticut, married, and began working in restaurants, Tommy starting as a busboy. He “watched and learned the secrets of pizza dough and sauces from a boss who encouraged him,” and before long he and Dije were running Italian restaurants in Connecticut, including, for ten years, Portofino’s in Torrington.

Wanting their own place in the late 1990s, they found the site on Route 8 in Sandisfield, just south of New Boston, where for many years there had been a series of restaurants and breakfast/lunch counters. They tore down what was still standing and put up a new building, opening Villa Mia in 2001.

They built a steady local clientele and enjoyed working through the seasons here. Busy summers made up for slow spells during long winter months.

In several ways they became part of the community. Dije’s stand at local farmers’ markets were popular for her pastries and Albanian delicacies. A Facebook post on “Connect Sandisfield” this winter read: “A huge thank you going out to Villa Mia. My mother-in-law could not find our driveway in the dark and discovered she had no cell service. They let her use their phone and even drove down to our house so she could follow. Talk about a beacon of light in the dark.”

Villa Mia gift certificates purchased between November 2018 and March may be redeemed at Roma Pizzeria in Canaan, Conn. Dije wrote on Facebook, “They will honor them at one time use now through the end of May. Make sure you bring your certificate and enjoy eating delicious food!”

Dije told the Times she will return over the summer to tend her large potted dahlias and flowers that grace the southern entry to Sandisfield. To her many local friends and former customers, Dije said, “To all of you who supported Villa Mia, thank you so much. It was joyful working and serving all of you for so long. Love and much respect to you all!”



Were You There?

Sandisfield’s Memorial Day Parade, 1981, near the New Boston Inn.

Photo: The Record, Sandisfield Times Archives

Memorial Day Parade

SUNDAY, MAY 26

Sponsored by the Sandisfield Fire Department and American Legion Post #456, the Memorial Day Parade will kick off at 10 a.m. at the new Town Garage near Old Town Hall.

The parade will move south and east down Rt. 57, stopping for ceremonies at the New Boston Cemetery and at the Berkshire Skilled Care & Rehabilitation facility across from the New Boston Inn. The parade ends

at the American Legion Pavilion on South Main Street with a ceremony honoring all war veterans, followed by free hot dogs and refreshments.

Maria Domato, Commander of the American Legion post, and Fire Chief Ralph Morrison are co-chairs of the parade. If you’d like to march in the parade, drive your vintage car, or ride horseback along the route, call Chief Morrison at 258-4742 to give him a heads-up. Or simply show up near Old Town Hall by 9:30 a.m., check in with Ralph, and get in line.

Bulky Waste and Electronics Collection

A bulky waste collection will take place at the Transfer Station from May 11 through May 19. There is no charge for bulky waste (scrap metal, wood, furniture, etc.).

Please note that the procedure for turning in used or worn-out electronics has changed.

The electronics collection container has been moved from Town Hall to the Transfer Station. To dispose of electronics, first stop at Town Hall Annex and purchase a ticket/coupon from the Town Clerk. Take that ticket with your item to the Transfer Station and hand it to the attendant, who will open

the container for you. The new procedure is expected to be in place mid-May.

The disposal fees for electronics are, per item:

Refrigerators:	\$25.00
TVs: Console TVs :	\$20.00
Flat screen TVs:	\$10.00
Air conditioners:	\$20.00
Fluorescent lights:	\$1.00

All other small items such as computers, printers, laptops, and telephones are \$5.00 per item.

Household batteries will continue to be collected for free.

Bulky waste and electronics collections are offered as a service to town residents, at a net cost to the town.

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Making Noise

This month the Times reports that local resident Alex Bowman was sacked from the Zoning Board of Appeals by the Select Board because he wouldn't let go of his stubborn notion that the town should follow its own guidelines.

Reasonable people may disagree about what led to Alex's ouster, but it seems hard to disagree with his point in his Out on a Limb column on page 5 about a need for greater engagement by town residents.

Accepting things because "that's the way it's always been" – whether it's town buildings decaying or roads washing out or something else – is becoming less and less acceptable.

But civic improvements only come from residents getting together to demand change. By the end of World War II, our population was at an historic low – 370 souls – and the Town struggled

to maintain even minimal services. "There is not a road in town fit to travel," one resident complained at a 1949 Select Board meeting. But that changed when part-time and year-round residents banded together under the banner of the Sandisfield Taxpayers Association. Within a few short years, according to Ron Bernard's history, *Sandisfield: Then and Now*, their advocacy led to the "hard-topping" of 22 miles of road in Town – an improvement that facilitated commerce and allowed children to get to school more easily.

Fast forward to today. Route 57, the Town's main thoroughfare, has for years been so potholed that it significantly slows the response times of fire and ambulance service. Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito described Route 57 as "a public safety issue" during her visit to the area in April 2018. According to a report in the Berkshire Record, she promised to bring residents' concerns "back to the team" in Boston for review.

Since then: radio silence.

Clearly, Boston will not make such a major investment (estimated to cost around one million dollars per mile) without a lot of local residents making noise. Smitty and our Select Board are pushing on 57, but they need a whole chorus of noise-makers. Readers willing to send a reminder can do so by calling the Governor's Office of Community Affairs: (617) 725-4005.

Making noise can also mean running for office. In the upcoming Town elections there is not a single contested seat. Next time you feel the temptation to say "that's just the way it's always been," pause to reflect and ask: "But what if it were different? What would my neighbors and I need to do to make it so?"

*Seth Kershner
Sandisfield Center
Bill Price
West New Boston*

Possible New Source of Broadband Money

ADVANCE NOTICE FOR BUSINESSES AND FARMS – DEADLINE MAY 30

By Simon Winchester

There has been a fresh and encouraging development in the seemingly endless saga of persuading the broadband gods to smile on Sandisfield. Another pot of internet-related government money has appeared and it seems we have a chance of getting our hands on some of it, *but only if we act quickly by May 30*.

For Sandisfield to qualify, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), the source of the new funds, needs to know how many Sandisfield businesses and farms will benefit from internet services.

This will require current businesses and farms to fill out a very simple and no-obligation form by May 30. All businesses should apply; and all farms – which includes anyone who does logging or grows flowers for sale or any other form of commerce. If you have any kind of business in town, please fill out the form.

The forms, which, again, need to be filled out by May 30, will be available on the town website and on paper at Town Hall in early May.

Crocker Communications, in the person of the company president Matt Crocker, brought this news to a private meeting of the Select Board in late April. Two hundred millions dollars is being made available nationally, part of a program to

bring high-speed fiber-connected internet to rural America.

Inevitably, being a government program charged with doling out taxpayer money, the process is a little complicated. Applicant communities like ours first have to be rated, with a score between 1 and 100, to determine our eligibility.

If Sandisfield can get a cumulative total of 35 or more forms filled, then our chances of being able to apply for the grant are, Matt Crocker suggests, "pretty good."

Thus the need for local businesses and farms to fill out the form. May 30 is a crucial date.

The complexities of our potential broadband future more generally are legion, as readers well know. Crocker is currently not the only firm interested in Sandisfield; the publicly traded and very much larger company, Charter Communications, which has recently finalized a deal with New Marlborough, is also said to want a deal with Sandisfield, and town officials are scrambling to find a convenient date.

So there is some movement, after a long winter of discontent. To that end the town is currently being urged to spend \$30,000 or so on making a

survey of all the utility poles in Sandisfield as a way to help kick-start the construction part of the program. If that is authorized, you may well soon see people in cars looking unusually interested in our roadside furniture – a development that may offer residents a hint that progress is being made.

