

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

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Rapper Freddie Gibbs, left, and Bob Tarasuk with a few barnyard friends at Snow Farm in a scene from the film "Down with the King." Photo provided by Diego Ongaro, courtesy of The Berkshire Eagle.

Why Bob Tarasuk?

THAT'S WHAT WE WANT TO KNOW

By Bill Price

Except for a few residents who may have recently relocated to Sandisfield, most of us know Bob Tarasuk: neighbor, farmer, woodsman, family man. He and his wife Sue have lived and worked in Sandisfield for over 50 years, which almost makes him a local's local. Their three kids were born here and are still in town. Bob and Sue began working at Snow Farm, on South Beech Plain Road, in 1980 and have owned the farm since the late '90s.

Now, despite all the above and Bob's determination to remain an iconoclastic, rough-hewn Sandisfield character, he has become a movie star invited to film festivals in places like Austin, Cannes, Sundance, and the Czech Republic.

On December 9, he'll walk a red carpet at the Berkshire Film Festival in Great Barrington, at the screening of his new film, "Down with the King."

Last month Bob was profiled on the front page of The Berkshire Eagle with a headline reading "But Why Bob Tarasuk?"

Why Indeed?

That's what we wanted to know. Why does crusty old Bob Tarasuk get to be on the big screen and not us?

The fabulously witty front-page article by Eagle reporter Felix Carroll explained why.

Because film director Diego Ongaro invited him. Diego and Bob became friends several

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SELECT BOARD REPORT Town Hires New Town Manager, Treasurer/Collector

The Sandisfield Select Board is pleased to announce the hiring of a Town Manager, Kevin Flynn, who began his duties on November 22.

Mr. Flynn was previously the Town Manager of Phillipston (pop. 1,700) and is familiar with small-town government as well as Massachusetts General Law. In five years of service to Phillipston, located in Worcester County, he was instrumental in obtaining over \$5 million in grants. His municipal experience is extensive. He has been a Community Development Director with a 22-town Regional Planning Commission, Executive Director of a Community Development Authority, and Director of Planning and Development with several Massachusetts towns, among other positions.

The selection of Mr. Flynn is the culmination of a months-long process carried out by the Town Manager Search Advisory Committee, which worked diligently and speedily to find candidates and narrow the field. The committee, consisting of Barbara Cormier, Joanne Olson and Rita Kasky, reduced the candidate pool to five highly qualified candidates, eventually choosing three for final interviews with the Select Board. In a telling indication of the current real estate market, two of

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**New Town Manager,
Treasurer/Collector**

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those last five dropped out, citing the inability to find affordable housing in this area.

The Select Board was impressed with Kevin's breadth of experience and his familiarity with Massachusetts General Law and is confident that he will quickly master the idiosyncrasies of the Sandisfield bylaws. Select Board Chair George Riley noted, "Mr. Flynn struck me as personable and thoughtful, yet experienced and confident in his ability to help to build and to participate in a culture of teamwork in town government."

A FULL PLATE AND NEW TREASURER



Kevin Flynn

The next Town Manager will have his plate full. Since May 28, when the previous Town Manager Joanne Grybosh resigned, the duties of Town Manager have been covered on a part-time basis by Mr. Riley. He notes that only the most critical

and pressing items have been dealt with during this time, leaving many longer-term issues still to be resolved by his successor.

Another new member of the Town Hall team is our new Treasurer/Collector, Gina Campbell. Gina comes to us from her previous position as Collector for New Marlborough for the past six years, and her current role as Treasurer/Collector for the Town of Washington. She is certified as a Massachusetts Municipal Collector and is nearing certification as a Massachusetts Treasurer. We are very fortunate to have someone in this position who can hit the ground running, as she is arriving after Sandisfield endured a month without a Treasurer/Collector. Although there is currently a mountain of tax bills pouring into Town Hall, we're confident that she will soon have our financial situation well in hand.

There will be a "meet and greet" in early December to introduce Kevin Flynn and Gina Campbell to the public. See two ads relating to Town Manager, page 9.

Members of the Select Board

- George Riley, Chair*
- Alex Bowman*
- Steven Seddon*

New Addresses for Town Governance, Commissions

If you write to one of the Town's governing bodies to praise them for something done (or to complain about something undone), you should use new addresses that were recently set up by Town Secretary Janey Beardsley.

A cluster box was installed at the Town Hall Annex parking lot where each department, board, or commission has its own Suite number and will be able to access their own mail. Formerly, town mail was picked up in bulk at the post office and sorted separately at Town Hall.

New addresses should read:

**Town of Sandisfield
Department, board, or commission
Suite #
Sandisfield MA 01255**

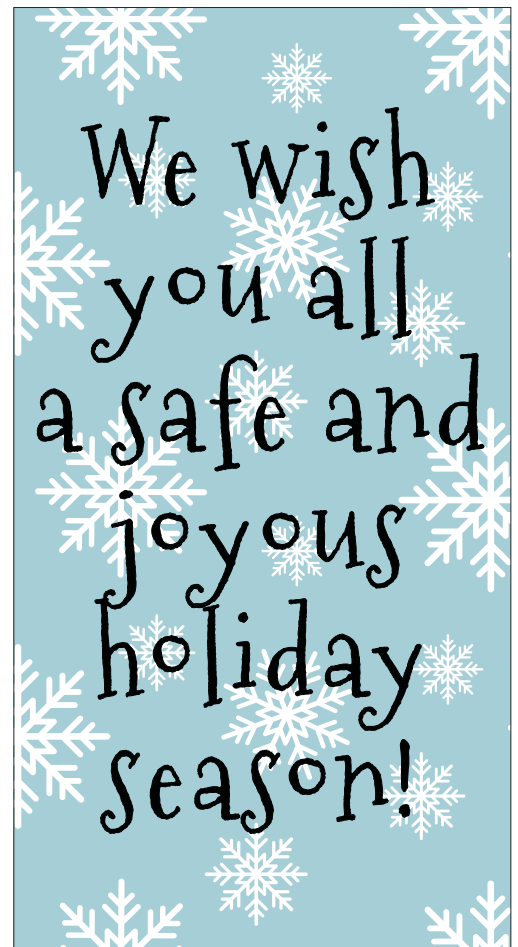
- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Suite 1: Select Board, Town Manager, General Mail | Suite 7: Conservation Commission |
| Suite 2: Town Clerk | Suite 8: DPW |
| Suite 3: Treasurer, Tax Collector, Accountant | Suite 9: Planning Board |
| Suite 4: Board of Assessors | Suite 10: Cultural Council |
| Suite 5: Board of Health | Suite 11: Historical Commission |
| Suite 6: Building Inspector | Suite 12: Council on Aging |

Free Well Water Testing

MassDEP is offering private well owners in Sandisfield an opportunity to receive free testing for PFAS compounds. Although widely used in commercial and household products, the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of "forever chemicals" thought to cause adverse health effects in humans.

