

# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

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RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

*Volume X, Number 4*

*July 2019*

## A New Pot Proposal?

### A LONG PERMIT PROCESS YET TO START

*By Bill Price*

Katie Murray of lower Town Hill Road was home Wednesday, May 29, when a stranger pulled into the yard. They stood talking outside.

After introducing herself as Jennifer Pilbin, without saying who she represented, the stranger said she was here “to let you know about an exciting proposal for the property adjoining your place just to the north.” Katie listened politely as the woman explained about the planned “family farm” that was to be built on 70 acres currently owned by Jeffrey Marres.

The land would be used to grow marijuana in a large gated facility.

Katie said she felt the lady was a public relations contractor trying to reassure abutters that the marijuana farmers would be good neighbors. Katie said that the word “organic” was used. But when she asked questions that the visitor didn’t seem able to answer, the woman reached into her briefcase and pulled out an informational sheet that “might answer most of your questions.”

There was no letterhead or identifying marks on the informational sheet, other than the visitor’s phone number. The sheet stated that the proposed family farm would be, initially, a 12,000 square-foot gated facility with security. Marijuana, or cannabis, would be grown in 100 percent compliance with the Massachusetts Cannabis Commission and all state regulations.

A timber buffer would be planted to shield the building from the road. A family-owned company, not a corporation. Start small and expand. Be part of the community. Be a good neighbor. Produce oils for cancer and other conditions. Environmentally friendly. Discrete transport of product from facility. And more.

***Cont'd p. 13***



## 4th of July, 1840s

*In honor of Independence Day, we've pictured here a 26-star flag that represents the flag that flew over America in the 1840s, the decade in which the home of George and Michelle Wheeler was built on Sandisfield Road in West New Boston.*

*If you have an older house, or even if you have a new one, you may be interested to learn about the history of Old Glory and maybe even how to obtain a durable nylon historic flag like this one with the appropriate number of stars for your place. We recommend a visit to the website of U. S. Flag Depot, Inc. at [www.usflag.org](http://www.usflag.org).*

*Nearly two dozen houses in Sandisfield could legitimately fly a flag with only 13 stars, and maybe ten or so with 15 (until 1818). A list of Sandisfield historic homes and buildings, and their estimated build dates, assembled by the Sandisfield Historical Commission, is on our website at [www.SandisfieldTimes.org](http://www.SandisfieldTimes.org). Follow the link to the list.*

*Photo: George Wheeler. Text: Ron Bernard*




# Images of the Clam River Reserve

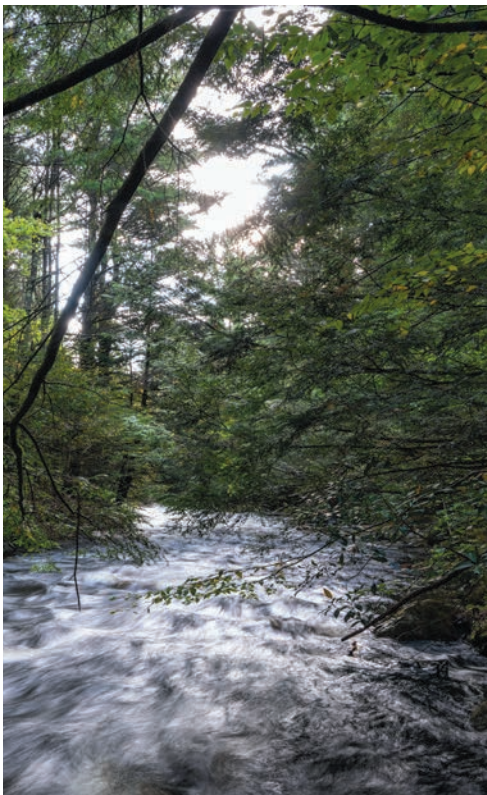
By Peter Baiamonte

As a commercial photographer in New York City, I focus on client meetings and photographic needs. Lately, very little of that work has involved being in natural surroundings.

Early last summer, during a hike with friends who had never been to Sandisfield, I really enjoyed the challenge of making interesting pictures in the woods of the Clam River Reserve. Not long after that hike, I decided to make exploring the Reserve a regular part of my time in Sandisfield and an ongoing project for all seasons – something outside my normal world of photography.

One of the images was chosen as part of Berkshire Magazine’s “Secret Places” contest last fall. I took pictures last winter and am continuing whenever I have time this summer. I’m not sure where it’s all going, but what a great excuse to enjoy a great hiking spot right here in town.

Several trails pass through sections of the Reserve, but one of the most popular begins behind Town Hall Annex at 66 Sandisfield Road (Rt. 57) and leads to the Clam River and Hammertown Loop trails that include both the Clam and the Buck rivers. The trails were built and are maintained by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council. 





# LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

## That Old Family Farm

News that a buyer is interested in purchasing a tract of land to grow marijuana (see front page) raises the question: What is the best use of large tracts of land in our Town when they come up for sale?

Maybe a local logger could log it. Or perhaps a back-to-the-land stock broker could buy it and immediately put his forest into Chapter 90 and thus out of the reach of local and state taxes.

Housing entrepreneurs may envision a cluster of homes, though the Town's bylaw restrictions limiting builders to one house per 300 feet of roadway could dampen their dreams.

Farming? Our forefathers learned the hard way that this land is good for alfalfa and in some places apples or a few farm animals, but it is not very profitable for row crops.

So, who is going to buy that tract of land you're trying to sell after holding onto it for a few generations? Here in Sandisfield, a company wants to

turn such land into a pot farm. It could be one of those rare win-win-wins. The landowner sells his land. The pot farm turns a profit. And the Town, presumably, will gain much-needed tax dollars.

But one person's gain could be another's loss. What if the pot farm erases the forest down the road, the forest that has been the landscape that is the Sandisfield we call home?

The idea that pieces of Sandisfield could be returned to a kind of farming is intriguing. But what do we have to give up to help our town survive economically? In coming months, the Town may have to address the question of what kind of landscape do we want here?

In the meantime, today's real question is not about pot: it's about the school budget. Don't miss the Special Town Meeting: July 15, 7:00 p.m., at Old Town Hall.

*Bill Price  
West New Boston*

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# Where's the Right Person?

## SEARCH FOR NEW ADMINISTRATOR TO BEGIN SOON

*By Seth Kershner*

The Select Board recently convened separate meetings with Town staff and department heads to get their views on the Town Administrator position.

It is a common form of government. In an email to the Times, Massachusetts Municipal Association spokeswoman Candace Pierce wrote that the Bay State currently has 156 towns with town administrators. Sandisfield has had four different people filling the position since it was created around eight years ago. One of those, Rick White, was a part-time consultant who served as interim administrator until the town hired Fred Ventresco late in 2017.

Ventresco served for about two years before his contract expired May 6. He agreed to stay on until the end of this fiscal year and was a quiet presence at the annual town meeting May 11. "It's really a matter of fit," selectman George Riley told the Berkshire Eagle in June. "There are certain towns where Fred would be an excellent administrator. We're looking for something different."

### A Clear Need

At a June 18 meeting with department heads, selectman Brian O'Rourke listed several large

issues that are going to keep the Select Board busy for the months and years to come, including repaving Route 57, building broadband, and improving municipal buildings. Given the tasks ahead, he said he is eager to fill the void left by Ventresco's departure. "We see a need that the Select Board cannot fulfill during normal working hours," O'Rourke said.

What skills would the ideal candidate possess? For outgoing chair of the Finance Committee, Joe Gelinis, an administrator would need knowledge of Massachusetts laws and procedures, along with knowing how local town governments operate. This point was seconded by Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko, who said that having a Town Administrator with legal know-how could often help Sandisfield avoid paying for outside legal help.

At an earlier meeting with Town staff, the idea of a part-time administrator rather than full-time was strongly supported and that a consultant be found with strong procurement experience, Massachusetts law knowledge, and grant writing skills.