Only don't get too excited. Even as one as optimistic and hungry for our business as Matt Crocker thinks we're still two years away, maybe three, from getting fully-functional internet. And even then, probably only at kind of speed currently enjoyed by the good people of Borneo, Sudan and rural Afghanistan. We still have a long way to go. 🇺🇸

HEALTH AND WELLNESS FAIR

Free Health Exams

Free Admission

June 8, Saturday

10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

American Legion Pavilion

Route 8, near Firehouse #2

New Boston/Sandisfield

Board Member Sacked

STUBBORN PERSISTENCE GETS A RAP ON THE KNUCKLES

By Simon Winchester

In a move believed without precedent in Sandisfield's recent memory, the Board of Selectmen have voted to dismiss an appointed member of a government body.

With a unanimous vote at their April 1 meeting, the three board members agreed to sack the relative newcomer Alex Bowman from the Zoning Board of Appeals, calling into question his "judgment on zoning matters."



Alex Bowman with his 2-year-old son Louis

The decision brings to a probable end a complicated dispute which has been simmering for almost two years. The core of the argument was that Mr. Bowman had publicly challenged what he saw – and still sees – as the mentality that "this is just the way things have always been done in Sandisfield." He instead wanted town officials to follow the letter of the law and asserted that, in one specific case and maybe many others, officials simply do not, but instead ride roughshod over the rules.

It all began in the summer of 2017 when Mr. Bowman – a computer specialist who admits to being a stickler for good government behavior – noticed that a new outbuilding was being constructed beside an existing historic house on New Hartford Road, at No.117.



The disputed garage on New Hartford Road. Photos: Simon Winchester

Although living half a mile away and not an abutter to the offending property, Mr. Bowman was nonetheless concerned that the new structure seemed to be closer to the highway than the 30 feet mandated in town by-laws. He could find no evidence, however, that proper procedures had been followed in the erection of this building. On subsequently hearing that the owners were planning to undertake yet further demolition and construction on their 33-acre lot, he decided to keep "a watchful eye" on the developing situation, to make certain proper protocols were observed on this next occasion.

And, last August, the property owner – a Manhattan real estate broker named Jed Garfield, who with his wife Karen use their Sandisfield property as an occasional retreat from their Upper East Side townhouse – decided to tear down a rickety small barn and replace it with a new two-car garage. Mr. Bowman suspected that town bylaws were once again not being followed – most notably since the building and its replacement were also set back less than the required ten yards from the road – and commenced formally to lodge his objections.

Town officials – those on the Planning and Select Boards, as well as the Building Inspector, Eric Munson – then began to receive a blizzard of emails and other communications from Mr. Bowman, all objecting to what he regarded as the non-conforming nature of the buildings – both the demolished structure and its replacement, which was larger than and thus overspread the footprint of its predecessor. "Not only was it a completely new building," wrote Mr. Bowman in a letter to the Select Board, "but its street frontage has doubled in size and it appeared not to move back from the road."

Sandisfield's official response appears to have been a mix of a determination to comply with the existing planning and zoning rules, and a sense of weary exasperation that so little seemed to appease Mr. Bowman's stubborn insistence that these rules were not in fact being followed at all. He had also demanded that all construction be halted until they were, and insisted that the town's "zoning enforcement agent" be compelled to take the necessary steps.

In early February Mr. Bowman took his objections to the Zoning Board of Appeals – of which, to add further complexity to this already Byzantine case, he was a member (though he recused himself from all discussions). The ZBA was reformed only last June, after several years of inactivity.

Here he appears to have scored something of a victory, because the Planning Board, presumably acting as this "enforcement agent," did agree that Mr. Bowman's objections, as transmitted by the ZBA, did actually have some merit.

The Board accordingly told the Garfields, who had already been issued an initial building permit, that they must now apply for a new Special Permit

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All photos shown are the actual work of C.W.Nelson

requesting a variance in their plans. They duly applied, and a public hearing on their application was scheduled for March 25.

But the hearing never happened – in part at least because by then the Garfields’ new garage had already been built.

What did happen instead was a flurry of official hyper-exasperation, a lengthy and costly request for a legal opinion from the town counsel in Boston – and then the surprise announcement two days later that the first item on the Selectmen’s agenda for April 1 would be the “consideration and vote on Alex Bowman’s appointment on the Zoning Board of Appeals.”

Mr. Bowman knew immediately that his goose was cooked. He had prepared a four-page explanation, allowing as to how he was only making sure the town did things by the book, and – citing various legal opinions from the past – insisted that the town’s lawyers had got it all wrong.

Selectman George Riley, himself something of a stickler, read out the doom-laden five-paragraph note. Noting that Alex Bowman “did not accept the opinion of Town Counsel, nor the decision of the Select Board,” the very nature of his complaint about the Garfield house, “combined with his refusal to accept the outcome, causes the Board to call into question his judgment on zoning matters. The Select Board has therefore determined that it is not appropriate for Mr. Bowman to continue to serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals.”

Alex Bowman then read his own statement – interrupted once by Select Board chairman Mark Newman, who initially demanded Bowman “keep it short, two minutes,” though later said he was sorry for saying so – and then it was done. The Board voted unanimously that Mr. Bowman be dismissed. The room fell into an embarrassed silence, and Mr. Bowman walked out, with purposeful dignity.

The minutes of the April 1 meeting include the following: “In making this decision, the Select Board does not want in any way to ignore or minimize the valuable contributions to the Town which Mr. Bowman has made and continues to make in other areas.”

Massachusetts rules suggest that a Select Board has the right and duty to dismiss a member of a town body “for cause.” Whether a stubborn disagreement over protocol and process is, in a legal sense, “cause” for dismissal, is a matter for later. Mr. Bowman said subsequently that he was considering his options.

And as for the owner of 117 New Hartford Road, caught in the middle of this classically small-town brouhaha, “At first I was bewildered,” said Jed Garfield. “Why would anyone do such a thing? He’s a newcomer – surely he knows you settle more problems with honey than with vinegar. But he went ahead anyway – and then I became a little annoyed. He must have cost the town thousands in legal fees. But finally, when it was all over, I was just amused. And all I can think now is: what’s with this guy?”



Playing Defense WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO RUN A TOWN?

By Alex Bowman

Growing up, the best baseball team I played on was the one where the players learned to do the defensive fundamentals. Before we could even think about batting practice, we had to flawlessly execute each common defensive scenario. Whether it be covering a base, receiving a cutoff throw, or being a backup in case of an errant throw – everyone knew exactly what to do in each situation. Each player knew his responsibilities and understood that even the smallest breakdowns could lead to a disastrous inning. Focusing primarily on defense required discipline, and was a big mental change from treating offense and defense equally, but it paid huge dividends. Fewer errors led to quicker outs, which got us back on the offense. Simply put: defense won games.

I believe operating a small town is analogous to the game of baseball.

The “defense” here is the standard annual operations to keep the town running: budgeting and capital expense planning, tax collection, construction oversight, road and building maintenance, and bylaw enforcement.

Just as with any good baseball team, everyone involved in running the town, from elected officials to volunteers, relies on each other to know their role and efficiently execute their responsibilities. The hard work that goes into these standard operations is rarely, if ever, celebrated, yet if town officials do not focus on these fundamentals, it leaves the town vulnerable to wasted time, overspent funds, and possibly higher than necessary taxes. We have spent too much time using Band Aids instead of addressing the underlying foundational problems. When the town does not invest in proper processes and systems to assist our civil servants, they spend all their time chasing after fly balls and never get to bat.

The “offense” for our town is making visible and lasting improvements: rebuilding our most downtrodden roads, modernizing town buildings, accelerating broadband internet rollout, and offering easy online payments and permitting options.

Around town I often hear: “That’s just the way it’s always been done,” or “You’re expecting too much.” I understand the frustration from those who have been worn down and are now apathetic toward town government, but in order to make progress, we must be willing to take a step back, examine our defensive strategies and work on the fundamentals. We need to hold our leaders accountable to get these fundamentals right, so we can see our town start to get some wins.

