

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



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FIRE CHIEF RESIGNS AFTER 42 YEARS CHANGES COME FAST AND FURIOUS

By Simon Winchester

Sandisfield residents are having to come to terms with an unimagined new reality: that after more than four decades, the considerable power and influence wielded in town by the Morrison brothers — Fire Chief Ralph Morrison and Police Chief Michael Morrison — is now coming to an end.

Last month, both men, who have held their powerful unelected positions since the early 1980s, found themselves the subject of excoriating criticisms from the current three-man elected Select Board. Most of the criticism — involving nine specific charges ranging from negligence and abuse of power to self-dealing and suppression of evidence — was leveled against Fire Chief Ralph Morrison.

The three charges against Police Chief Mike Morrison were eventually winnowed down to a single offense of insubordination.

The Fire Chief resigned with immediate effect. The Police Chief kept his job, but was officially put on notice not to let "family loyalties negatively affect his decisions."

Three specific events have brought the Morrisons to their present level of discomfort.

All were investigated in detail by the Select Board, whose members — Chair Steve Seddon and members John Field and Robert Fedell — performed a level of inquiry unprecedented in our town's recent recorded history. See the two following pages for excerpts from the minutes of the Select Board Executive Sessions of November 13 and 17. The full minutes can

be read at [sandisfieldma.gov/Minutes/Select Board](https://sandisfieldma.gov/Minutes/SelectBoard).

In summary: there was first an August 7th incident that resulted in a serious injury to Police Officer Mary Bredenfoerder; then came the rather better-known September 23 crash of the Fire Department's tanker truck; and lastly a little-reported shouting match which erupted in the Town Hall parking lot in late October which involved the two chiefs and a few of their supporters allegedly harassing town officials for inquiring into the details of the tanker crash.

Mary's injury — which resulted in her being invalidated out of work for ten weeks — came after Police Chief Mike Morrison ordered her to make a sudden inspection of the registration papers for the eleven vehicles in the town's public works fleet — plows, graders and the like. There was no apparent need for the move — the police computer could have offered up the information at the touch of a few buttons. The assumption at the time was that the order had been handed down because of a long-standing rivalry between the fire and public works departments. But in any case the order turned tragic: Mary fell from the cab of one of the larger trucks she was inspecting — "I heard a crash and then moaning" a witness testified — and Mary suffered a debilitating back injury.

The water tanker crash six weeks later was not only more serious in itself (though Mike, driving, was happily unhurt), but an investigation into the circumstances surrounding it threw up a slew of potential charges against the chiefs. The badly damaged vehicle was first spirited away to a private garage owned by Ralph Morrison to keep it away from "lookyloos" (the Chief's word to a later inquiry). It soon became clear that the truck's brakes had failed — not having been inspected for a long while. Like many other town vehicles, the tanker had been long overdue for mandated inspections and maintenance that was to be carried out by Sandisfield's A&M Auto shop — owned by Ralph Morrison. The town swiftly canceled the contract, and noted with some harshness that matters concerning the troubled arrangement would be referred to other authorities. The Select Board began pondering what to do next.

The Board's inquiry into the affair did not sit at all well with the Morrisons. After the Board's session of October 24 concluded, there was an unseemly incident outside Town Hall, observed by several residents. One witness, who later filed a formal statement, watched as the Morrisons rounded on Selectman John Field and became sufficiently disturbed by the discourtesy and violence of the language that she called out "Stop this now" and later told John to "get in his truck and leave." John left immediately after me."

At the time of writing, our community is down two full-time department heads — along with Ralph's resignation, Brad Curry, in an unrelated move, stepped down from leading the Department of Public Works. Brad, who has led our overworked highway department since 2018 with distinction, has accepted a position at the Hampshire County community of Huntington, near Springfield.

The police department remains intact — and this newspaper regrets having reported otherwise when we suggested in a brief online-only edition last month that Mike Morrison would be summarily removed.

For Ralph Morrison, the events of recent weeks have proved a melancholy ending, a cruel capstone to his long career with the town. He has many supporters in Sandisfield who would have dearly wished him to lead the Fire Department's 75th anniversary parade next year. That task will now fall to another, whose identity thus far remains undecided. ♣

The Discussions from the

Following are excerpts from the Minutes of the Select Board Executive Sessions of November 13 and 17. The Times is printing them at length because of the extraordinary circumstances of the events of the last three months. The November 13 meeting reviewed the charges relating to Fire Chief Ralph Morrison and his resignation. The November 17 session reviewed charges relating to Police Chief Michael Morrison. *Editor's notes are in italics.*

NOVEMBER 13 EXECUTIVE SESSION, Excerpts

The Select Board presented a lengthy and detailed summary of the Board's fact findings regarding the September 26 fire tanker crash and subsequent events.

The summary included the crash itself; the lack of safety inspections; Ralph's towing of the crashed vehicle to a private garage he owned in Tolland, resulting in the fact that a "post-accident inspection could not be conducted due to the chain of custody of the vehicle being broken;" the attempted intimidation of a Select Board member following the October 24 Board meeting; Ralph's having submitted invoices to the insurance company for towing but later withdrawing the invoices; and the Board's request November 9 that Ralph "provide a statement of your involvement in the accident and any and all subsequent related events by this Friday."

Ralph responded to that request on November 10, "As you know, we have had two select board meetings regarding this issue, everything was reported at those meeting. I have nothing to add to the verbal statement and discussion with the select board."

The Board ended its summary with the comment: "As of today, 11/13, the original tanker truck Title has not been signed over and received by MIIA. This prevents the tanker from being auctioned."

The minutes report that "Kathleen McCormick, Ralph's legal representative, would like the record to reflect that Ralph is no longer the Sandisfield Fire Chief, as he submitted his resignation today, effective immediately.

"Steve asks if Ralph would like to speak on any of the facts presented. Ralph does not dispute any of the facts."

After discussion, Kathleen said that she "would like the record to reflect that they are not admitting that the summary was fact, but Ralph does not wish to make further statement."

The fact-finding summary was accepted by unanimous vote of the Select Board and the list of nine potential charges against Ralph were listed and accepted unanimously.


- a. Failure to properly inspect and maintain Department apparatus resulting in loss of property;
- b. Negligence;
- c. Making False Statements to the Select Board;
- d. Conduct Unbecoming a Public Employee;
- e. Abuse of Office;
- f. Self-Dealing;
- g. Possible Ethics and Criminal Violations;
- h. Suppression of Evidence;
- i. Insubordination."

Following the list of potential charges, Brian Maser, legal representative for the Town of Sandisfield, explained that "the vast majority of the charges are moot upon Ralph's resignation, as the Town has accepted and filed it with the Town Clerk.

"Some of the charges are relative to possible ethics or criminal law violations, and the Board must decide whether they would like to refer these out to another agency. Brian recommends making the motion as specific as possible.

"A motion was made, seconded and so voted to forward the ethical or possible criminal violations to the appropriate external authorities.

"A motion was made, seconded and so voted to adjourn the meeting."

Attached to the Minutes were 15 pages of corroborating statements and documents. 