Fire Chief Ralph Morrison said he wasn't sure the Town needs a full-time administrator. He noted


that Rick White, the part-time consultant, "did more in two days a week than any of the others combined." This had also been mentioned at the earlier meeting when Town Clerk Harasyko pointed out that she had worked with all the administrators and the "per diem consultant accomplished more than the full-time administrators."

Morrison then asked whether the Select Board envisioned a part-time or full-time position. To which Select Board Chairman Mark Newman replied: "We're on the fence."

The question of salary was raised. In mid-June, the Berkshire Eagle reported that Ventresco's fiscal 2019 salary of \$68,250 increased to \$70,146 for 2020. Starting salaries in Becket and Richmond, which have both recently posted positions, are around \$75,000.

Gelinis of the Finance Committee offered that the fairness of the salary depended on how the job description was written and what the candidate was expected to do while in office. He said that a highly skilled person – someone "well worth the money," in his words – would be needed to tackle all the ongoing and future projects in town.

To conclude the meeting, Selectman Riley reported that recent hires are – in his judgment – "superb at what they do," adding "Based on our track record, I have a high level of confidence in the Board to hire the right person for this position."

The Board will soon begin the process of searching for that right person. 

# Broadband in Sandisfield

## A REPLY TO THE BROADBAND COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

By Bill Price, Co-Editor

Last month's broadband article in The Times drew the ire of Jeff Bye, chairman of the Broadband Committee.

The article outlined the Select Board's May 6 vote to change the town's broadband choice from Crocker Communications to Charter Communications. Readers can access a paper copy of that article at the Library or by online visiting [www.SandisfieldTimes.org](http://www.SandisfieldTimes.org). Additionally, you can find a report from the Broadband Committee, "Status as of May 16, 2019" on the town's website at [www.sandisfieldma.gov](http://www.sandisfieldma.gov).

After the article was published, Jeff asked in an email for a retraction in the July issue. He wrote that our reporter Ron Bernard "states that no

member of the town's Broadband Committee was present at the May 6 Select Board Meeting. This is not true. Broadband Committee member Bill Haines was present and was prepared to answer any questions regarding the recommendation from the Broadband Committee to the Select Board."

Ron says that he regrets the misunderstanding. He adds that he does not recall Mr. Haines identifying himself as a committee member and that "Select Board members answered the audience questions without referring to the committee member." There was no mention of Mr. Haines' presence in the published minutes of the meeting.

In a second, later email, Jeff complained that "instead of expressing excitement about the town's recent development regarding the acquisition of broadband internet service for everyone in town, Ron Bernard chose to use a very negative tone."

Readers may remember that the Times cheered each of the four or five earlier efforts to bring broadband to the town and the hard work by members of the Broadband Committee. We reported projected dates the town could expect to get up and running. We reported the reasons a particular provider was selected. We did print occasional "Out on a Limb" responses opposing certain choices of the Committee, but when good people have opposing views they should all have a voice.

Like many others in town, we were optimistic.

And, in his article about the latest broadband selection, Ron did list several pluses for the town for using Charter Communications. And he expressed the likelihood that Charter could actually do what it says it will. Those inclusions were positive, if not excited.

But Ron did bring reasonable skepticism to this latest plan, and a little mistrust of Charter. So did Select Board member George Riley. So have others in town. The role of The Times is not to act as cheerleader, though we sometimes do.

Jeff also took exception to Ron Bernard's mention of the difficulty of wiring Otis Wood Lands properties. Jeff's explanation is in a separate article on this page.

And Jeff reiterated the hard work provided by Matt Crocker of Crocker Communication and how he believes the town owes Mr. Crocker our thanks for his efforts on our behalf.

Jeff's email ended with the comment that "The Sandisfield Times prides itself on being reliable and relevant? The article ... is far from being reliable."

Again, with all due respect, The Times disagrees. ♡

# The OWL Problem

## THE REASON WHY

By Jeff Bye, Chairman, Broadband Committee

The residents of most of the 50 or so homes in the Otis Wood Lands development that are in Sandisfield, as well as those that are in Otis, understand the reason why broadband installation will be difficult and expensive there. Residents in other sections of Sandisfield should understand it as well.

Regarding the Otis Wood Lands community, NO Internet service provider can connect homes in this community to a network. Not Crocker, not Charter, not Fiber Connect, not Matrix, not Comcast, not anyone.

Why?

Because the Wood Lands community has no utility poles or underground conduit. Existing power and phones lines coming from Otis are shallowly buried in the ground without conduit. No Internet service provider can run fiber down the private roads in the Wood Lands without underground conduit present since the community by-laws do not allow utility poles.

Since the roads in the Wood Lands are private, neither Sandisfield nor Otis can use town funds to pay for the installation of underground conduit. The people who live in this community would have to pay to have conduit installed. This will be expensive to do.

Charter, or any Internet service provider would be able to connect the homes in the Wood Lands if conduit is installed by the community. ♡

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# Once More 'Round the Mulberry Bush

## TOWN TO VOTE AGAIN ON SCHOOL BUDGET

By Bill Price

The impasse over the town's school budget for the coming fiscal year may be settled July 15. Or maybe not.

At the Town Meeting in May, with the Select Board unanimously opposed to the budget of \$1,566,670 and with the Finance Committee split, half in favor and half against, town voters rejected the budget by 9 votes, 30-21.

In the memory of John Skrip, a longtime (now former) School Committee member, Sandisfield has never rejected the school budget.

To solve the impasse, a Special Town Meeting has been called for July 15 at 7 p.m., at the Old Town Hall, so the town can vote again to either accept slightly revised budget numbers or insist the Sandisfield School Committee make serious cuts.

### Since the Town Meeting Rejection ...

The Finance Committee, at its June 12 meeting, discussed the issue and the committee's vote changed: 3 opposed, 1 in favor. Member Bogart Muller changed to no because, he said, the School Committee has not been responsive to the FinComm, to the Select Board, or to the town's voters.

FinComm Chair Joe Gelinas said in a phone call to the Times that the School Committee has declined to make any budget cuts, even though the FinComm and the Select Board have suggested particular items. Gelinas said, "Our proposals have not been accepted, but rather ignored. There has been no attempt by the School Committee to change the budget numbers since February."

The only budget reduction, he said, came from a decrease in health care costs, which, he pointed out "were reduced because of lower premiums. That's not a response to our request for a reduced budget."

On June 14, in a rather irate email to Eric Jessner, business manager of the Farmington River Regional School, and to the Sandisfield School Committee, Selectman George Riley referred to the same point, that a decrease of some \$29,000 was due to initially over-estimating the cost of health insurance and that when the actual cost of the insurance came in lower, the committee claimed the difference as a budget reduction.

He added, "Eliminating an erroneous excess figure does not constitute, in our opinion, a 'substantial reduction,' and the idea that we would be fooled into thinking that this shell game was an actual 'reduction in our health insurance cost' as you claim, is somewhat insulting."

On behalf of the committee, Nick DellaGuistina, committee chairman, said in a phone conversation with the Times that he will speak at the Special Town Meeting July 15 to explain the budget amounts and the difficulty of making cuts.

"I'm a taxpayer in Sandisfield, too," he said, "and I don't want to see taxes go up. But I'm on the committee, and I see where the money goes and what it does."

More bad news was recently reported to the Select Board by the School Committee. School population has increased, which raised costs. There is little wriggle room with costs of lunchroom staff and bus routes. The state has discontinued its grant support for the pre-K program. "That's a loss of income of approximately \$48,000," said DellaGuistina. "It's not a total surprise, but this is the last year for any state pre-school support." And the School Committee notified the Select Board that the district may become responsible for an additional special needs student at significant cost with no additional state funds to help.