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

Now Available

SOIL AND SHUL IN THE BERKSHIRES

THE UNTOLD STORY OF SANDISFIELD’S JEWISH FARM COLONY

by Lorraine J. German

SandisfieldArtsCenter.org/GiftShop

A Review of the FY2020 Town Warrant

Cont'd from p. 1

Article 16 calls for a \$121,000 increase in the town's contribution to the school operations budget. This in part reflects an increase of five students in Sandisfield's enrollment in the Farmington River School District.

However, the Sandisfield Select Board is disputing the formula used to parcel out the costs between towns. If the original formula for apportioning costs that was agreed upon by Sandisfield and Otis when the School District was founded in 1992 were to be used, Sandisfield's contribution would drop by \$22,000. Thus the opposition of the Select Board (and half the Finance Committee).

By the time of the Town Meeting, the Select Board will be able to explain the ramifications of what will happen should the town vote against the school budget.

Another warrant article that makes interesting reading is Article 10, which calls for an appropriation of some \$57,000 to pay the salary of a proposed new public safety officer. As noted in the Times last month, Fire Chief Ralph Morrison and Police Chief Mike Morrison have supported the creation of this position, saying that the public safety officer could reduce pressure on their departments and the town's volunteer rescue squad by serving as a daytime first responder and being "on call" for four hours daily beyond the regular shift of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., manning the phone at the police desk.

If the vote on the creation of this position is a yes, then the increase in Police and Fire Department salaries proposed in the following Article 11 would be amended and decreased.


Another notable increase to the town's budget would be the \$10,000 for employee incentives called for in Article 2. This reflects in part a

change of bookkeeping. Such incentives were previously awarded by contract to Department of Public Works employees and formerly were listed in its budget. But the town is extending this program to all the town employees, subject to their performance evaluations, with a tiered system awarding from \$300 to \$1,000.

Article 5 includes a proposed increase in employee benefits of a little over \$40,000. This reflects the cost of health insurance for the proposed public safety officer, as well as the cost of another employee who has opted to join the town's health insurance plan. It also includes a payment of \$3,500 in lieu of health insurance to one employee who will continue not to participate in the plan (this payment occurs only every third year). Added to these payments is an increase of 6 percent in the expected total cost of health insurance.

Articles 7 and 8 propose, respectively, allocations of \$45,000 and \$60,000 for the purchases of a new F350 Pickup truck and a used loader backhoe. These two pieces of equipment would replace similar but worn-out machines in the DPW's arsenal.

Article 22 calls for the raising of \$100,000 to be added to the Stabilization Trust Fund for 2020. This fund serves as a 'rainy day' fund to meet unexpected expenses. Article 23 calls for transferring \$300,000 from the Free Cash account to the Capital Improvement Stabilization Account; Article 24 calls for the appropriation of a further \$200,000 for that purpose.

And finally, a proposed amendment to the town's bylaws would establish a series of escalating penalties for what has been an ongoing problem, false alarms received by the Police and Fire Departments. 

At Yanner Park

A COMMITTEE UPDATE


By Adam Brown

The purpose of this new committee is to advise the town with regard to developing useful recreational infrastructure and managing the natural resources of Yanner Park. The park is a 275-acre parcel of land located between Town Hill and Hammertown Roads that was given to the town for the purpose of "recreation" in 1995.

The committee, which began meeting last September, consists of the following members: Adam Brown (chair), Jessica Cofrin, Paul Gaudette, Kathy Jacobs, Roger Kohler, Bob Tarasuk, and Sue Tarasuk.

The committee's goals for the FY 2020 budget term are:

1. Construct a small-scale 3-season parking lot on the Town Hill Road side of the property (main entrance).
2. Beautification of the Town Hill Road entrance (mowing, plantings, sign repair, informational kiosk).
3. Coordination and implementation of community engagement and educational events.
4. Clean-up of residual cabin-site debris.
5. Pursue grant-funding for trail design/construction and removal of invasive plant species along Town Hill Road.

The committee typically meets on a monthly basis and thus far we have been primarily engaged in planning for the five goals listed above. We hope to begin more visible and tangible improvements to the property this spring and summer. 

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A Return of the Silverbrook?

Cont'd from p. 1



*The SilverBrook Café today.
Photo: Sandisfield Times reporters*

The last true owners, Sandisfield residents Connie d'Andrea and her father, tried gamely to make it work as bar and general store – but then the note-holders, the Toronto Dominion bank, took the property back. Bizarrely, they then agreed to sell it once again to Ms. d'Andrea two years of decay later, and this time for a paltry \$49,000 – less than ten percent of its asking price a decade earlier

Connie d'Andrea, after toying with the idea of trying to reopen, then put it back on the market yet again. After six nail-biting months, Ms. Gabso and her husband chanced upon the listing, and negotiated a purchase price of \$80,000—about a third of the assessed value of what many will see as a seriously distressed property.

Yet the SilverBrook has good bones. It also now has a more-than-acceptable septic system, a well-equipped professional kitchen and sufficiency of features to at least allow the commencement of a new business. Many scores of thousands of dollars need to be spent to make it a fully-functioning business – but this is a reality with which Melissa and Seth say they feel comfortable.

So their current plan is designed to match the challenges, and they intend to move very cautiously into the project.

In a blow to some locals, they have decided against opening a general store, because, as Seth said, “operating a retail business in a remote area has never been easy and may now be nearly impossible because of Amazon. At most I could see

having a few basic local food items, but we'd have to do research into that topic.”

They want first of all to refurbish the two apartments on the upper floors—their intention being to market them as short-term rentals, via AirB&B or HomeAway, and get an income stream flowing.

Once the apartments are up and running, the pair hope to start work on the Tavern side of the business. They appear to have thought this through. Their principal idea is to invest in a smoker, and to have smoked barbecue be the centerpiece of their cuisine. “To our knowledge there isn't that kind of a restaurant in the area, and it's a type of cooking that has been spreading from the areas where it was traditionally practiced. It's also a type that would match well with the building aesthetic and its rural location.”



*Melissa Gabso and Seth Fritch,
ambitious new owners of the SilverBrook.*

The timetable is uncertain, although the hope is that the two apartments might be ready by the end of summer. The possibility then presumably exists that the aroma of barbecue might become a wafting component of Sandisfield's atmosphere by Christmas, surely a gift for us all. And, after so many years of nothing, a truly great relief. 🍷



Sandisfield Arts Center

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Sandisfield, MA
413 258 4100

SANDISFIELDARTSCENTER.ORG

MAY



In the Gallery
through MAY 25
THAD KUBIS
“CAPTURING LIGHT”
PHOTOS



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Sir William Trio – Jazz



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Police/Fire/EMS Logs



POLICE

POLICE, CONT'D

- March 13 Assist citizen, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 14 911 hang-up, Sears Road
- March 15 Mutual aid, structure fire, New Marlborough
- March 15 Equipment fire, South Main Street
- March 16 Medical call, Town Hill Road
- March 16 Assist other agency, Reservoir Road
- March 16 BA Alarm, Beech Plain Road
- March 18 Vandalism, Sandisfield Road
- March 19 Court service, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 20 Property Retrieval, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 20 Protective order violation, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 21 Protective order violation, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 23 Protective order violation, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 26 Court service, Sandisfield Road
- March 26 Court service, Winsted Police