To address COVID-19 concerns, participating homeowners will receive instructions on how to collect the water samples so no MassDEP representative will need to visit their well.

To apply for the free PFAS testing program, visit <https://dwp-pfas.madwpdep.org>.



SandisfieldMa.Gov

TOWN WEBSITE CAN TELL YOU WHAT'S GOING ON

By *Larry Dwyer, Webmaster*

The Town website, sandisfieldma.gov, has seen an increasing number of visitors, from about 1,300 a month to over 2,000. This shows the website is being viewed more often and is increasingly useful to those who rely on it for information.

To keep this trend going, I encourage users send town news or events to me at webmaster@sandisfieldma.gov so I can post them as a News Announcement on the home page.

Last August, the Select Board announced that the town was looking for a webmaster for the town's website. I have some computer skills, having worked with computers since 1981 and having run my own Aviation History website since 1995. I volunteered to be the town's webmaster for no fee. I didn't want to accept pay because I wasn't sure how difficult the job would be or how easy.

As it turned out it hasn't been much of a problem at all.

The first two weeks were busy, with at least 100 hours spent learning my way around the software

and updating and reorganizing most of the web pages. Now that I am more comfortable with the program, I normally spend less than eight hours a week updating and posting information. I usually do this when I have my morning coffee and maybe a bit later in the afternoon.

The town uses a software program called Civic Plus. The program is relatively inexpensive considering how useful it is. Since this software is used by towns around the country, the look-and-feel of the website should be familiar to most users and fairly easy to navigate.

Most postings are committee agendas, committee minutes, and news announcements. Personally, I focus on the calendar of events. It seems to me that the calendar is the best place to find what's happening in town. The calendar links to committee agendas as well. The software has a powerful search feature, which anyone can use to find information going back to 2014.


Most of the time I'll post information, but each committee has the ability to post their own news events, minutes, and agendas. It's faster and

easier if I post the information for the different committees, but I prefer that committees post their own information.

The number of daily users and statistics is provided by Google Analytics. Statistics break down the number of users and which pages are being viewed.

I monitor statistics for my own website, aviation-history.com, which gets about 3,000 users/day and 10,000 page views/day. The number of daily users for the Sandisfield website is about 75 users/day.

If I post a link on Sandisfield Connect (Facebook) the number of users may jump up 150 users/day. This may not sound like a lot, but it is significant since most of our users are local, whereas most other major websites are national or global.

Occasionally someone passes along a compliment that sandisfieldma.gov seems to have improved lately. Users can send their feedback to webmaster@sandisfieldma.gov. 



What's Going on at Tuckers?

By *Bill Price*

Not much going on yet. But there will be.

Remember how long the truck that destroyed the New Boston Store in 2012 sat in the debris before it was ultimately pulled out – nearly four months, and then it was a few more before the building rehabbing began. The fire that destroyed Tuckers was only in mid-September. There's a time to reflect, a time to get the paperwork in order, then a time to repair and rebuild. Tuckers is at Step 2.


Over the Thanksgiving weekend we asked co-owner Martin Cormier what was going on, if they were in a kind of limbo? Marty replied:

"Thanks for checking in and yes, all is good here. We had the entire family together for Thanksgiving, everyone is healthy and content so who could possibly ask for more?"

"The cause and origin investigation has been over for quite some time. Now we are in the process of negotiating the rebuild and content replacement cost with the insurance company and have no idea how long this will take. Limbo is the correct term!"

"We would love to be there cleaning up the damage and moving forward but unfortunately cannot alter the structure until we have come to an agreement with the insurance company."

"Until we're back in business, MJ Tuckers would like to wish all of our friends and customers a very happy and healthy holiday season. We wish that we were sharing all of the holiday joy with you but, instead, from our homes we will raise a pint and keep you in our thoughts."

Cheers from Marty, Jeff, and Staff. 

THE SANDISFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY CHRISTMAS FAIR



Many vendors selling their Holiday wares
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Saturday, December 4, 2021

10 AM - 2 PM

Santa arrives at 11 AM

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Event hosted by the Sandisfield Historical Society
Santa sponsored by the Sandisfield Recreation Committee

Facemasks are suggested.

Not a FRRSD sponsored event

Return of the Country Schoolhouse?

By Simon Winchester

One of the older boys, Solomon maybe from Town Hill Road, or Jim or Elijah, brothers from Montville, would get up at six, make their way through the silent dark and the unplowed drifts of snow, creak open the door, set to with kindling and straw and matches, and light the pot-bellied wood stove.

By seven, the Monday dawn now bright and loud with early birdsong, the little building would be getting warm and snug, the overnight frost melting from the isinglass windows. Young Miss Warner, slender and tall, brought in from Springfield and boarding at one of the farms on New Hartford Road, would arrive at half-past, would lay out the books for the day ahead, arrange the slates and chalks, clean off the blackboard and put a pot of soup - a gift from the farm - on top of the stove. She'd wind the clock and adjust its too-slow hands, then take the cloth off the birdcage and scatter some seeds for the African gray inside.

At eight the first children would arrive, their cheeks red, the boys blowing on their hands to warm them, the girls swathed in scarves and mittens. Everyone would gather around the stove and chatter excitedly. Then Miss Warner would direct them - youngsters at this end of the room, Solomon and Martha and Ethan and their friends at the other. All would then sit, and quiet themselves as much as children can. The clock ticked up to half-past eight. The youngsters looked up earnestly at their pretty young teacher, waiting to be told something they didn't know. To be given some information - some history, some geography, some arithmetical nugget that

would soon be turned into knowledge. Waiting, though they didn't know why, to be educated.

And thus was another day beginning, another week getting under way, in Sandisfield's little red one-room schoolhouse.



One of actually sixteen of them, as it happens. Almost since its founding our little town has taken with grave seriousness the business of educating our children - and since at times of bustle and prosperity there were many scores of these eager little beavers, and with the distances so great and the roads so poor and the weather so difficult, the town created a patchwork of tiny school districts. In each of them our elders threw up a small confection of wood and lath and plaster and - if they had the money, paint (though seldom red, more often off-white) - to create what has long been an American frontier icon.

