

Happy Birthday! We're 13! Going on 14!

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES

Tribunus



Plebis

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Volume XIII, Number 11

March 2023



THE RT. 8 ICE WALL

Warm temperatures and too little snow have made for an odd winter season. The usually beautiful ice walls that normally appear every winter along the cliffs on Rt. 8 opposite Colebrook River Lake did not show up as usual until a few days of extreme cold came along at the end of January. Not long before this photo was taken, the temperature on the morning of February 1 was 17.2 degrees below zero with a very bitter wind. Remember that morning as we move into Spring 2023. ❄️

Photo: Ron Bernard



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Left to right, Sandisfield Fire Volunteers Brian McCuin, Alec Morrison, Shamus Gaberty, Clayton Hadsell and his father Kyle Hadsell of Berkshire Trail Riders, Fire Department Captain Eric Pachulski, volunteers Logan Burdick, and Teagan Ahear. Other members of the department were on emergency calls and unavailable for the photo.

Photo: Tanya Hadsell

A Cash Grant for Your Fire Department

By Fire Chief Ralph Morrison


The Sandisfield Fire Department Inc. extends a huge thank you to the Berkshire Trail Riders for choosing our department to receive a \$1,000 grant to help us better serve our community.

This greatly appreciated donation from BTR will go towards an ATV trailer specifically designed with a backboard to help with the recovery of people injured or in medical need out in the woods. The trailer is attached to an ATV so that an EMT or Medic can ride into the site, treat the patient, and safely pull them out from wooded areas or trails that may be a long distance from roads and inaccessible to other types of vehicles.

We are lucky in Sandisfield to have plenty of hiking trails and outdoor recreation areas, and this tool will help us keep everyone utilizing our wild spaces safe.

Representing BTR, Clayton Hadsell and his father Kyle Hadsell made a special trip to Sandisfield to present the check to the Department.

Founded in the early 1970s as the Foothill Trail Riders and later incorporated in 1992, the Berkshire Trail Riders has been advocating responsible off-road motorcycle riding, competition, and local philanthropy in the greater New England region for nearly 50 years. The group maintains their trails, actively promotes preservation through trail work parties, and works alongside local, state, and federal agencies.

BTR offers \$250-\$1,000 grants to local emergency services to procure needed equipment for remote rescue operations. The grants are a way to give back to the community's and emergency services that BTR relies on for their events. BTR holds Turkey-Runs, Enduros, and the Big Bike Adventure in and through Sandisfield. 



A potential fire fighter, Clayton Hadsell of the Berkshire Trail Riders.

Alex Bowman to Resign from Select Board and School Committee



TO TAKE EFFECT MAY 14

By Bill Price

Selectman Alex Bowman submitted his resignation papers to Town Clerk Doug Miner in late January, to take effect Sunday, May 14.

The Town Clerk subsequently notified the board of Bowman's decision, and the issue was discussed at an open session in early February. Minutes for that Select Board

meeting have not yet been posted on the Town's website.

In an email to The Times, Bowman wrote that he chose May 14 because it is "the Sunday between the Annual Town Meeting and the election the following Monday, which means the remaining year of my term should be filled in the annual town election."

He has not yet provided The Times with the reasons for his resignation. We have sought to elicit an article/explanation for our next issue, April.

Bowman was elected May 2021, to a 3-year term which would have run until May 2024.


Bowman also resigned from the Sandisfield School Committee, with the same end date and election timing. He was appointed to the School Committee following the January resignation of Amanda Leavenworth. To fill the vacancy, the Select Board requested applicants so a new School Committee member could be appointed. Receiving none, the Board voted to appoint Alex to the position, which he will have filled from his January appointment to his May 14 resignation. There will be two years remaining on that term as of Alex's resignation.

Bowman is joining a group of four other Select Board members who bailed out before their terms were up for various reasons in the past eleven years.

Richard Campetti, first elected to the Select Board in May 2001, resigned October 2012 to avoid a conflict-of-interest which would have occurred as he applied for a position with the Sandisfield Highway Department. Richard subsequently accepted a position with the Highway Department of the Town of Monterey.

Rosario Messina, who was elected to the Select Board May 2013, resigned January 2015 due to conflicts with his evening job as a Stockbridge police officer.

Alice Boyd, elected May 2015 to fill Messina's seat, was re-elected May 2016. Before her 3-year term was completed, Alice resigned Sept 2017 when she moved to eastern Mass.

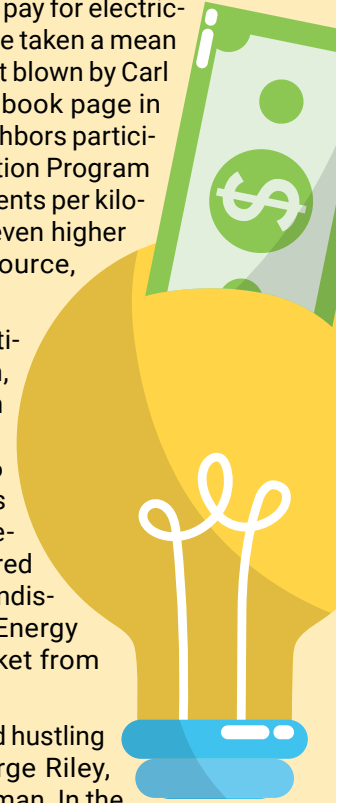
Mark Newman was elected May 2017, re-elected in 2020. For his resignation, Mark left a note to that effect on Select Board Chairman George Riley's desk at Town Hall. No reason for Mark's sudden resignation was provided. 

Shocking Electricity Rate Bump

Editor's Note: Sandisfield residents who pay for electricity every month now know that rates have taken a mean bounce. The "heads-up" whistle was first blown by Carl Nett on the Connect Sandisfield/Facebook page in December. Carl recommended that neighbors participating in the Town's Municipal Aggregation Program were facing increases from about 10.3 cents per kilowatt hour to 22.8 cents. This rate was even higher than the basic rate charged by Eversource, without the program.

While Sandisfield's new rate was negotiated for 22.8 cents for a one-year term, other community programs did much better for their citizens. For instance, Becket negotiated a rate of about 9.6 cents for three years. Other comparisons can be found on www.municipal-aggregation.com, an easily navigated website offered by the Mass. Dept of Public Utilities. Sandisfield sources its power from NextEra Energy Services of Texas and Louisiana, Becket from Dynegy Energy Services of Dallas, TX.