The fact that two members of the School Committee attended the June 17 Select Board meeting and to discuss these issues was received gratefully by the Board. Member Brian O'Rourke said that there has been no communication between the Board and Mr. Jesner of the FRRSD, but that he was "happy with the dialogue at this meeting. We've heard some things tonight for the first time."

### And If It's Turned Down Again?

If the town votes against the school budget a second time, DellaGuistina told the Times, the committee "will have to go back to the budget numbers. If we're forced to make cuts they may not be what parents want cut ... For instance, when there is one bidder for grounds keeping, that's the bidder who gets the contract. Those numbers don't change much."

The next step after that, said DellaGuistina, would be that "Otis and Sandisfield would have a joint meeting at the school to vote again on a budget with a show of hands."

If the two towns cannot agree, then "Boston would tell the town what the budget is, divide it by 12 and give the school district 1/12th of that amount every month until the issue is resolved. That's a hard way to budget anything."

### Finding a Resolution

In George Riley's June 14 email to the School Committee, he wrote that in the Select Board's opinion there were two options. The first would be to let the budget stand as proposed and schedule a Special Town Meeting in Sandisfield.

## Special Town Meeting

July 15, 7:00 p.m.  
Old Town Hall,  
3 Silverbrook Road



Of three items on the agenda, #1 is to vote on the school budget for Fiscal Year 2020. This is a re-vote from Town Meeting in May which rejected the budget by a vote of 30-21.

However, Riley added that such a vote would likely fail to pass because of a required footnote on the warrant saying that both the Select Board and the Finance Committee oppose the budget.

Under option two, Riley wrote, the School Committee would meet again and approve a revised school budget that "reflects an actual decrease to the operating account, which we can then submit to the Town for approval."

Riley closed his email by expressing his hope that the Committee can identify some possible ways to reduce the school budget, "with a commitment to an ongoing dialogue throughout this year which we hope will result in a FY 2021 budget which will be reasonable and acceptable to everyone involved."

For its part, the School Committee is proposing to work much more closely with the Select Board in the future. DellaGuistina said, "Like the Board, our doors are always open for comments and ideas. The committee is going to meet more often with the Board and earlier in the year. We'll try to work much more closely."

Late note: At its meeting June 25, the Select Board signed the warrant for the Special Town Meeting on July 15, with the notation that the Board was unanimously opposed to the budget numbers and that the FinComm was 3-1 opposed. 🗳️

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# The Exploding Ambulance

By Bill Price

June 14. On one of this summer's brilliant sunny days, June Wink and her daughter, Tricia Bergland, were gardening at their home at 155 Sandisfield Road, Rt. 57 near the intersection with Town Hill Road but on the other side of the Buck River.

Suddenly they smelled something burning, looked up and saw billowing black smoke above the trees and, on 57, a huge orange ball of fire, growing larger.

They ran across their bridge to where, on 57, a vehicle was completely engulfed in flames.


They saw a man running from the fire as it intensified. Tricia later said, "He must have been trying to put out the fire as we saw a small fire extinguisher in the road. Then a loud explosion occurred, followed by smaller explosions."

At first, they couldn't tell what kind of vehicle it was, but then, said Tricia, "We realized it was an ambulance. It had been heading east on 57 when it stopped just past our driveway, where the fire occurred."

The ambulance, from Alert Ambulance Service, Chicopee, was returning a patient to the Berkshire

Rehabilitation Center when the driver, smelling smoke, realized all the systems had failed. According to a report in The Berkshire Eagle, the driver brought the vehicle to a rolling stop and the crew safely got out, pulling the patient out on a stretcher. Fearing explosions from multiple canisters of oxygen on board, the crew pushed the patient several hundred yards away. It is unclear what caused the system failure and the fire, but there were no injuries.

According to The Eagle, a Sandisfield resident, so far unnamed and unacknowledged, climbed into the back of the ambulance and removed the 100-pound oxygen tank, the largest in the vehicle. Anthony Suffriti, Alert's vice president of operations, said this person was able to "prevent pretty much a bomb. A couple of small ones were already out of the ambulance. I think everyone did well."

The Sandisfield Fire Department was soon on the scene to extinguish the fire, joined by representatives from the Sandisfield Police, the State Police, and the New Marlborough Fire Department. 



The burning ambulance.



A firefighter confers with Fire Chief Ralph Morrison after the fire is out.

Photos: Tricia Bergland

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# FinComm Chairman Resigns

By Bill Price

Joe Gelinas, Chairman of the town's Finance Committee, has asked Town Moderator Simon Winchester not to reappoint him when his term expires June 30.

Joe was first appointed in 2016. His first year was with Kathy Jacobs as chair. He became chairman in 2017.

He helped oversee the town's finances during a turbulent period, with changes in Select Board members and town administrators, an appointed treasurer rather than elected, the first full town audit in several years, reorganization of the town's financial systems, and more upheaval even than this short list.



Joe Gelinas at a Special Town Meeting, 2017.

Photo: Bill Price

Asked by The Times to reflect on his single term and his leadership of the committee, Joe replied in an email:

"The FinComm worked with the Select Board to develop policies and processes that would enable us to make informed decisions (Select Board) and recommendations to town meetings (FinComm) about proposed uses of taxpayers' funds and to make the process transparent to the taxpayers. These policies and processes required that all requests be accompanied with written documentation explaining and justifying any expenditures, even if a budget was to be level-funded. The written documentation was to replace what had been verbal requests. The documentation would facilitate communication from requester to Select Board to FinComm and would provide the necessary transparency. In many ways this was a big change for the town. As with any change process, it was difficult to accomplish.

"The Select Board did not consistently follow the processes that they had agreed to. This made the FinComm's job more difficult and time consuming. For example, the FinComm often received budget requests that had been reviewed and approved by the Select Board that did not provide sufficient explanation and written documentation with which the FinComm could make informed recommendations to Town Meeting. This led to back and forth questions and requests for additional documentation. Major requests for capital purchases were made without following the Capital Improvement Plan process. This led to making one-off purchase decisions without considering future capital needs. The FinComm and Select Board struggled to find a way to work together. This at times felt adversarial.

I enjoyed meeting and working with townspeople and town employees and volunteers. It was satisfying to me to accomplish what we did and frustrating that we could not do more. Struggling to get information with which to make our recommendations and the resulting somewhat contentious nature of the Select Board/FinComm relationship was eventually exhausting.

# FOR JOE A TRIBUTE FROM HIS COLLEAGUES

Roger Brown, Katy Jacobs, Bogart Muller  
Members of the Finance Committee

After nearly three years, Joe Gelinas is stepping down as Town of Sandisfield Finance Committee Chair and from the committee.

Over the course of his tenure as Chair, Joe has worked tirelessly to improve the effectiveness, transparency, and professionalism to the function of the Committee guided by Massachusetts regulations and the Association of Town Finance Committee recommendations. Working closely with the all the Town's officials and department heads, Joe dug in to the Town financial records to rebuild a consistent, solid, and enduring foundation of the Town's spending and streamlined the accounting to improve Town officials' and residents' ability to evaluate expense spending and budgeting.

Joe did all of this while maintaining a fair and professional attitude which isn't always a simple task. It was never "about Joe," it was always "about the Town of Sandisfield." While, there were other effective and dedicated Town officials in the past, and we expect great contributions for those who will follow, those who have had the pleasure of working with Joe during his time in office are grateful for his leadership and contributions.



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

# New Heights for The Sandisfield Players

## “CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY” A BIG HIT

By Barbara Penn

Imaginative! Creative! Amazing! Coupled with “How did they do that?”

Just some of my thoughts while thoroughly enjoying the first night performance of the musical, “Charlie and The Chocolate Factory” at the Sandisfield Arts Center.



Every detail was picture perfect, starting with the sets, which became an equal “character” in the play. The sets brought the audience into that magical space of the “willing suspension of disbelief.” In this small theater, a stage with no moveable walls or even a modern theater curtain, the mega-talented, visual artists Susie Crofut, Erica Crofut, and Robin Crofut Brittingham created sets and props that made the Chocolate Factory real. Erica Crofut’s gobstopper and gum machines, Wonkavision, the geese and egg-laying machine were whimsical and so imaginative they could appear in a gallery show on their own.