March 2019 Incidents, 911 Calls

- March 1 Medical call, New Hartford Road
- March 2 Disabled motor vehicle, New Hartford Road
- March 8 Chimney Fire Silverbrook Road
- March 9 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
- March 9 Medical call, Tolland
- March 9 Breaking and entering, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 10 Well-being check, Sandisfield Road
- March 10 Follow-up investigation, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 11 Well-being check, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 12 Suspicious motor vehicle, Dodd Road
- March 12 Follow-up, Sandy Brook Turnpike

- March 27 Medical call, New Hartford Road
- March 27 Well-being check, New Hartford Road
- March 28 Erratic operator, North Main Street
- March 29 Medical call, Tolland
- March 29 Well-being check, Sandy Brook Turnpike
- March 30 Erratic operator, North Main Street
- March 30 911 Hang-up, Norfolk Road



FIRE

March 2019 Incidents, 911 Calls

- March 8 Chimney fire
- March 8 Tree on wires, Route 8 South
- March 15 Mutual aid, structure fire, New Marlborough
- March 15 Equipment fire, South Main Street



EMS

March 2019 Incidents, 911 Calls

- March 1 Medical call, transport to Charlotte-Hungerford Hospital
- March 1 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 6 Medical call, Tolland, transport to Noble Hospital
- March 7 Medical call, Tolland, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 8 Medical call, Tolland, transport to Noble Hospital
- March 8 Medical call, Sandisfield crew not able to respond, Otis Rescue transported to Berkshire Medical Center
- March 9 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 9 Medical call, Tolland, transport to Charlotte-Hungerford Hospital
- March 16 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 20 Medical call, Tolland, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 27 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
- March 29 Medical call, Tolland, cancelled en route
- March 29 Medical call, Tolland, cancelled en route

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FOR HOURS OF OPERATION AND ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULE

Select Board Report

Our main focus in April was finalizing the Town Meeting Warrant.

We had Ralph and Mike Morrison in to pin down the final details of costs for the proposed Public Safety Officer position, including, if that proposal passes, reductions in the Police and Fire Department budgets in order to help pay for the position. Based on this discussion, the Board agreed to put the proposal on the warrant with a vote of support.

We also had both the Business Manager and School Committee Chair for the School District in to discuss the school budget and the formula used to determine the Town's share. The Board does not support the statutory formula now in use, and wants the District to use the original formula agreed to when the District was formed.

We held a Public Hearing regarding a garage at 117 New Hartford Road. Per advice of Town Counsel, the building permit remains valid.

We awarded a mowing contract for the next two years, and hired a temporary Assessor's Clerk to fill in until September 1.

The Green Team met to focus on energy upgrades for the Town Hall Annex, and two valuable MVP meetings took place to determine our Town's vulnerability to climate change.

We also met with the Tolland Select Board and Finance Committee regarding the Public Safety Officer position and Tolland's contribution to this proposal. Sandisfield provides ambulance service to Tolland, so Tolland has a stake in its continued operation.

A Bulky Waste and electronics collection was approved for May (see announcement on page 2).

See you at Town Meeting, May 18! 🍷

Mark Newman
Brian O'Rourke
George Riley

Editor's Note: Minutes of Select Board meetings are now available online (and at Town Hall) following the subsequent meeting. Go to www.sandisfieldma.gov, select "Minutes/Agendas" in Citizen Action Center, and locate the minutes you seek. Agendas are also posted before each meeting.

Come to the Arts Center!

MAY EVENTS INCLUDE A JAZZ TRIO, GALA BENEFIT DINNER

By Hilde Weisert

The first performance of the season, Saturday, May 11 at 8:00 p.m., marks the return of our longtime friend Bill Stillinger as leader of the Sir William Trio, a jazz group based in Connecticut and Western Mass. If you like classic jazz and the American songbook performed in a relaxed, club-like atmosphere, this is for you. The piano they'll use is the Steinway given to us last year, then refurbished to concert quality through donations at our spring fundraiser dinner last May.

This year's gala benefit dinner on May 18 at 6:00 p.m. aims to recapture the early creative spirit of our founders as we begin a fund drive to make the Arts Center "The best little performance space in South County." Architects Jerry Herman and Nick Elton have donated their time to map out plans for a smartly-designed addition on the rear of the building to provide much-needed space. With a green room (where performers can dress and prepare) and storage for sets and costumes, the addition will let our performers focus on their lines rather than how to change clothes in a closet-sized area with ten other people. As longtime volunteers and planning advisors to the Arts Center, Jerry and Nick understand how to design additional space without adversely affecting the historic building.

Guests at the May 18 dinner will enjoy a delicious meal cooked by chef and board member Adam Manacher and a program featuring a sneak preview of the 2019 season with selections from Neil Simon plays, "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and "The Art of Song."

"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," which opens its three-day run on June 14, is the first musical ever undertaken by the Sandisfield Players. (Yes, they sing!) A musical version of Roald Dahl's famous children's story of the same name, this will be a treat for the whole family.

The gallery show "Capturing Light," showcasing the work of photographer and local teacher Thad Kubis, will remain on view during performances or by appointment until May 25. We are grateful to Thad for kicking off the opening of his show on April 27 with a free smartphone photography workshop for the community. 🍷



May Delicious

I keep thinkin'
That the first of May
Is a brush with heaven
And a *crème brûlée*.

April's a mess
And your car won't work.
You're being paid
Like a soda jerk.

But up in the sky
Is a summery spray
That makes a rainbow
Every May.

So lift a glass
To the first of May
And swallow that lovely
Crème brûlée!

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ELECTION, 2019: ONE CANDIDATE FOR EACH OFFICE MAY 20, OLD TOWN HALL



Left to right: Joe Salzano, Julia, Henry, and Jennifer Hibbins.

FOR SCHOOL COMMITTEE INTRODUCING JENNIFER HIBBINS

My name is Jennifer Hibbins and I am running for Sandisfield's School Committee.

My husband, Joe Salzano, and I have lived in Sandisfield for the past 13 years. We have two children at the Farmington River School and I am an active member of the PTA. I am passionate about our school and as a member of the committee hope to make meaningful improvements in the areas of transportation and facility repairs.

I feel I'd have the time to make real contributions to the School Committee, although I currently work as a stay-at-home mother. Prior to motherhood, I served as Marketing Services Manager at Cranwell Resort where I drafted and maintained the marketing department budget, among a host of other duties. I gained additional work experience as Marketing Technology Coordinator at Legacy Banks. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree from Clark University.

I feel my experience and commitment would make me an asset to the School Committee and I ask for your support on May 20 as well as during the three years of the term of office.

A TIP O' THE HAT FROM JOHN SKRIP

John Skrip was a member of the Sandisfield School Committee for the past 15 years. He served at times as assistant chairman and chairman and participated on ad hoc committees. He says, "I enjoyed my time using my administrative and classroom experience as a guide."

He also told The Times: "I feel it's time for some of the younger residents and parents to participate as they have the pulse of their children and their needs to consider.

"I've been impressed with the level of dedication of our teachers and administrators at Farmington River Regional School.

"I thank the residents of Sandisfield for allowing me to serve on the School Board for so many years."



FOR RE-ELECTION TO SELECT BOARD

GEORGE RILEY

I've been a Select Board member for a year. Now I'm running for a 3-year term because I feel that over the past year as a board member I've helped to make a positive difference for the people of Sandisfield.

For the first time in my experience of over twenty years here, I feel we have a Select Board where all three members are united in a common sense of mission to make Sandisfield a better place to live and who are willing to make personal sacrifices to accomplish this. We respect and trust each other.

This shared sense of purpose makes myself, Mark Newman, and Brian O'Rourke an effective team. Over the past year we've dealt successfully with major personnel changes, Transfer Station scofflaws, and a host of other issues.

Despite the frustrations of the ongoing and complex issues of broadband and Route 57, I'm convinced that we are in a better place as a town than we were a year ago, and that gives me a great sense of satisfaction.