THE TIMES REGRETS A MISTAKE

In a Special News Brief issued November 14, The Times reported the resignation of the Fire Chief but included an erroneous report that Police Chief Michael Morrison would be dismissed at the subsequent Select Board meeting.

The Times apologizes to Chief Morrison and his family for any discomfort our report caused. We regret as well any confusion we caused our readers.

Minutes

NOVEMBER 17 EXECUTIVE SESSION, Excerpts

The Select Board presented a detailed summary of the Board's fact findings of issues, beginning with the Police Chief's having assigned Officer Bredenfoerder to inspect vehicle registrations at the DPW.

Serious charges of intimidation and retaliation stemmed from the following summaries:

"On October 24, 2023 the review of the tanker crash was Item 7 on the Select Board agenda. This item was subsequently tabled, as they agreed to conduct the discussion in executive session. Police Chief Michael Morrison, Fire Chief, and volunteer firefighters in attendance left the meeting immediately thereafter, but waited outside for 40 minutes for the Select Board to exit. Both the Fire and Police Chief cornered Bob Fedell and John Field in the parking lot and attempted to intimidate and harass the members due to their displeasure in the tanker accident being designated to an executive session. Witness statements have been submitted to corroborate this fact.

"On October 26, 2023 the Select Board received a formal complaint against the Police Department from Tara Birkett, wife of Select Board member John Field. The complaint reported that there was an Officer sitting outside of her home with blue lights on at 6:15am on October 25th. She felt as though this was a clear act of intimidation and abuse of power due to the previous night's altercation."

Asked to respond, Michael argued that "the incident of October 24th is excluding details." He outlined the event as he saw it unfold and asked for the "fact-finding description of this incident to be struck from the minutes." The Board responded, "While events leading up to the altercation may exclude some details, they have" now been cleared up, and this does not change the seriousness of the altercation."

Further, Michael said he was not present during "the incident that resulted in the formal complaint from the Select Board member's wife on October 26th. He gave a lengthy explanation of why Officer Gonska might have been stopped at 6:15 a.m. on that particular spot on Rood Hill Road with his steady-burn lights on. "[Selectman] John Field states that the optics are really bad and that the incident made his wife extremely anxious. He notes that an apology to Tara may have gone a long way. Michael apologizes, but assures this was only a coincidence."

Town Manager Jonathan Sylbert noted at this point that "upon looking at the officer's patrol logs, there was only one day since July 1, 2023, that he started at 6:00 a.m."

Regarding the incident of August 7th, Michael offered an explanation of why "Officer Mary Bredenfoerder was ordered to check the status of the registrations on the Town equipment" [and added that] he did not give her any direction on how to gather this information and does not know why she entered the truck." He presented a description of why and how the information could have been learned.

Jonathan notes "that should he ever give a subordinate vague instructions that led to an accident he would take responsibility.

"Michael stated that he takes responsibility for ordering Mary to check the registrations, but will not take responsibility for her actions."

Selectman John Field said, "the optics of this situation seem like the Police Department is going after the DPW instead of working together.

"Michael states that he was just fulfilling his duties as Police Chief to make sure all the Town vehicles were registered and in the event an accident were to occur, the Town would be covered."

The Select Board then voted unanimously to accept the facts of the summary as amended.

The Board opened discussion of the following charges:

- a. Insubordination;*
- b. Abuse of power;*
- c. Intimidation/retaliation.*

In discussion, the minutes reflect that "Adopting the charges does not mean Michael is guilty of these charges, but indicates the Select Board is agreeable to the relevance of these charges in the series of incidents laid out above."

The minutes end with the following: "John agrees with the insubordination charge. However, both abuse of power and intimidation/retaliation are serious accusations for a Police Officer. He notes that the way in which our public

officials present themselves is very important, but supports only pursuing the insubordination charge at this point.

"Robert notes that Michael must use his authority and power only to benefit the Town and not let family loyalty negatively affect his decisions, but does not support any of the charges presented at this point.

"Steve notes the optics of all these situations are very negative, and while the incident of October 25th may have been a coincidence and August 7th may have been a misunderstanding between the Public Safety Officer and Police Chief, the incident of October 24th seems to be a clear instance of insubordination, which is not a criminal violation.


"Should the Select Board agree to charge Michael with insubordination, another executive session would be had to discuss potential disciplinary action. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the charge of insubordination.

"Discussion opens. John asks whether Michael has any history of complaints or charges brought against him. Michael confirms he has served as Police Chief for 42 years and does not have any violations in his personnel file, nor has he ever been called before the Select Board in an executive session to discuss complaints or charges brought against him.

"John would rather let this be a learning opportunity for Michael rather than pursue bringing any charges against him; Robert is in agreement.

"Despite Steve's support in pursuing the insubordination charge, the other members disagree and the motion dies.

"A motion was made, seconded and so voted to exit executive session."

Attached to the Minutes were 13 pages of corroborating statements and documents. 



Less Salt on the Roads, Please?

By Alex Bowman

Something needs to change with Sandisfield's use of road salt.

I've noticed an alarming increase in the Highway Department's use of salt over the past decade. For a majority of wintry weather these days, every paved road receives a pretreatment, more salt added as it snows, followed by even more salt to melt away the small areas of slush plows couldn't push aside.

Excessive salt use is costly, wasteful, and known to contaminate wells, plants, and wildlife, in addition to being corrosive for cars. For each of the past few years, Sandisfield has submitted a bid request of 1,500 tons – about 100 dump trucks full! – of salt. At \$70 per ton, that totals \$105,000.

As a comparison, Tolland only bids for 130 tons, and they have less than 10% of the paved road miles of Sandisfield. If towns around us are using significantly less salt with similar outcomes to drivable roads, we are wasting tax dollars. We must remember that just a few decades ago, it was rare to see liberal salt use in small towns. We got by, and it was hardly a disaster.

Last year was a relatively tame weather year, yet the highway department overspent its \$176,400 snow and ice budget by \$87,500. While many think that it was overtime wages that played an overwhelming and unavoidable part to the spending, it's materials like salt and gravel that actually made up most of it.

All that salt doesn't just break down and disappear.

Salt is known to be a slowly accumulating threat to our wells – especially if your well is at the bottom of a hill and closer to the road. It's expensive to remove salt from drinking water, and higher concentrations are known to damage pipes and other plumbing equipment. Multiple Sandisfield properties already report sodium concentrations in drinking water well above Massachusetts' recommended guideline of 20 mg/L.

And that's not even talking about the impact to wildlife from runoff into streams and wetlands. Salt is known to be a particularly damaging hazard to maple and white pine trees.

I hope you'll join me in requesting the town subscribe to a plan to use salt only when and where it is truly needed so we can hopefully prevent irreversible contamination of our wells and environment and curb unnecessary spending. 🇺🇸

Out on a Limb: Op-Ed:

Subjects should be of interest to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents. Address either PO Box 584, Sandisfield, or email. Opinions in Out on a Limb articles are those of the authors and do not represent The Sandisfield Times.

A Review of Fire Department Equipment

From Select Board Minutes, November 13:

- NFPA guidelines for annual inspections of fire equipment including, but not limited to, pumps, hoses, ladders
- DOT vendor inspections of all fire vehicles
- Annual emergency vehicle service/inspection vendor for maintenance

It is clarified that Massachusetts is moving towards following the OSHA guidelines, and the requirements for this change will be extensive.