Such buildings—clapboard here, log up in the Rockies, adobe out west, sod in the prairies—fascinated writers like Willa Cather,


John Williams, Mark Twain, J.D. Salinger, Wallace Stegner. And let's not forget Laura Ingalls Wilder, who made frontier life in the Ozarks so romantic and inspiring that Hollywood gave us Michael Landon and Melissa Gilbert each week on NBC, for the eight years of *Little House on the Prairie*.

Well, we're not the prairie; but we have our share of little houses here, and sixteen of them were one-roomers. Three of them survive, now private homes, one on Hubbard Road, another on Rt. 8. Of course, the current Town Hall building served as a two-room school until 1999 when our children were put on buses and sent out to Otis.

And now not a few in town, dismayed by what they think is happening over at the big school are wondering whether we might perhaps reinvent the small school idea once again, and have a return to no-frills educational simplicity by building a one-room schoolhouse of our very own.

The legal hurdles to doing such a thing are not insurmountable - and there are scatterings of one-room schools across the country, some twenty or so in New England. There is a two-room version, built in 1881 and still hanging on, over in South Egremont. They could advise, and perhaps tell us whether in their view the old schools were any good at what they did. Were children of a century ago better educated than their equivalents today?

That most crucial debate will doubtless go on for some long while, even as some here begin to dream about where and when we might build. There is land across from the Rt. 57 firestation. There is a nice abandoned building near the New Boston cemetery. Moreover, that one is already painted red, so there'd be a savings there. Worth considering? Write a letter to the Times and let us know.

And meanwhile persuade one of your older children this winter to practice getting up really early, and grabbing a handful of kindling on the way out the door. Down at school, the stove will need to be lit. 

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FRRSD Contretemps

IS THERE A PATH THROUGH THESE ISSUES?

Editor's Note: At the October 4 School Committee Meeting, Farmington River School Principal/Superintendent, Tom Nadjolny, and a school committee member from Otis, Arlene Tolopko, both expressed frustration with a presentation by the Sandisfield School Options Explorations Committee. Nadjolny took particular umbrage with what he claimed was the committee's negative portrayal of the school district's teachers. "They come to work and teach their students with their best ability every day," he said, according to meeting minutes. "After all their time and work, they were referred as lousy teachers." For her part, Tolopko stated that there was "not one positive word coming from the Sandisfield Options Committee" about the school district's performance. They also complained about a report in The Sandisfield Times, but did not provide specifics.

In a response, Barbara Cormier, a member of the Sandisfield School Options Explorations Committee, said the following at the subsequent November 1 School Committee meeting:

Barbara Cormier, Sandisfield: We were not a witch hunt committee going after the FRRSD. We were appointed by our Select Board to look into school options. Many hours were spent researching Department of Education websites. All the data came from these sites. I would like to address remarks that were made through email and meeting minutes.

We in no way bad-mouthed teachers. We did address the fact that two classes were falling behind in their test results. We also noticed that their pay scale was on the low end of the scale. In comparison, the Administrator and their staff were on the high end. We never said that it was the worst school in the State. We question if the administrator was doing his job to make sure the class teachers had the proper tools and guidance to do this. I feel the Administration and some board members are deflecting the criticism we had for them onto the teachers.

We did note that before 2014, the School was operating at a great level, but with the new administration

it has steadily declined. In reviewing data on his evaluation in the past we found out that only one evaluation was done, without the knowledge of most of the school board, and it was done by the administrative assistant's husband and only signed by him. Is this ethical? I think not. I noticed you are talking about his evaluation at tonight's meeting. I hope you will assign him proper goals, and let him decide how to accomplish them.

My personal opinion, speaking for myself and not the committee, is that in order to obtain change and progress you need to consider changing administration and its staff.

We were then asked for school options, and we did a lot of research in this area.

After much discussion, my personal opinion is that we should resign from the district and form our own tuition-only school district. This has been done in several towns and works well.

I don't see our school board members ever having a fair voice on this committee. At an earlier meeting I observed one member [who] said all we seem to do lately is talk about money. As members your job is always (1) Education using correct data from your resources, (2.) Finances – you need to be able to pay for your goals.

Our Committee always said that our direction would be, 1) Education and results, 2) Financial Responsibility, and 3) How to encourage change, and 4) options.

Your board should have the same values. You need to decide if the Administration works and confers with you, or if you work for the administration.

The School Options Committee would be happy to come to Otis and present our findings. Thank you for your time.



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Why Bob Tarasuk?

Cont'd from p.1

years ago when Diego lived in Sandisfield. Wanting to make a short documentary about the life of a New England logger, Diego picked Bob as his subject. As he explained to The Eagle, Bob is “an interesting, unique character. He’s bigger than life, and he’s endearing.”

The documentary was expanded into a feature-length film “Bob and the Trees,” which was filmed at Snow Farm and other locations in South County during the 2014 polar vortex, a particularly grueling time that made for serious bonding experiences for everyone involved. The expanded film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2015 and took the top prize at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in the Czech Republic.

When Ongaro came up with an idea for a new film last year, he included as one of the two main characters an iconoclastic, rough-hewn Sandisfield farmer/logger who looked and acted just like Bob Tarasuk.

The resulting feature-length film, “Down with the King,” premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and was shown in October at the Austin Film Festival where it received a standing ovation. The film has been bought by Sony for a 2022 nationwide release.

Berkshire residents will have an opportunity to see the film when it is shown at Great Barrington’s Mahaiwe Theatre on December 9 as part of an advance showing at the Berkshire International Film Festival. Tickets are available online at biffma.org. The film will be followed by discussions with the director, the producer, and the star, Mr. Tarasuk.

The film features real-life rapper Freddie Gibbs who plays “a disillusioned rapper who comes to a

Berkshire town much like Sandisfield to reevaluate the meaning of life and befriends a farmer, played by Tarasuk.” Bob, in reality, is playing himself again. In the film he gets to teach the rapper a few realities of life, such as how to work through the fall and winter and the mud and the cold and how to slaughter animals that you’ve fed for months. This is all brand new to the big-city rapper who finds a new sense of purpose in Sandisfield.