The whole theater space, including the aisles and the handicap lift, were brilliantly used.

The entire cast did an admirable job. The youngsters in the play, Crosby and Waverly Coyne, Chloe Howard, and Gabriel Lassar were charming and believable. Bailey Howard, starring as “Charlie,” struck just the right balance of pathos and innocence, suitably understated and wonderfully natural.

Reid Sinclair, in four roles, continues to amaze this reviewer. I remember him as a teenager in several plays, he was very good. Now he is a superb professional. I look forward to seeing him next on stage in New York City!

Hayden Graham as Newscaster 2 was terrific, with a clean, believable and engaging portrayal.

But the star of the show was Jesse Howard as Willy Wonka. Some readers might remember his multiple roles in “Shakespeare Unchained.” Jesse is whatever character he portrays, and the audience is always enthralled. That he also directed (with Luxon) is a stunning tribute to his talent. He also created two original songs for this production: “Ten O’Clock” and “It Won’t Be Me.”

Portraying the parents, Mary Anne Grammer, Evers Whyte, Bibb Baily, Jean Atwater-Williams, and Laura Danehower-Whyte, were seasoned professionals. They never disappoint and were marvelous here. Jean, as Mrs. Gloop, sang beautifully. Using a German accent in an explanation of how her son Augustus was conceived, Jean was hysterical.

Jean was also the costume manager and designer, pulling together from a variety of sources costumes that were colorful, distinctive, and “popped.” Each character’s costume fit their personality.

Performing multiple roles were the versatile actors, Reid Sinclair, Lauren Paul, Susie Crofut, Laura Danehower-Whyte, Jean Atwater-Williams, Hayden Graham, John Funchion. They did an enchanting job as the other-worldly Oompa Loompas, aided in the illusion by the ups and downs of the handicap lift.

Ben Luxon as Grandpa Joe (in addition to co-directing) was simply a world apart. Whether he has one line or a hundred, when Ben is on stage he owns it.

A shout out too to accompanist Cathrine-Shane Lydon, Assistant Director and sound board operator Kate Howard, light board operator Abbie Lombard, backstage manager Annie Rosenberg, and the backstage crew, Harlan Bruggemann and Matt Spanielt.

Justifiably, this was a near sell-out for all three performances!

*Note: For the full program and more pictures, see our website [www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org). This program was supported in part by a grant from the Sandisfield Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.*



## Making It Look Easy

### Takes a Lot of Work

By Barbara Penn

To produce a complicated play with as many characters as “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” requires a lot of work. And creativity.

Aside from the creation of the piece by Jesse Howard from the original novel by Raoul Dahl, the players themselves rehearsed easily three or four evenings a week and weekends for several months, in groups small and large, sometimes separately.

The cost of the productions was considerable for a small arts theatre. Somewhere in neighborhood of \$1,500 to \$2,000 to pay for the accompanist, assistant director, director, etc., excluding additional expenses of ads in the Shopper Guide. Three hundred posters were printed and distributed.

The staff did a lot of marketing with targeted press releases which got us a number of stories in newspapers and social media, including Facebook. We distributed posters to the Farmington River School where teachers put 150 in kid’s backpacks. Berkshire School did similar. All cast members took ten posters each to distribute in surrounding towns.

The cast and crew were remarkable. They worked very hard and long hours to pull this off. Jesse Howard’s co-directing with Ben Luxon equaled Ben’s energy. Ben not only directed but painted the sets that Susie Crofut and her family designed. Atwater-Williams selected the costumes, even designing and sewing some of them. Many others of the cast and crew painted, cleaned, did whatever needed to be done. They all went well beyond their roles.

A terrific community of very hard-working, dedicated people pulled this off. Hard work, dedication, and talent. And the Arts Center did a tremendous amount of marketing to help draw the large audiences for each of the three performances.





Above photo by Anni Crofut  
All other photos by Cindy Ragusa



# A Change of Pace

## ARTS CENTER IN JULY

By Hilde Weisert

We're taking a breath after the seven events that rollicked through the Arts Center in June. The seven included three performances of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," the first musical from the Sandisfield Players. "Charlie" played to sell-out crowds, delighting children young and old.

Our July line-up is interesting and fun, but calmer than last month!

Well-known local artist and popular teacher Patricia Hogan opens in the Gallery July 6, 2 to 4 p.m. You can view her show all month before events or by appointment.

Friday, July 12 at 5:30 p.m., is free Family Film Night. Hosted by Bogart and Tina Muller, and curated this month by Riley Muller, the film will be "Guardians of the Galaxy."

The next morning at 10:30 a.m., back by very popular demand, our own crossword maven Michelle Arnot gives us insider knowledge, tips, and perhaps some challenges for us to solve. Reserve a spot early for "Words Matter—Fun with Crossword Puzzles

for All Ages." Last year it drew a sizable and passionate crowd of people who might be described as "crossword" + "a 4-letter word for *aficianados*."

The surprise hit of last year's season, pianist Frederick Moyer, returns to play piano classics on July 20, from 8 to 10 p.m. Besides being an internationally-known pianist, Moyer's warm manner and keen insights into the pieces he plays make the familiar and unfamiliar come alive. People who attended last year were blown away by the MoyerCam, a camera that projects the keyboard on the piano lid and lets the audience engage with the music in an entirely new way. The Sandisfield Cultural Council provided support for this program.

Finally, we wrap up on Sunday, July 21, 4-6 p.m., with Berkshire Opera Festival co-founders Brian Garman and Jonathon Loy providing an interactive presentation on their summer 2019 production of the comic opera "Don Pasquale," which will later this summer be performed at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center. If you have never been to the opera, this is the perfect one to start with. "Don Pasquale" is also a great introduction to opera for children because it is so much fun.

Tickets and more information at [www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org).

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# My Modular House

## HER OWN CONTRACTOR, LEARNING ON THE JOB

By Rita Kasky

*Editor's note: Last month, Rita Kasky's memoir of moving to the Berkshires from New York City to start a new and calmer life in the country was published in The Times, as well as online May 27 at The Berkshire Edge.*

*After moving north, Rita rented a home in 1992 in Southfield and a year later rented in Hartsville where she lived happily for 12 years, until the landlord needed to sell the house. The second part of her memoir, which follows, picks up just as she realizes she is going to need a new home.*

Finding a rental at or even just a little more than I was paying was not going to happen. One night at dinner my friends Linda and Jerry suggested I consider buying land and building a modular house.

After all, doesn't paying a mortgage instead of rent make sense and then I'll never have to move again? Are you kidding me???

Well, these very dear friends promised they'd take me through it all, as they had lots of experience building houses and, besides, Linda was a realtor.

Linda got a line on a piece of property on Silverbrook Road in Sandisfield.

When we drove out to see it I realized that it was very near that sharp turn on Route 57 at what was once the Sandisfield Town Center, a turn I took carefully whenever I drove to or from the Hartford airport and each time I thought, "I won't have to do that curve again for a while."

The property was perfect. Trees. Some land but not too much. I could garden, eventually.

First I needed to talk to the bank, and if they thought I was a good bet I could become a property owner.

And then I could talk to the modular people at Segalla's and pick out a house!

It was 2004, and, lo and behold, all of that came together nice and neat!

The trip to Segalla's Turnkey Housing in Canaan, Conn., was really the start of something BIG for me. I met the Segalla brothers, told them how this was a brand new idea for me and that if they were willing to "train" me and be patient and comforting when I needed it, then we could do business.

They suggested I go down to the modular home manufacturing plant somewhere near Dover Plains and see how these houses are put together. I did and I was wowed. The following day I signed a contract and the project began.