[Selectman] Robert Fedell reviewed the basic NFPA guidelines Sandisfield should be following: annual pump testing, annual hose static testing, and ladder testing.

Robert supports establishing a policy for these tests. Robert confirms that the Town hired Bulldog Fire Apparatus to conduct inspections on all the Fire Department vehicles and return a detailed report of their findings.

The list is extensive and raises some major concerns and has the potential to expose even more issues should an even more tedious inspection be done. The liability now falls on the Town to address these issues. Robert notes that the 1995 Kenworth Tanker has some serious issues and recommends the vehicle be taken out of service. The other vehicles will need to be looked at and a schedule of priority established. The Select Board would like to meet with the Fire Chief to begin this process. 🇺🇸

Editor's note: With the resignation of the Town's Fire Chief as of the date of this Select Board meeting, the issues outlined will likely have to wait until a new chief is on board.



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Select Board and Town Manager Act Signed by the Governor

From the Town Website

A year ago, in November 2022, the Town voted at a Special Town Meeting to designate specific roles and responsibilities for the Town’s Select Board and the Town Manager. In a message to Sandisfield this month, the state government wrote that it approved, and:

“Congratulations to the town of Sandisfield on the approval of H3907, An Act creating the offices of select board and town manager in the town of Sandisfield, passed by the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate and signed by Governor Healey on November 2, 2023. This Act, which passed overwhelmingly at town meeting last November, is available on the town website. The residents of Sandisfield now have the authority to make certain their town officials work transparently and effectively in their roles as policy leaders and operational managers.”

The Act can be read at sandisfieldma.gov, see Select Board & Town Manager Act Signed by Governor Healey. 




Home Construction Driving Dodd Road Repair

Editor’s note: Brian O’Rourke plans to construct a few homes on property he owns on Dodd Road. In order to ensure that he can do that, he has requested that the Town find a way to permanently repair a Town road that during winter and rainy seasons can turn into a muddy quagmire that has trapped more than one 4-wheeled vehicle and many cars and pickups, causing a few residents to abandon their vehicle and walk home.

The following paragraphs are from the Select Board minutes, November 13:

“There are some options to repair the road from 45 Dodd Road to Brian O’Rourke’s property. The first option would be to have the Sandisfield DPW conduct all the work with their crew and equipment, potentially with an extra rental. Another option would be a combination of utilizing the Heavy Equipment Bid winner and the DPW crew using material the Town is already in possession of. The last option would allow the Heavy Equipment Bid winner to use the Town-owned material themselves.

“The work would include widening the road, creating swales, and laying down the new material. The work is estimated to take three days and cost under \$20,000. This information will be confirmed with the Heavy Equipment Bid winner by the end of the week.

“Brian O’Rourke clarifies [that] his request for repairs to Dodd Road stem from his intent to log and build a home on his property, which is currently inaccessible under the current road conditions. He asks that once the road is repaired it will be properly maintained moving forward. He plans to build a few homes on Dodd Road, which will be a great revenue source for the Town.” 



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The Chief Vacancies

The Select Board at its November 17 meeting discussed the two Town vacancies.

ITEM 3. DISCUSS FIRE CHIEF VACANCY

Chairman Steve Seddon announces that Ralph Morrison has resigned as Fire Chief. Town Manager Jonathan Sylbert has been working with the Collins Center on an EMS study. Steve suggests that Jonathan reach out to them for insight on filling the position. Michael Morrison and Eric Pachulski will be point people on the Fire Department to assist in finding a replacement.


ITEM 4. DISCUSS DPW SUPERINTENDENT VACANCY

Steve announces that Brad Curry has submitted his resignation as DPW Superintendent as of November 24, 2023.

Brad is editing the current job description and will draft an advertisement for the position.

Tony Soares applied for and has been promoted to Foreman.

MassDOT of Lenox has filled in if necessary for plowing in the past. Jonathan has reached out and is waiting to hear back to determine if this is an option for Sandisfield.

Selectman Robert Fedell notes that it was insinuated that Brad was leaving Sandisfield because greater benefits are available elsewhere. Jonathan reports that Sandisfield is the last town in the Berkshires, potentially the state, not to offer a percentage of health insurance after retirement. This would be a considerable expense to the Town, but can be adopted at Town Meeting. 



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Special Town Meeting Results

ALL ARTICLES PASS

Adapted from Town Website

The Special Town Meeting held November 18 at Old Town Hall was attended by 17 residents. All the articles on the warrant passed unanimously with a one no-vote exception

Article 1: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$150,332 released from overlay, to reduce the Tax Levy for Fiscal Year 2024, beginning on July 1, 2023. Unanimous

Article 2: To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$2,500 from Emergency Management Expenses, account #60291.02, to Emergency Management Grant, account #5004.00, to cover the cost of unreimbursed expenses. Unanimous


Article 3: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$7,976 from General Stabilization to pay the town's portion of five (5) percent of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant award. Article passed with one no vote

Article 4: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$7,500 from General Stabilization to the Reserve Fund to pay for FY24 unforeseen legal expenses. Unanimous

Article 5: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$10,000 from General Stabilization to the Voc-Tech account to pay for FY24 student transportation expenses. Unanimous

Article 6: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$9,716, or any other sum, from General Stabilization to pay bills from prior fiscal years. Unanimous

Thanks goes out to Administrative Assistant Janey Beardsley, Town Clerk Douglas Miner, our intrepid and excellent stand-in Moderator Barbara Cormier, Steve Seddon and Bob Fedell from the Select Board, and all our attendees.

The meeting took all of 20 minutes—just in time for dinner. 



Be A Better Gardener

IS THERE A VOLE IN YOUR GARDEN?

by Thomas Christopher

Okay, I admit it, voles are cute. With their small pudgy bodies and short tails, they look like undersized, feral hamsters, to whom they are in fact related. But whereas hamsters are house pets, voles roam free in your garden. Voles are vegetarian, too, which can spell trouble for your plants. Their most heinous habit is that they like to chew the bark off the base of young trees and shrubs, with fruit trees being a favorite.

That's why voles are on my mind. I planted several plums, a couple of bush cherries, and two honeyberries in my food garden last spring, and I know that winter is a hungry season for voles. They clear a network of runways under the snow or fallen leaves, so that they can remain unseen while they forage, and I am afraid they'll find the additions to my garden. I've wrapped the base of these trees and shrubs with spiral-cut, cylindrical plastic tree guards, but even those aren't fail-safe. One winter a couple of decades ago, a three-foot-deep snowfall allowed the voles to tunnel upward and over the tree guards I had installed around 50 little apple trees I had grafted myself. When the snow melted, I was confronted by the sight of fifty little trunks that were bone-white and bark-less from the top of the tree guards upward.

Two species of voles are common in the Northeast, the meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) and the woodland vole (*Microtus pinetorum*). The common names indicate the sort of habitat each species prefers, but in our patchwork of field and forest, you may find yourself encountering either one.