Readers can find the full Berkshire Eagle article at www.berkshireeagle.com or, as a special feature, at <https://sandisfieldtimes.org/BerkshireEagle-Tarasuk-20211110.pdf>. 📄

THE ACTOR SPEAKS

While Bob Tarasuk did not reply to requests for comment from The Times, he was quoted by Felix Carroll in The Eagle, as follows:

When asked about the reception to the new film, Tarasuk said, “People are loving it. They loved it in France,’ looking amused and just slightly alarmed.”

“Last year, when Ongaro once again asked Tarasuk, ‘Do you want to do another film?’ Tarasuk asked, ‘What do I got to do?’

‘Just be you, man,’ Ongaro said. ‘All right,’ Tarasuk said. ‘I can do that; not much of a stretch.’”

Asked once to summarize his life as an actor, “Tarasuk admitted, ‘No, this is ridiculous. It’s hysterical, is what it is.’”

Council on Aging 

By Nina Carr

Well, the Holiday Season is upon us, and the members of the Council on Aging are hoping to help you celebrate it.

We will have a table with yummy homemade baked goods at the Holiday Fair on December 4 at the Rt. 57 Fire Station.

We are hosting a luncheon on Wednesday December 15 at noon at Mario’s Restaurant in Winsted. Please contact Linda Riiska at 258-4816 or Anina Carr at 258-3314 to reserve a spot at the table. There is a choice of beef, chicken, or fish for the main course.

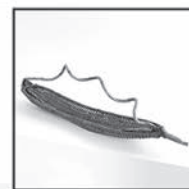
We have to suspend our Chair Yoga classes for the month of December. Our wonderful instructor, Wendy, has to take some time off. We will surely miss these meet-ups, as they have been great for both the spirit and the body. We’ve had such fun together! Please check ConnectSandisfield for news of when we will resume the classes.

Our Foot Clinic will be held December 16 at the Town Hall Annex, beginning at 10 a.m., with Dr Schwartz. Please call Linda (258-4816) to make an appointment.

We expect to start a COA coffee hour at the Town Hall Annex in January. We are hoping that there will be no uptick in Covid cases in town so we will be able to get together to socialize, play cards, play bingo, and gossip.

Our good wishes to all for a happy, healthy, and safe Holiday Season! 📄

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Evergreen Ally of our Woods: Eastern Hemlock

By Elizabeth Orenstein

As the days grow short and first fat flakes fall from the skies, as the leaves brown and drift from the branches, the evergreen trees and shrubs call out to us from the woods as beacons of color through the drab winter months.

One of the most prevalent evergreens in Sandisfield is the eastern hemlock (scientific name *Tsuga canadensis*). This tree is notable for its elegant pyramidal shape on the landscape, its deep green and silvery foliage, and its practical and medicinal uses.

Hemlocks prefer moist areas and rich soils, so it is not surprising that they are a common sight in Sandisfield. Hemlock habitat stretches from the Canadian Maritimes to western Quebec and down south to into northern Georgia. While they can associate with a variety of other tree species, hemlocks most often prefer the company of sugar maple, yellow birch, American beech, and eastern white pine in this region. In mature forests eastern hemlocks can reach over 100 feet tall, 40 inches trunk diameter, and 800 years old. Some trees may be much older, but they can be hard to date because of heart-rot, the rotting out of the center wood.

Hemlocks bear some of the smallest cones, only up to an inch long, of the coniferous trees that grow in our region. The cones are typically light to middle brown. Hemlock's short needles have two parallel white lines that run the length of the underside. Unlike their spruce relatives, hemlock needles are soft and flat, not spiky, and run in two rows on either side of the twigs. Like other conifers, hemlocks send out their branches in a 'whorled' pattern, with branches emerging all the way around the trunk. The bark varies from rough mid-brown on young trees to rich red-brown on older trees. Older trees' bark is also characterized by a distinctive pattern of diamond-shaped grooves or slashes.

While eastern hemlocks share part of their name with a couple of plants that are known for their poisonous qualities, *Tsuga canadensis* is not known to be toxic. The hemlock that Socrates was forced to drink (*Conium maculatum*), is more properly called water hemlock or poison hemlock. Part of the parsley family, it is an herbaceous plant, not a woody like eastern hemlock. Poison hemlock grows in wet areas along rivers and streams, sometimes in ditches near roads, and can grow in this region. Be especially cautious when foraging for other parsley family plants like purple angelica or wild parsnip as poison hemlock has been confused for both.

Our Sandisfield woods sport one other poisonous hemlock. Ground hemlock (*Taxus canadensis*), or Canada yew, can be easily confused with the benign eastern hemlock as it often grows in similar habitat and has a really similar look. Ground hemlock, however, is a low-growing shrub, while eastern hemlock is a tree. Ground hemlock sends up one- to three-foot long 'whips' of slender branches with parallel rows of green needles. If you look closely, you'll notice that ground hemlock's poisonous needles differ from the eastern's medicinal ones.

The native peoples of North America have long made use of this tree. The Algonquin in what is now Quebec used eastern hemlock to treat rheumatism, as a disinfectant, and to aid difficult childbirth. The Micmac in northern Maine and eastern Canada used the inner bark as an antidiarrheal and the bark and stems as cold medicine. Early European settlers in North America learned from the Native populations and often used the vitamin C-rich twigs and needles to make tea during the winter to ward off scurvy.

Eastern hemlock is threatened by a few pests. The wooly adelgid (scientific name *Adelges tsugae*) is a vicious, tiny, white, sucking insect that drains the life out of the whole stands of trees. Hemlock or fiorina scale (*Fiorina externa*) is an armored insect that sucks the life from needles. It also builds up waxy excretions on the needles that makes the trees susceptible to other threats like wooly adelgid, root rot, and hemlock borer. This is not a new story for this, or really any other, tree. About 5,000 years ago hemlocks were attacked by an unknown organism that nearly destroyed the species. It took them over 500 years to recover.

For more information about hemlocks and our other native trees, I highly recommend *Native and Naturalized Trees of New England and Adjacent Canada: A Field Guide* by Richard M. DeGraaf and Paul E. Sendak, *A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America* by Donald Culross Peattie, *Native American Medicinal Plants* by Daniel Moerman, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* by William Cronon, and *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, and of course others in our local libraries. 📖



Watercolor rendering of a hemlock branch, by the author.



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The CCC Tragedy

CEREMONY AT SANDISFIELD STATE FOREST

Join a memorial ceremony honoring Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollees on Thursday, December 16 at 2:30 p.m., Sandisfield State Forest, Rt. 183 in New Marlborough.