In any event, many local residents started hustling for other providers. One such is George Riley, former Select Board member and chairman. In the article below, George relates his adventures in the electric trade. There are lessons to be learned.



How I Switched One Off, Another On

PERSISTENCE IS HELPFUL

By George Riley

Many Sandisfielders were dismayed to discover whopping big increases in their electric bill as of January 1. Is there anything you can do about it?

Yes.

Two separate charges are combined on your bill; the first is "Supply" – generating the power you use – and the second is "Delivery" – shipping that power to your home through Eversource's wires. The second charge has increased about 25 percent – but since Eversource is a monopoly there's nothing you can do about that increase.

You do have some choice in the "Supply" charge, however. You can choose your supplier. You can compare rates from about a dozen suppliers by taking a look on www.energyswitch.ma.gov. It's an easy state-organized chart to understand, for a change, and worth a look.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Sandisfield has enrolled in an "aggregation" plan which offers power to all residents at an agreed-upon rate. Three years ago, the Select Board negotiated a three-year fixed-rate contract with First Point Power at 10.3 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh). This was a great deal for Sandisfield customers, but that three-year contract expired on Dec. 31, 2022.

Cont'd on p.6

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Pig Hunting Is New Sport in Sandisfield

From The Berkshire County Eagle, January 1, 1930
Sandisfield, Jan. 1 - Dominick Campetti recently purchased a young pig and placed it in a temporary pen for the night. Early the next day the animal was missing. Immediately the owner, an employee on the farm, and a neighbor started on a pig hunt. They tracked him across the road, and found where he had swum the icy river and then gone into the woods. After going a long distance through the woods, they found him in the snow.

He at once began to run and the three men gave chase. They were nearly exhausted when the owner took off his coat and threw it in front of the runaway pig causing him to halt. He was surrounded and forced into a bag and thus ended the pig hunt.



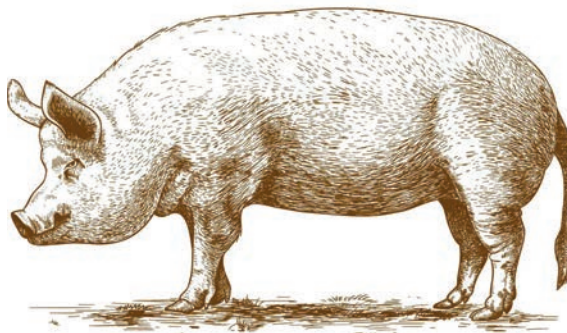
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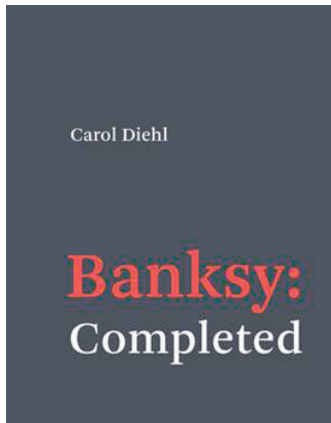
Who's Banksy?

FIND OUT IN OTIS THIS MONTH

By Times Reporters

The Times seldom highlights events going on outside of Sandisfield or that have little to do with the Town, but something is going on in Otis in March that strikes us as interesting.

A mysterious graffiti artist known as Banksy is the world's most famous living artist, yet no one knows who he is. For more than twenty years, his wryly political and darkly humorous spray paintings have appeared mysteriously on urban walls around the world, generating headlines and controversy.



To possibly get to the bottom of the mystery, artist and critic Carol Diehl, a resident of the Berkshires, researched her book, "Banksy: Completed." Diehl is the first author to go deep into the Banksy mystery and the dramas that unfold after his works are discovered.

Carol Diehl is leading an hour-long discussion on the book – and Banksy – at the Otis Town Library on March 8, Wednesday, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. The presentation is the first event in this year's NoticeOtis series.

To register, please visit www.otispreservation-trust.com or www.townofotisma.com. There is no charge for this in-person event and book-signing. Donations are welcome.



Grffiti painting by Banksy.

Cultural Council News

Cultural Council Announces Awards

By Jennifer Hibbins

The Sandisfield Cultural Council is pleased to announce that we have awarded \$8,200 in grants to 20 organizations or individuals to provide cultural programming to the residents of Sandisfield and surrounding areas in FY2023.

- Davis Bates, Celebrating New England: Songs and Stories at the Sandisfield Library
- Becket Arts Center, Music Brings Communities Together
- Berkshire South Community Center, Berkshire Ukulele Band and Berkshire Sings
- Blandford Historical Society, Jose Gonzalez and Criollo Clasico Trio
- Jane Burke, Sparks at Flying Cloud Farm (creative learning for children)
- Farmington River Elementary for field trips to Amelia Park Children's Museum and Howe Caverns, a Community Musical production, Musical Instrument Enrichment and Visual Frontiers/CTSB TV programs
- Festival Latino of the Berkshires
- Mary Jo Maichack, Lift Every Voice Sing-along Show at the Sandisfield Library
- MUSIC Dance.edu, Hip Hop Dance Chair Exercise for Seniors
- New Marlborough Village Association, Meeting House Programs
- Sandisfield Arts Center, Ari and Mia Music

- Sandisfield Arts Center, Zoe Lewis Returns
- Sandisfield Cultural Council, Sandisfield Memorial Day Parade
- Sandisfield Recreation Committee, Sandisfield Family Day
- Sculpture Now, Outdoor Sculptures at the Mount
- WAM Theatre, 2023 Season of Events

In keeping with our council priorities, grants were awarded to applicants that best met the following criteria: The venue should reach a large group in the community. Community-wide gatherings are desired. School children and activities related to learning are a high priority, as well as events for senior citizens in town. Local presenters dealing with the arts, humanities and sciences are encouraged.

The Sandisfield Cultural Council is supported by an annual grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, as well as funding of \$500 from the Town of Sandisfield.

The Council seeks additional members to carry out our mission to broaden and enhance the cultural life available to the town of Sandisfield and its residents. Members who join now will have time to get up to speed before the next grant cycle in the fall. Reach out to any current member for more information on joining: Karema Almeida, Connie Canty, Ellen Croibier, Jennifer Hibbins, Barbara Kershner, or Jennifer Lenzi. Or contact us by email at culturalcouncil@sandisfieldma.gov.