The woodland and the meadow vole also differ in their dining habits. Both are active burrowers, making nests underground, but woodland voles also rely on burrowing to eat tubers, bulbs, and roots, especially those of young fruit trees although they will also attack other woody plants and perennials. The meadow voles commonly forage above ground, eating fresh grass, sedges, flowers, and tree bark. However, meadow voles are also known to eat roots, tubers, and bulbs.

Vole populations typically rise and fall in cycles of 4 years or so, with booms at times of food abundance, followed by crashes as populations of predators such as hawks, owls, and foxes increase locally in response to the greater availability of prey – voles are a favorite food source for them.



Weasels, shrews, bobcats, and even coyotes also depend on voles as a source of protein. In fact, voles are an important element of the wildlife food chain in our region. Voles have adapted to this by becoming hugely prolific. The females mature sexually at the age of 25 days on average, and thereafter they can reproduce roughly every three weeks, giving birth to litters of 1-10 young, often bearing young from more than one father in a single litter. It's a brief if fertile existence: although voles have lived to two and a half years in captivity, the typical lifespan in the wild is two to three months.

This emphasis on rapid reproduction makes it difficult to eliminate voles when they invade your garden. A mouse trap baited with peanut butter or an apple slice and placed near and perpendicular to one of their runs or an entrance to their burrow will dispose of an occasional individual, but that won't have a significant impact on the population size. Various poison baits are recommended for reducing vole populations, but they pose an unacceptable risk to other wildlife and pets. Repellents based on castor oil are supposed to make the plants in your garden unappetizing to voles and many customers report success with them, although there is little reliable research to support this claim. Likewise, there is little proof that ultrasonic repellents, devices you place in the garden to deter voles with high-pitched sounds that humans cannot hear, are effective at all.

I prefer the option of making my landscape unwelcoming to voles. That includes eliminating wood and brush piles that can provide them with retreats, and mowing the lawn short around the garden,

Cont'd on p.9

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By Terry Spohnholz

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CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS: The Library will be closed beginning Monday, December 25 through January 1, 2024.

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Sandisfield Woman's Book Club meets every 4th Thursday of the month at the Library at 6:30 p.m., except this month we will meet on December 21 at 6:00 p.m. at the Skrip home for a holiday buffet dinner. The club reads a variety of books suggested by members and is always looking for new members to join. Selection for this month is *Heidi*, by Johanna Spyri.

PINOCHLE ANYONE?

The Library is hosting a pinochle group at the library that meets at least once a month; sometimes two nights. Knowledge of pinochle is not required – we learn as we go. We will be meeting this month on Wednesday, December 13, at 6:30 at the Library.

CHILDREN'S SECTION

The Children's section is replete with books, games, toys, Brio trains, and lots of arts and crafts supplies.

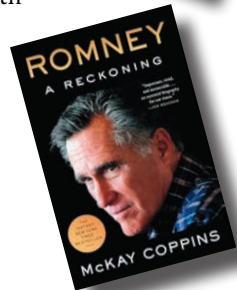
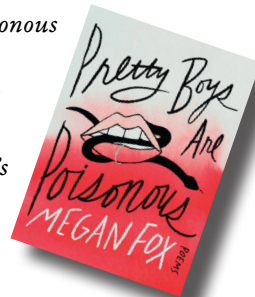
We also offer notary service, public computer and printer availability, free wifi and access to e-books from other Massachusetts libraries with your Sandisfield Library card.

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.

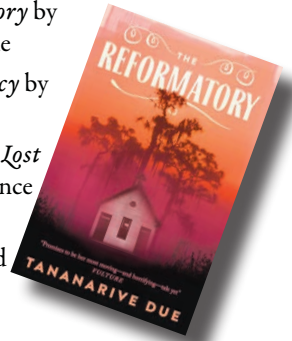
NEW BOOK ARRIVALS

ADULT FICTION AND NON-FICTION

- *Pretty Boys are Poisonous* by Megan Fox
- *So Late in the Day* by Claire Keegan
- *The Girl in the Eagle's Talons* by Karin Smirnoff
- *A City on Mars* by Kelly Weinersmith
- *Starling House* by Alix E. Harrow
- *Someone Always Near By* by Susan Witting Albert
- *Romney* by McKay Coppins



- *The Reformatory* by Tananarive Due
- *A Lethal Legacy* by Fin Dwyer
- *Blessing of the Lost Girls* by J.A. Jance
- *Class* by Stephanie Land
- *West Heart Kill* by Dann McDorman
- *The Bell in the Fog* by Lev A. C. Rosen
- *White Holes* by Carlo Rovelli
- *The Little Liar* by Mitch Albom
- *The Edge* by David Baldacci
- *Resurrection Walk* by Michael Connelly
- *Unnatural Death* by Patricia Cornwell
- *Alex Cross Must Die* by James Patterson
- *The Ball at Versailles* by Danielle Steel
- *Iron Flames* by Rebecca Yarros

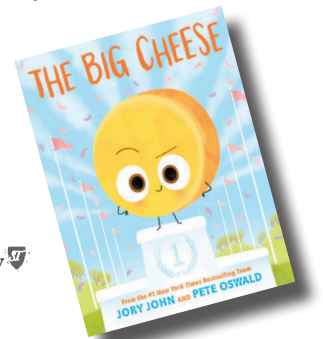


NEW TO THE OLDER CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULT SECTION

- *Cat Kid Comic Club 5*

NEW BOOKS IN THE CHILDREN'S SECTION

- *The Big Cheese* by John Jory



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Sandisfield Arts Center Our Appreciation for a Grand Year

THE SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER SAYS "THANK YOU"

By the Arts Center Staff

The true spirit of giving is about gratitude, and at the end of another year we at the Sandisfield Arts Center give thanks for you and all you have done to make possible our programs and the continuing fulfillment of our mission to preserve our historic building.

Whether by a financial donation or by volunteering your time, performing or sharing your art, or joining the audience for our events, your engagement directly fuels the vitality of the Sandisfield Arts Center.

Your contributions helped us offer many free programs this season, including "Romance in the Afternoon," a classical music recital by Josh-Luxon Robinson (we hope to have him back next year), "Introduction to Handmade Rugs" by John Balayan, a showing of the tragic but inspiring film "Vow from Hiroshima," an open mic to relieve the August doldrums, and a conversation with Simon Winchester on his latest, very timely book, *Knowing What We Know*.

Terrific performances included "Evening of Song" with Linda Mironi and Brian De Lorenzo, "Zoë Lewis Returns" for the whole family, and "Ari and Mia in Concert." Each of these was supported in part by a grant from the Sandisfield Cultural Council, a local agency supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. We were thrilled to have Karen Allen, star of "A Stage of Twilight," on hand for her film's screening. At our Gala Annual Dinner, the showing of the PBS film "Two Gentlemen Folk" (Ben Luxon and Bill Crofut) brought the audience to their feet.

The Gallery season was a stand-out, including our second bi-annual outdoor sculpture show, a moving talk and show by the Pulitzer-winning documentary photographer Andre Lambertson, and winding up with "Connected," an art exhibit celebrating artists with ties to South Berkshire County. As Gallery chair Jess Cofrin put it, "It feels vital, at this time, to acknowledge our profound interconnectedness as humans, with one another and with the natural world." The winner of this year's Daniel Manacher Prize for Young Artists, Falcon Laina, was one of the featured artists.