On December 16, 1934, five young men, enrollees with the 196th Company, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) at Sandisfield State Forest, were tragically killed in a truck accident on Three Mile Hill in Great Barrington while traveling to a church service. A lone marble memorial stone inscribed with their names remains today in the state forest.

On this 87th anniversary of that event historian and CCC re-enactor, Kevin Titus, DCR staff, friends and neighbors, honor the memory of these men, and the service of the CCC in the creation of our State Forests and Parks. Attendees can participate in a solemn ceremony, place a wreath at the memorial stone, listen to a brief recounting of the tragedy, and hear taps as a 1930s period 48-star flag is retired. Artifacts from the CCC program will also be on display, and attendees will have the opportunity to talk more with experts about the legacy of this New Deal era program.

The 45-minute ceremony takes place at the site of the former CCC camp, on Rt.183 in New Marlborough, just south of the intersection of East Hill/York Lake Road. Roadside parking is available. The ceremony is held weather permitting. Dress appropriately for the weather conditions. Recommended for ages 13 and up. For more information or updates call (413) 426-7890. 🇺🇸



How 'Bout Them Apples?



In early October Mrs. Hamill's preschool and Mrs. Higgins' early kindergarten classes from Farmington River Elementary enjoyed apple picking at Mountain Orchard in Granville.

Photo: Tami Spohnholz



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Cultural Council

As a member of the Sandisfield Cultural Council, I recently attended Music Like a Map - Zoe Lewis at the Arts Center and was very pleasantly surprised, thinking this would be a performance geared toward a young audience. It was not. Attendees ranged in age from six to 'a certain age,' all of whom seemed to enjoy themselves. Ms. Lewis is a talented musician and songwriter and knows how to captivate her audience.

Jennifer Hibbins, also a member of the Sandisfield Cultural Council was there with her daughter, Julia, and said, "I was impressed with Zoe's ability to engage with the audience; to have us clap to the rhythm, sing the chorus and answer questions about our families. It was great to be back in a live theater and feel part of that community again."

The Cultural Council is proud to support the Arts Center's mission of bringing lively entertainment to Sandisfield. Members of the Council will be meeting in November to discuss the more than 30 grant applications we've received and will make an announcement soon about who we will fund for the next cycle. 

Ellen Croibier, Cultural Council

One More Event at the Sandisfield Arts Center


What could be better than relaxing with a glass of wine and a nibble all in a cozy room while being read to by members of The Sandisfield Players? Saturday, December 4, 4:00 p.m..

Ben Luxon will regale you with a Cornish man's fight with a bear.

Want a laugh? Nora Ephron? Jean Atwater-Williams will tickle your funny bone.

Nostalgic for the long lost summer? Mary Anne Grammer will take you there.

Author John Funchion will recount his humorous medical tale of his nose.

Free, donations accepted. 



Apartment wanted

Sandisfield town employee seeking small apartment / efficiency unit in Sandisfield or surrounding towns for winter season. Please contact Kevin Flynn, 978-514-0519, or consultflynn@gmail.com

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The Town of Sandisfield has the following positions available:

Assistant to Select Board / Town Manager. Fulltime position provides administrative, analytical and professional duties in the Office of the Select Board and Town Manager. Some evening hours.

Facilities Handyman/Maintainer. Part time position performs light to medium maintenance tasks at Town Hall, Town Hall Annex and Library, including but not limited to painting, carpentry, monitoring HVAC, etc.

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Complete job descriptions and employment application available on town website: www.sandisfieldma.gov. Submit to: manager@sandisfieldma.gov. Open until filled. AA/EOE.

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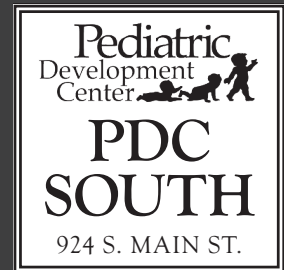
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By Terry Spohnholz

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Saturday, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

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Email: sandisfieldlibrary@gmail.com

"Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings."

– Anonymous

"Kindness is like snow. It beautifies everything it covers."

– Kahlil Gibran




We continue to add new and enlightening books to both the adult section (upstairs) and children's section (downstairs). The Children's section is replete with books, games, toys and a train set. We also offer notary service, public computer and printer, free wifi and access to e-books from Massachusetts libraries with your Sandisfield Library card.

If you have a particular author or book in mind, and the Sandisfield Library does not have it, we can borrow it from other libraries. It may take a week or two while the book winds its way from one end of Massachusetts to our end.

We at the library wish everyone a grateful and joy filled Holiday Season! Please note we will be closed for the Holidays beginning December 25 through January 1, so be sure to visit before then to stock up for your holiday reading.

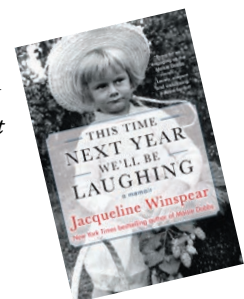
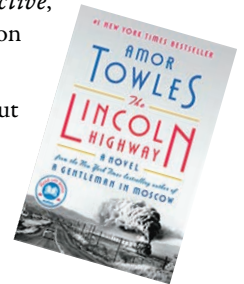
Library Events

STORYTELLING

Storytelling hours with crafting fun every Saturday from 11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Come join us for fun and light entertainment. 

NEW BOOK ARRIVALS

- *Crossroads*, by Jonathan Franzen
- *As the Wicked Watch*, by Taron Hall
- *The Relentless Moon*, by Mary Robin Kowal
- *Remote Control*, by Nnedi Okorafor
- *The Paris Detective*, by James Patterson
- *Oh, William*, by Elizabeth Stout
- *The Lincoln Highway*, by Amor Towles
- *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*, by Mitch Albom
- *Mercy*, by David Baldacci
- *A Man of Honor*, by Barbara Bradford
- *Tom Clancy Chain of Command*, by Marc Cameron
- *The Dark Hours*, by Michael Connelly
- *The Midnight Lock*, by Jeffrey Deaver
- *Fear No Evil*, by James Patterson
- *Wish You Were Here*, by Jodi Picoult
- *Flying Angels*, by Danielle Steel
- *This Time Next Year We Will Be Laughing*, by Jacqueline Winspear



IN THE CHILDREN'S SECTION WE HAVE ADDED:

- *The Christmas Pig*, by J. K. Rowling



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On a winter day at Old Town Hall, perhaps at a Select Board meeting around 1950. Can you identify the lady who is stoking the fire? We don't know who she is but if anyone is sure of her identity the Times will provide a free one-year mail subscription to an out-of-town address of your choice. Write or email the Times to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org or by postal to P. O. Box 584, Sandisfield MA 01255.

