

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



Plebis

RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

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July 2020

Whatever Happened to Sandisfield's Capital Improvement Plan?

By Seth Kershner and Setsuko Winchester

Broadband. Route 57. A cramped and aging Town Hall complex in need of repair.

While the Town tackles all of these current or future projects, it is using a one-off, pay-as-you-go model of municipal finance, despite the existence of a Capital Improvement Plan, passed by voters at the 2018 annual Town Meeting and approved by the Select Board shortly thereafter.

Capital planning is intended to guide a town's planning for and coordination of major capital improvements, defined as anything costing more than \$25,000.

According to a joint statement released in June 2018 by the Select Board and the Finance Committee, "The capital plan will allow town officials and taxpayers to know what capital improvements are required over the next ten years, the total cost of those improvements, and funding sources that may be available to address those needs."

Its purpose was simple: to avoid a risky pay-as-you-go model of financing major capital improvements and protect the Town from unanticipated capital expenditures.

According to Sean Cronin, Senior Deputy Commissioner at the Division of Local Services, a capital plan is "one of the pillars of sound financial management."

Cronin's division, part of the State's Department of Revenue, is responsible for the oversight of municipal finance for all cities and towns in the Commonwealth. Besides approving each community's tax rate, it also offers a host of services to help set up communities for financial success.

"Over the last few years our division has stressed the importance of long-range planning, including capital plans," Cronin told the Times.

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Sandisfield's Annual Town Meeting DESPITE SMALL CROWD, SCHOOL BUDGET STIRS DEBATE

By Thomas Christopher



Town Meeting at the new garage, residents properly distanced.

Photo: Joanne Grybosh

Attendance was down at the year's Sandisfield Annual Town Meeting. Given the pandemic, this was not entirely unexpected. Even though the folding chairs in the town garage were socially distanced, the crowd of some 58 voters did not fill them all. Still, when Moderator Simon Winchester gavelled the meeting open, at ten o'clock sharp, feelings were running high.

The first warrant article to be considered concerned the transfer of \$100,000 from the Stabilization Trust Fund to the Capital Improvement Plan Stabilization Account in order to restore funds borrowed to pay for overages on the restoration of Rugg Bridge. To move money out of the Stabilization Trust Fund would have required a two-thirds majority for passage. However, Finance Committee Chairman Roger Brown

called to amend this article to move the sum from the Town's Free Cash—a move requiring only a simple majority. This amendment was moved, seconded, and passed. Public discussion of the amended article focused on concern that this allocation of funds would

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DO WE REALLY
NEED OUR
OWN POLICE

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Election Results

By Sandisfield Times Reporters

Roger Kohler, a schoolteacher newly elected to the School Committee, hit the ground running. Within hours of his success at the ballot box, he posted a questionnaire on ConnectSandisfield Facebook asking parents what they now expect from Farmington River Regional School District. His 136-vote victory over former committee member Nick DellaGiustina suggests turbulent times ahead for a body already on the defensive for its handling of the rising cost of education.

Marc Newman handily won a third term on the Select Board with a 118-vote victory over write-in candidate Alex Bowman's 35.

The election drew 165 voters out of the Town's 606 registered voters. Of the 165, roughly 125 were early mail-in ballots. Most of the races were uncontested.

At the Swap Shop

TRIP TO THE TRANSFER STATION NOW A SHOPPING THRILL

By Bill Price

Do you have something you can't throw away but don't want in the closet?

You're in luck. Take it down/up to the Swap Shop and let someone who wants it take it home and treasure it all over again.

The new Swap Shop is open at the Transfer Station and will soon be filled with gently used items that you can bring home or space where you can leave things you don't need anymore.



The Sandisfield Swap Shop, empty at first.

The Shop is open when the Transfer Station is open: Wednesday, noon-5:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. It's on a seasonal basis, so don't count on it during next winter's snowstorms.

Two major points of interest in the election were Kohler's clear success and the curious victory of local firebrand Bowman as an undeclared candidate for the town's Planning Board. Bowman's write-in votes for Select Board barely dented Newman's victory, but was enough to give him credibility for a possible future run. His small success in the Planning Board race was quite bizarre: there were no official candidates, but nine townspeople had their names written onto the ballot – with Bowman written in four times, giving him a majority and consequently, a seat on the board. However, he told *The Times* he does not plan to fill the seat.

Full results are as follows:

Moderator (One year): **Simon Winchester** elected with 135 votes; 8 other names written-in; 22 slips left blank.

Selectman (Three years): **Mark Newman** elected with 118 votes; Alex Bowman, write-in candidate, 35 votes; 4 other write-in candidates; and 8 slips left blank.

For sanity's sake, there are rules.

1. All donated items must be deemed acceptable by the attendant and dropped off inside the shed. Anything not approved by the attendant will be required to be taken back by the resident or discarded properly. Leave nothing outside the Swap Shop.
2. If the Shop starts to overflow with too many items, the attendant can say "No, thanks." All items must be clean, dry, and in good working condition.
3. You can leave many things (household items, glasses, silverware, folding chairs, toys, puzzles, tools, lawn and garden equipment, bird feeders, sports equipment, and baby/child stuff). Important! Do not bring puzzles with missing pieces!
4. Some stuff you can't leave (child safety items, large furniture, electronics, TVs, appliances, lawnmowers, mattresses, books, carpets, construction material, hazardous material like paint and varnishes, anything broken or missing parts).

The rules are posted at the Transfer Station. Please direct questions to Department of Public Works at Sandisfield DPW, PO Box 103, 3 Silverbrook Road, Sandisfield 01255. Or online at highways@sandisfieldma.gov.

Town Clerk (Three years): **Dolores Harasyko** elected with 150 votes; four other names written in; 8 slips left blank.

Board of Assessors (Three years): **Steven Kopiec** elected with 148 votes; two write-in candidates and 15 slips left blank.

School Committee (Three years): **Roger Kohler** elected with 136 votes; Nick DellaGiustina received 16 votes; one other write-in name and 12 slips left blank.

Board of Health (Three years): **Victor Hryckvich** was elected with 135 votes; two others written in, and 28 slips left blank.

Planning Board (Five years): **Alex Bowman** received 4 write-in votes; nine other write-in candidates, and 152 slips left blank.

Two Constables (Five years): **John Burrows** won 152 votes and **Nazario Sanchez** 149 votes, both were elected; one other write-in candidate, and 28 slips left blank.



Full-Time DPW Person Needed

The Department of Public Works is seeking a full-time, 40-hour-per-week employee, someone who is willing to work hard and be part of a team.

See the Town website at www.sandisfieldma.gov for the job description and a job application form.

Write to Brad Curry, DPW Superintendent, PO Box 103, Sandisfield, MA 01255, or email at highways@sandisfieldma.gov.

If writing by email, please use "Full Time Work" on the subject line.

Letters of interest along with resumes and job applications will be accepted until the position is filled.

Covid Still Here?

NOT SHOWING ITS UGLY FACE, SO FAR

By Bill Price

Maybe lurking somewhere? In some car approaching from “outside?” Sneaking up on us? But so far, like last month, so good.

Board of Health spokesman Roger Kohler reports “no new reported cases since May. And that number of zero reflects all the residents in town, including the nursing home.”

With Sandisfield’s few public spaces (Town Hall, the Library, York Lake) re-opening slowly and cautiously, the Town seems to be creeping back to life. Likewise its few businesses (New Boston Inn, Tuckers, New Boston Crane Service & Sleds, A&M Auto – which never really closed, car repair in Sandisfield being as essential as it gets). The

Inn and Tuckers are open with outside tables or take-out only, with limited hours. Pigs Fly Farm is open for produce and Snow Farm is selling flowers again. Check their websites for hours of operation or call ahead.