For a couple of reasons, I decided I wanted a Cape that was pretty much like the one I had been renting.



Rita Kasky of Sandisfield

I liked the flow of it (it fit me well) and importantly neither the cats nor I would get lost in the middle of the night looking for the bathroom. They showed me a plan and allowed me to tweak it a bit.

Once the tweaking was done we went on to selecting counters and floors. "You mean I can pick colors and textures and rugs and wooden floors and things like that?" They assured me that I had lots to choose from, and I dug right in. I was stunned when I realized how I was taking control of building a house!!

I also remember the astonished look on their faces when they asked me where I wanted the kitchen soffits. Sheepishly I confessed I didn't know what a soffit was. Same thing with what side did I want the hatchway – what's that?

The next steps involved things that I knew nothing about: digging a foundation, perc tests, digging a well, site clearance, building permits, topographic information, septic systems, a driveway, and so much more.

My god, what am I doing! Money for this, money for that, oy vey. So I called my instigator, Linda. "Linda, how much did you pay for a perc test." Linda's response: "Talk to Jerry, he took care of that." I did, he gave me the information, and then I asked him who dug their well. "Talk to Linda, she took care of that."

This kind of bantering went on about almost every major decision I had to make. After all, they said they'd help me. When I told them I was exhausted from it all and afraid of making wrong decisions, they couldn't understand. When I reminded them that while there were TWO of THEM when they built their home, there was only ONE of ME, and it was a pretty heavy job.

Anyway, I got through it all and my 2.2 acres were ready to receive my new house.

All the details with the Segallas (bless them for their patience) were finalized and a delivery date set.

I'd be in my new home by mid-July 2004. I started to breathe free again.

After all, I was working full time (in Monterey now, at Gould Farm) during this whole process and my brain was pretty well fried. All the sub-contractors (it occurred to me that, in fact, I was the Project Contractor – quite a different job from the one


I had been doing most of my adult life in the non-profit world) were doing their work and it was very, very exciting. This was all coming together, despite my lack of training in this arena. Oh boy, oh boy!

And the day came as we all knew it would.

I sat on a boulder near the site where the front and back ends of the house would be dropped and married together. Just seeing the flatbeds coming down Silverbrook Road and turning into my driveway brought tears to my eyes. An extremely emotional moment, one I'll never ever forget.

The two sides were joined, the guys put some cinder blocks in front of the door so I could peek in, and I was filled with joy and pride. More work would need to be done as the upstairs would be built onsite, and the floors needed to be built (on top of the sub-floors), the bannister needed to be installed, and lots more.

But the thing is, it was mid-July, the house was here, on schedule, it was mine, and another challenge in my life had been met.

I love my house, I really dig Sandisfield. This is so cool. 



The foundation poured.



The house being assembled.



The house today.

Photos: Rita Kasky



# On Growing Up in Two Worlds

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HERE AND THERE

By Avery Kim

I've spent half of my life darting down crowded subway stairs in an ever-bustling city, perfecting the speed, tone, and diction of ordering my go-to deli sandwich and coming to terms that an iced coffee is more expensive than it should ever be.

I have spent the other half of my life strolling down dirt roads, riding horses through plush pastures of green and gold, and stopping my car for never-ending streams of turkey families crossing the road.

One half of my life took place twelve stories above a glowing grid of yellow taxis, streetlamps, and public buses. The other half of my life was down an unpaved road nestled between soaring trees.

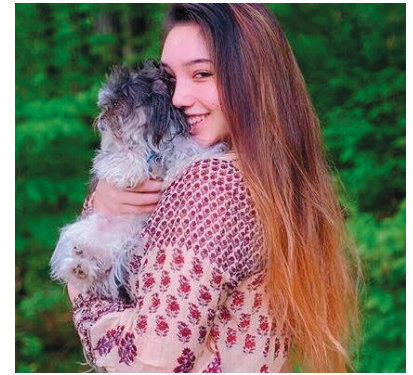
I never fully appreciated this dual citizenship between urban and rural life until recent years, when America's political landscape revealed a divide between the two types of living.

Calling both Sandisfield and Manhattan home, my perspective has become more nuanced and my mind more open.

In one home cellular service is sparse, the population density is one of the lowest in the state, my father is the only Asian according to the 2010 Census, the closest big brand store is 30 minutes away by car, and bears cross my backyard.

In my other home, people are glued to their mobile devices, the population density is one of the highest in the nation, multiple Asian families live in my apartment building, Starbucks shops are mere blocks apart, and Central Park is my backyard.

Similar to my half-Asian, half-Eastern European heritage, I do not compartmentalize myself and "choose" one half, but rather see myself as a synergistic combination of multiple backgrounds.



Avery Kim with her dog, Zeno.

When I reminisce about learning to swim in Lake Garfield, learning to drive on Route 57, hiking with my 5-lb dog on Monument Mountain, attending camps and programs in Sandisfield, Monterey, and Great Barrington, I feel very strongly that I would not be the New Yorker that I am today without having spent half my life in Sandisfield.

Avery Kim's family has owned a home in Sandisfield for nearly 30 years. She is currently enrolled at Columbia University, Class of '21.

# For Love of an Old House, Part 2

## THE MANTLE, BEFORE AND AFTER

By Lorraine German

"If these walls could talk..." We often hear this phrase about old houses.

At our home that we've been rehabbing for several years at the intersection of Town Hill Road and Rt. 57, it's not just walls, but the house that speaks to us.

Our front parlor, once the showpiece of the Greek Revival addition, was featured in a book about early houses. Detail about its beautiful faux marble mantle was highlighted. Over time, the mantle was replaced with a plain, dark one. I planned to paint it to match the original, using some old photos as a guide.

Apparently, the house had other plans and let us know.

While looking at the mantle one day my husband Steve had a sudden urge to pry off a piece of wood: Out peeked some marbled paint.

We pulled off more wood and were rewarded with more paint.

A little later, the dark mantle was on the floor and we were laughing like kids. It turned out that the faux marble paint on the flat surfaces was still there. Also revealed were the scribe marks on the old wood that had shown the 19th century builder the size and placement of those original pieces.



The mantle, before, with the late Sylvia German.



The mantle, after. Photos: Courtesy of the German family.

I knew then that I owed it to the house to recreate the original mantle. I had my work cut out for me, because our photos showed that the design wasn't simply painted on; the pattern was made up of interlocking dowels.

It took months to finish but the result speaks for itself – thanks to the insistent voice of our old house.

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## The Librarian's Corner

By Terry Spohnholz

**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.

Ah, summer nights—when the stars gleam above, and the skies are dark velvety purple. I can sit nestled in my colorful Adirondack chair, surrounded by fireflies Morse-coding in the dark while listening to the night sounds. The Buck River gurgles away below me, sidestepping boulders and branches, an owl hoots and the occasional bark and yelp of coyotes remind me that not all is peaceful in the dark. Better go inside and read a thriller!

### NEW BOOKS

*Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson – Not a “new book” but a must-read for anyone concerned about the environment. In *Silent Spring*, considered the landmark work of environmental writing, Rachel Carson shows the potentially harmful effects of pesticides on the environment.

*Magic for Liars* by Sarah Gailey – Featuring a small-time investigator called in by the local school of magic to investigate the death of a teacher, this book is part murder mystery, hardboiled noir, and whimsical urban fantasy.

*The Friends We Keep* by Jane Green – The best-selling author writes a contemporary novel of three college friends who reunite in unforgettable fashion. A wonderful summer reading companion to tote along to the beach.

*Recursion* by Blake Crouch – In this relentless thriller about time, identity, and memory, New York cop Barry Sutton investigates the devastating phenomenon dubbed “False Memory Syndrome” – a mysterious affliction that drives its victim mad with memories of a life they never lived.

*Save Me the Plums* by Ruth Reichl – A gourmet memoir by restaurant critic and editor-in-chief of *Gourmet* magazine. Reichl changed the way we think about food. A perfect weekend read – with recipes – for those who love to eat.