Photo Berkshire Eagle archives.

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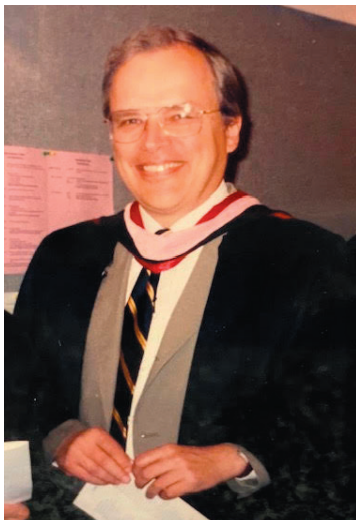
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✈ *Comings and Goings* ✈



PAUL ROBERT VAN SICKLE
1938-2021

Paul Van Sickle, 82, died at his Sandisfield home on October 25 following a year-long illness. He and his wife Susan bought their place on Rood Hill Road in 1970 and had lived there full time since his retirement. Paul was active locally, particularly at Gould Farm in Monterey and with the Sandisfield Players where he participated in many of their early productions.

Born in Durand, Illinois on November 23, 1938 to John R. and Kathryn B. Van Sickle, Paul graduated from Rockford's West High before heading east to study music at Harvard College and Boston University. While teaching was his life-long vocation, Paul went on to become an accomplished pianist, organist, and vocalist after serving for two years in the Army Reserve Corps Band as a percussionist.

Paul met his future wife, Susan Lawrence, at St. George's Episcopal Church in Middlebury, Connecticut while serving as organist and choir director; they were married there on August 10, 1968.

Following a decade teaching music at The Taft School in Connecticut and Shipley School in Pennsylvania, Paul arrived at Miss Hall's School in Pittsfield to interview for a music position that had just been filled; that he went on to teach mathematics and computer science there, until his retirement in 2010, is testament to his willingness to jump in and lend a helping hand, no matter the circumstances. He gave of his time and talents in the classroom and on the playing fields and remained active in the campus community through his many friends and colleagues. He was proud to be the father of two graduates and the grandfather of a current student.

Paul cultivated many passions throughout his life. He was an inaugural member of the Cantilena Chamber Choir, an acapella

ensemble where he sang bass for close to 15 seasons. Upon retirement, Paul moved full-time to Sandisfield, a locale he had discovered through his friend and mentor from Harvard, John Ferris.

Paul filled his days with hobbies: he was an avid vegetable gardener, an accomplished woodworker, a voracious reader, a seasoned fisherman, and a staunch Red Sox fan. He took his role as grandfather seriously, and offered advice on myriad topics from how to properly harvest a carrot to the best opening moves on any given role in backgammon.

Paul especially enjoyed his time as an active volunteer at Gould Farm in Monterey where he worked on the Forestry & Grounds team, under the leadership of his good friend Bob Rausch; when he was no longer able to work in the woods, Paul was appointed Board Member and served on various committees dedicated to bringing The Reverend Hampton C. Price Community Center to fruition. He was a member of Trinity Church in Lenox.

Paul is survived by his wife of 53 years, Susan Van Sickle, and three children: Amy Ober of Kent, CT (Rob); Hannah Van Sickle of Sandisfield; and Andrew Van Sickle of Burlington, VT (Danica); his brother John B. Van Sickle; and four grandchildren: Kathryn Barrett, Alice Barrett, Robby Ober, and Lucy Ober. He was predeceased by a granddaughter, Cora Barrett. Paul enjoyed the companionship of his many caregivers over the past year, including Izzy Fearn, Sarah Harasyko, Laurie Jones, and Juana Martinez.

A memorial service was held November 20 at Trinity Church in Lenox.



Comings and Goings



MARY BROCK

1928-2021

Mary Meigs Brock, 93, died peacefully in her sleep November 21 near Cape Elizabeth, Maine, where she had lived for many years.

Mary and her husband, John, will be recalled by town residents as having owned the large farm at the top of the first hill going up South Beech Plain Road. The historic farmhouse is now owned by two world-renowned fashion designers and another part of their farm became Snow Farm. The Brocks owned large sections along both sides of Beech Plain Road, much of which is now protected.

Karleen Blass, a good friend of the Brocks, said that a significant portion of open land in Sandisfield is due to the conservation ethics of John and Mary. "I was a young mother," Karleen recalled, "and Mary took me aside one time to advise me that my sons were not in school simply to learn to make a living, but to learn how to learn and the

value of knowledge. She was an incredible person, soft-spoken and humble, but if she took up a cause she was committed to it totally."

The Brocks fought the good fight over the proposed designation of the Sandisfield portion of the Farmington as a Wild & Scenic River. The proposal failed due to misrepresentation of what the designation would have meant for New Boston, most of which was generated outside of town.

Mary grew up in Philadelphia and was a graduate of Wellesley College in Massachusetts. She met and married the love of her life, John Brock, while both were teaching at Chestnut Hill Academy. They ultimately settled in Sandisfield where they were both active in town and civic affairs, with John serving as selectman from 1990 until his death in 1995.

After his death, Mary lived briefly in Monterey before moving to Maine and settling in Cape Elizabeth, with summers on the island of Vinalhaven. Mary was predeceased by a daughter, Jane Scott. She is survived by two daughters: Susan B. Saltonstall (Endicott) of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and Jennifer Brock of Marysville, Pennsylvania; three sons, John M. Brock (Sheila Dugan) of Missoula, Montana, Peter Brock (Janet) of Barrington, Rhode Island, and Stephen C. Brock (fiancé Sheri Romer) of Vinalhaven. Mary loved children, especially young ones, and she leaves 14 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Mary's later volunteer work and donations all centered around her love of Vinalhaven: animals, especially birds and dogs; conservation, with a focus on land trusts; and equality and peace, particularly the American Friends Service Committee.

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Letters to the Editor

LIVENING THINGS UP

Kudos to Simon Winchester for his recent article in the October issue, "Good Government: A New Normal?" He livened up what might have been a dull town meeting report with his wry humor.

*Susan Potashner
West Hartford, Conn.*



FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS



As Seen on ConnectSandisfield: **Sarah Pease** wrote, on November 1: "I want to thank everyone who participated in trick or treating last night. It is such a fun time for families and it's so important that the kids have these traditions to look forward to. My younger son was sort of bummed because I had to work and his older brother was off with friends in another town. But he went with his dad and reported back to me that he had such a fun, fun time and that he got so much candy!"