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SPECIAL ST. PATRICK'S DAY MENU!

Friday, March 17

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How I Switched One Off, Another On Cont'd from p.3

A new contract was entered into with NextEra Energy for the 12 months of 2023 at 22.8 cents per kWh – more than double the December rate. This rate is even higher at present than Eversource's own Supply rate of 22.0 cents for the next 6 months.

But you can get a better deal, by choosing a different supplier. By the way, both the old and new contracts were for 100 percent renewable energy generation – the rate difference between renewable and fossil fuel energy is minimal – typically one cent or less per kWh and shrinking.

The old 10c/kWh deal is history, but if you go to www.energyswitchma.gov you can find comparisons between power supply companies.

HOW I CHANGED SUPPLIERS?

On energyswitchma.gov, you will find that Clean Sky Energy, for instance, is offering 14.9 cents/kWh for 12 or 24 months, no cancellation fee, 100

percent renewable, for a savings of about 8 cents/kWh. That translates to about \$50 per month saved for the average 600 kWh/month user.

(I highly recommend the 24-month option, unless you believe that electric supply rates will go down next year. If you believe that, please call me about a fine bridge in Brooklyn for sale cheap.)

Click on "Sign Up" under the CleanSky logo and it opens an application form. NOTE: It gets tricky where it asks for your Eversource account number, because it will only accept a 21-digit number, and your account number is only 11 digits!

After several tries and a call to customer service (who was equally baffled by this), I tried entering the account number (11 digits) followed by a zero, followed by the "Service Reference" number on page 2 of your bill (9 digits). For some reason, this combination was accepted by the application computer.

All seemed well, and on the application it says, "Don't worry about contacting your current electric provider. We got you!"

Alas, I had to call 10 days later (1-888-355-6205) to tell them that NextEra was still listed on my Eversource account as my supplier. They told me that NextEra had rejected the switch due to a "wrong meter number."

I explained patiently what I'd done on the application and gave the rep the Service Reference number. They re-submitted the switch request.

Finally I was notified I will get switched, as of March 1. (Apparently this can only be done on the first of the following month.) So if you're willing to endure an online application and maybe several phone calls, it can be done. 🗑️

Thanks to Joe Gelinas for the Energyswitch link.



Our New Fire Engine Is Here

From Fire Chief Ralph E. Morrison

As we enter 2023, the Sandisfield Fire Department is happy to announce that the new engine and equipment is now in service at Station #1 in New Boston

I would like to thank all of the townspeople who supported this purchase. We are grateful for all of your help.

Our new, updated engine and equipment is extremely important for everyone who lives in Sandisfield as well as the personnel of the Fire Department.

Safe and updated equipment and training is crucial to our ability to do our job well.

We have also updated the engine for Station #2 on Rt. 57, which improves the service available in that area of Town.

We are always looking for more personnel for our Fire and EMS departments. There is currently a nationwide shortage of volunteers. By joining your local Fire Department you would be helping our wonderful community as well as joining a wonderful group of people. The Fire Fighters meet every Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., at Station #2. The EMT Squad meets the first Tuesday of every month, 7:00 p.m., at Station #1. Remember the Annual Steak Roast Dinner and Dance is always on the second Saturday in August. 🗑️

A Celebration Concert Features Local Composer ST. PATRICK'S DAY IN TORRINGTON

By Bill Price



Bill Taylor, Sandisfield composer

A symphonic piece, "Eire Alive," by Sandisfield composer Bill Taylor will be performed by the Torrington Symphony at its St. Patrick's Day Celebration Concert March 17.

Local composer Bill Taylor describes his piece, "Eire Alive," as "a history of Ireland in seven and a half minutes." It hints, he said, "at the long course of Irish history from a very broad perspective."

He isn't kidding.

As he described the piece: "The opening chords evoke Roman times instruments by sounding the natural overtone series in C, then modulating to D using the diatonic or even-tempered scale. A happy 6/8 theme alternates with some heavier piano and low brass, then harp and strings and then tutti."

He said that all of this "hints of a time of sporadic Roman and other invasions of a pastoral society. Next we hear the arrival of Christian influence with the theme 'Slane,' that accompanies the hymn 'Be Thou My Vision,' a poem attributed to St. Patrick, played at a very slow tempo against a faster figure in the trumpet and strings."

Continuing through the history of that oft-invaded land, Taylor wrote that "A pensive theme then represents the time of Nordic incursions/

Viking raids and the intolerance of pagan religions coming from the Christianization. The Dies Irae theme from the 13th C. with shifts to D minor brings in the ideas of famines, plagues, and invasions by Normans and English."

Despite its history, Ireland is a beautiful country. For Taylor a pennywhistle then "introduces a pastoral theme evoking the beauty of the countryside. The idea of a more pluralistic society which over the last few centuries has gradually become manifest builds as earlier themes weave in. A soprano sings 'Be Thou My Vision' calling for the protection of God and later the last lines of the William Butler Yeats poem 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' with its words of joy and praise, and the orchestra confirms this more tolerant and peaceful Ireland emerging from a long history of struggle with many themes woven together."

All in seven and a half minutes.

Other pieces in the Celebration Concert are by John Williams, Leroy Anderson, Benjamin Britten, and others, including dancers from the Scoil Rince Luimni Dance Academy. Singer Sybil Chamberlain will add her voice to several of the pieces, including "Eire Alive." The Conductor and Music Director is Maurice Steinberg.

The St. Patrick's Day Celebration Concert will be at the Elks Lodge Ballroom, 70 Litchfield St., Torrington, Conn., Friday, March 17, at 7:30 p.m. (doors open at 7:00).

For more information the website is torringtonsymphony.org and tickets are available by calling Chuck at 860-214-3347 to reserve a seat or table. Attend the concert and support a nearby orchestra and your local composer, and enjoy some great and varied music! 🍀





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historia (Greek) - "inquiry, knowledge acquired by investigation." The discovery, collection, organization, and presentation of information about past events.