### HAPPENINGS AT THE LIBRARY

“A Universe of Songs and Stories” – In a lively participatory program for all, Davis Bates presents an afternoon filled with songs and laughter. Join us at the Library on August 3 at 1 p.m.

### ARTS AND CRAFTS AT THE LIBRARY

On Saturday July 13, from 1:30-3:00 p.m., the Library will celebrate the Summer Reading program with an animal toy stuffing party. Sponsored by the Sandisfield Recreational Committee and the Berkshire Rehabilitation Center. Please pre-register at the Library to ensure enough unicorns and dinosaurs for all participants.

**SUMMER READING PROGRAM** – The theme this summer is “Reading is out of this world.” With 2019 the 50th anniversary of Man’s first walk on the moon, we will celebrate with a star- and space-themed program. Reading program registration begins Saturday, June 22. Prizes, rewards, membership cards, and fun all begin here at the library. The summer reading program ends on Saturday, August 24th with Ed the Wizard and Alien Balloon Twisting.

We have over a dozen children’s books to take you “out of this world,” featuring *Astronaut Sally Ride*, *Dr. Seuss, Curious George, Aliens in Underpants*, and the “Glow in the Dark Night Sky Book” and “Guide to Space,” the latter two donated by Joanne Olson.

### PAPERBACKS

In an effort to provide more room for our ever-expanding collection of new library books, we say good bye to some old friends, our paperback selection! (Only a few left). Thirty cents apiece or four for a dollar.

### THANK YOU!

Many thanks to **Bob and Sue Tarasuk**, who graciously donated the lovely hanging baskets that grace the Library entrance this summer. And to my son, Rudy who provided the hooks and hung them for me.

To **Dassy Hermann** who once again replenished the wall containers with Johnny Jump Ups!

To those who voluntarily donate to the children’s section of the library in lieu of notary fees.

To the **Berkshire Rehabilitation And Skill Care Center and the Sandisfield Recreational Committee** who have donated so much to helping the library with its children’s programs.

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# Sandisfield Historical Society



## The Summer Fair

By Ann Wald, President

The Society's Summer Fair and Flea Market will be held on Saturday, July 13 from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., at Fire Station #2 on Route 57. More than 30 vendors – locally and from out of town – will offer a wide variety of items from a very diverse group of sellers. Raffles, baked goods, tag sale, and more to benefit the Sandisfield Historical Society. Refreshments available to benefit the New Boston Congregational Church. Vendors are welcome. And if anyone would like to help the day of the Fair, please call me at 413-258-4415 or email at [annaw@aol.com](mailto:annaw@aol.com).

At our June meeting, we discussed the repair of the roof of the Society which is a necessary repair because of the historical items we store in the building. We also talked about our future fund raising concerning the construction of our bathroom.

I hope to see all of you at the Fair. 🍷

# Council on Aging



## A July Summer

By Nina Carr

A presentation by Age Friendly Berkshires at Berkshire Community College on June 24 was a screening of a new video produced by them to highlight their efforts to allow Seniors to maximize their quality of life and hopefully to age in place for as long as possible.

I attended the presentation and spoke to Peg McDonough, who directs the program. Peg previously visited a COA meeting in Sandisfield and also sent a representative to our Health and Wellness Fair on June 8.

The Age Friendly Berkshires program is really valuable, and the members of our board, perhaps with other nearby towns, intend to take advantage of their help and advice.

In July we will continue to offer our Chair Yoga classes on Wednesdays after our regular meeting at 2:00. We enjoy our time with Wendy Larsen so much, she has been a great addition to our program.

We will also have a visit from the Foot Nurse on July 18 at 8:30. For an appointment, please call Linda Riiska at 258-4826.

Also July is the time for our annual picnic at York Lake. I was there the other day and the beach and picnic areas look great! Even more importantly, the bathrooms work! Thank you, Smitty Pignatelli! The picnic will take place on July 31 at noon. Come join us! 🍷

## A NEW POT PROPOSAL?

Cont'd from p. 1

The land currently belongs to Mr. and Mrs. Marres, a retired couple who are trying to sell with hopes of moving to Maine. Their 70 acres, without a house, was listed at \$229,000, with Lance Vermeulen Real Estate of Great Barrington. The zoning is residential, in a right to farm community. On the west, the land abuts a portion of the Sandisfield State Forest. As of late June, the property had been on the market for about a year-and-a-half.

The listing is headlined: "Build your country getaway on this large 70 acre private parcel." It describes a "unique opportunity" for "family farm land" that "features ample cleared land for building and a rough drive installed. With over 800 feet of road frontage this property could host a variety of opportunities."

### Marijuana Efforts Increasing in South County

The idea of marijuana facilities in Sandisfield has been discussed several times over the past six or so years, most notably in 2013 when the town rejected a proposal for a marijuana dispensary to be located in Town Hall Annex.

According to Planning Board Chairman Roger Kohler, no formal proposal for the pot farm has yet been made to the Planning Board.

Other communities have faced a similar issue. Neighboring Monterey and New Marlborough met proposals to build or install marijuana-growing facilities by writing new bylaws restricting such facilities. Mount Washington has banned them altogether. Other towns have voted for zoning laws to allow and regulate the facilities: Great Barrington (which now has five facilities), Lee, and Becket.

Along with Sandisfield, three other south county towns have no zoning regulations regarding the issue: Sheffield, Tyringham, and Otis. Of these, Sheffield now has at least two pot-growing facilities, one operated by Theory Wellness, in partnership with Equinox Farm, to grow hemp in fields, and another by Nova Farms, which has bought a farm on Kellogg Road to grow cannabis for retail distribution.

### What About Sandisfield?

The June 3 Select Board minutes report that during the "Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated" section of the meeting, Town Hill Road resident Lynn Rubenstein "asked if there was a marijuana-growth facility going in on Town Hill Road. Brian [O'Rourke] responded that we have no bylaws in place to prevent this. They [any owners of the property] would have to go



through the special permitting process like any business would. They are a long way off. There is an 8-month process to go through with the state before they would come to the town. Brian stated that should [the proposal] come before the town, there will be informational meetings before the special permit hearing."

While acknowledging that the Marres can sell their property to anyone of their choice, a few neighbors along Town Hill Road have voiced opposition to such a large facility just down the road from Yanner Park. One neighbor, Myles Reynolds, said in an email that opponents "have not yet reached the point of protest, and hopefully will not."

Selectman George Riley, in an email, said that in his estimation, "with purchase, utilities, 8-month residency, provisional license from the Cannabis Control Commission (several months, since they only meet monthly), town hearings and permits, and final license, it'll be a good two years before anything starts." 🍷

Phone calls by the Times to Jennifer Pilbin, who handed the information on the proposal to Katie Murray, were not returned. Efforts to reach the Marres were unsuccessful.





# At the New Garage

## EVERY TOOL IN PLACE

By Tom Christopher

For town residents who remember the devastation following the fire on December 10, 2017, that destroyed the old town garage, three trucks and almost every other piece of road equipment, an open house at the new garage Saturday, June 8, had the fascination of a phoenix rising from ashes.

Selectman George Riley expressed gratitude that the town had been carrying such good insurance on the previous structure and its equipment, so that the settlement after the fire had enabled, as he spread his arms wide, "building all of this."



The DPW crew with, left, Select Board member George Riley. Keith Larson, Ralph Leavenworth, and supervisor Brad Curry. Crew member Dave McCuin was away on vacation.

The brand new building boasts all sorts of up-to-date touches: energy-saving LED lights and an extra efficient, sub-floor radiant heating system. Two huge, shiny green, brand-new Western Star plow trucks. A sectioned-off area for the supervisor. A real, working bathroom. For the first time in Sandisfield's history, a real, working bathroom in the garage.