Town police and all the volunteers at the fire station and EMS have been on call since the pandemic started. The same goes for the staff at the New Boston Rehabilitation Center, many of whom have worked extra shifts, covered for each other during emergencies, and kept the place and the residents – many of them veterans – safe and sound. Thanks, and hats off to all of you. 🍷

Tuckers, *Al Fresco*

WITH A NEW FACE (BUT FAMILY) IN CHARGE

By Bill Price



“The Way Things Used To Be” is the way they’re on the way to being again.

After being closed since March because of state Covid-19 regulations, MJ Tuckers bar/restaurant on Rt. 8 in New Boston has reopened, for outdoor dining and take-out only. It’s not quite the old days, it’s not quite bellying up to the bar, but it’s a lot better than driving by with no reason to stop.

Some regulations are still in effect for the safety of customers and staff. The tables are outside and placed to encourage social distancing. Masks are not required outside, but will be necessary for trips inside the building. Hugging old friends not seen for months and Sandisfield shaking of hands are postponed until later this summer.

Owner Marty Cormier told The Times, “We’re glad to be back. We can’t wait to see everyone again, and we’re grateful for all the continued support.”

Marty added that he and his team spent the down time “cleaning up the joint, painting, cleaning, updating the kitchen.”

Marty’s nephew, Joshua Cormier, will be running day-to-day operations. Joshua began his cooking career at Tuckers as a kid hanging around the kitchen with his grandmother Barbara and his dad. “He worked a couple years at Blantyre in Lenox before moving to Brooklyn where he was lead chef at Midnights in Williamsburg,” Marty said. “He moved back home during Covid-19, and he’s going to give new life to the old place.”

Tuckers draws about half its customers from Sandisfield and Otis, with the other half coming up from Connecticut or passers-by on Rt. 8. The June Horseshoe Tournament was postponed, but Marty thought it likely the October event could be held as usual. He is expecting a few customers stopping by from the new free-style climbing site at Hanging Mountain, just south along Rt. 8, organized this spring by the Western Massachusetts Climbers Coalition. 🍷

Whatever Happened to Sandisfield’s Capital Improvement Plan?

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Of course, it is challenging for under-resourced, smaller communities like Sandisfield to establish or improve their capital plans. Which is why Cronin’s division has offered free technical advice and consulting services to dozens of communities across the Commonwealth, including nearby Granville, and offers many training tools, including for capital planning, at www.mass.gov/DLS.

Great Barrington and New Marlborough also use capital planning to guide their annual spending, the Times has learned.

But Sandisfield’s Capital Improvement Plan has never been implemented, and the Town still lacks even a basic inventory of its most expensive assets like DPW vehicles, fire trucks, and other equipment.

According to outgoing Finance Committee Chair Kathy Jacobs, the Town’s response to the DPW garage fire in 2017 illustrated the need for a reliable inventory of Town assets. “Sandisfield does not know what it owns,” Jacobs told the Times in an interview. A 2016 audit of the Town’s finances by Deerfield-based accounting firm, Scanlon & Associates, also faulted Sandisfield for not reporting details about its assets and infrastructure.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Although Select Board Chair Mark Newman declined to comment for this article, he has said that the process has been held up by a lack of volunteers willing to serve on a Capital Improvement Committee, as per the terms of the original policy.

During a conversation with the Times, Town Manager Joanne Grybosh said she would ask the Select Board to revisit the issue. “If this is something we can implement,” Grybosh said, “we will.”

For her part, Jacobs, who served on the Finance Committee for ten years, says that members of the Capital Improvement Committee would likely only need to meet three or four times a year, with most of those meetings occurring around budget time.

“We have limited revenue and we need to make sure we’re spending it correctly,” she added, noting that a Capital Improvement Committee would assess the capital improvement needs of various Town departments to ensure that high-priority projects receive funding.

Community members interested in serving on the Committee are urged to contact Dolores Harasyko, Town Clerk and Administrative Assistant to the Select Board: TownClerk@sandisfieldma.gov. 🍷

At a Sandisfield Family Farm

HOMEGROWN VALUES KEY INGREDIENT

By Callie Hyland

Being farmers takes a lot of work. Andy and Sandra Snyder, owners of When Pigs Fly Farm in Sandisfield Center, ought to know. Since 1994 they have been running their 16-acre farm and selling fresh, organic produce, flower bouquets, and other items at their farm stand on Route 57.



The greeter at When Pigs Fly, appropriately masked for safety of the pig and the public.

Photo: Callie Hyland

“We’ve met a lot of wonderful people and made great friends” Sandra said, sitting under a shady tree. They have made those friends through their business, and through the Town’s Fire and Rescue Squad where they have volunteered for years.

Living with them on what they proudly call their “family farm with family values” are two dancing peacocks, six cats, and two dogs.

SUCCESS NOT HANDED OUT

The Snyders worked long and hard to make When Pigs Fly into what it is today. From what was once an abandoned 250-acre farm, Andy and Sandra created a place where they could start a new phase of their lives.

“When pigs fly, we will make this into a farm,” they both agreed, but through hard work the farm came sooner than that. Visitors see a reminder of the origin of the farm’s name in the pig statue in the Snyders’ front garden.

Although they made little profit in the beginning, their produce soon attracted a loyal customer base. When Pigs Fly was one of the founding farms of the Otis and Sheffield farmer’s markets. Now they have customers from all over Sandisfield and other towns of the Berkshires.

Due to the pandemic, business has increased for the Snyders. More people want to start growing gardens yet do not know how. Andy and Sandra help their customers create gardens by planting seedlings for them. They also sell maple syrup, jam, soup, herbs, flowers, and other items. Like many farm stands in the area, Andy and Sandra’s place operates on the honor system, trusting that customers will pay in the collection box.

More important than earning big profits is the pleasure than comes from giving others the luxury of fresh, organic foods.

One of the great farms in Sandisfield is thriving, and their key to success is clear: with great family values comes a great business. 🍷

The Times is now available at When Pigs Fly farm stand.

Select Board Report

Select Board meetings are still being conducted by a mix of in-person and telephone conference call, but other boards and committees can now also meet in person with social distancing. Town Hall is now open to the public by appointment only; the drop box outside will remain for deposit of documents. We will make some modifications to the Town Clerk’s office to facilitate business with the public.

The summer schedule for Select Board meetings will be: July 14; July 27; August 10; and August 24. All meetings begin at 7:00 p.m.

The Swap Shop is now open at the Transfer Station! Please note the rules and the list of allowable (and forbidden) items. The cardboard compactor is also now in operation but remember that you still need to break down your boxes beforehand.

We awarded a bid for building the Yanner Park driveway and parking lot to Woloshchuk Enterprises in Monson, MA.

We scheduled a public hearing on a special permit application by Roger Ball for upgrading a pre-existing non-conforming structure on his property, for July 14.

We discussed guidelines for re-opening the Library for curbside pickup of books.

After some research and discussion, Sandisfield will join 19 other Berkshire towns in using “Permit Eyes” software for building permits. This will greatly simplify the building permit process, and reduce the number of in-person meetings required. We also approved a new value-based building permit fee structure effective July 1, 2020, which is more in alignment with surrounding towns.

We held a work session to plan the process of performance reviews in light of the current situation. We have developed appraisal forms and will carry out these reviews from late June to early July.

We had a further discussion on a draft bylaw from the Planning Board regarding marijuana establishments. It still needs more work and discussion; the Planning Board will continue to work on this.

We agreed to purchase a PA system for the Town Meeting and future meetings, which expense we expect will be reimbursed by CARES Act funds.

The Route 57 paving project is still on track: paving and culvert work will be bid separately, bids to be received late July and early August.