Historia

The Way It Was MAIN STREET, NEW BOSTON VILLAGE

by Ron Bernard

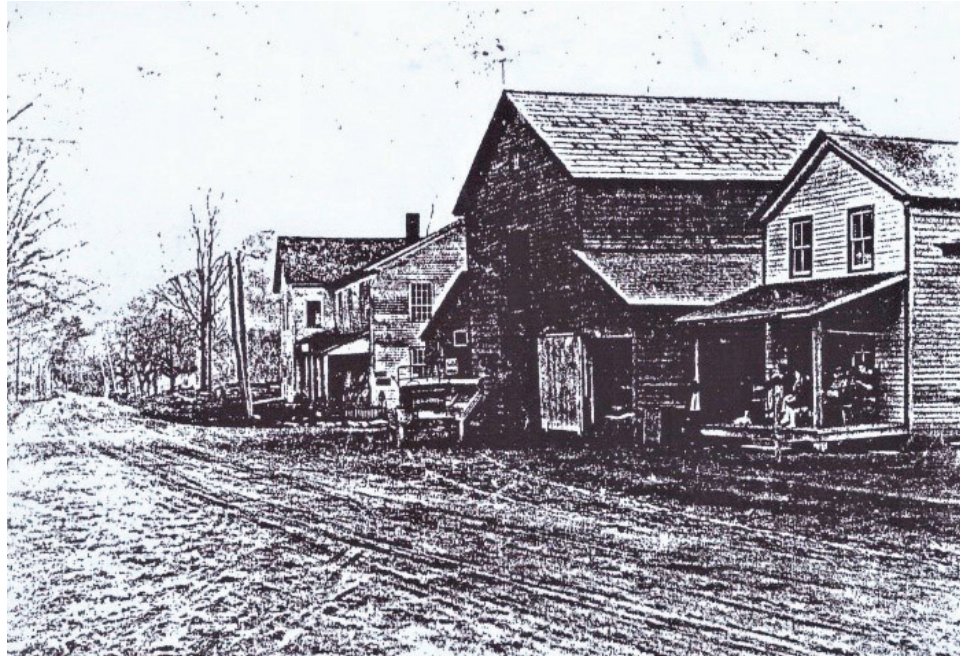
Recently, researching for a new book – about New Boston, mostly – I came across a couple pages of handwritten notes in one of former Town Clerk/historian Flora Rhodes' overstuffed folders. I never met Flora, but I feel she collected every scrap she could of Sandisfield ephemerae for a researcher like me to find. Among the pages was a blurred photocopied view of Main St., New Boston, circa 1900s. I had never seen this image.

OLD NOTES + RARE PHOTO = A STORY!

The writer was Emily Clark Vogellus, New Boston native and long-time resident. Her parents, Wallace Clark and Ellen Sears moved to Winsted when she and her sisters Isabelle and Helen, were at school age, around 1908. The Clarks operated a grocery in Winsted for many years but remained in close contact with friends and family in Sandisfield. Emily retired from school teaching in Winsted in 1957 and bought a house in New Boston. She married in 1965.

Emily was a stalwart keeper of family and Sandisfield heritage. She was a dedicated, active member of the New Boston Congregational Church. She and her sisters were also proud descendants (on their mother's side) of the noted author/poet, Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears, their great-grand uncle. They were also close to their uncle, Jason Sears, who was a highly respected citizen and the Town Clerk.

Emily's notes, possibly written in the 1940s or '50s, are not organized and reflect different aspects of family life and times, including a bit of oral tradition. I have rearranged her comments (her words in italics) in what seems a logical way, interspersed with my supporting comments.



Home of Jason Sears, Town Clerk and Selectman of New Boston, Mass., Berkshire Co., on the Farmington River. The family on the porch is Mr. & Mrs. Wallace W. Clark of Winsted and daughters Isabelle, Helen, Emily and son, Wallace R. Clark and the Ford car [left].

These images date to the early 1900s and are the oldest known views of New Boston Village looking south on Main Street. All the structures depicted on the west side of Main Street (right hand side of photos) have disappeared, mostly in the early 20th century.



“ Jason kept horses in the barn as our father did before him. The part near the house [attached shed] was his meat market as he once peddled meat in New Boston and nearby towns. The next building was painted blue (and was) a store. Twinings, I think. My parents once attended dances there. The last house down on the right is the Hiram Bliss house.

”



The mentioned barn and utility buildings as they appeared in the early 1900s. The house with the large ell (center, right) was the Edson Twining place.

DeMars images courtesy of Great Barrington Historical Society.



Sharper image of Main St. buildings taken about the same time, including among the trees the top of a house across the street, originally the Dr. Parson's house, currently the Charles Pease residence



The Clark sisters, Isabelle, Emily and Helen, 1985.

“Uncle Jason and wives are buried in West New Boston cemetery (about middle) near his father and mother, Mr. & Mrs. Edmund B. Sears and grandparents, Joshua Milton Sears. Besides his sister, Ellen Maria Sears Clark, they had a brother, Milton Sears (1869) who went west to live and he never returned but once. They never knew what happened to him or where he died or was buried. He was a gold prospector & cowboy & was friendly with the Indians and swapped horses with them. He had an unfaithful wife when he left and no one ever heard of him again. He wanted to build a home for his father and mother in California but they would not leave Sandisfield. He was a deer hunter and often got one. He had many hunting dogs.

Jason Sears' house once stood across the road by the Welles' house and was a former woman's hat factory before becoming a granary. Our father, Wallace W. Clark, had it moved by horses across the road where it still stands.

Our father sold the house to Jason Sears whose first wife was Ethel Sackett and she died there. His second wife was Eva Granger who also resided there. Jason got his drinking water in a pail from the Welles' property across the street. He and his wife used pumped water from the Farmington River in back of the house for dish water and baths, etc., or caught rain water in big cream cans on the porch.

”

Historia
Cont'd from p.9



At the New Boston Fair south of town, he hitched and fed dinners to the horses and my mother Ellen Sears Clark had an ice cream parlor in this house. Our family lived in the house last owned by the Wilber family. Our mother put on chicken dinners in the house for people at the fair.

Uncle Jason had a pair of black team horses and a sad horse named "Railroad" and rode horseback with Emily and Helen and sometimes Isabelle. We had a riding club which was known as the "Sandisfield Riding Club." Jason's favorite little driving horse was called "Watchey." He bought Helen a saddle horse named "Queenie." Emily's horse was "Dart."

Jason bought Railroad and Queenie at a Lee horse auction and Emily and Helen rode them back to New Boston. Jason wrote for the Berkshire Co. Eagle, Springfield Republican and Waterbury Republican.



Jason Sears was Selectman 1925-45 and Town Clerk 1927-45. He died in 1958, age 85.