Your donations help ensure that the Arts Center can continue to offer programs, events, and workshops that inspire and enrich the lives of our community. So thank you again, and we'll see you in the Spring. 🍷

Be a Better Gardener *Cont'd from p.7*

so that the voles have to expose themselves to predators when they want to forage there. Voles are reluctant to take that chance, and if they do, they are much more likely to end up as prey. In times of infestation, you should also avoid dressing the landscape up with mulch, as the voles can use that as cover under which to excavate their runs.

In sum, if I want a cute rodent, I'll adopt a hamster. 🐹



*Be-a-Better-Gardener is a community service of Berkshire Botanical Garden, located in Stockbridge, Mass. Its mission, to provide knowledge of gardening and the environment through a diverse range of classes and programs, informs and inspires thousands of students and visitors each year. Thomas Christopher is a volunteer at Berkshire Botanical Garden and is the author or co-author of more than a dozen books, including *Nature into Art* and *The Gardens of Wave Hill* (Timber Press, 2019). He is the 2021 Garden Club of America's National Medalist for Literature, a distinction reserved to recognize those who have left a profound and lasting impact on issues that are most important to the GCA. Christopher's companion broadcast to this column, *Growing Greener*, streams on WESUFM.org, Pacifica Radio and NPR and is available at berkshirebotanical.org/growinggreener.*



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Letters to the Editor

SELECT BOARD/CHARTER MEETING MISREPRESENTED

I was at the Select Board meeting (October 10) with the Charter Committee that Larry Dwyer wrote about in the November issue of the Sandisfield Times.

I was very active in that meeting, asking lots of questions and strongly critiquing several aspects of the current Charter draft.

The Select Board, Town Manager, and members of the Charter committee were all very professional and welcoming to all who asked questions or had opinions to offer. This is easily verified by requesting from the Town Clerk a link to the video recording of the meeting and watching it.

Larry in particular was given more than ample opportunity to ask questions and state his opinions, in spite of any vitriol with which he may have expressed them.

Given all this, I was shocked and dismayed by Larry's portrayal of the meeting in his article, which in my opinion was a gross misrepresentation of the meeting.

In particular, there was absolutely no vitriol coming from anyone in the meeting besides possibly Larry himself.

*Carl Nett
Town Hill Road*



SELECT BOARD/CHARTER MEETING MISREPRESENTED II

I was very disappointed and dismayed to read Larry Dwyer's November "Out on a Limb" piece regarding the joint Charter Committee and Select Board meeting of October 10.

While Mr. Dwyer claims he was "subjected to an intense barrage of vitriol" he cited no specific instances of said "vitriol." I attended that meeting (as I do almost every Select Board meeting) and saw no one, especially Steve Seddon and Jon Sylbert, treat Mr. Dwyer disrespectfully. Indeed, I have discussed Mr. Dwyer's claims with another committee member and a citizen who were in attendance and they are frankly shocked at Mr. Dwyer's accusations. Was Mr. Dwyer at a different meeting than the one my fellow citizens and I were at?

Regarding when Mr. Dwyer "finally did get to speak," as I recall, he spoke at length and was able to do so without interruption – even when he made inaccurate statements accusing the Charter Committee of failures to engage in transparency. (It's worth repeating that all of our meetings are well publicized and we welcome attendance and input by our fellow Sandisfield citizens.) As a matter of fact, when I spoke at the meeting to address misinformation that Mr. Dwyer had been promoting regarding commission memberships, Mr. Dwyer interrupted me. I said "Larry, no one interrupted you when you spoke, so please don't interrupt me." If asking not to be interrupted is "vitriol" then I guess I don't understand the definition of the term.

I realize this is a classic case of "he said, she said," so I urge readers of the Times to listen to the recording of the meeting, or, once they are posted, go to the Town Website and examine the minutes of the meeting Mr. Dwyer references. Janey Beardsley, our excellent assistant to the Town Manager and Select Board, does a superb job of capturing and transcribing the recordings

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of Select Board meetings so that even folks who aren't able to attend can get a very good grasp of what transpires at those meetings.

As I mentioned, my husband Jeff and I are at almost every Select Board meeting and we have never seen Steve Seddon or Jon Sylbert act in any way other than professionally. Indeed, I have witnessed on more than one occasion citizens who became agitated and failed to adhere to rules of decorum and common courtesy and Mr. Seddon, in particular, as the chair of our Select Board, calmly and successfully lowered the temperature during these exchanges all while treating citizens respectfully. I realize this is another case of "he said, she said," still, I have to wonder, why does Mr. Dwyer appear to harbor such personal animus towards Mr. Seddon and Mr. Sylbert?

And finally, if one reads Mr. Dwyer's "Out on a Limb" piece closely one can't help but notice it's very short on facts regarding the Charter and long on emotion and hyperbole, relying on inflammatory language such as "hostility," "intense barrage of vitriol" and "micro-aggressions," all while engaging in ad-hominem attacks. In my experience, that's what folks do when they don't have the facts on their side.

Melissa Bye
New Hartford Road

Editor's Note: We request that Letters to the Editor be limited to 300 words, but because the questions regarding the Charter Committee raised by reader Larry Dwyer in several "Out on a Limb" columns have been challenged as well as his representation of the demeanor at the joint Select Board/Charter Committee meeting, we have printed the preceding response at length.



Once More, Do We Need a Town Charter?

By Larry Dwyer

If you listened to the Charter Committee, you would think that I am the only person who questions the need for a Town Charter, but I know this is not the case. I have received feedback from many readers who are opposed to creating a Town Charter.

Currently, the Town is governed through open town meetings and regulated by town by-laws. If the town decides to change a by-law, it requires only a majority vote, except for zoning by-laws which require a two-thirds majority. By-Laws are routed via the Attorney General's office which has 90 days for approval.

Whereas a town charter must be approved by the state legislature and signed by the governor. How long does this take? According to State Senator Paul Marks office, it could take up to two years to approve a charter.

Just this month, a special act was passed by the state legislature and signed by the governor. Sandisfield received a notice of congratulations (see page 5).

However, the special act was voted on by you and me a full year ago. It describes the duties of the Select Board and Town Manager. It was only three pages and it took that long, one full year, to pass! The town charter on the other hand is

16 pages, contains nine articles, with 41 sections. Given the length of the charter, it is anticipated that approval could take much longer than a year.

The Collins Center, which has been advising the Sandisfield Charter Committee, recommended that we not include too much detail in the charter. The reason; if you need to change the charter, you would have to repeat the entire process.

By-laws, on the other hand, are approved by the Attorney General's office in 90 days. A town charter is a foundation document and not an operating plan; that is why the details should be addressed in town by-laws.

One item in the charter draft that was recently changed is that a Select Board member now could serve as an Interim Town Manager, but would not be compensated above his or her normal stipend. The Collins Center recommended, however, that the Select Board member be properly compensated. It is unlikely that a Select Board member would take on the duties of a full-time manager without compensation. The way this could be handled is that the charter would allow a Selectman to serve as Interim Town Manager, but the details of compensation could be handled in a corresponding by-law. An example of a corresponding by-law might state: A Select Board member may serve as an Interim Town Manager at the same rate as the previous Town Manager, limiting compensation to three months. Afterwards compensation would be limited to the Select Boards normal stipend.