Residents were encouraged to climb up the steep steps into the cabs of the new trucks and take a look at the controls of the computerized systems that will monitor and automatically adjust the distribution of sand and salt during next winter's storms.

Wearing a "Roads Scholar" T-shirt, DPW Superintendent Brad Curry emphasized the careful organization which he believes must be at the heart of an efficient, productive crew. He showed off the white board on the back wall on which is detailed each employee's daily tasks, plus notes on the weather and a reminder to wear protective gear.



DPW Superintendent Brad Curry points out a troublesome spot on the Sandisfield road map. Behind him is the white board used for individual daily assignments.

Photos: Suzanne O'Connell

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Every tool has its designated place in the new tool boxes and custom-built rack. A compressed-air system delivers motor oil directly to the trucks, eliminating the spills and environmental contamination that were a feature of the old garage.

Also prominently displayed is a map of Sandisfield tracing every one of the town's 93 miles of roads, a reminder of the magnitude of the work faced by the town crew.

Superintendent Curry characterized the muddy winter of 2018-2019 as "a learning experience." He is already planning the campaign for next year, as he seeks further training for his crew in the use of grading equipment to better prepare the many dirt roads for what may be weather even worse than the winter and mud season of 2019-20.

"We're trying," he noted. "I won't say it's 100 percent, but it's at least 95." 🍷





*No Slowpoke He*

*On Cold Spring Road, the biggest – and fastest – snapping turtle I have seen in Sandisfield crossed the road ahead of me. Its shell alone was probably 15 inches across.*

*Jean Atwater-Williams*

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# Craig B. Cooley Graduates Boot Camp


By Bill Price



Craig Cooley of Sandisfield and Tolland graduated in May from basic training with the US Marines at Parris Island, South Carolina.

Born in Sandisfield, Craig attended Farmington River Regional School, Monument Valley and Monument Mountain High Schools, graduating in 2014. He is the son of Darcy and James Cooley, grandson of James and Karen Cooley (Karen served the Sandisfield Post Office for 25 years, the last 10 as Postmaster) and Dennis Clifford and Donna Clifford Shaw.

In school, Craig was a member of the wrestling, football, and rugby teams, often serving as captain, and was a life member of the Sandisfield/Otis Boy Scout Troop. His brother, Michael, lives in Great Barrington; his sister, Morgan, in Pittsfield. His partner,

Ashley Sermini, lives in Sandisfield. Before joining the Marines, Craig worked locally at Cantina 229, Gedney Farm, Windy Hill Farm, and Sermini Construction. 

*A Marine private, Craig will join a Motor Transport team. As of the end of July, he had not yet been assigned a station. Friends who would like to keep up with Craig can contact his mother at darcycooley1@gmail.com.*

## Dorothee Coleman, 1935

I don't remember if the curtains were made of cotton or muslin,  
But I do remember them stretched out to dry  
On enormous, fragile wooden frames  
Dry in the summer sun of Illinois.  
It was the Depression and these were my mother's flags,  
Her ensign, her answer to the poverty,  
The ashen soup she fed the tramps  
In our back yard.  
"There will be another day," she'd sigh,  
"A day when we will fill these cups with wine  
And hang these very curtains high,  
So very high."

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# OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



## Town Website

At its June 10 meeting, the Select Board commended **Pauline Bukanis**, Assistant Town Clerk, for her work on the town's website.

## Yanner Park Kiosk

An informational kiosk is being installed at the Town Hill Road entrance to the park. Built in timber-frame style by local artisan and woodworker **Kevin Kiwak**, the kiosk was commissioned by the Yanner Park Committee. Photos and story will be in the August Times.

## Not Friends, but Maybe Neighbors

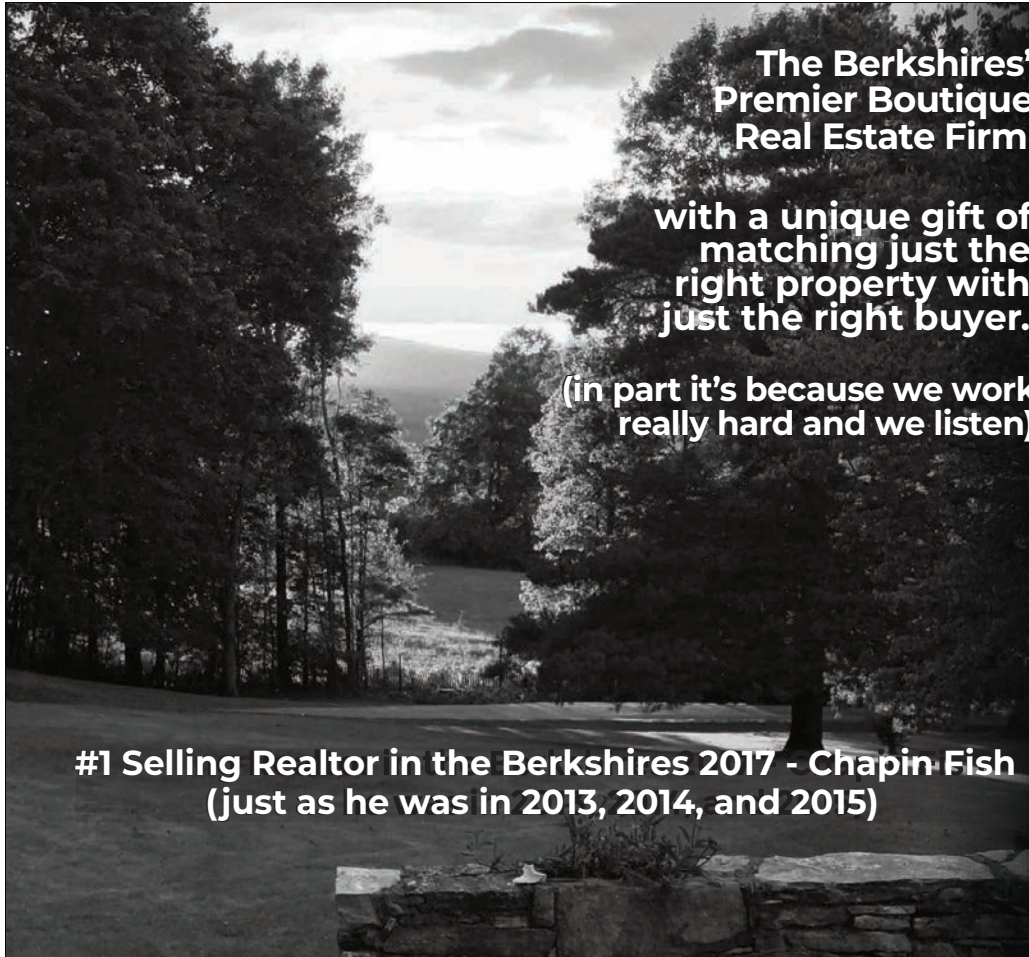
The shrill, painful sound of **speeding dirt bikers** going back and forth, back and forth on upper Dodd Road into and out of the state forest caused a local farmer's calves to tear through barbed wire surrounding their pasture. Alarmed mother cows went after them. The farmer stopped the dirt bikers, pointed out that they were frightening domestic animals (illegal), were speeding (illegal), and were not wearing helmets (illegal). The lead rider looked at the farmer and uttered a crude and rude expletive before taking off. The farmer called the Sandisfield Police Chief who said that the dirt bikers had legal bikes and since he didn't see them speeding or not wearing helmets there was nothing to do.



*Coming Along, Almost There*

*Dean Monteleone installing the signboard for Yanner Park's timber-frame kiosk. The kiosk still needs a roof covering and some plexiglass.*

*Photo: Adam Brown*



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## Letters to the Editors

### The Charter Business Model

Over 15 years ago I heard the first promise of broadband for Sandisfield. As someone outside the range of DSL and needing broadband for my work, I've hung on each promise with hope – Wired West, a very solid rural electrification type solution actually voted on by the town, but sabotaged by state shenanigans, then Frontier, then Crocker Communications, and now Charter. I hope this time the town will go into the agreement with their eyes wide open.