Photo: Berkshire Eagle archives.

What Really Happened to Milton Sears

Milton's mother, Lucy Sage Sears, 74, died on February 8, 1916. While her funeral was taking place two days later, her husband, Edmund B. Sears, 72, ill at home, succumbed to "the grip." Both died not knowing what had happened to their son, Milton. According to Lucy's obituary, it was rumored that he "had perished in the desert."

Berkshire Eagle, February 11, 1916

DIED DURING HIS WIFE'S FUNERAL

While the funeral of Mrs. Jane L. Sears was being held in the village church in New Boston in the town of Sandisfield yesterday afternoon, at which Rev. Robert Thorne was the officiating clergyman, Edmund Sears, aged 72, husband of Mrs. Sears died of the grip with which he had been seriously ill for some time. Mrs. Sears died Tuesday of pneumonia. When the children, with other mourners, returned from attending the funeral, they found Mr. Sears had died.

Mr. and Mrs. Sears died without having learned whether their son, Milton, who went west 12 years ago, was still living. Nothing had been heard of him since he left home. Two other children, Jason of New Boston and Mrs. Wallace Clark of Winsted, Conn., survive. The Sears farm is one of the best in Sandisfield.

Divorced and Becomes Insane.

Milton Sears, who was granted a divorce last week from his wife, Edith, became suddenly insane, near Chloride, Friday of last week. Sears, after securing his decree, went to Chloride and started to his mines in Weaver district with W. H. Hall. When a short distance from town Sears became greatly excited, telling Hall that Mexicans were after him, and jumped from the wagon and took to the hills. A search party was sent out after the unfortunate man, but soon returned. E. J. McNulty and Thomas Graves then went in search of the man and followed a track to Halls camp, but there they learned that the man making the track was not Sears. Returning to Chloride an Indian was put on the trail and followed it some distance into the valley, where it appeared to be headed south. Some people that knew Sears are of the opinion that he came back to the railroad and boarded a train, going on to Los Angeles, where his divorced wife is said to live. Sears was very much in love with his wife and when she deserted him he became despondent and at times is said to have been irrational. Another search party, with an Indian trailer, is to be sent out from Chloride today.

Sears has been mining in Weaver district and is also said to have some good prospects in the Eldorado Canyon section. He is well liked by those who know him and regret is expressed for his misfortune.

Milton had in fact gone west in 1898, to Montana where he worked as a miner. While there he met Edith Gill. They married on November 13, 1905 at Salt Lake City, Utah and apparently went on to Los Angeles. Reportedly she deserted him and they divorced in September 1909. A very distressed Milton left to go work in mines in Mohave Co., Arizona. A story about what happened then begins: "Milton Sears, who was granted a divorce last week from his wife, Edith, became suddenly insane near Chloride, Friday last week." During a delusional episode he ran off into the desert and, despite a native Indian tracker's efforts, could not be found. Maybe the rumor of his death in the desert was true.

Mohave County Miner, October 30, 1909

Above, the Jason Sears house as it was in 1961. Isabelle and Helen Clark of Winsted moved back to town and lived there 1974-84 when it was sold to Charles Gross. This house, along with the neighboring house (middle), the Wilber place, became derelict (below, 2010) and were demolished by the town.

Photos, Sandisfield Historical Society and Ron Bernard





Moreover...

A Little Error That I Can't Afford

By Simon Winchester

Close friends and others have on occasion told me what I now at long last know to be incontrovertibly true – that I am an idiot. A complete, total, copper-bottomed nitwit, a person who should among many other sanctions be kept by a restraining order from being within a hundred feet of a computer. Especially when in possession of a credit card.

As this tale will amply illustrate.

The tale I tell here is not to evoke sympathy nor to seek redress, but to caution any others similarly compromised of the costly perils of unyielding stupidity. A simple but expensive failure to read the small print.

One weekday evening during that very cold spell in early February, with my wife and the dog cozily settled by the fire, I was at my laptop, no doubt reading some uplifting literature when I suddenly remembered: around now is the deadline for buying tickets to see James Taylor perform over Independence Day, at Tanglewood.

We love James Taylor. Aside from the traffic, we love Tanglewood. We love that bit in Sweet Baby James where he sings about the winter turnpike, our turnpike, covered with snow from Stockbridge to Boston. We well up. We brim.

Because the realist in me thought that James Taylor can't go on doing this for ever, maybe this year I might actually buy tickets. Moreover, I had become a citizen on July 4th some years ago, so the show would amplify the pleasure of the anniversary. It would cost, I knew. But hey. Once in a while, why not. So I went looking for tickets.

Twenty-two years ago, when I first came to the Berkshires, you'd ring the Tanglewood box office and a nice motherly-sounding lady would find the best seats for you and take your details and that would be that. Not anymore. Now, on simply typing Tanglewood, Tickets, James Taylor, a web-only company called TicketSales.com presented

itself on my screen, telling me that its business was Connecting Fans With Unforgettable Experiences.

How true. Despite the concert's on-sale date having passed, a scattering of tickets was still available. In the Shed, section four, maybe ten rows back from the stage. Nice enough, I thought. I moved my mouse around across the more and less attractive rows in the section while large numbers in dollars rose and fell before my eyes. How many tickets, the site asked. Four I replied. A number stabilized in front of me. Nine hundred and ninety-eight dollars. Golly, I choked to myself. But then again – once in a lifetime, a very good cause (because the Taylors donate all proceeds back to Tanglewood, fine folks that they are). So I said to myself, sure. I put in the credit card number, expiry date and the little three-digit thingy, clicked (without reading, naturally), and hit Purchase.

It took maybe three seconds. When the screen lit up I gave a little cry. It must have been quite piercing, or loud. From beside the fire my wife pricked up her ears. The terrier, a creature of some economy of action, pricked up one of his. I'm afraid I've made a bit of a bish, I spluttered, keeping the rising panic from my voice. What, she inquired.

I've just bought four tickets to a James Taylor concert. I've been billed – and I read the number as slowly and carefully as I could – five thousand and ninety-five dollars and twenty-six cents.

I went back to the website. Beneath the listed price number there was, in the tiniest and barely visible font, the letters 'ea'. Each. Each ticket had been \$998.



Oh. My. God.