Since the Select Board member would be compensated for only three months, this would create an incentive to hasten the search for a permanent Town Manager. Details in the by-law could be later adjusted as needed, which would be easier than revising a charter. This may sound redundant, but that is what would be needed if we were to adopt a town charter.

In writing my now-five Out on a Limb articles, I have reviewed the August 24 Charter Committee Zoom video meeting with the Collins Center in attendance at least a dozen times. I would suggest that the Charter Committee review the video as well, to help them recall what the Collins Center has advised them to do.

Out on a Limb: Op-Ed:

Subjects should be of interest to most of us and have a strong link to Sandisfield, written by and for Town residents. Address either PO Box 584, Sandisfield, or email. Opinions in Out on a Limb articles are those of the authors and do not represent The Sandisfield Times.

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New Owners at the Knox Trail Inn

ADAPTED FROM THE
BERKSHIRE EAGLE

By Bill Price

Long-time customers Brooke Tame and her father, Michael Tame, bought the 200-year-old Knox Trail Inn in Otis at the end of October.

In a November feature article in the Berkshire Eagle, reporter Jane Kaufman wrote about the purchase and Brooke Tame's education in food/beverage management and her background in the restaurant business. Having a few years' experience even by the age of 25, Brooke is willing to put it all into her efforts at the Knox Trail. The Inn, on Rt. 22 in East Otis, is one of the few bar/restaurants located in the eastern section of South County, along with the New Boston Inn in Sandisfield.


Brooke is already familiar with many of the Inn's regular customers, having worked as general manager there since July in order to get a feel for the place's rhythms. Kaufman wrote, "Locals may remember [Brooke] as a ski instructor at Otis Ridge, where she also worked at the summer camp and later at Grouse House, at the bottom of the slopes."

Her father, Michael, is a customer at the Inn and currently works with his daughter as, as he terms it, "the maintenance guy." On a recent Monday, Kaufman reported, he was painting and spackling the restrooms. He said that he also does maintenance at Otis Ridge Ski Resorts.

The Inn's previous owners, who owned it since 2017, converted a dark formal dining room into the Birch Room, removing a fireplace and bar to create a room that can sit 84 customers. The nearby Pine Room, which seats 156, contains pine shiplap paneling on the walls and oak floors. Bands perform on the Pine Room stage.

Brooke told the Eagle reporter that the Inn's menu of prime rib Thursday through Saturday will continue.

She said she wants to build on the intimacy of the Inn. "I just hope everybody loves coming here," she said. "And that it's a safe space, a fun place to hang out where everyone can just let go, and the rest of the world doesn't matter while they're here."

The Knox Trail Inn has been a long-time advertiser with the Times. The former owner, Peter Sullivan, turned the place into a popular venue. The Times wishes the new owners the best of luck, and we will be visiting soon. 



A Poem for December

WINTER-TIME

by Robert Louis Stevenson

Late lies the wintry sun a-bed,
A frosty, fiery sleepy-head;
Blinks but an hour or two; and then,
A blood-red orange, sets again.

Before the stars have left the skies,
At morning in the dark I rise;
And shivering in my nakedness,
By the cold candle, bathe and dress.

Close by the jolly fire I sit
To warm my frozen bones a bit;
Or with a reindeer-sled, explore
The colder countries round the door.

When to go out, my nurse doth wrap
Me in my comforter and cap;
The cold wind burns my face, and blows
Its frosty pepper up my nose.

Black are my steps on silver sod;
Thick blows my frosty breath abroad;
And tree and house, and hill and lake,
Are frosted like a wedding-cake.

Selected by Town Librarian
Theresa Spohnholz



WINTER SCHEDULE BEGAN NOVEMBER 8

- Wednesday, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Saturday, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
- Sunday, 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

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Photos by Vanessa Tarasuk.

Vanessa said, "I saw her in a driveway on Rt. 57, heading toward Lower West Street. I stopped to let her cross. I thought she had the right of way."



LUCILLE PETERSON

1936-2023

Lucille Peterson, who with her husband Bob lived in Sandisfield for about ten years, died Saturday, September 16.

Her friend, Katie Rocco of Rood Hill Road, described Lucille as "a gracious, loving woman who loved to host dinner parties. She cooked wonderful food and told stories of her colorful life and the fascinating people she had encountered along the way."

Lucille was born and raised in The Bronx, New York, August 26, 1936, the daughter of Jesse and Elizabeth (Rothstein) Cohen. She graduated from The High School of Music and Art in Manhattan. She loved to dance, sing, create art, garden, and play piano.

A serious lover of animals, Lucille took in every stray she ever found in New York. (Sometimes she would find homes for them, but more often they became family).

She and her husband Bob, who predeceased her, were the devoted parents of Lisa, Manx, and Neil. For Lucille, her children and grandchildren were her greatest passion. Her love for them was obvious to anyone she met, as she bragged continuously about them to anyone who would listen.

She had a wide group of friends who became family as well. At her dinner parties for friends and family, she often spent days reading recipes aloud in order to create fabulous meals for all.

If you met Lucille, you loved her. She had a way of connecting with everyone, everywhere. Katie Rocco said, "She will be deeply, deeply missed by many."

Lucille is survived by her children Lisa DeCobert of Malden, Manx Foster of New York, and Neil Foster of Washington; her grandchildren Joshua Foster, Alice Foster, Geneva DeCobert, and Zoe Garside and great-grandson Aiden Wade Prado as well as many other family members and friends.

Please celebrate Lucille's life in any way that gives you comfort, and that she would love. She would love for her friends and family to celebrate her life by creating some art, singing out loud (especially in public), dancing, going to see a play or dance theater, reading aloud from a cookbook (not online) and making a fabulous meal for family or friends, and spending wonderful quality time with those that you love.

Donations to The Alzheimer's Association are greatly appreciated.

Coming and Going



ROSEMARY ALLAN

1924-2023

Rosemary Allan, the oldest resident of Sandisfield and its last surviving World War II veteran, died at her home on Tannery Road, October 29, just days shy of her 99th birthday. She was honored earlier this month by the inclusion of her military information at the American Legion, Post #456, in Sandisfield by her partner Richard Mercure and her friend Sarah Delabera.

Rosemary was born in East Lee on November 8, 1924, the daughter of Charles Millard and Inza Emmond Harland. Graduating from Searles High School in Great Barrington early in World War II, Rosemary's first job was at the defense plant at Hamilton Standard Propeller in Hartford. She enlisted with the Women's Army Corps in 1945, and was stationed at Camp Edwards, Mass.

In a profile for *The Sandisfield Times* (November 2015), Rosemary told of her closest contact with the war. One night, walking back to camp with friends after the movies, an army bus stopped to give Rosemary and her friends a ride. She told *The Times*, "The bus was full of German prisoners being driven to prison camp. The driver could have gotten in a lot of trouble, but we didn't report him." Rosemary had to resign in 1946 when she married Charles Allan, since married women were not allowed to serve in the WACs.