Serving as a Selectman is both a burden and an honor. With your continued support, I want your Select Board to continue the progress we've made and I'll be glad to be part of it.

.....

George Riley and his wife, Annalee, have lived in Sandisfield more than 22 years. They've raised five children and five foster children; all now adults. Currently semi-retired as a nonprofit consultant, George continues to serve on the board of directors of local and national organizations. He was a nonprofit administrator, grant writer, and fundraiser who has served as executive director and director of development with several organizations. He's been on building committees that have planned and supervised multi-million dollar-plus projects. He has been treasurer of numerous organizations large and small, and, he says, "knows how to read a financial statement." He has also been a grant writer and has overseen the construction and submission of successful grant applications.

ALSO RUNNING.....

RESULTS OF THE ANNUAL TOWN CAUCUS APRIL 11, 2019

Nominees for offices to be elected on May 20, 2019. All are incumbents currently serving in the office, except for Jennifer Hibbins for School Committee. Number of registered voters attending: 27.

Office	Nomination Papers	Caucus Nomination			
Moderator (1 year)	No papers	Simon Winchester	School Committee (3 years)	Jennifer B. Hibbins	No Caucus Nominee
Selectmen (3 years)	No papers	George R. Riley	Board of Health (3 years)	Kim E. Spring	No Caucus Nominee
Board of Assessors (3 years)	No papers	Bethany R. Perry	Planning Board (2 years)	No papers	No Caucus Nominee
			Planning Board (5 years)	Paul Gaudette	No Caucus Nominee
			Library Trustee (5 years)	Clare English	

Special Note Meet the Candidates

The Council on Aging's annual Meet the Candidates will be held Thursday, May 2, at 7:00 p.m. downstairs at the Town Hall Annex on Route 57. Even though there is only one candidate for each office, it is important to meet the people who have stepped up to help lead town government. Light refreshments will be served.

PLAIN TALK

A statement of honest facts by the Democratic Party in rebuttal of distorted versions of town affairs.

I. ROADS

A minimum program is not the town's official choice but is set by the monies appropriated and dictated by the Dept. of Public Works Commission of the State of Mass.

1. Sandisfield-New Marlboro Road

This road will be completed if and when the townspeople vote and appropriate enough money to complete the job.

2. To complete all of the roads and hard top them as suggested, for the following four—New Hartford, West Street, Town Hill and Beech Plain roads, the cost to the town would be approximately \$200,000. As there is 27 miles of road and at the low pre-war rate of construction of \$7,000 per mile, the project is highly desirable but financially impossible.

3. Utilizing our Equipment

If and when money is made available to build new roads with our town equipment, the present and any new Democratic officials will be the first, as always, to rush this fine civic work.

4. Work Distribution

All work in the town of Sandisfield has been delegated and apportioned as to their availability and the nature of work regardless of party affiliation.

5. Emergency Aid

Any emergency aid that is necessary and feasible has been extended at all times.

6. Signs

Suitable and State approved signs have been placed and are in process of erection prior to the holding of either Democratic or Republican Caucus.

II. PUBLIC UTILITIES

1. Telephone

The Board of Selectmen and the Sandisfield Voluntary Fire Dept. have been in contact with the Telephone Co. officials to try to alleviate the present difficulties. These negotiations have been in progress for four months or more.

2. Electric Power

All electric and power rates are not within the scope of town political debate. The proper authorities will entertain any citizen's complaints.

3. It is agreeable to all that more Protection for the Town is necessary by the Fire Dept.

Despite past difficulties in obtaining money the Dept. has been formed and is gradually advancing in its scope. If more money is made available for needed additions the Democratic Party will again lead the way.

III. SCHOOLS

1. As civic improvements are being injected into political debate, one must stop to consider and review the past.

The school was completed and will be improved by the citizens of Sandisfield as in the past, despite the narrow opposition of the few that sought to save money at the expense of the children of Sandisfield.

IV. TAXES

A subject that appeals to all — especially when one shouts reduction and inequity.

1. **As for Inequity** — The laws provide relief to any citizen that feels he is being taxed unfairly or inequitably. By appeal to town, County and state agencies, they are sure to alleviate their troubles—not by unfair and untrue newspaper insertions in local papers at election time.

2. Tax Rate

It is a far cry from past years to present days as to the cost of maintaining and improving the Town of Sandisfield. Approximately 90% of the tax money of the town is disbursed under state supervision and approval.

V. POLICE PROTECTION

With an area of 84 miles of road to cover it is impossible for the present officials, without funds to compensate them, to perform an adequate patrol. If funds are appropriated for this service, better protection can be obtained.

VI. TOWN LIBRARY

The Town Library obtains its present funds from the dog tax, after deductions by the county for expenses.

VII. TREE WARDEN

The past records of events prove that at the 1949 Town Meeting the Republican Party led the motion to reduce the funds for tree disease control.

CANDIDATES

MODERATOR Charles J. Allen	(1 year)
TOWN CLERK Zoa Campetti	(1 year)
SELECTMAN Newton A. Orso	(3 years)
ASSESSOR Morris Levine	(3 years)
CONSTABLE Joseph O'Brien	(1 year)
CONSTABLE Charles J. Allen, Jr.	(1 year)
SCHOOL COMMITTEE William Rowley	(3 years)
SCHOOL COMMITTEE Mary Campetti Lundgren	(2 years)
LIBRARY TRUSTEE Helen E. Goda	(3 years)
AUDITOR Bessie Rowley	(1 year)
TREE WARDEN Walter Galaske, Jr.	(1 year)

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Sandisfield Democratic Committee
For a
Truly Democratic and Progressive Sandisfield

Vote **DEMOCRATIC**

The Issues: 1950

The Sandisfield Democratic Committee in 1950 distributed this flyer to explain its positions on a wide variety of issues confronting voters and to rebut what they considered "distorted versions of town affairs" proffered by unnamed parties.

Although some 70 years have passed, Sandisfield will this month debate many of the same important questions and problems – roads, schools, emergency services, infrastructure including communication and, of course, taxation.

We still do this at the "Old Town Hall" in the fine tradition of New England-style small-town direct democracy. Not so much has changed here.

– Flyer courtesy Ron Bernard collection



On the Road — Again!

TO REBUILD DODD ROAD

By David Hubbard

Photos/captions: David Hubbard

According to last month's Times' article "On the Road," the Select Board has expressed the idea that the poor condition of Dodd Road has been self-inflicted by a business located on the road. In another article, the DPW superintendent suggested that during mud season residents use the road as little as possible.

THE PROBLEM

Sandisfield's poor road conditions are indeed "self-inflicted," but it is a problem that has been inflicted on the taxpayers by the Select Board and the highway department, not by businesses or residents who have the temerity to use roads they pay taxes to have maintained.

Facts and science should and do matter. The fact is that the town built Dodd Road, and many other town roads with improper materials. This use of inappropriate materials, combined with the creation of ineffective drainage systems and lack of maintenance renders Dodd Road (and other town roads) functionally unusable on too many occasions.

Dodd Road, and most of Sandisfield, is high, wet, and exposed to extreme weather. Bedrock is no

more than a few feet below the surface of the road, and the soil contains a high level of clay. The result is that the entire geology wants to shed water.

When the town built Dodd Road and filled it with bank-run sand and gravel, the road became a perfect drainage ditch. To put it simply, it is hard to imagine a worse material to use as a roadbed. It will not compact or cohere and when wet turns to mud. Capillary action and osmosis (remember high school science class?) combine to push all of the area ground water into the base of the roadbed, and it promptly turns to mush.



Dodd Road drainage. Without rip-rap, water is uncontrolled and erodes the road.