That's what I would have said were I a native-born American. But I'm English, and so it was a single word, and much, much worse. Only for a moment, though – because within seconds,

I appeared to have been saved. A tiny ding sounded on my phone. Credit card security had declined the charge. Was this you? Hit YES. If not, hit NO, and we'll cancel the card and send you a new one.

But oh!, the inconvenience, a hastily convened family council decided. Far better to talk to Customer Service. It was an honest mistake – stupid, yes, careless, but honest. They'll forgive it, surely.

It took less than three minutes for an algorithm creatively named Joebert to introduce himself on Live Chat. He very politely explained that he regretted most sincerely what had transpired, agreed that I had erred honestly, and then solemnly but sympathetically informed me that rules were rules, no refunds could be offered and would I kindly have a nice day. Moreover, everyone looked forward to my doing business with TicketSales.com at some future date.

No dice, in other words.

Ah well, there's always VISA. To save a five-thousand dollar mistake I could certainly weather the inconvenience of canceling a card. So I called the cardistas. But it seems the TicketSales computers had been quite busy while Joebert was chatting to me. The same firm that had written 'ea' in near-invisible lettering had gleefully resubmitted the charge four further times and VISA, seeing no challenge from me, had given up the fight, assumed everything been correct all along, and authorized it.

I was, in a phrase, done for.

And so it appears on my latest bill. \$3,944 for the four tickets themselves. Plus seven dollars and fifty cents for the benefit of using the technology. And a somewhat improbable one thousand, one hundred and forty-three dollars and seventy-six cents for what is listed as a 'service charge'. Total: \$5,095.26.

There may yet be some kind of recompense, but if there is I believe it will be of little, if any, consequence.

All I can now say is that James Taylor had better be on top form. Of course, what he'll give back to Tanglewood is a far smaller sum than I was charged. But he's a good man. Maybe some characters in this story are less so. One of them is stupid, for sure. But the others? Frankly, I miss the motherly-sounding lady. Tanglewood should hire her back. ♪

"A Little Error" previously appeared in The Berkshire Eagle, February 24, 2023.

SCHOOL DAZE

COMMITTEE TO AMEND THE SCHOOL AGREEMENT

By Bill Price

The questions raised by Sandisfield's recent vote to consider withdrawing from the Farmington River Regional School District has caught the attention of the FRRS School Committee.

The basic unfairness of the three-decade's old Regional District Agreement – where Otis had four committee members to Sandisfield's three, and where decisions were made by majority vote that favored Otis – was the reasoning behind Sandisfield's vote.

Subsequent to Sandisfield's vote, the FRRS School Committee, at its regular February meeting, voted to form a Regional Agreement Amendment Committee to examine the original agreement between Sandisfield and Otis, an agreement that hasn't been amended since its inception in the 1990s.

Dr. Steve Hemman, a consultant at Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools, recommended that the committee include eight members, four from Sandisfield and four from Otis, with one member from each town being a School Committee member appointed by the town's Select Board. Hemman added that the meetings should be public with posted agendas and minutes and occur once per month until the work is completed.

The goal of the Amendment Committee would be to modernize the wording of the agreement, bringing it up to current standards set by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DECE) and to draw up an amendment setting forth the terms by which Sandisfield could withdraw. Rewording is necessary because the current agreement does not include a provision for withdrawing from the district. Any such provision would require the Regional Agreement to be current.

It is hoped that rewording the agreement will create a more equitable situation for both Sandisfield and Otis, which should negate the idea of Sandisfield leaving the district. The Sandisfield Select Board is anxious, on its part, to point out that the recent vote to consider the idea was not a vote to leave, but rather an effort to adjust the standing of both towns.


In the meantime, several shifts have taken place in the FRRS School Committee itself.

For one, the Sandisfield School Committee changed personnel. When Amanda Leavenworth resigned from the committee in January, the Select Board solicited applicants to fill the position. Because no one volunteered, the Select Board voted 2-0 (with Bowman abstaining) to appoint Alex Bowman to the position.



Also, the makeup of the FRRS School Committee itself changed when Phil MacGovern of Otis joined the Sandisfield members in voting Roger Kohler of Sandisfield as Vice Chair with a vote of 4-3.

Other School Committee business included a discussion about declining enrollment being a county-wide problem that affects all schools. Sandisfield committee member Carl Nett suggested that the school consider how to make Farmington River Elementary School more desirable for out-of-district children to opt-into as the school has excess capacity and each student brings additional funds.

As for the coming year's budget, as of early February the draft of the district budget was up 6.9 percent over last year. State aid amounts are not yet known, but based on the regional agreement's 3-year enrollment assessment calculation a majority of the increase would likely fall to Sandisfield. 

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- *The Shards* by Bret Easton Ellis
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- *Never Never* by Colleen Hoover
- *Rough Sleeper* by Tracy Kidder
- *I Have Some Questions for You* by Rebecca Makkai
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- *3 Days to Live* by James Patterson
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The Children's section is replete with books, games, toys, Brio trains, and lots of arts and crafts supplies. We also offer notary service, public computer and printer availability, free wifi and access to e-books from the Massachusetts libraries with your Sandisfield library card.

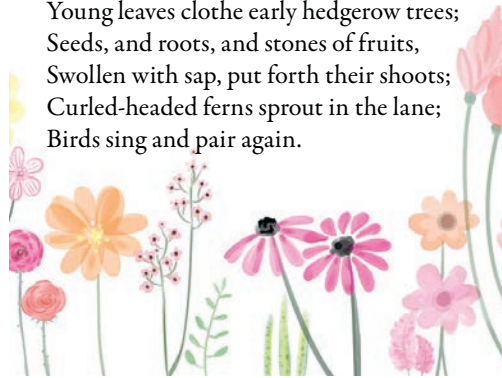
If you have a particular author or book in mind, and the Sandisfield Library does not have it, we can borrow it from other libraries. ♡

SPRING

By Christina Rossetti

Frost-locked all the winter,
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
What shall make their sap ascend
That they may put forth shoots?
Tips of tender green,
Leaf, or blade, or sheath;
Telling of the hidden life
That breaks forth underneath,
Life nursed in its grave by Death.

Blows the thaw-wind pleasantly,
Drips the soaking rain,
By fits looks down the waking sun:
Young grass springs on the plain;
Young leaves clothe early hedgerow trees;
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
Swollen with sap, put forth their shoots;
Curled-headed ferns sprout in the lane;
Birds sing and pair again.