*Mark Newman, Chair
Brian O’Rourke
George Riley*

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ROUTE 8 / 61 S. MAIN ST., NEW BOSTON, MASS
“THE WAY THINGS USED TO BE”
a FAMILY FRIENDLY RESTAURANT WITH A RUSTIC ATMOSPHERE

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OUR FAMOUS
HORSESHOE
TOURNAMENTS

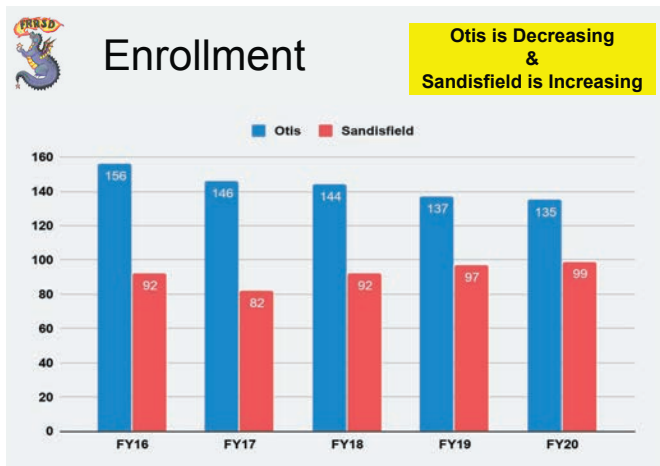
HOSTING PARTIES AND EVENTS | see us on FACEBOOK
FOR INFORMATION AND TAKE-OUT CALL 413 258-4040

OPEN WED & THURS 3-9; FRI - SUN, NOON TO CLOSE

**Sandisfield's Annual Town Meeting
con't from p. 1**

affect the property tax rate. This concern was put to rest by Chairman Brown, who explained that this article was, in effect, just moving money from a "checking account to a savings account." Responding to a query from the public, Kathy Jacobs of the Finance Committee noted that the Town currently has \$657,000 in Free Cash. Ultimately, this article passed with a vote of 29 for and 22 against.

Next up was a far more controversial article, which called for the appropriation of \$1,652,729 for the Town of Sandisfield's share of the Farmington River School budget. This represented an increase of \$97,463 over the previous year's budget share. A major reason for the increased cost is that a greater proportion of Sandisfield students are now attending FRRSD (see chart).



First Selectman George Riley addressed this article, explaining that the Select Board and the Finance Committee had both voted unanimously not to support the passage of this. However, he added that the vote was merely symbolic because if the Town did not pass the budget, then the school budget would go to a joint meeting with the Town of Otis in which Sandisfield would be out-voted. Kathy Jacobs added that the opinion of the Finance Committee was that this increase was not sustainable.

The reaction of the public was, for the most part, angry but resigned. Jennifer Hibbins of the Town's School Committee shared a couple of charts showing that the majority of the increase came in fixed costs such as teachers' salaries, which are up because of teachers having completed educational programs which brought contractually guaranteed raises. Every effort had been made, according to Ms. Hibbins, to reduce costs where possible, such as cutting back on school bus services supplied to the Town by utilizing vans belonging to the School. She also pointed out that Sandisfield's education expenditures represented 43.12 percent of its total municipal spending, lower than the county average of 45.47 percent. During the comment period, it was pointed out that Sandisfield includes a disproportionately large area of untaxed real estate, or real estate taxed at a reduced rate because of conservation and forestry programs, and that the burden on the reduced number of actual tax-payers is high. John Skrip and Anina Carr, both past members of the School Committee, agreed that real relief could only come at the state level and recommended voicing complaints to local political representatives. After



Town leadership, masked and distanced.
Town attorney Brian Laser standing.

Photo: Joanne Grybosh

much heated discussion, the article eventually passed by a simple majority.

After this vote, half the members of the public departed, and the remaining 21 articles were quickly dealt with by a rump of two-dozen voters. One article, calling for the Town to vote on the acceptance of reports from Town Officers was tabled, as submission of the reports had been delayed by the state shut down. The other articles governing such things as Highway Department expenses and salaries and Town employees' salaries passed. (An amendment added to the Highway Department article increased the tree removal budget from \$14,000 to \$25,000 to address the widespread death of ash trees due to the emerald ash borer.)

A few minor decreases marked the articles of what Finance Committee Chairman Roger Brown described as "an austerity budget." Thus, for example, Article 17 was amended to cut \$3,500 from the Recreation Committee's proposed budget of \$7,000 to reflect the many cancellations caused by the pandemic. One notable, if minor item, was the reduction of the annual compensation of the School Committee members to fifty cents each per year. Preceding this vote, Selectman George Riley commented that the Committee's efforts had brought no benefit to the Town.

Moderator Winchester adjourned the meeting at 12:48 p.m. 🇺🇸



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3 Tolland Road
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413.258.4968
www.hillsidegardeninn.com

Police/Fire/EMS Logs

NOTE: North Main Street is Rt. 8 north of New Boston Bridge; South Main Street is south of the bridge.



POLICE

March, April, & May 2020 Incidents

March/April police statistics were delayed due to temporary administrative layoffs in Pittsfield due to pandemic regulations.

March, Police

Mar 1 Medical call, Norfolk Road
 Mar 2 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 2 Medical call, Sandybrook Turnpike
 Mar 3 CO alarm, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 3 Burglar alarm, Sandybrook Turnpike
 Mar 3 Well-being check, Sandybrook Turnpike
 Mar 3 Assist other agency, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 3 Motor vehicle accident, North Main Street
 Mar 4 Serve legal papers, Carpenter Lane
 Mar 4 Serve legal papers, VIA Pittsfield Police Department
 Mar 5 Wires down, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 6 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 9 Well-being check, Dodd Road
 Mar 9 Assist citizen, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 10 Medical call, Tolland
 Mar 10 911 hang up, Hammertown Road
 Mar 11 Fire alarm, North Main Street
 Mar 11 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 11 Assist citizen, Sandybrook Turnpike
 Mar 11 Well-being check, Sandybrook Turnpike
 Mar 14 Medical call, Stump Road
 Mar 14 Medical call, Otis
 Mar 16 Investigation, Clark Road
 Mar 17 Fire alarm, Tolland
 Mar 18 Fire alarm, Sandybrook Turnpike
 Mar 18 Assist other agency, Clark Road
 Mar 22 Structure fire, West Street
 Mar 23 Motor vehicle accident, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 23 Motor vehicle accident, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 25 Animal call, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 25 Medical call, New Hartford Road
 Mar 27 Medical call, Tannery Road
 Mar 28 Building check, Sandisfield Road
 Mar 28 Assist other police department, Otis
 Mar 29 Building check, South Main Street
 Mar 29 Suspicious person, South Main Street
 Mar 29 Medical call, Sandisfield Road

April, Police

Apr 2 Medical call, Tolland
 Apr 3 Fire alarm, Sandybrook Turnpike
 Apr 3 911 hang up, South Main Street
 Apr 5 Traffic complaint, South Main Street
 Apr 5 Trespass complaint, South Main Street
 Apr 5 Trespass complaint, Town Hill Road
 Apr 5 911 hang up, South Beech Plain Road
 Apr 5 Burglar alarm, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 6 Animal complaint, Dodd Road
 Apr 8 Suspicious vehicle, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 8 Animal complaint, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 8 Well-being check, Roosterville Road
 Apr 9 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 9 911 hang up, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 11 Medical call, South Beech Plain Road
 Apr 13 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 13 Disabled motor vehicle, Town Hill Road
 Apr 14 Animal call, Sandybrook Turnpike
 Apr 14 Animal call, South Main Street
 Apr 15 Road hazard, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 17 Medical call, Silverbrook Road
 Apr 18 Well-being check, Silverbrook Road
 Apr 19 Medical call, South Beech Plain Road
 Apr 19 Burglar alarm, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 20 Motor vehicle accident, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 21 Follow-up investigation, Hammertown Road
 Apr 21 Burglar alarm, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 22 Well-being check, Clark Road
 Apr 22 Wires down, Silverbrook Road
 Apr 25 Follow-up investigation, Sandisfield Road
 Apr 25 911 hang up, Silverbrook Road
 Apr 26 Off-road vehicle complaint, Clark Road
 Apr 26 Off-road vehicle complaint, Sears Road
 Apr 28 Fire alarm, Gremler Road
 Apr 29 Fire call, West Street