At that point the combination of gravity and traffic push the larger rocks down into the wet, unstable base and the wet, mud-like fines rise to the surface, covering the solid parts of the roadbed with unstable material that, when wet, render the road essentially impassable. ("Fines" in roadwork refer to small particles of material, in this case essentially sand.)

Compounding this problem is the flawed drainage system that was installed by the town. The cut-offs that dump water to the side of the road make matters worse. Instead of being carried away, the water sits by the side of the road, and works its way back



Dodd Road, last year. Without a crown and no drainage ditch, water drains down wheel tracks eroding road and softening roadbed. Mix of small rocks and fines do not compact or cohere so when wet it turns to mush.

into the base creating soft spots further down the road. The culverts crossing New Hartford Road have not been maintained, so they clog, resulting in the backup of the existing drainage ditches.

A SOLUTION

Short of digging out all of the inappropriate roadbed material and replacing it, the only solution is to control the flow of the water, dry out the current road bed, and supplement it with appropriate material.

Drying out the roadbed on Dodd Road requires a continuous, broad, and deep drainage ditch lined with rip-rap and with no cutoffs running the length of the road to the river. (Rip-rap here refers to granite or other stones lining the roadside ditch.) This should protect the roadbed from the water that is shed by the surrounding land. This will require every driveway to have a culvert in place.

This solution should start at New Hartford Road, where the culverts are clogged. The drainage ditches to the river need to be cleaned, graded, and lined with rip-rap. Currently the water that does make it to New Hartford Road is ponding up, saturating the roadbed, and causing the coarse material to sink and the mud-like fines to rise to the surface.

As you travel west on Dodd Road, the first rise dips into an undrained area (roughly #6 to #19 Dodd) that serves as a holding pond. That water bleeds into the roadbed causing the entire lower section of the roadbed to sink.

From #6 Dodd Road to #19, it will be necessary to dig down several feet and use filter paper, gravel, and slotted pipe to create a drain on both sides of

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the road that will carry the water to the downslope drainage ditches and dry up that area. Once dry, that section of road will need to be built up with 3" material. The 6-8 inches of fines covering the roadbed from New Hartford Road to #9 need to be firmed up with 1 1/4-inch stone (no fines). After properly draining the rest of Dodd Road, once it is dry, an application of 3" stone to the roadbed will stabilize the road.

THE ROAD NEEDS TO BE FIXED

The use of faulty material, and the installation of an equally faulty drainage system (which has not been maintained), has now resulted in a road which is endangering the safety of its residents.

This year there were a number of incidents of cars losing control and being thrown off the road by either the ruts or the ice. The impassable road forced many residents to park at New Hartford Road and walk home, sometimes more than a mile, in the dark, on an icy rutted road, sometimes in subzero temperatures. This is dangerous. No taxpayer should be made to suffer such conditions. Getting to work should not require residents to take risks. In such conditions, it is questionable as to whether a fire truck or ambulance would be able to make its way up the road should an emergency occur.

It is clear to me that if these conditions continue, someone will inevitably be hurt. When that happens, it will be directly due to the actions and inactions of our Select Board. They have a moral and legal responsibility to protect the taxpayers. Magical thinking, blaming residents, and pretending to do something by dropping an odd load of material on the road will not fix this problem.

I am confident that our highway department has the skill to repair Dodd Road (and all of our roads). It is up to the Select Board to provide them with the resources and direction that they need to do their job.



Clogged culvert at Dodd and New Hartford Roads. Unmaintained culverts pond up the water and undermine the road bed.

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

Town of Otis Planning Board

Town Hall, One North Main Road, Otis, MA 01253-0237
(413) 269-0100 x209

The Town of Otis is accepting applications for a part-time Planning Board Clerk. This is a non-benefitted permanent position that will require about 5 to 15 hours per month.

General abilities should include good typing skills, be computer literate, have the ability to work without direct supervision, work with multiple departments and attend evening meetings once a month. Preferred abilities are familiarity with Open Meeting Laws, MA General Laws, and Public Records Law. A full job description and application may be obtained through the Selectmen's office between the hours of 8:30 a.m. & 3 p.m., or you may call 413-269-0100 ext. 103 or 104 and one may be mailed to you.

Deadline for applications is Thursday, May 30, 2019.

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Sandisfield Historical Society



Appraisal Day

By Ann Wald, President

Dig out those relics. It's time to learn if they are valuable. Or not!

David Lebeau is back and ready to appraise your treasures. Saturday, May 11 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Society Meeting House, South Sandisfield Road at Route 187. Each item is only \$5. All money raised will go toward improving the water supply and the bathroom at the Meeting House.

Our next meeting will be June 8, 11 a.m., at the Meeting House. All are welcome to visit and share ideas. Pot luck lunch to follow.

Contact Ann Wald at 413-258-4415 or annaw2@verizon.net

Council on Aging



By Nina Carr

With the sun finally shining on us here in Sandisfield, we are trying some new activities at the COA.

Our chair yoga class with Wendy Larsen has been quite successful. Wendy has a great sense of humor so both our minds and bodies get a good workout. The classes which take place at Town Hall Annex on Wednesdays at 2:00. They will continue for at least a few more weeks. Come and check it out!

We enjoyed our Spring flower arrangement class with Bob from "Wildflowers." He really takes his time to fully explain the process, and brought a wonderful assortment of flowers and greenery for us to select and arrange.

On May 2 at 7:00 the COA is sponsoring its annual "Meet the Candidates" event. Light refreshments will be served.

Because on Wednesday, May 29, the seniors will go to the MGM Casino in Springfield, our regular meeting is cancelled.

Finally, SAVE THE DATE! The COA will host a Health and Wellness Fair on Saturday, June 8, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., at the American Legion Pavilion on Route 8 near Firehouse #2. We will have a large number of exhibitors who will provide free health exams. Admission is FREE!

Recently we voted to have two business meetings a month. They will be held on the first and third Wednesday of the month. All are welcome to attend. Please feel free to join us for lunch and activities at 11:30 every Wednesday and remember we are always looking for new ideas or suggestions. ♡

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Recreation Commission: Kathy Carroll, Bill Dyer, Mary Adams, Dana Pustinger
Program Supervisor, Patricia Richard; Movie Night Supervisor, Tom Soules

OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



For Children's Book Day on April 2, the **Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center** donated a \$50 Barnes & Noble gift card to the Sandisfield Library. Librarian Theresa Spohnholz said she was "extremely grateful to have this donation to help purchase more children's books." The Sandisfield Free Public Library has a variety of books as well as access to the Massachusetts Library System, through which books not available locally can be ordered.



For the Love of an Old House

By Lorraine German

Steve and I have always loved his family home in Montville, bought by his grandparents, Max and Ida Linder, in 1922. More than fifty years later, in 1975, the house began to work its magic on me.




The family home came to us in 2015 when my mother-in-law, Sylvia German, passed away. That summer we set about turning it into our second home, which for Steve simply meant cleaning out the rooms and freshening things up.

But I had a more ambitious plan: to restore as much of its earlier character as possible within our tight budget. The original one-and-a-half story house was built in the late 18th century and expanded – including an addition in the Greek Revival style – in 1826 by a resident named Jonathan Colton. The house hadn't changed much over time until a remodeling in the early 1980s removed much of its history. With some paint and sweat equity I hoped to restore it to its original state.

The first order of business was to clear the rooms. We held tag sales, donated items to Goodwill, and brought in an auctioneer. Steve, who became well-acquainted with Tony through countless trips to the dump, cringed each time he saw a certain gleam in my eye because he knew we would soon be lugging furniture from room to room or floor to floor.

Finally, we were ready to bring the old homestead back to its origins. We painted the dark-paneled rooms a pale cream, pulled up the wall-to-wall carpeting to uncover the original floorboards, and made trips to Country Curtains' sale showroom in Lee. The house has rewarded our efforts with a warm welcome every time we cross the threshold.