WINTER SNOWFALL AND EXTREME TEMPERATURES TO DATE

2022-2023 Snowfall to date as measured/estimated at a Beech Plain back-yard weather station.

November 2022 2.0 inches

December 2022 15.5

January 2023

January 12 1.0

January 15 1.0

January 20 1.0

January 23 4.5

January 26 1.5

Total January 7.0

February

February 21 2.0

February 23 1.0

February 25 1.0

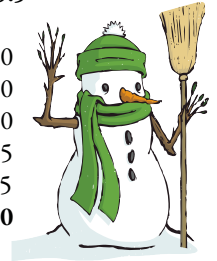
February 28 5.5

Total February 9.5 inches

Season to date 34.0 inches

EXTREME TEMPERATURES:

February 1 minus 17.2



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Comings and Goings



From left: Rose, Maxine, Cora

MAXINE ROSE BLASS

was born on February 16, 2023, to Rose Nelson and Jake Blass of Dodd Road. Her proud grandparents are Chuck and Zoe Nelson of Sandisfield and Dusty and Nila Blass of Falls Village, CT and Kathy Betti of Whitehall, MT. Great grandma is Maxine Marinelli of Bristol, CT who she is named for and great grandparents Steve and Karen Blass. We are all thrilled to welcome Maxine Rose into our family and our Sandisfield community.



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Mud Season Has Arrived

By Brad Curry, Highway Superintendent

Your Highway Department will continue to do our best to maintain the Town's dirt road conditions within our capabilities and budget throughout the ongoing mud season.

Dirt roads thaw and soften during the day when the early spring sun beats down on them and will frequently re-freeze overnight. Additionally, melting snow and spring rains contribute to the mess.

The crew is hauling in loads of stone to spread on roads to help stiffen up the mud and provide a base on which vehicles can travel. Roads will also be graded and yolk-raked to help aerate and dry out the mud. It will be at the discretion of the DPW Superintendent to determine whether the heavy machinery will do more harm than good. Sometimes we have to wait for better conditions.

The Highway Department highly recommends residents follow these mud seasons tips:

Travel dirt roads in the early morning before the thaw occurs and later in the evening when the grounds re-freeze.

Try to schedule gas or oil deliveries on cold-weather days to assure safe delivery.

Always travel dirt roads in 4-wheel drive vehicles whenever possible.

Respect any and all Road Closed signs in town. These roads are open to residents who live on them, but are closed to through-traffic. Road conditions are assessed daily by the DPW.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation during Mud Season, 2023. 🍀

St. Patrick's Day Dinner, March 25

5:00-7:00 p.m. at Fire Station #2 on Rt. 57.

Vegetable, dessert. DINE IN or TAKE OUT. \$18 and under 12, \$7. 50/50 Raffle. Dinner sponsored by the New Boston Congregational Church.



CRITTER CORNER



A Green Heron

Cindy Ragusa sent us these two images of an unusual bird for these parts. Going through some old photos, she found this one among others she took a few years ago. She remembered, "I noticed this strange beautiful bird walking around on top of a beaver's lodge in wetlands in Sandisfield."



Public Hearing on the Budget


MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD, MARCH 24

By the Finance Committee

The Sandisfield Finance Committee will conduct a public hearing on Friday, March 24 at 6:00 p.m. at Old Town Hall, 3 Silverbrook Road, to review the Town's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget and to hear public comment.

This public hearing has been scheduled to provide Sandisfield residents with the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed budget, which will then be finalized with your input.

We strongly encourage residents and voters to attend this meeting so their voices can be heard. The Finance Committee is traditionally your representatives in the budget process. Please take advantage of their role in the budget process.

Budget documents will be posted on the town website prior to the meeting and printed copies will be available at the meeting. 



Nomination Papers Now Available

Nomination papers for the 2023 annual town election are available at the Town Clerk's office. The election will be Monday, May 15, two days following the Annual

Town Meeting on Saturday, May 13. If you are interested in running for a town office, please stop by during Town Hall office hours to pick up your papers, Monday-Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

The last day to submit nomination papers to the Board of Registrars is Monday, March 27. A further opportunity to be nominated for office is at the Town Caucus to be held April 4. As of the end of February, only two individuals, both incumbents, had taken out nomination papers for open seats.

Open positions for the upcoming election for the Town of Sandisfield:

- Moderator (1 year)
- Town Clerk (3 years)
- Board of Assessors (3 years)
- Select Board (1 year)
- Select Board (3 years)
- Board of Health (3 years)
- Planning Board (5 years)
- School Committee (3 years)
- Library Trustee (3 years)
- Constable (3 years)
- Constable (3 years) 

NOW HEAR THIS!

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

MARCH EVENTS

Sandisfield Select Board Meetings are currently through Zoom and in-person at 6:30 p.m. on Mondays unless otherwise posted. 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 is necessary. Led by Nina Carr. This fun program includes free play, crafts, stories, and songs! A great time to meet up with friends and meet new friends! For confirmation, please call Nina Carr (258-3314). Free!

Coffee Hour on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. at the Council on Aging, Town Hall Annex. Snacks and conversation! For more information, contact Nina Carr (258-3314). Free.

Chair Yoga with Wendy Larsen 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.

New Boston Church Service on select Sundays at 10:00 a.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57. Weather permitting. All are welcome. Services are suspended during the current month of March, replaced by our St. Patrick's Day Dinner, March 25. Services resume Sunday, April 2, at 10:00 a.m., Palm Sunday, and Easter Sunday, April 9.

Float into March with the Sandisfield Recreation Committee on Saturday, March 11 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Fire Station #1 on Route 8. Everyone invited to join the Recreation Committee for root beer floats, cupcake decorating, seasonal crafting, and more. Free! Please RSVP by March 5 (sandisfeldevents@recreationcommittee.info or 413-269-7357).

Sandisfield Finance Committee Budget Public Hearing on Friday, March 24 at 6:00 p.m. at the Old Town Hall on Silverbrook Road. Review and comment on FY2024 Town Budget. Let your voice be heard. Documents to be posted on Town website prior to the meeting and printed copies available at the meeting.

St. Patrick's Day Dinner. Corned beef and cabbage dinner on Saturday, March 25 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at Fire Station #2 on Rt. 57. Vegetable, dessert. DINE IN or TAKE OUT. \$18 and under 12, \$7. 50/50 Raffle. Dinner sponsored by the New Boston Congregational Church.