May, Police

May 2 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
 May 3 Vandalism, Sears Road
 May 4 Trespassing, Silverbrook Road
 May 5 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
 May 6 Medical call, Tolland
 May 6 Structure fire, West Street
 May 6 Mutual aid, structure fire, New Marlboro
 May 8 Trespass order, Sandisfield Road
 May 8 Animal call, Sandisfield Road
 May 8 Domestic disturbance, North Main Street
 May 11 Medical call, East Hubbard Road
 May 11 Animal call, Otis Woodlands
 May 11 Animal call, Sears Road
 May 11 Illegal burn, Roosterville Road
 May 12 Animal call, South Main Street
 May 13 Medical call, West Street
 May 15 Tree on wires, Cold Spring Road
 May 17 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
 May 18 Medical call, South Beech Plain Road

May 20 Medical call, Sandisfield Road
 May 22 Assist other agency, Silverbrook Road
 May 23 Burglar alarm, Sandybrook Turnpike
 May 23 Disabled motor vehicle, Sandybrook Turnpike
 May 24 Medical call, South Beech Plain Road
 May 25 Medical call, Lower West Street
 May 28 Off-roader complaint, Sears Road
 May 28 Erratic motor vehicle operator, North Main Street



FIRE

May 2020 Incidents

May 6 Structure fire, fire extinguished, Monterey, New Marlboro, Tolland, Otis, and Colebrook fire departments were dispatched for mutual aid
 May 6 Mutual aid to New Marlboro for structure fire, Car 1 and two tankers responded, Tolland requested to standby for Sandisfield
 May 11 Illegal outside burn, no permit
 May 11 Fire alarm, accidental, set off by cooking
 May 15 Tree on wires, wires burning, contacted Eversource



EMS

May 2020 Incidents

May 2 Bicycle accident, transport to Fairview Hospital, Great Barrington
 May 2 Medical call, transport to Berkshire Medical Center, Pittsfield
 May 6 Medical call, Tolland, cancelled enroute, dispatched to structure fire on West Street, Otis Ambulance dispatched to Tolland
 May 8 Medical call, transport to Berkshire Medical Center
 May 11 Medical call, no transport
 May 13 Medical call, Otis Ambulance and Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance responded
 May 17 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
 May 18 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
 May 24 Medical call, transport to Fairview Hospital
 May 25 Medical call, patient refused transport



Who Brings You This News (Online)?

IT'S BECAUSE OF ONE PERSON

By Bill Price

In honor of our 10th decade of bringing the news to Sandisfield, we're presenting a series of profiles of 'Who's Who in bringing you The Times every month. Last month we featured Laura Rogers-Castro, who has edited Now Hear This! for about eight years.

Readers can access The Sandisfield Times online – as well as every issue back to April 2010 – thanks to the computer skills of its website designer Jean Atwater-Williams of Cold Spring Road.

The fact that Jean has computer skills is not due to her high-school guidance counselor. Interested in how things work even as a kid, Jean told her counselor that she hoped to become a mechanical engineer. The counselor replied, “Oh, honey, you’d make a wonderful music teacher.”

Which is how Jean found herself at the Boston Conservatory of Music where she earned a degree in vocal performance. Audiences at the Arts Center have benefitted from Jean soaring lyric coloratura soprano voice and her acting skills. Over the years she did indeed “teach school” and has performed in and/or directed church choirs, operettas, musicals, and straight theatre.

But – as every artist knows – a living must be made.

Since Jean’s interest in how “everything works” continued during and beyond her musical education, her curiosity led her to what became known as “Information Technology” or “IT.”

Jean’s idol was Hedy Lamar, a film actress and creative inventor who helped pioneer technology fields that led to today’s wi-fi, GPS, and Bluetooth communication systems. In college, Jean taught herself to program computer systems and by 1990 was setting up IT networks for different companies, including phone and voice-mail systems. Lacking a computer degree, she essentially “learned how to do things on the job.” She took a few classes in specific programs, but her overriding interest in how things worked kept her at it.

In 1995, she started her own business as an IT consultant and now serves companies in Boston, Hartford, and the Berkshires.

Her endless curiosity “about everything” led her to learning French and Italian, as well as Lithuanian, a little German and enough Mandarin to have been able to function at a very basic level during a trip to China in 2014.

A Massachusetts native, Jean grew up in Easton, the middle child of three, which gave her, she said, the option to be “the free-spirited daughter.” She lived in upstate New York and Richmond, Virginia, married and moved to Connecticut in 1986.



The Times' webmaster.

She and her second husband Ron Bernard met during a time when both their first marriages were ended or ending. “We met at Rotary Club meetings in Farmington,” she said, “and became good friends early on.” With Jean’s grown daughter from her first marriage and Ron’s three sons, together they make a broad-based family of six, with all the kids grown and off to their own careers and interests.


Ron, who loves old houses, already owned their current historic house on Cold Spring Road in

the Beech Plain section and had nearly finished rehabbing it when he and Jean married in 2006.

Jean has been active in the Sandisfield Arts Center not just as a performer, but as a board member and then as vice president, president, and now treasurer. She is currently a member and the treasurer of The Times’ Board of Directors. She has also participated in town affairs, serving as Town Moderator from 2014 until 2016. Her IT background led her to be the chair of the newly formed Technology Committee, starting in 2008.

One of the earliest proponents of bringing broadband to Sandisfield, Jean worked out of a tent at the 2012 Sesquicentennial Celebration, explaining the benefits of broadband to everyone who stopped to listen. She accepted subscriptions to the Wired West Cooperative, at the time the state-approved program that promised to wire every rural town in western Massachusetts. She was very disappointed when in 2016 politics derailed the co-op plan and forced every town back on its own resources. In the interim, some towns have flourished while others, like Sandisfield, remain unserved, with relief promised “soon.”

Every summer, Jean travels for about a week with three friends from the 1980s, a friendship that has lasted through moves, marriages, children, and changing lives. “It takes an effort to maintain a friendship over nearly 40 years,” Jean said, “especially if you don’t live near each other. You have to find something to do together, to keep the friendship fresh and interesting enough that you want to vacation together again next year. We’re lucky we’ve been able to do that.”

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Parents as Teachers

HELPING YOUR KIDS WITH HOMEWORK, PART 1

By Maxene Kupperman-Guiñals, Town Hill Road

Editor's note: A teacher for 35 years and the parent of a teacher for the last 15, Maxene here offers support to parents who want to help their kids master their school homework and get it turned in on time, and to learn habits that will be useful to them their entire lives. The Times will publish three or four of her tips per issue.

All students need at-home support for learning. Even if you were a mediocre student, even if you were laconic or frustrated or just didn't care much, you probably hope that you can assist the children in your home so that they will have a more positive experience.

Many of us may think, however, that we need some superior training to give this assistance, but that has never been true.

What we need is our own support network and some sensible ideas to get us started. Nothing is too hard; do whichever works for you.