Thank you all. Your efforts are not unnoticed. Happy Halloween, Sandisfield.



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Recreation Committee Holiday Time is Here

By Lynn Rubenstein


SANTA will be at Fire Station #2 on Rt. 57 Saturday, December 4, from 11 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. He will hand out prizes to all good little children, while their parents get to hear all about their wishes and dreams for the upcoming holidays.

As part of the Holiday Fair, the Rec Committee will sponsor a craft table supervised by one of our young residents in town, Julia Salzano. At the table, there will be foam holiday shapes to decorate and take home. In the Holiday spirit, we are asking that you to decorate one extra, which we will deliver to The Rehab Center residents in town, a little something to brighten their spirits as well as their room.

If you would like to see "NightWood" (An Outdoor Sound And Light Experience) at The Mount, Edith Wharton's House in Lenox this season, we have a ten percent discount code available. The event runs through December 31. When purchasing tickets online, after clicking the promo/discount code line, enter NWSAND2021. Adult tickets will change to \$18 and children to \$9. Ages 5 and under are free. This sounds like fun, and we hope you can take advantage of this opportunity. You can buy tickets online at <https://www.edithwharton.org/calendar/nightwood/>.



We have started to compile an email blast list so those who are registered can be notified of upcoming programs and reminders. Register via email at kowgirlruby@yahoo.com. If you don't have email, give us your phone number and we will contact you that way. Call 413-269-7357.

We are always looking for new members, energetic volunteers, "out of the box" ideas, and constructive comments. Please contact us at the email or phone listed in the previous paragraph. Wishing everyone a Healthy and Happy Holiday Season. Stay Warm & Stay Safe, from all of us at the Rec Committee: Lynn Rubenstein, Laura Ziegler-Messina, Dawn Odell-Lemon, Anina Carr, and Christine O'Brien. 



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Letter from the Founding Editor

Dear Friends, Readers, Subscribers,

As the days shorten and the crisp scents of another New England fall make way for the crisper chill of the approaching winter, so we here in Sandisfield are starting to feel something that has been in all-too-short supply these many recent months: a gathering sense of optimism and promise.

We can see it on all sides: Our roads are smoother, our utility poles are strung with new magic cables, fresh paint is everywhere, new arrivals, mostly younger folk, are looking around, unpacking their cars and pledging to stay in their newfound corner of paradise.

And the evidence is more than purely physical: The town government is swiftly changing gear too – a team of new and highly-capable elected officials is in place, a fresh corps of professionals backing them up, a growing mood of cooperation and coming-together.

I'd like to think our small and feisty newspaper has played a role in helping create this altered mood.

Think of it: had we not been here these last twelve months to provide news and commentary and offer space for debate and argument, Sandisfield might well now have an enormous and highly polluting agricultural factory in our pristine northern woods; we might have in place an administration quite careless of how it collects and harbors and spends our tax monies; we might find our children facing the prospect of years of less-than-ideal education.

But in all of these areas – just as we pledged back in 2010 when, with your welcome support, we launched this newspaper, promising to take a firm stand in favor of good government, clean air and water, and a bright future for our young – so in 2021 we have manifestly stood our ground. Some few have complained: But most of the community have welcomed our reporting, our persistence, our writing – the fundamentals, after all, of good journalism.

And with your continued support – for running a regular newspaper is not an inexpensive venture, even though all of our editors, writers, and internet gurus still volunteer our time – this is what we plan to continue to do in 2022 and the years beyond.

We have survived a profoundly challenging year, just as has the community which we love and of which we are so proud. And so, as we approach another holiday season, I hope you will find it in your hearts to reach for your checkbooks or your electronic ways of paying and send us something to help us to keep to our mission, to help our newly optimistic Sandisfield become an ever more delightful place to live and work, to preserve and enjoy.

A very happy holiday to you all, and from the entire team at *The Sandisfield Times* the very best wishes for the year ahead.

*Simon Winchester
Silverbrook Road*



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AN AFTERNOON OF SHORT STORIES WITH THE SANDISFIELD PLAYERS

Ben Luxon, Jean Atwater-Williams, John Funchion and Mary Anne Grammer from the Sandisfield Players will read poignant, funny, mystical and action-packed stories.

(This event is free, though donations of any amount are gratefully accepted.)

The Sandisfield Arts Center wishes you a joyful holiday season!

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NOW HEAR THIS!

Edited by Laura Rogers-Castro.

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

DECEMBER EVENTS

Sandisfield Select Board Meetings are currently through Zoom and in-person. Please visit sandisfieldma.gov or call 258-4711 for information.

Playgroup on Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. at the Otis Town Hall. Sponsored by South Berkshire Kids. Weather permitting. No pre-registration necessary. Led by Nina Carr. Meet outside behind the Otis Town Hall in the gazebo for stories and songs followed by creative crafts. Free!

Chair Yoga on Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road, sponsored by the Council on Aging. For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free. Chair Yoga is cancelled thru December.

Holiday Fair organized by the Sandisfield Historical Society on Saturday, December 4 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Firehouse Station #2 on Route 57. Vendors, lunch by members of the New Boston Congregational Church, and penny auction (to benefit the Sandisfield Scholarship Fund). Santa will visit from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. to hand out goodies and prizes to all children.

Short Story Reading on Saturday, December 4 at 4:00 p.m. at the Sandisfield Arts Center on 5 Hammertown Road. Ben Luxon, Jean Atwater-Williams, John Funchion, and Mary Anne Grammer from the Sandisfield Players will read poignant, funny, mystical, and action-packed stories. Attendees must be fully vaccinated and wear a mask. The Arts Center is operating at about 60% capacity to allow for social distancing. Free.

Film made in Sandisfield, "**Down With the King**," at Mahaiwe Theatre, Great Barrington, Thursday, December 9, 7:00 p.m., as part of Berkshire International Film Festival. Q&A following the film, with director Diego Ongaro and star Bob Tarasuk. Tickets online at <https://biffma22.eventive.org/schedule/619d153697a8cb00c2708c62>

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

Forest Floor Discovery Hike on the Clam River Trail on Saturday, December 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. sponsored by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council. The focus will be on identifying low-growing evergreens like American wintergreen,

partridgeberry, princess pine, and more during this 1.2-mile hike. Free, but preregistration required (mauman@bnrc.org).