As we continue with the restoration, I'll share anecdotes and photos with readers of *The Times* to show how we are turning back the clock at our Old House. 



Hello, After All These Years

Finally, a bluebird in the bluebird box! For more than 10 years, the tree swallows have arrived first and claimed the boxes. But this year – no tree swallows. Where have they gone? But hello, bluebird. Its about time.

Photo: Jean Atwater-Williams

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The Librarian's Corner

By Terry Spohnholz

COME VISIT YOUR LIBRARY

The wonderful, rich smell of freshly turned soil greets me now as I stroll about my postage stamp-sized yard while listening to the return of songbirds. Seeds have been planted and tiny green sprouts rise to the surface. The sun is warm and lasts into the evening. The return of butterflies and fireflies is eagerly awaited. Glorious, glorious summer is coming. Even the tiny snow piles in deep, dark places in the nearby woods have disappeared. Light spring clothes have been hauled down from the attic and bulky sweaters and coats returned to the rafters for a summer sleep. All that remains is to begin looking for beach reading material.

New Book Arrivals

The Chef, James Patterson – In the Carnival days leading up to Mardi Gras, Detective Caleb Rooney of the New Orleans PD comes under investigation for a murder he is accused of committing in the line of duty. While fighting the charges against him, Rooney realized his beloved city is under threat of attack by homegrown terrorists.

Smoke and Ashes, Abir Mukherjee – Winner of the CWA Historical Dagger Award, Captain Sam Wyndham and his sidekick "Surrender-Not" Banerjee are on the case of a grisly murder in 1920's Calcutta. Clever dialogue, laden with double entendre and in-depth knowledge of Indian culture and traditions.

See You in the Piazza, Francis Mayes – Bestselling and beloved author Frances Mayes offers a sumptuous travel narrative that crisscrosses Italy, with inventive new recipes celebrating Italian cuisine.

The Lost Gutenberg, Margaret Davis – The never-before-told story of one extremely rare copy of the Gutenberg Bible and its impact on the lives of the fanatical few who were lucky enough to own it

Library Hours:

Monday and Tuesday, 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.;
Wednesday, 2:00-5:00 p.m.; Thursday, 5:00-7:00 p.m.;
Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-1 p.m.
Phone: 258-4966

Greek to Me: Adventures of the Comma Queen, Mary Norris – A charming account of Norris's lifelong love affair with words, the author explains how the alphabet originated in Greece, makes the case for Athena as a feminist icon, and reveals the surprising ways Greek helped form English.

Happenings at the Library

On Saturday May 11, the Library will be having a fun crafty event for kids. This fun event will be a celebration of mothers and spring. Crafting begins at 1:00 p.m. and ends at 2:00. Come join us!

Museum Passes – Tired of watching old DVDs, bored, looking for something different? The library has passes to five Springfield Museums, the Clark Museum in Williamstown as well as discounted coupons for the Connecticut Science Museum which is featuring the award-winning exhibition – *The Human Body*. Explore your world.

Summer Reading Program – The theme this year for the Sandisfield Free Public Library is "Reading is out of this world." Expect new books for the kid's section involving space, the skies, and our home planet. The program will kick off the last week of June with an exciting "alien" event. Stay tuned for more information.

PAPERBACKS

In an effort to provide more room for our ever-expanding collection of new library books, we were forced to say good-bye to some old friends, our paperback section! (Only a few left of those). Gently used, they would make a great addition to your beach bag! For sale at thirty cents apiece or four for a dollar.

THANK YOU!

The library would like to thank **Berkshire Rehabilitation and Skilled Care Center** for their surprise visit on National Children's Book Day and their gift of a Barnes and Noble gift card of \$50 for the children's section.

Simon Winchester graciously donated several issues of *Lapham's Quarterly* to the Sandisfield Library. Each issue of this beautifully designed magazine addresses a topic of current interest and concern – war, religion, money, medicine, nature, crime – by bringing to the microphone of the present the advice and counsel of the past. 📖

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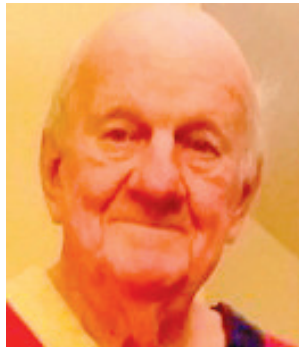
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BOB PETERSON 1925-2019

Robert Valentine Peterson, 93, died on April 1 with his daughter and son-in-law, Beth and Jim Stacy, at his side. During his lifetime Bob owned several properties in Sandisfield, and for several years lived at Stone Bridge Farm, also known as the Charles Tracy House, on Route 57 near the SilverBrook Tavern. Bob and his wife Lucille lived then on West Street before moving to Connecticut and later to New York State.

Bob sold the Stone Bridge home to Richard and Jean Zietel. A memoir about the friendship between Bob, Richard, and their friend Chandru Paspuletti appears on this page.

Cailin Rocco remembers Bob for “his fun-loving nature and generosity to family and friends.” Margaret O’Clair remembers that Bob “was an avid hunter and fisherman and spent a lot of time ice fishing with neighbors in the reservoirs around town.”

Bob was born on October 11, 1925 in Hartford, Conn., to Charles and Mary Theresa Peterson. He served in World War II, having enlisted in the Marines at age 17, attended Yale University, and then to Officer Candidate School.

After the war, Bob joined his father in business at Laurel Supply Corporation, eventually leaving to start his own manufacturing company, which eventually evolved into Precision Punch, still in existence today.

An avid outdoorsman, Bob fulfilled his dream of going on safari in Africa with his son Bob.

Bob leaves wife Lucille, daughter Beth and husband Jim, brother Donald and wife Shirley, three grandsons Bob and wife Darcy, David and wife Megan, and Michael and wife Ali, and five great-grandchildren. Bob always maintained a close relationship with his nieces and nephews.

He was predeceased by his former wife Lois, son Bob, brother Richard, and sister Marie. A celebration of his life was held in Windsor, Connecticut, last month.

A MEMOIR OF BOB PETERSON

TARZAN BOB, RICHARD DOLITTLE, AND ME

by Chandru Paspuletti

The recent passing of Bob Peterson, preceded by Richard Zietel a few years ago, reminded me of the halcyon days we all had together living near each other in Sandisfield.

We were a strange troika. Bob was a true outdoorsman, Richard an LL Bean type, and me a true New Yorker. Bob and Richard had retired from the daily grind, me not yet. Both of these men impacted my life in many ways.

Bob loved fishing, hunting, and every other crazy thing. Richard tried to join him and I made no attempt. We did go fishing in the middle of winter, Bob in a T-shirt and windbreaker pulling a canoe over the ice. Richard accepted my suggestion and waited in the heated SUV. They asked me to go out on the ice while they dug ice holes. While I sat on a bucket, they made a circle of holes around me. That was a laugh to them. We all sat on buckets on that frigid day, but never caught any fish.

Richard decided he needed manure for his yard. Bob said, “Doug and Katy have horses and a lot of manure.” When we got to the Rocco’s, I saw a small horse close to a huge mound. I said, “They must have a lot of horses.” Bob said, “It’s all from that small horse.” Later both of them decided to fill my galoshes with manure.

As a troika we had a gala of a time. Bob was the outdoor Tarzan, Richard was like Korak, and I was Cheetah, the comedic chimp to entertain them. Grown-ups being boys.

Bob and Lucille, Richard and Jean, and my wife Kim and I had many “get-togethers,” inviting friends and neighbors through the years. We loved this ensemble, eclectic, and otherwise.