SET UP THE ENVIRONMENT

Naturally, you provide your children with privacy and every possible extra you can afford. You make sure that there is quiet during study periods. Here are some suggestions to heighten the experience so that your children see the respect you have for their learning.

Observe your children. Watch to see if they work best sitting at a table or lying on a floor. Some children like to spread out their work; some like to be very contained. Some children need a snack right next to them, and some need to have a glass of water or milk. Some need to get up and

walk around in order to process their data; some need to focus by never moving from the bed they are lying on. Watch them to see where they do best.

Their chair and the table should be comfortable. Take a hint from school or office seating to provide correct heights, but also have chairs with back support and no arms to get in the way of movement. These change often during growing years, so don't invest in antique Sheridan quite yet.

Is there a container at their work space for sharpened pencils, pens, highlighters, markers, a ruler, a pair of scissors, notepads? Is their electronic tablet charged? Do you have a cable and charger available, designated for their tools? Not interrupting themselves for these essentials will help them sustain their concentration. Let them pick these items themselves – having the items close by is what is important, not what the items look like.

Your child can make a tool kit from a box you have at home. In it should be everything your child needs to do the work assigned: paper, markers, pencils, ruler, charging cable, tape ... whatever is needed. Put the box in the same place when work is finished so your child knows where the stuff is. ♡

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

Cultural Council

NEWS FROM THE SANDISFIELD CULTURAL COUNCIL

Due to the conditions surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic we have reached out to our representative from the Massachusetts Cultural Council for guidance on how to proceed with locally funded programs that have been cancelled.

Veronica Martell Ramirez, our representative and our council members met on Zoom to discuss alternative ways for applicants to receive the granted money and to discuss modifications to projects.

Members of the Sandisfield Cultural Council unanimously voted to automatically grant an extension to all projects that we funded until December 31, 2021.

Grantees were notified by letter with specifics on how to proceed with projects.

We look forward to seeing many of these programs unfold in the future.

We will also keep our community updated regarding the new grant cycle which typically begins in September. We are currently awaiting information from the Massachusetts Cultural Council on how to proceed this coming year.

*Rosanne Skrip, co-president
 Sandisfield Cultural Council*

Finding Home

SANDISFIELD FARMER FEATURED ON NPR

By Bill Price

Very seldom does anyone from Sandisfield make it onto a nationwide news broadcast. A few local authors in town sometimes pull that off, and maybe a Sandisfield actor or actress might get cast in the right TV production. Never the rest of us.

But Brigitte Ruthman did the trick simply by building her own house. Log cabin, really. Big log cabin.

Most regular listeners to National Public Radio are familiar with Kai Rysdall's daily program, "Marketplace," where he presents economic and stock news as well as human-interest stories with clarity and a gentle humanity.

One of latter series, "Adventures in Housing," has a vague theme of how people are faring in a tough housing market. Listeners were invited to submit capsule stories about finding and affording a place to live. Brigitte, a full-time Connecticut newspaper reporter who operates, also full-time, if that's possible, Joshua's Farm on Dodd Road, sent a summary of her adventures finding and building her own two-story log cabin.

The producers accepted the idea, interviewed Brigitte, and in February broadcast her story. Those of you with wi-fi on an I-phone or laptop can hear the full broadcast at www.marketplace.org/2020/02/19/building-a-house-one-log-at-a-time/.

On the program, Brigitte explained that living in her family's vacation log home in Quebec caused her to decide to someday live in a log home. In 1996, she read a newspaper ad for 12½ acres in a small Berkshire town for \$5,500. Although it was three telephone poles off the grid, she bought it. "The light just looked like something in a Provence painting and I thought this is the most beautiful piece of land I've ever seen." It was the property that Brigitte built into Joshua's Farm.

After several years of permit gathering, land clearing, digging a well and septic, she was ready to start work on the house. In 2004, "I got a log cabin kit, enlisted a couple of my friends and my brothers and we went about building a log home, not having ever done it before."

When she moved in, she told NPR, "I remember the first night I spent in that home. I was so happy to be sleeping in a place that I built. I felt that I belonged. When I look up in the morning, I remember which logs I placed, how heavy they were. I've scribbled little notes all over the logs. If somebody takes them apart in 100 or 200 years, they'll see what I left behind."



Since then, along with full-time reporting for the Waterbury Republican-American and part-time for The Sandisfield Times, she's added a two-tier barn with salvaged hand-hewn timbers, cows, calves, and a milking room, a timber-frame chicken house for 150 chickens (she sells the eggs to restaurants and grocery stores), and has planted a small apple and peach orchard. On its website, Joshua's

Farm is described as existing "out of passion, not profit."

That still may be the case, and it would be nice if it was different, but for Brigitte Ruthman there's never been a question of which takes precedence. ♡

This account was based in part on a PBS written report, used with permission, and quotes from Brigitte's radio interview.



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The Librarian's Corner

By Terry Spohnholz

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Thursday, 5:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

Thank you for your patience during the Covid-19 close-down. We have re-opened a bit, offering curbside service only.

Which reminds me of the Pittsfield A&W Root Beer Drive-in. If you want fries and a milkshake with your books, it's just not happening. But the Library Trustees and Vickie Bakunis, Pauline Bakunis, and I are working to make the temporary system run smoothly.

We can offer books from the Sandisfield Free Public Library only. Books ordered from other libraries are not yet available.

You can access the Library either online, by email, or by phone.

For online, go to www.masscat.bywatersolutions.com, to Our Libraries, and search for Sandisfield Free Public Library. That will get you to instructions.

For email, write to sandisfieldlibrary@gmail.com or call 258-4966. We access email and phone messages during our temporary hours only and will contact you when material is ready for pickup.

For online and email, you will need a library card and the card number. If you can't find your card or don't have one yet, call the library at 258-4966 during open hours.


Check out our new arrivals page on the Library section of the Town website at www.sandisfieldma.gov.

The Library wi-fi will remain on and is accessible without a password.

The Library will not be open to the public until Governor Baker says so.

FOR OUR YOUNG PATRONS

If you would like to borrow picture books or reading books for young children, feel free to email or call and we will do our best to pick out a selection.

The Summer Reading Program and Arts and Crafts for Kids are postponed until further notice. We are working on ideas. We are also continuing to transfer the children's section to the lower level, including a wooden train set. We are revamping it a bit to make it more colorful and child oriented for when we can hold a Grand Opening downstairs. 

Sandisfield Tales (1937)

Town of Sandisfield recalls when it was Berkshire's queen

Reprinted from *The Berkshire Eagle*, February 27, 1937

One day a month or so ago, Mrs. Eva Granger, assistant town clerk of Sandisfield, happened to look for the first time at the town seal with which she has stamped many an official paper. The seal read "Incorporated March 6, 1762." Doing a little rapid calculation, she discovered that the town was 175 years old. So she turned to Jason Sears, town clerk, for whom she keeps house, and said, "Jason, don't you think we should have a celebration?"

So this year Sandisfield will mark the 175th anniversary of its incorporation. The celebration will take place the latter part of August. Fifty dollars was appropriated for the purpose at the last town meeting, and it was voted to make the recently-formed Historical and Betterment Society responsible for the arrangements. Mrs. Frederick P. Whitney, former minister of the Baptist Church, is chairman of the society.

Actually Sandisfield is more than 175 years old. In 1735 it was purchased by Nahum Ward and Ephraim Williams from the Housatonic Indians for 300 pounds. The agent for the Indians in the transaction bore the resounding name, "John Pophnohonnawok alias Konkapot." The Township, one of four granted at the same time, was merely labelled "No. 3." It was baptized Sandisfield at its incorporation, in honor of Samuel, Lord Sandys, then Lord of Trades and the Plantations for the Crown of England.