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Christmas in Riverton, Connecticut on Friday, December 3, from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. and Saturday, December 4, from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. Holiday shopping, Festival of Trees, Children's activities, Christmas caroling. For more information, visit rivertonct.com.

"**Notice Otis**" Event featuring Sculptor Robin Tost on Thursday, December 9, at 7:00 p.m., via Zoom, sponsored by the Otis Historical Commission and Otis Preservation Trust. For more information, email otishistoricalcommission@gmail.com.

Holiday Market on Saturday, December 11, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Gould Farm in Monterey. Handmade arts and crafts, roadside treasures, gift baskets, pies, bread, cookies, and special Silent Auction to benefit the new Roadside. The Holiday Market will be located at the Harvest Barn, Lower level.

Greet the Solstice Hike on Saturday, December 18 from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at April Hill on 62 Mountain Road in South Egremont. Meet Eli Fry, Trails Coordinator for Greenagers, for a moderate hike around the historic April Hill grounds and forest. Experience the seasonal changes. There is limited space available, please register (eli.fry@greenagers.org).

Berkshire Grown Winter Farmer's Market on Saturday, December 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Housy Dome at 1064 Main Street in Housatonic. Featuring locally grown and produced foods, including fruits and vegetables, cheese, meats, breads, and more.



*Happy Holidays
from
The Country
Journal.*

*And
congratulations
to the new editor,
Shaw Israel Izykson*

SANDISFIELD TOWN DIRECTORY

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258-4578 (April-October) or rainbow2498@embarqmail.com

ASSESSORS OFFICE: 258-4711 x 6
Office Hours: Tues, Wed, Thurs. 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Meets 2nd Tues: 5 p.m.

BOARD OF HEALTH: Victor Hyrcckvich, 413-717-0592
Meets 2nd Tues: 7 p.m., Old Town Hall.

BROADBAND COMMITTEE: Jeff Bye: 258-4711
Meets as needed. Check for schedule.

BUILDING INSPECTOR: Matthew Kollmer, 413-358-8509

CEMETERY COMMITTEE:
Kathie Burrows: 258-4943. Meets as needed.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION: Meets 3rd Tues: 7 p.m.
Email: concom@sandisfieldma.gov.

CONSTABLES:
Nazario Sanchez: 258-4705, John Burrows: 258-4943

COUNCIL ON AGING: Linda Riiska, Nina Carr: 258-4711 x 8
Wed: 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Senior Center/Town Hall Annex
Business Meeting 1st and 3rd Wed: 10 a.m.

DPW SUPERINTENDENT: Brad Curry:
Emergency, 717-7627 cell. Office 258-4711 x 7

EMERGENCIES: POLICE, FIRE, EMS
Call 911 for emergencies. Will reach all responders.

NON-EMERGENCY: 258-4742
Police Chief: 413-441-2129, chief@sandisfieldma.gov
Fire Chief: 258-4742

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR:
Mike Morrison, 413-441-2129

FARMINGTON RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOL:
North Main Street, Otis, 413 269-4466; Thomas Nadolny, Principal

FRRSD SCHOOL COMMITTEE meets 1st Mon: 7 p.m.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Roger Brown, Chair.
Meets as needed. Check for schedule.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION: Ron Bernard, 413-269-0012;
Ronbernard@aol.com. Meets 2nd Wednesday or as posted, 7 p.m.,
New Boston Firehouse training room.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Ann Wald, President
258-4415 or annaw2@verizon.net.
Meets 2nd Saturday, Apr-Nov. Sandy Brook Turnpike/Rt. 183.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE: John Skrip: 258-4788

LIBRARY: Librarian: Theresa Spohnholz: 258-4966;
sandisfieldlibrary@gmail.com
Mon/Tues: 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Wed: 2 - 5 p.m.
Thurs: 7 - 9 p.m., Sat: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

NOTARY: John Skrip: 258-4788
Theresa Spohnholz: 258-4966 or 258-4711 x 4

PLANNING BOARD: Roger Kohler
Meets 2nd Tues: 6 p.m., Old Town Hall

POLICE-STATE: Lee Barracks: 413 243-0600

POST OFFICE: Amy Rintoul, Clerk, 258-4940
Window Hours: Mon-Fri: 9 a.m.-noon & 1-4 p.m. Sat: 8-11:30 a.m.
Delivery boxes in both lobbies accessible 24 hours.

RECREATION COMMITTEE: Lynn Rubenstein
kowgirlruby@aol.com

SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER: (May-December)
5 Hammertown Road, PO Box 31
258-4100; www.sandisfieldartscenter.org

SANDISFIELD TIMES: Seth Kershner, editor
editor@sandisfieldtimes.org
Published monthly (Jan/Feb combined)
PO Box 584, Sandisfield

SELECT BOARD: 258-4711 x 2
Meets Monday, regular meeting, 7 p.m. Town Hall Annex.
See posted agendas for changes in meeting times
Select Board Assistant: Janey Beardsley, 258-4711, x 3

STATE OFFICIALS:
Smitty Pignatelli, State Representative
413 637-0631; rep.smitty@mahouse.gov
Adam Hinds, State Senator; 413 344-4561; adam.hinds@masenate.gov

TAX COLLECTOR: Gina Campbell
258-4711 x 4; Mon/Tues, 11:30-4 p.m.; Wed/Thurs, 9 -2 p.m.

TOWN ACCOUNTANT: Margaret McClellan
by appointment; 258-4711 x 5 or accountant@sandisfieldma.gov

TOWN CLERK: Mary Kronholm, 258-4711 x 2
PO Box 163, Sandisfield, MA 01255 or townclerk@sandisfieldma.gov
Mon: 8 a.m.-2 p.m./ 6 p.m.-7 p.m.
Tuesday - Thursday 8 - 4 pm or by appt

TOWN HALL: At Town Hall Annex
66 Sandisfield Road, PO Box 90, 01255
Open Mon-Thurs: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Mon: 6-7 p.m. or by appt.

TOWN MANAGER: Kevin Flynn, 258-4711, x 1

TOWN TREASURER: Gina Campbell, 258-4711 x 4
treasurer@sandisfieldma.gov
Mon/Tues, 11:30 - 4 p.m.; Wed/Thurs, 9 -2

TRANSFER STATION: Keith Larson
Wed: 12 noon - 5 p.m., Sat/Sun: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

VETERANS SERVICES: Laurie Hills
413-528-1580, Great Barrington Town Hall

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