General user dissatisfaction with Charter has been discussed in this paper, but I can add a firsthand caution that I hope the Broadband Committee and Select Board will take into account.

Please don't let them do to the residents of Sandisfield what they have done to me and my neighbors in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, my other home. Rates start low with attractive bundled packages.

"Introductory deals" expire and \$99 goes to \$149 per month. Worse, suddenly you open the bill and see \$188. You look back at Autopay and realize they raised the rate three months ago without notice. You call and they say, oh, the rate for the cable boxes went up, but now that you've called, we'll take that off. That happens regularly several times a year.

Suddenly a sports package is added that was never requested. Vacation "hold" may lead to losing the package you had and only getting something comparable for a higher price.

Now is the time, before we are captive consumers, for the Select Board to lock in reasonable rates, a commitment to maintain the promised service without excessive or unexplained increases, and secure protections for all our residents, many of whom live on fixed incomes.

Because Charter will have a monopoly with no real competition, it is even more important that the town (with the assistance of the state) negotiate a franchise agreement that protects the residents from behavior we know this company considers part of their business model.

*Hilde Weisert  
Hammertown Road*

### Thanks to the Times

Thanks for all of your dedication, hard work, and excellent reporting. I really enjoy catching up on what is happening in town.

*Tracey Hohman  
Lower West Street*

### Apology to Rosemary

In the June issue of The Times, the editor misidentified Rosemary, the mother of a new Sandisfield calf, Bob "Bullet," as a Brown Swiss. The editor was subsequently informed that Brown Swiss are docile but rather dumb animals and huge, thus requiring more food and more manure to be disposed of. Few if any are found in Sandisfield.

Bob's mother is, in fact, a rather smart Milking Shorthorn who knows she is not a Brown Swiss and is glad of it. She is one of Joshua Farm's primary milk producers. Bob's father is a Jersey Cross, which makes Bob a Milking Shorthorn/Jersey Cross. He is currently romping like the bull calf he is across the newly green pastures.

*Bill Price  
West New Boston*



### Select Board

*Brian O'Rourke, center, and George Riley, right, re-elected Marc Newman, left, as Select Board Chairman following the town election May 13.*

*Photo: Bill Price*



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"Hawk Ink"

Painting by Michelle Arnot



# NOW HEAR THIS!

*Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro*

*Please send notices for Now Hear This! to [editor@sandisfieldtimes.org](mailto:editor@sandisfieldtimes.org).*

## JULY EVENTS

**Playgroup** on Mondays from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. at the Sandisfield Library Community Room (library basement). Pre-registration not necessary. The playgroup features a story time, too. 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.

**Chair Yoga** on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex on Route 57. Free.

**YOGA with Ann Gadwah** will be offered at 6:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Contact the Recreation Committee or Library for dates. \$5.

**Opening Reception: Patricia Hogan** on Saturday, July 6, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. Pat Hogan specializes in paintings inspired by nature. Private showings by appointment with the artist. The gallery exhibition will be on display through August 1.

**Free Family Movie Night** on Friday, July 12, at 5:30 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. This month's selection for the whole family is "Guardians of the Galaxy II" Free.

**Sandisfield Historical Society Summer Fair** on Saturday, July 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Firehouse #2, Route 57. Crafts, food, raffles, many items for sale.

**Words Matter with Michelle Arnot** on Saturday, July 13, at 10:30 a.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. Fun with crossword puzzles for all ages. For more information visit [www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org). \$10.

**Arts and Crafts** on Saturday, July 13, from 1:30-3:00 p.m. at the Library. Celebrate the Summer Reading Program with an animal toy stuffing party. Preregister at the Library to ensure enough unicorns and dinosaurs for all.

**New Boston Church Service** on Sunday, July 14, at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57. All are welcome!

**Special Town Meeting** on Monday, July 15, at 7:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall. To revote on school budget rejected at Annual Town Meeting in May.

**Frederick Moyer Piano Recital** on Saturday, July 20, at 8:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. Moyer's engaging recitals include time-honored favorites. He will perform a program of classical piano masterpieces. For tickets and more information visit [www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org). \$20.

**Berkshire Opera Festival interactive presentation** on Sunday, July 21 at 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center at 5 Hammertown Road. Berkshire Opera Festival co-founders Brian Garman and Jonathon Loy will answer all your questions through an interactive presentation on their summer 2019 production of the comic opera "Don Pasquale," which will later be performed at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center. For tickets and information, visit [www.sandisfieldartscenter.org](http://www.sandisfieldartscenter.org). \$15.

**Blood Pressure Clinic** with Porchlight Visiting Nurse Association on Wednesday, July 24 at 11:30 a.m. at the Council on Aging, basement level at the Sandisfield Town Hall Annex on Route 57.

**COA Annual Picnic at York Lake**, on Wednesday, July 31, at noon. Food provided by COA, usual picnic fare. Free. Everyone welcome.

## OTHER EVENTS IN NEARBY TOWNS

**Naumkeag at Night on Thursdays** from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. in Stockbridge. Live music, cash bar. Grounds open. \$5 Members: \$10 non-members.

**Bidwell Country Fair** on Saturday, July 6 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Bidwell House at 100 Art

School Road in Monterey. Pie-making contest, live music, re-enactors, crafts, games, food, and drinks. Free!

**Fishing Derby** on Saturday, July 13 from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. at the Berkshire Hatchery on 240 Hatchery Road in Monterey. The Derby is for children thirteen and under, rain or shine. Prizes are awarded and limited equipment and assistance is available. For more information, call 528-9761.

**Retracing Native Histories on the Landscape** on Saturday, July 27 at 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Bidwell House at 100 Art School Road in Monterey. A guided walk with Rob Hoogs to explore the grounds and retrace the steps of the Mohican tribe who lived and hunted in this area for thousands of years. \$10 Members; \$15 non-members.

**Family Basket Making** on Sunday, July 28, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at the Monterey Community Center on 468 Main Road. Professional basket maker Wendy Jensen will conduct a workshop for adults and children. For more information and to register, visit [www.ccmonterey.org](http://www.ccmonterey.org).

## SAVE THE DATE

**Twelfth Annual Otis Arts Festival** on Saturday, August 3, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., at the Farmington River Elementary School, Otis. A variety of crafts and artisans will exhibit their wares, a pottery demonstration by fine artist Pied Piper Hamelin, and the CHP Health Van on site for the community. Food truck. For info, email [culturalco.otis@yahoo.com](mailto:culturalco.otis@yahoo.com), or call 413 269-4674. Free admission

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# THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



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*The Times is grateful to readers  
who have donated this month.*



*Jeff Gonyeau & Jack Dennerlein*

*Tracey Hohman*

*Hal Holt & Pam Kittredge*



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](http://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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Copies are also available in Otis at Berkshire Bank, Katie's Market, Papa's Fuel, Otis Library, Otis Rec Center, Farmington River Diner, Otis Poultry Farm, Otis Woodlands (May-September), Knox Trail Inn, and the Laundromat. Locations in Monterey include the Library (temporarily located at the firehouse) and the Roadside Café. Also available at the Southfield Store in New Marlborough, and at the general store and post office in Colebrook. Back issues are available for purchase.

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

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### Editorial Staff

*Editors: Bill Price and Seth Kershner*

*email: [editor@sandisfieldtimes.org](mailto:editor@sandisfieldtimes.org) or cell 413.429.7179*

*Advertising/Subscriptions: Ron Bernard*

*Graphic Design: Tina Sotis*

*Website: Jean Atwater-Williams*

*Now Hear This!: Laura Rogers-Castro*

*Founding Editor: Simon Winchester*

### How to Contact Us

*Mail can be directed to*

*The Sandisfield Times, PO Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255.*

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