Sandisfield's population has had its ups and downs. For 15 years no one at

all settled there. Then in 1750 Thomas Brown moved over from Enfield. By 1791, when the first census was taken, the population was 1581. Mr. Sears believes that early in the next century it reached its peak, about 2500. For a time it was the fourth most populous town in the county, far larger than Pittsfield.

The town was the money center of the Berkshires in its early days. Its residents still recall with pride a loan of \$300 made to Pittsfield during the 1760's for the erection of the First Church of Christ Congregational.

Then a scheme to lay a railroad through the town fell through. Pittsfield was chosen as a junction instead, and the once-lively industrial center gradually died.

Editor's Note in 1937: Sandisfield numbers about 400 today, to Pittsfield's 50,000.



Bridge Accident, 1842

Has This Bridge Been Fixed Yet?

Submitted by Barbara Pellesier, who found it in the files of *The Boston Statesman*, June 18, 1842:

Fatal Accident.—As a Mrs Phelps, of Sandisfield, was crossing a bridge over Clam river, on Saturday last, near the "tool works" erected by Mr Jared Smith, a plank upon which she stepped tipped and the lady was precipitated into the river. She was killed instantly.

—*Stockbridge Visiter.*



Moreover...

Do We Really Need Our Own Police Force?

By Simon Winchester

We are a town now seriously strapped for cash. Yet at our latest Town Meeting three items that will cost us fully four percent of our total budget passed scrutiny without debate, discussion or demur.

We will now pay out a total of \$131,127.82 for the salaries, benefits, and expenses of two police officers and two part-time "patrol officers," together with the running costs of a patrol cruiser and a stock of weaponry - semi-automatic carbines, shotguns, automatic pistols, laser sights - that could subdue a small insurrection. And though no-one was bold enough to raise it at the Meeting, there was a muttering afterwards: *do we really need all this?*

So, I have to wonder: in view of the recent shift in the mood of the nation, might Sandisfield people now be on the brink of seriously considering the desirability of maintaining our own police department?

Might this be the time to have a candid exchange about perhaps decreasing its presence or even - heresy of heresies - getting rid of it entirely? The money, I have heard many say, could perhaps be put to better use.

We are by and large a peaceable community. The last lethal crime here occurred back in 1975, almost forty years ago, when a trio of robbers hit a chicken farmer on the head, causing him to fall into a puddle and drown. Since then the police blotter has been filled with little more than the mild misadventures of village life - a fender-bender here, an escaped cow there, a bear on the loose, domestic incidents. To deal with these decidedly non-urgent matters we have two resident police officers - our chief Mike Morrison (who is of course brother to our very able fire-chief Ralph Morrison, an arrangement not uncommon in small New England towns, and one generally not questioned here); and the newly appointed former Monterey officer Mike Johnson as Public Safety Officer, who most often drives the cruiser and, reasonably enough, lies in wait on the main roads, discouraging speeders.

Chief Mike, who works for us only part-time, will earn a salary next year of \$25,000, give or take - but has two "patrol officers" and ancillary costs including firearms training programs

that bring his total salary costs to \$56,945.57 - an increase of \$2,245.03 from last year. The chief's administrative assistant was unable to offer the names of the patrol officers.

His junior colleague Mike, who is full time and can also pull EMT duty *in extremis*, makes \$58,532.25. This last is a sum which, like many other expenditures in our budget, we can't really afford, and so we split his cost - drawing half from our minuscule tax revenue, half from one of our savings accounts. All of it coming from town's ever-depleting coffers.



The sub-total for the two officers' pay and training is thus a not inconsiderable \$115,477.82 - more than we spend on all of our town buildings and all of the fuel we put in all of our trucks and plows; and more than we pay our Town Clerk and Town Manager combined, and who many might suppose perform at least an equivalent amount of work.

To add to their salaries and benefits our police department also has a \$15,650 expenses budget - a call for a breakdown of which was not, as they say, "immediately returned," with Officer Johnson on disability leave and Chief Morrison simply unavailable. We do know how the men are armed, however: in addition to their own side-arms, which are either rapid-fire Sig-Sauer or Glock pistols, five years ago the department bought two

Ruger AR-556 semi-automatic patrol carbines and two Remington pump-action 870 shotguns. In addition, they have red-dot scope weapon sights, just in case. After discussion, the then Select Board allowed these purchases.

The officers are thus fully prepared for the kind of situations that have not yet interrupted the serenity of Sandisfield life - but which, given the nervy mood of the nation, might just one day occur.

But it should be noted that it is not strictly necessary for our own force to be so amply prepared for action.

When our finest are not available, or when there is a major emergency - a serious traffic accident, for instance or, heaven forbid, a terror attack - then it is up to Troop B-1 of the Massachusetts State Police to respond from their barracks in Lee. Many small towns in Connecticut already leave their general policing to State officers, with Resident State Troopers in town - Barkhamsted a nearby example. One might argue that such a set-up could be the best arrangement for Sandisfield.

Friends have advised that taking on a local police department can be unwise, fraught with displeasing consequence. I have no doubt that our two Mikes and their so-far nameless (but \$19.10 an hour) patrol officers are all sensible and reasonable men, unlikely to take my suggestions personally. My only concern is one quite probably shared by many taxpayers in our cash-strapped town: sensible and reasonable and impressively armed though all these officers may be - *is their department really worth the money?* 🍷



A Cloud of Jewels

TURNING YOUR YARD INTO A DRAGONFLY HABITAT

By Thomas Christopher

One of the most magical moments in my garden came during an afternoon several years ago. I don't remember the season, although I do remember that it was a sunny, warm day, and I stepped outside of the house into the open, graveled area where my wife and I park our cars. The air was full of dragonflies, zooming and swooping, their wings glittering in the sunshine. It was as if I'd wandered into a cloud of jewels.

Christine Cook told me recently that probably what I experienced was what she called "hilltopping." This behavior is a preparation for migration south in the late summer or fall. Who knew that dragonflies migrate? Christine does, and a lot of other details about their life histories as well. She has been watching dragonflies ever since she was a girl and they used to roost beside her while she

was gardening. She would admire their cellophane wings and iridescent bodies and was fascinated when they would shoot up into the air, then return to their perch to devour the insect they had caught.

This childhood interest bloomed into a true fascination as Christine grew up to design and install natural habitat gardens for clients all over Connecticut and farther afield, under her company name, Mossaics Ecological Landscape Design. Over the years, she has designed and installed several landscapes specifically intended to attract dragonflies. If that sounds esoteric to you, consider that dragonflies are one of the few insects so intriguing that every child (at least, every child who explores the outdoors) learns their name. With their brilliant colors, prehistoric appearance and habit of eating mosquitoes—as many as 100 per day—dragonflies are well worth cultivating as garden wildlife. Especially since, according to Christine, attracting them is relatively easy.

The first necessity is a pond, and this can be large and elaborate or as small and simple as a plastic- or rubber-lined kit purchased online. Once installed, the pond should be lined along the bottom with an area of sand, an area of mud, and an area of gravel. This creates a variety of habitats that will

support the greatest diversity of immature dragonfly larvae, or nymphs, which may live in the water for just a couple of months or up to 12 years before emerging and flying off as adults. Arrange some large rocks around the edges of the pond's bottom, too, to create sheltered nooks, as many female dragonflies like to lay their eggs in such spots.

Then, after filling it with water, the pond should be inset with aquatic plants in containers. Ponds a couple of feet deep can accommodate native water lilies at the center; the lily pads are a favorite egg-laying spot of some species of dragonflies. In shallower ponds, or at the shallow edges of deeper ponds, place containers of emergent plants, such as blue flag iris, pickerel weed and broadleaved arrowhead. The sub-surface parts of these plants create havens for the dragonfly larvae, and later the larvae may crawl up the leaves and stalks when they are ready to emerge as adults.