Running for Town Office? **Last Day to Submit Nomination Papers** is Monday, March 27. For now, stop during Town Hall hours to pick up nomination papers, Mon-Wed, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Don't miss your chance to have a voice in local town government. Submit papers to Board of Registrars by Monday, March 27.

ONLINE EVENTS

LUNCHTIME LECTURES with Hancock Shaker Village on Wednesdays, March 1 (Animism, Animals, and Agriculture), March 15 (Handled with Care), and March 29 (Charles Sheeler & the Shaker Aesthetic) at 12:00 p.m. The lectures cover a variety of Shaker-related topics including vegetarianism, upcoming exhibits, and objects from the collections. For more information and required registration, visit hancockshakervillage.org. Free.

A Farm and Garden Show with Bill Taylor and Jaye Alison Moscariello streamed every Monday from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at berkshire-radio.org. The March show will feature Didi Pershouse and a discussion on the soil carbon sponge and ways regenerative farming can improve soil and human health, and restore the water cycle and carbon cycle to cool the planet.

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

Playgroup on Thursdays from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at the Monterey Library. Sponsored by South Berkshire Kids. Weather permitting. No pre-registration necessary. Meet for stories and songs followed by creative crafts. For information, please call Nina Carr (258-3314). Free!

Painting with Margaret on Saturdays (every other Saturday, beginning January 28) from 1:00 to 2:15 p.m. at the Monterey Community Center at 468 Main Road. Visit ccomontery.org for more information. \$5 per session.

Ukulele Beginner Classes on Thursdays, March 2, 9, 23, and 30 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Colebrook Community Center on 2 Schoolhouse Road in Colebrook. \$40 for the series taught by Jean Atwater-Williams. Bring a ukulele if possible but a limited number of instruments and tuners are available for use in class on a first-come, first-served basis. Reserve (860-738-9521) a spot as soon as possible.

Sheffield Winter Farmers' Market on Saturday, March 11 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at

Dewey Hall on 91 Main Street in Sheffield. Local produce, meats, baked goods, crafts, and live music.

Torrington Symphony performs "Eire Alive" by Sandisfield Composer Bill Taylor on Friday, March 17 at 7:30 p.m. at the Torrington Elks Lodge. Other composers include John Williams and Leroy Anderson for an Irish-inspired program. There will be dance as well as music. For tickets, visit torrington-symphony.org or call Chuck (860-214-3347).

Berkshire Grown Winter Farmers Market on Saturday, March 18, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Housy Dome on 1064 Main Street in Housatonic. Featuring locally grown and produced foods, including fruits and vegetables, cheese, meats, breads, and more. Masks encouraged, but not mandatory.

Rocks & Minerals Show on Saturday, March 18 and Sunday, March 19, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Whiting Mills, 100 Whiting Street, in Winsted, Connecticut. Twenty guest vendors will be located throughout the Whiting Mills building. Alternate weather-related dates will be the weekend of March 25 and 26.

Winter Arts Market on Sunday, March 19, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at St. James Place on 352 Main Street in Great Barrington. Local and regional artists and vendors. Admission is free.

Vernal Pools are Cool! on Saturday, March 25 at 10:00 a.m. at the Whittemore Grove on East River Road at Peoples Forest in Barkhamsted (1.3 miles south of the Riverton Inn in Riverton, Connecticut). Salamanders, frogs, and invertebrates that migrate to vernal pools in spring are important links in our ecosystems. Join Erik Landgraf for a discussion and field walk. Free!

Fiddler on the Roof Jr. on Tuesday, March 28 at 5:30 p.m. at Monument Mountain High School. This is a special viewing for Berkshire County Senior Citizens sponsored by the Monument Mountain Theater Department and the Monument Mountain Regional High National Honor Society Cord.

SAVE THE DATES

Palm Sunday services at New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57, on Sunday, April 2 at 10:00 a.m.

Easter Sunday services at New Boston Congregational Church, Route 57, on April 9 at 10:00 a.m. Easter egg hunt for the kids. Please join us for these two very special church services.

recreation COMMITTEE

Rec Comm Hosts the First Winter Dance

AND FLOAT INTO MARCH, ON MARCH 11

Story and Photos By Laurie Seddon

The Sandisfield Recreation Committee took a break in January, but we welcomed February by trying to dance away all the winter blues.

Did you miss it? Sorry if you did. We had the most wonderful time.

On Saturday, February 11th we hosted our very first town dance. It was not full of fanciful fanfare, however it was filled with laughter and fun. Our Recreation Committee members made finger foods and appetizers such as veggie cups w/dip, pigs-in-a-blanket, and magic meatballs. Don't forget the chocolate fountain with all the toppings for dipping! And that was just the food ...

The setting was Fire Station #2 and were given full reign! The firemen helped us set up plenty of tables and chairs around the dance floor, complete with tablecloths, centerpieces, and sparkling grape juice. At the "front" of the room, DJ Jonny Jams

set up his booth complete with any song selection you could think of, blow up toy instruments, disco lights, and karaoke.

Once the music started, it didn't take long for people to find the grove and start dancing. Attendees could easily make song requests to the DJ in addition to karaoke requests. After a few good hours of eating and dancing the brave and talented karaoke participants began to take the "stage."

So much fun! Thank you so much to everyone who joined us.

A very special Thank You

to our Sandisfield Fire Department for not only hosting the event, but for being such a huge help with set up and clean up. Shout out to Sandy Morrison and Barbara Colorio who both generously donated their own homemade dishes to the food table. Finally, Thank You so much to the party goers who donated financial contributions to our committee so we may host more events like this in the future.

As for the future? SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, March 11 from 10:00 a.m. to noon at Fire Station #1 on Rt. 8 in New Boston. We're hosting "Float into March," with root beer floats, cupcake decorating, seasonal crafting, and more! Please RSVP by March 5 to 413-269-7357 or sandisfieldevents@recreationcommittee.info.



Float into M₃rch
 with the Sandisfield Recreation Committee
 Saturday, March 11th, 10am-12pm




Everyone is invited to join us for
 Root Beer floats,
 cupcake decorating,
 seasonal crafting
 and more!

Fire Station #1
 Rte. 8 Sandisfield, MA

RSVP by 3.5.23 to (413) 269-7357 or
 sandisfieldevents@recreationcommittee.info



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