All good things must pass. Richard was first, now “Tarzan Bob” who will be met by Richard in a canoe in the great outdoors in the sky. I will follow in the future, and the troika will have a great get-together.

I savor the fun times with Bob and Richard. I hope each of us have such fond memories of good times in life. 🍷

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Letters to the Editors

Oh, My Dodd ... A Response

I have been a resident of Dodd Road for over 12 years. I have experienced the deep, impassable ruts that present themselves throughout winter and spring.

I have often experienced an unplowed road, since for years the highway department has only plowed the front half of Dodd Road, and has neglected the narrower part at the end (although there are many houses down there). I have found neighbors, late at night, walking up the icy, impassable road, in the dark, because their cars were incapable of driving in such treacherous conditions. And I have worried about the ability of fire or first responders to get to my house should the need arise.

The highway department has never effectively controlled the flow of water down the road. Although they did effectively wash out half of my driveway when they incorrectly trenched the water. I have more than once spoken to the many different heads of the department when frustration has gotten the best of me, and I have been worried about the safety of my neighbors, family and friends.

I have been polite.

I have tried to explain the situation.

I have tried to provide information about the nature of the road.

We have tried to be patient.

We have replaced many tires.

I have cried.

However, when I read in The Sandisfield Times that a Select Board member had offered an opinion that the problem with the road is "self-inflicted," I was outraged.

To be precise, all Dodd Road suffers from the problem of an impassable road. The fact that one commercial business exists on the road has no bearing on the entire length of the road. To be honest, there are many snowy mornings, when this good neighbor has plowed the road himself to enable neighbors to get to work. We benefit, rather than suffer, from the existence of this business.

Over the years that I have lived here the road has been graveled and graded more than once. It clearly has not worked. And will not work while the water is still running down the road. Water mitigation needs to be addressed in an educated and meaningful manner. The last time that they attempted to do that they washed out my driveway in the effort to divert the water. My driveway was impassable and the repair was expensive (for us). That clearly, was not an answer. And did not solve the problem.

If the Select Board would like to continue to stall and put gravel Band-Aids on the road, they will be continuing to negatively impact our safety, ability to get to work, and live our daily lives. Perhaps they would like to decrease our property taxes until they solve the problem? For us to be advised to stay off our road, minimize our trips, and further inconvenience our lives does not seem to me to be a viable option. Not to me.

Patricia Hubbard

Dodd Road



They're Baack!

Photo/report by Ron Bernard

Every year starting in mid-April through May, a magnificent great blue heron visits our small pond in the hopes of snagging a fish or two. For about the past five years, herons – as many as five pairs at a time – roost in impressive nests perched high above nearby wetlands.

We put up our defenses: a fake alligator, plastic owls and snakes, chicken coop wire, plus waving and shouting from a distance. They ultimately outsmart us.

It is not a fair contest. The herons have all winter to plot and scheme on best how and when to raid our pond. Once the nesting season is over we don't give them a thought until the next spring which by then is always too late.



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NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro

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

MAY EVENTS

Playgroup on Mondays from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. at the Sandisfield Library Community Room (below the library). No pre-registration is necessary. The playgroup features a story time in the library. Led by Nina Carr. Free!

Wednesday Weekly Gatherings from 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex on Route 57.

Paint and Sip Party on Wednesday, May 1 at 6:00 p.m. at Fire Station #1, 79 South Main Street, Sandisfield. All painting materials and light snacks will be provided. Sponsored by the Recreation Committee. \$30, pre-register at berkshirerpaintandsip.squarespace.com.

Meet the Candidates on Thursday, May 2 at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex on Route 57. Sponsored by the Council on Aging. Light refreshments will be served.

YOGA with Ann Gadwah will be offered in May at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesdays (5/8, 5/15, 5/29) and Tuesday (5/21) at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Contact the Recreation Committee or Library for more information. \$5.

Appraisal Day on Saturday, May 11, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Historical Society on Route 183 at South Sandisfield Road. Join Appraiser David Lebeau for an appraisal of your items. \$5 per item.

Arts and Crafts on Saturday, May 11, from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. at the Library/Community Center. Sponsored by the Sandisfield Recreational Committee.

Bill Stillinger and the Sir William Trio on Saturday, May 11, at 8:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. The jazz group, based in southern New England, will perform classic jazz compositions, the American songbook, and new works. \$20. Tickets available at www.sandisfieldartscenter.org and at the door.

New Boston Church Service on Sunday, May 12, at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57. All are welcome!

Annual Town Meeting on Saturday, May 18 at 10:00 a.m. at Fire Station #2 on Route 57.

Spring Fundraiser Gala Dinner, Auction, and Sneak Season Preview on Saturday, May 18, from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center

on 5 Hammertown Road. Cocktails at 6:00 p.m., followed by a delicious dinner prepared by master chef Adam Manacher. There will be vignettes performed by the Sandisfield Players, music, and an auction. Tickets available at www.sandisfieldartscenter.org. \$75.

Community Birding Walk at Yanner Park, May 19, 8-10 a.m., Town Hill Road. Rene Wendell of The Nature Conservancy will lead a bird identification walk at Yanner Park. Please wear sturdy shoes/boots that can get muddy, clothing appropriate to the weather, bug spray, and bring binoculars if you have them. All are welcome and the cost is free.

Annual Town Election on Monday, May 20 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road.

Blood Pressure Clinic with Porchlight Visiting Nurse Association on Wednesday, May 22 at 11:30 a.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level at Town Hall Annex on Route 57.

Memorial Day Parade on Sunday, May 26 at 10:00 a.m. Meet at the Old Town Hall, Silverbrook Road, or view from Route 57 down Route 8 south to the American Legion Hamilton's Grove.

SAVE THE DATE

Health and Wellness Fair, Saturday, June 8 from 10 a.m.-2:00 p.m. American Legion Pavilion, Route 8, near Firehouse #1. Many exhibitors, free health exams. Free admission.

OTHER EVENTS IN NEARBY TOWNS

Family Spring Walk on Sunday, May 5 at 2:00 p.m. at the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest to explore the newly improved trail system and look for signs of spring. Please bring water and snacks and wear sturdy footwear. Meet at the trailhead across from the town beach on Lake Mansfield Road in Great Barrington. Free.

Writer's Workshop led by Sonia Pilcer on Saturday, May 18 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Monterey Community Center on 468 Main Road in Monterey. For more information and to register, visit www.ccmonterey.org.

Home Sweet Home Open House on Saturday, May 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Naumkeag and Mission House in Stockbridge. These historic houses will be open to the public for free! Come explore the homes and inspiring gardens through a celebration of the architects and craftspeople who designed and built them. For more information, visit thetrustees.org/homesweethome.

Spring Hike on Saturday, May 18 at 2:00 p.m. on the Three Mile Hill/Fountain Pond Trail in Great Barrington sponsored by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Great Barrington Land Conservancy, Berkshire South Regional Community Center, and Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. This will be an invigorating four-mile hike to discover native trees, wildflowers, and birds. Please bring a snack and water and wear appropriate footwear. Meet at the Berkshire South Regional Community Center gazebo trailhead on 15 Crissey Road. Severe weather will cancel the hike. Free. For more information, send an email to info@gbtrails.org.

Tag Sale on Saturday, May 25 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. sponsored by the Otis Cultural Council at the Otis Ski Ridge parking lot.



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The Sandisfield Times is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization staffed by volunteers from the Sandisfield community and funded by individual and business sponsors. Its mission is to connect the community through reliable, regular, and relevant information. The paper is published 11 times each year, with a joint January-February issue and monthly issues thereafter.

Donations of 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. Donations to The Sandisfield Times are deductible under section 170 of the Federal Income Tax Code. Donations do not include subscriptions. Subscriptions do not qualify as donations.

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

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