Place a few flat rocks on the pond's rim to serve as roosting spots for adult dragonflies. (The rocks also help to conceal the upper edge of the pond's liner.) Then excavate a very shallow ditch around the pond's perimeter just beyond the rocks and plant it with moisture-loving plants such as sedges and rushes to serve as a miniature wetland; some dragonflies prefer that habitat. Make sure there are a few shrubs and trees nearby, as some dragonflies, especially the females, like to roost in bushes, and still others roost in the treetops.

Just the names of the dragonflies suggest their appeal. Christine spoke to me of yellow-legged meadowhawks, of the eastern amber-wing, blue dashers, the twelve-spotted skimmer and black-tipped darters. Who wouldn't want such colorful wildlife in their gardens?

For more detailed information about creating dragonfly habitats, and to listen to the recording of my conversation with Christine Cook, visit my website, thomaschristophergardens.com.

Thomas Christopher serves on the board of the Sandisfield Times. His Be a Better Gardener column is a community service of Berkshire Botanical Garden, located in Stockbridge, MA.

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Rare Species Spotted, Claims Local Birder

LACKING PHOTOGRAPHIC PROOF, DOUBTS REMAIN

By Simon Winchester

Sharp-eyed readers of this newspaper may recall a major local ornithological event to which we alerted the world in our April 1, 2010 issue.

The story told of how our redoubtable River Road birdwatcher Margaret O'Clair had spotted in her woods that rarest of all bird-like creatures, a griffin. She had taken a rather blurry snapshot of it – with its vaguely visible beak, a lion-like mane, long and much-folded wings and ugly-looking claws – which we ran on our front page. The story excited much local interest and not a little controversy, which only ended when some more astute readers noticed the date of publication.

It is now no longer April, and yet Ms. O'Clair, who is a knowing and well-regarded birder of forty years standing, seems to have done it again. She now claims to have seen in her back garden no less a creature than a red-headed woodpecker, a bird seldom seen here, there or anywhere.

Expert birders are surprised, some are shocked, all are skeptical. Didn't happen, they insist. But Ms. O'Clair is standing her Sandisfield ground.

There are many kinds of avian peckers of wood. There are familiar locals: The Downy. The Black-backed. The Hairy. The Pileated (aka The Very Stupid, or The Very Blind, since it hammers on iron drainpipes just as eagerly as on dead tree trunks). And the common-or-garden red-bellied.

It is the latter that experts like Thom Smith of The Berkshire Eagle (naturally) believe Ms. O'Clair saw. But she splutters at the doubters' condescension, insisting that she can tell a red-headed woodpecker from a red-bellied ditto at two hundred paces. And that she saw this animal no less than three times – once on a twig and then twice more on her feeder. Until her dog barked and the bird flapped off in leisurely woodpeckerly fashion, gliding away for parts unknown.

So the mystery remains. All the more so considering that while Ms. O'Clair took a picture of the aforesaid griffin, she omitted to do the same for the woodpecker. And out on the unforgiving landscape of birding world, you know what they say: No Picture? No Happen. 🐦



Was it a red-bellied (top), or a red-headed (bottom) woodpecker that stopped by a River Road birdfeeder?

Photos: Wikimedia commons

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Gardens Forged by Glaciers

By Camille H. Dwyer

I find myself in Sandisfield for an unexpected extended stay with my parents, Jane and Larry. I have not lived in one continuous place since I have been studying and working as a geologist for the past ten years. I decided to try something new and I have picked up gardening as a new hobby during my time in quarantine.

the smaller stones so I can place the tomato, squash, and cucumber plants on their rightful thrones. I pat the dirt around the plants and provide water so they can continue to grow.

When I work in the small five-by-seven-foot plot I think about the geology of Sandisfield. I look at the rocks and identify them – quartzite, mica



Camille Dwyer at the glacial erratic known as the Roosterville Rock just south of the Farmington River Bridge on Rt. 8, about a mile north of the Connecticut border.

Photo: Larry Dwyer

In these uncertain and tumultuous times, gardening keeps me grounded through its repetitiveness. First, I cultivate the land by removing the large rocks. I mix topsoil and manure with the organic soil. Then I dig a hole, flinging out

schist, marble. I appreciate all the rocks, even the heavy ones I drag out from the garden because they remind me of the glaciers that sculpted this landscape.

Sandisfield was covered by glaciers tens of thousands of years ago. A glacier is like a giant bulldozer that stomps and destroys everything in its path. As local historian Gary Leveille showed in a photo essay in the Times in May, the impacts of these ancient glaciers are all around us. The massive boulders that dot the landscape (known as glacial erratics) were dumped by retreating glaciers. The retreating glaciers also left tons of crushed rocks that make up the sand, silt, and clay under our feet. All this destruction led to fertile soil we use to plant our gardens and fields today.

As a geologist, I know there have been numerous glaciations throughout all of Earth's 4.56 billion years of history. The glaciations that shaped our northeastern landscape resulted from numerous ice ages of the Pleistocene epoch (2.5 million years ago to 12,000 year ago). However, there was a time in Earth's history (720 to 635 million years ago), when the entire planet was covered in ice. (One winter in Sandisfield could not compare to this!) You can see remnants of Snowball Earth in the deserts of Death Valley and Mongolia.

Geologists can tell there were two glaciation events during Snowball Earth by examining a rock called breccia. Breccia are sharp angular rocks of all shapes and sizes embedded in a sandy and silty matrix. If today's garden soil solidified to become a rock, it would look like glacial breccia remains.

To understand the power of these ice giants, you must visit one before they disappear. When I studied abroad in New Zealand, I took a class on glaciology and went on a field trip to see the Hooker and Tasman glaciers of the Southern Alps. Even though a glacier appears to be unmoving, it is in constant motion. A glacier moves along by accumulating snow and ice in the winter; in the summer, it retreats by shedding excess ice, water, and rocks. As humans continue to pump carbon dioxide and methane from oil, coal, and natural gas into our atmosphere, these greenhouse gases are causing glaciers to rapidly melt. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, glaciers lost an average of nine inches of ice every year in the 1980s compared to three feet per year in the 2010s. The accelerated melting of continental glaciers has caused sea levels to rise. Even the northeast is experiencing the effects of climate change with heavier rainfall and higher temperatures and this will change how we garden in Sandisfield.

When you observe the Sandisfield landscape, you can see the mountains and valleys forged by glaciers. As I dig and plant, I feel connected to this land and the glaciers that carved out the area. My parents and I are looking forward to enjoying the fruits, or in our case, the vegetables of our gardening labor. 🍷

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THE WORLD HAS FALLEN
DOWN IN PATCHES

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an old mansion will be
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Virtual fun expected to
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Be sure to check
uncertainty.

*Miriam Karmel
River Road*

*With a nod to Val Coleman
and Laura Rogers-Castro*



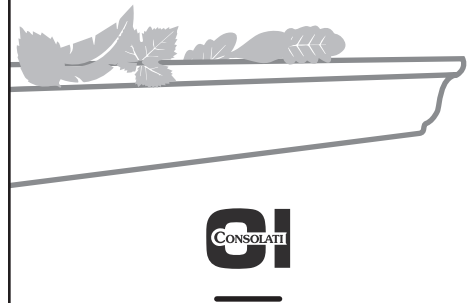
A Sandisfield Bluebird

When nature photographer Cindy Ragusa staked out a position near a blue bird box on Cold Spring Road on May 7, her patience was rewarded with these superb images of one of our most charming and increasingly frequent visitors. (See these images in full color on The Times online edition at SandisfieldTimes.org, July 2020 issue).