She moved to Sandisfield in 1946. She worked the New Boston Nursing Home when it was located in a house on Rt. 8 north of New Boston and later at the current veteran's rehabilitation center when it was built near the New Boston Inn. After more than 40 years at the nursing

home, Rosemary retired in 2001 at the age of 76. She told *The Times* in 2015, "I'd still be working there if I could. You get so attached to the people."

Rosemary was an avid reader and enjoyed trips to the casinos and scratch tickets. She was a lifelong animal lover, especially of horses. She enjoyed visits to Rose Nelson's horses at Sunny Rose Farm on Dodd Road. In October Rose rode Emmy to Tannery Road to visit Rosemary for what turned out to be a sentimental last visit.

Rosemary is survived by her partner of over 50 years, Richard Mercure, as well as her daughters: Debra Stanard and her husband, Richard; and Donna Funk. In addition, she leaves her grandchildren: Richard Stanard, Jr., and his wife, Denise, and Heather Brunnell and her husband, Brent; her great-children: Loren Stanard, Ryan Stanard, Ethan Brunell, and Mirabel Brunell. She is also survived by her granddog, Muffin.

She was predeceased by brother, Donald B. Millard and sister, Geraldine Wilson.

As per her wishes, her body was donated to Tuft's Medical School for educational purposes. There were no services.

The family thanks the wonderful caregivers and nurses with Hospice Care in the Berkshires. In lieu of flowers, those wishing may make a donation to the Berkshire Humane Society in Rosemary's name. Checks written to the Berkshire Humane Society may be mailed in care of the Kelly Funeral Home, 3 Main Street, Lee, MA 01238.





Letters to the Editor

GRADING OUR ROADS

To the Editor:

The unsigned response in the November Times by the “Select Board” to my October concerns (“Band-Aids Instead of Solutions”) about the improper maintenance of our dirt roads was interesting but hardly relevant. On hand of a lengthy comparison between Sandisfield’s and Monterey’s equipment and budget, the anonymous author notes that Monterey’s DPW budget is 20 percent more than Sandisfield’s and declares, “When he was a member of the Select Board, Mr. Riley never proposed such a budget for the DPW so that our crew could do as good a job as Monterey.”

Of course not, because contrary to the assumption of the writer, money is not the issue here. I gave one example of the Town recently spending \$397,000 to purchase a new adjustable-pitch grader so that

our roads could have crowns and ditches. But since that new equipment has been in use, the grading of our roads has not improved – the grader operator still flattens the road and fills in the ditches, resulting in the predictable potholes and washouts.

The author claims that the DPW crew was given “Grader Operating” training this spring; then why have we seen no resulting improvements in our roads? One can only conclude that either a) the training was ineffective, or b) the trainees are impervious to education.

Aside from my being misquoted twice, the response avoids addressing the core issue of my article. Controlling the flow of water on a gravel road is not rocket science, but it must be the essential focus of maintenance. This is a lesson that many of our neighboring towns (not only Monterey) have taken to heart, and which our DPW needs to implement. This problem cannot be fixed with money, but only with “forward thinking” instead of band-aids after the fact.

*George Riley
Cronk Road*

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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 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. No pre-registration 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 of dates, please call Nina Carr (258-3314). Free!

Coffee Hour on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. at the Council on Aging, Town Hall basement. 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.

Annual Holiday Fair was held December 2, sponsored by the Sandisfield Historical Society. This issue of The Times was printed later than usual. We regret not being able to list the Fair ahead of time.

New Boston Church Christmas Service was held Sunday, December 3. This issue of The Times was printed later than usual. We regret not being able to list the Service ahead of time.

Wreath Making on Wednesday, December 6, at 1:00 p.m. sponsored by the Sandisfield Council on Aging. Meet basement level of the Sandisfield Town Hall. \$10. Call Linda Riiska to register, 258-4816.

Lighting of Christmas Tree and Menorah Celebration on Friday, December 8, beginning at 2:00 p.m. at the **Berkshire Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center** on Route 57 in New Boston. Penny Auction, caroling, and refreshments. Please come in through the back door and join the fun. At 4:00 p.m., participants can go outside to view the lighting of the tree and Menorah. (See ad at right.)

Annual Cookie Swap on Sunday, December 10, at 1:00 p.m. at the New Boston Inn (upstairs Ballroom). Bring 36 cookies and a container.

Friends, neighbors, cookie lovers. For more information, call 413-258-4477.

Christmas Decorations on Wednesday, December 20, at 1:00 p.m. sponsored by the Sandisfield Council on Aging. Meet basement level of the Sandisfield Town Hall. \$10. Call Linda Riiska to register, 258-4816.

Sandisfield Woman's Book Club will meet on Thursday, December 21 at 6:30 p.m. at the Skrip's House. The book selection for December is *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri. Although the group usually meets each month at the library, **this meeting will be held at a different location hosted by Rosanne Skrip**. Please contact the library if you would like to attend as there is a buffet dinner scheduled to be served to club members and new members prior to the discussion. Books will be chosen for next year's club meetings.

Christmas Eve Singalong, Sunday, December 24, 5:00-6:00 p.m. at the New Boston Congregational Church, Rt. 57. Come one, Come all. Carols and Christmas songs from "O Come all Ye Faithful" to "Jingle Bells." All the favorites you have known since childhood. What fun!

"Little Brown Church." December 24 between 4:30 pm and 6:30 pm. Pick up your prepaid copy or order a copy of the new book, "Little Brown Church" at the New Boston Church. Info contact: Ron at 413 269-0012.

ONLINE EVENTS

A Farm and Garden Show with Sandisfield Residents Bill Taylor and Jaye Alison Moscarriello

streamed every Monday, from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. at berkshireradio.org.

EVENTS IN SURROUNDING TOWNS

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

Transformational Breathwork with Sandisfield residents Antonia and Roger Vanoro on the last Friday of every month from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. at the Monterey Community Center. A combination of deep rhythmic breathing, vocalization, self massage, and energetic movement. The suggested fee is \$30. For more information, visit ccmonterey.org.

Holiday Shop, Sip & Stroll on Saturday, December 9 from 3:00 to p.m. 8:00 p.m. in Great Barrington, sponsored by the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce. Kids activities, model train, live music, bonfire, special sales in downtown stores, and fireworks.

Great Barrington Winter Farmers Market on Saturday, December 16 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Housy Dome on 1064 Main Street in Housatonic. Featuring locally grown and produced foods, including cheese, meats, breads, and more. Local musicians, performing across a variety of styles and genres will be showcased.



A PENNY AUCTION CAROLING WITH BOBBY LOO

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8TH • BERKSHIRE REHAB

2 PM: PENNY AUCTION *(please come in through back entrance)*

4 PM: LIGHTING THE CHRISTMAS TREE
AND MENORAH *(outdoors)*

Please join us for refreshments
and holiday fun!



Berkshire
Rehabilitation & Skilled Care Center
7 Sandisfield Rd.
New Boston

Don't Overlook Our Annual Appeal for 2023

Dear Readers:

In a few short months the Sandisfield Times will begin its fifteenth year as your community newspaper. The board and unpaid volunteers and contributors work hard to produce eleven issues every year, issues which include a balanced blend of municipal news and interesting features, a community bulletin board, and serves as a public forum for thoughtful opinions on matters of local interest.