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Phone: (413) 446-4944

Comings and Goings



JANE SHANKLIN

1946-2020

Jane R. Shanklin of Sandisfield passed away on June 10, 2020. She was a third generation and life-long resident of Sandisfield, having visited during the summers as a child and choosing to make it her permanent home with her two children in 1973.

Jane loved her family and cherished all of the time she could spend with her grandchildren William, Josie, Jacob, and Andrew, as well as with her nine nieces and nephews. She spoke often about "Skyledge," the family home on Route 57 in Sandisfield, where she shared many happy memories with her extended family whose names included Mulhearn, Gillespie, Mulvaney, and McInerney.

Jane was a free spirit, with a deep faith and was a kind soul to those who knew and understood her.

As Robert Frost wrote:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Jane was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on December 12, 1946 to the late Robert D. and Ruth J. (Mulvaney) Freeman of Sandisfield.

She is survived by her sons Thomas A. (Melissa) Shanklin of Upper Arlington, Ohio, and Jeffery H. Shanklin of Sandisfield. She leaves her siblings Robert T. (Marianna E.) Freeman of Ocean City, Maryland, Dorothy Dubé of Cary, North Carolina, and James P. (Lori) Freeman of Barkhamsted, Connecticut.

Jane will be dearly missed by the many friends she made throughout her life in the Berkshires. She was laid to rest in a private ceremony alongside several generations of her family "on the Hill" at the Sandisfield Cemetery where she will join her long-time partner William A. Hassig of Sandisfield and Barkhamsted.

Finnerty & Stevens Funeral Home in Great Barrington handled the arrangements. Remembrances to her family can be left at www.finnertyandstevens.com.



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TRAVIS MADDEN
1986-2020

Travis Madden, known as Travelling Travis, was killed June 6 in a motorcycle crash in Winchester, Connecticut. He was a friend of mine.

An employee of RSE, my grounds-keeping service in Sandisfield, Travis was one of our town's biggest fans. He lived in Winsted, but he put his heart into working all over Sandisfield in the cemeteries, parks, and on some of the most gorgeous estates in southern Berkshire County.

He brought perfection to all of his work, which included maintenance to grunt work to anything anyone asked. He lived for working out here, helping whoever and wherever doing whatever. He would tell me that any time spent out here and getting paid for it was the best job and more than anyone could ask for.

All the people we worked for admired Travis's dedication, his keen eye, and his hard work. If you told him to manage 500+ gravestones on the hottest day and to be done at lunchtime, you could bet the farm he would be halfway through a Gatorade and smiling around 11:55 a.m., the place looking like Arlington.

On rainy days and on weekends he could be found at The Open Door in Winsted, volunteering his time and energy for the well-being of others. He was a regular non-student user of the Northwestern Connecticut Community College library.

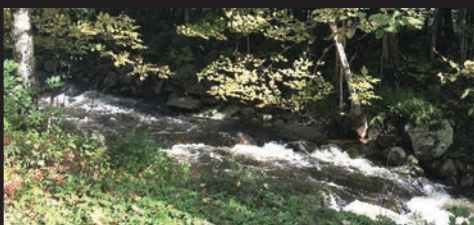
Traveling Travis will be missed. He talked about wanting to live "in a place like this, far away but not too far." I'm sure he found it, at least got a taste of it, here in 01255.

*Bogart Muller
Sandisfield Road*

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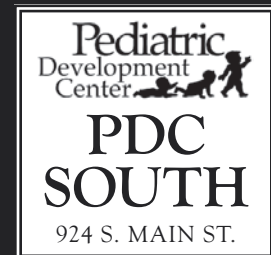
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Letters to the Editors

West Street Rocks!

Editor's note: In our May issue, local historian Gary Leveille asked: "Is there a 'Big Boulder' on West Street? Several years ago a former Sandisfield resident sent me an email claiming that a large rock could be found along West Street. So far, it has eluded my camera." Here, a local resident offers an answer. – SK

To the Editor:

In the May issue of The Sandisfield Times, someone posed a question regarding a large boulder once located on West Street.

It did exist at least into the 1970s and was at the end of Stump Road. The road wound around the rock so it must have been removed to straighten out the road. It served as a landmark for any visitors going up to the Annecharico farm in Sandisfield.

On the face of the rock the name "Eppie" was painted. That name was the nickname for our cousin Anthony Nardone who spent his summers on the farm.

Hopefully this clarifies the query by the former local resident whose memory was uncertain.

*Joseph & Sally Salzano
Perry Road*



*Mr. Pileated Woodpecker
Look who came to visit!
Maybe he knew we couldn't go out,
So he came to us!*

Photo: Jean Atwater-Williams



COVID SPRING

Covid Spring has come and gone.
Covid summer is
Inching along.

Still trying to keep
The virus from spreading.
But getting weary.
Virus still shedding.

Similarities
to HIV
Masks are the condom
Rarely worn correctly.

The masked and the maskless
Has become political
What happened to science?
It's inexplicable.

Will we ever emerge
From this place of uncertainty?
No one has been spared,
No place of normalcy.

Time has slowed
Down to trickle.
Things once so urgent,
Now just fizzle.

Covid Spring has come and gone
Covid Summer is ...
Inching along.

*Karen Garfield
New Hartford Road*





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NOW HEAR THIS!

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

JULY EVENTS

Please note: Be sure to check to see if the events are still scheduled as listed due to the uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic

COA 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. **Cancelled** until further notice.

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. **Cancelled** until further notice.

New Boston Church Service at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57 will be back as soon as it is safe to do so!

Sandisfield Select Board Meetings has moved to its Summer Schedule of alternating Mondays at 7:00 p.m., on July 17, July 27, August 10, and August 24. Attend by telephone conference at 855-855-9834 or 518-860-1995 and enter Meeting ID Number 1160221382#.

EVENTS/OUTDOOR FUN IN OTHER TOWNS

Butterfly Count on Friday, July 3, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. with Natural Resource Educator and Sandisfield resident Laura Rogers-Castro. The count is part of the Fourth of July North American Butterfly Association's annual effort. Several locations will be surveyed in Monterey and New Marlborough. Volunteers can contact Laura (258-4688) to join her for the day or part of the day. No experience required but participants will be walking in un-mowed fields and meadows. To protect the butterflies, please do not use insect repellent! Butterflies are released unharmed!

Ashintully Gardens on Sodom Road in Tyringham is open on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Explore the beautiful grounds and remains of an old mansion. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. Free.

ONLINE EVENTS

Otis Recreation Center offers online fitness classes, including Cardio Blast with Heather Rufo Bilotta on Mondays at 9:00 a.m., Chair Yoga with Connie Wilson on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m., and Mat Yoga with Connie Wilson on Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. Visit townofotisma.com for more information.

Stockbridge Library: **Introduction to Immunology: How It Can Provide Protection but also Drive Diseases** with Dr. Leonard Sigal on Tuesdays in July from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Visit stockbridgelibrary.org for registration information.



OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



Charlene and Don Peet were visited at their Rhode Island home on June 6 by **Peter Levine and Ellen Croibier**. Ellen wrote, "It's hard to believe they left Sandisfield in 2017. Then we found out while we were there that June 6 is their anniversary and this was their 67th. As you can see, they still look like young lovers and are still happy and busy with their new community. They asked me to send their love to all in Sandisfield. Take good care and stay safe!"



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*The Times is grateful to readers who
have donated in June.*

Melissa Bye

Tracey Hohman

Joe & Sally Salzano

Lucille Siegel



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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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 and the Roadside Café. Also available at the Southfield Store in New Marlborough, at the general store and post office in Colebrook, and at the library of NW Connecticut Community College in Winsted. 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.

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