When our predecessor, the monthly Sandisfield Newsletter, ceased publication in 2007 after fourteen years, the absence of information was acute and immediate. One observer wrote, "Residents lamented the absence of a newsletter. Attendance at local events decreased noticeably and knowledge of town affairs and doings [pre-town website] relied on word-of-mouth."

The local information vacuum lasted for almost three years until a new group decided that it was time to have a newspaper under the motto "Reliable, Regular, Relevant." Their vision of a monthly dedicated to issues of relevance to the residents and friends of Sandisfield has been met.

Following initial growing pains, The Times has evolved into a balanced, well-designed, and lively publication that is also not loaded with advertisements. The advents of a paid professional designer, intermittent issues in color, an on-line presence with all of our issues available in an accessible archive, and

a new no-charge policy for ads for local non-profits have been made possible because of the generosity of loyal readers. They understand that a small town's newspaper should not be taken for granted.

Thank you to all who have supported our paper through the years. We make only one appeal each year, with relatively little fanfare. Your financial support is crucial to the continuance and improvement of this free newspaper. Please consider today a tax-deductible donation of any amount.

The following form is provided for your convenience. Or, visit www.SandisfieldTimes.org to donate or subscribe (subscriptions for out-of-town postal addresses only).

Happy holidays to all and may everyone enjoy a healthy and prosperous new year!

Bill Price, Editor



Yes! I will support The Sandisfield Times with my tax-deductible donation of \$ _____

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Tel#: _____ Email: _____

I would also like to send a gift subscription by mail at \$25 per year to:

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address (out-of-town residents only): _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Check # _____ Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Thank you. Your support of this special publication is very much appreciated and helps to ensure The Sandisfield Times will survive!

The Sandisfield Times is dedicated to providing reliable, regular and relevant news and information about Sandisfield.

Donate or subscribe online at www.SandisfieldTimes.org or mail your donation to: The Sandisfield Times, P.O. Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255

**Donations to The Sandisfield Times are deductible under section 170 of the Federal Income Tax Code.*

SANDISFIELD TOWN DIRECTORY

DECEMBER, 2023

TOWN HALL: Janey Beardsley, Administrative Assistant,
413-258-4711, x 3, jbeardsley@sandisfieldma.gov

TOWN WEBSITE: www.sandisfieldma.gov.

AMBULANCE: 911. Non-Emergency: 258-4742

AMERICAN LEGION POST 456: Maria Domato, Commander
258-4578 (April-October) or yankeefruitloop@gmail.com

ANIMAL INSPECTOR: Kim Spring, 258-4450

ASSESSORS OFFICE: 258-4711 x 6
Office Hours: Mon, Wed: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

BOARD OF HEALTH: Meets 2nd Wed: 5:30 p.m., Old Town Hall.

BUILDING INSPECTORS:

- Fire: Paul Greene, 413-446-0964
- Plumbing & Gas: Bob Krupski, 413-229-8019
- Wiring: Jay Reynolds, 860-798-2578
- Building: Paul Greene. Office hours, Old Town Hall, Wed: 4-5 p.m.
Call 413-446-0964 for appointment.

CEMETERY COMMITTEE: Meets as needed.

Chair: Lynn Rubenstein
Email: Cemetery@sandisfieldma.gov. Meets as needed.

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF NEW BOSTON

4 Sandisfield Rd./Rte. 57. Biweekly Sunday services, 10:00 a.m.
Eric Kriebel, Pastor. www.newbostoncongregationalchurch.org.
All welcome.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION: Meets 3rd Tues: 7 p.m.

Chair: Paul Gaudette
Email: conservation@sandisfieldma.gov.

CONSTABLE:

Dana Beardsley: 258-4958

CULTURAL COUNCIL: Chair: Jennifer Hibbins

COUNCIL ON AGING: Linda Riiska, Nina Carr: 258-4711 x 8

Wed: 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Senior Center/Town Hall
Business Meeting: 1st Wed of the month: 11 a.m.

DPW SUPERINTENDENT: TBD

Office 258-4711 x 7
DPW Email: highways@sandisfieldma.gov

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR:

Jonathan Sylbert, 413-272-9913

FARMINGTON RIVER GENERAL STORE:

Nick and Megan Smigel, Proprietors
83 South Main Street (Rt. 8), 413-462-1104
Hours: Mon-Tues, 6-8; Wed-Fri, 6-6; Sat-Sun, 7-6

FARMINGTON RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOL:

Timothy Lee, Superintendent/Laurie Flower, Principal
North Main Street, Otis, 413 269-4466
School Committee: Meets every first Monday at 7 p.m.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Meets as needed. Check for schedule.

FIRE: CALL 911

Michael Morrison, Deputy Fire Chief, 413-441-2129
Eric Pachulski, Deputy Fire Chief, 413-464-6835
Email: FireChief@sandisfieldma.gov

HISTORICAL COMMISSION: Ron Bernard, 413-269-0012;
ronbernard@aol.com. Meets as needed.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Ann Wald, President
258-4415 or Email sandisfieldhistory@gmail.com
Meets 2nd Saturday, Apr-Nov. Sandy Brook Turnpike/Rt. 183.

LIBRARY: Librarian: Theresa Spohnholz: 258-4966;
sandisfieldlibrary@gmail.com

HOURS: Mon, Tues, Wed: 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.,
Wed eve: 5:00-7:00 p.m., Sat: 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Closed Th, Fr and Sun.

NOTARY: Joanne D. Olson, 258-4465 or 917-686-1985

Theresa Spohnholz: 258-4966 at the Town Library

PLANNING BOARD: Meets 2nd Tues: 6:30 p.m., Old Town Hall

Chair: Barbara Cormier

POLICE-LOCAL: Emergency 911, Non-emergency: 413-258-4724

Chief Michael Morrison: cell 413-441-2129
Email: PoliceChief@sandisfieldma.gov

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.

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER: Mary Bredenfoerder: Emergency, 911;
non-emergency, 258-4742

RECREATION COMMITTEE: Laurie Seddon:

sandisfeldevents@recreationcommittee.info

SANDISFIELD ARTS CENTER: (May-December)

5 Hammertown Road, PO Box 31
258-4100; www.sandisfieldartscenter.org

SANDISFIELD TIMES: Bill Price, editor

editor@sandisfieldtimes.org
U.S. Mail: PO Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255

SELECT BOARD: 258-4711 x 3

Meets Monday, regular meeting, 6:30 p.m. Town Hall.

See posted agendas for changes in meeting times.

Administrative Secretary: Janey Beardsley, 258-4711, x 3

STATE OFFICIALS:

Smitty Pignatelli, State Representative
413 637-0631; rep.smitty@mahouse.gov
Paul W. Mark, State Senator; 413-464-5635; Paul.Mark@masenate.gov

TAX COLLECTOR/TREASURER: Gina Campbell

258-4711 x 4; Tues & Thurs, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Email: Treasurer@sandisfieldma.gov

TOWN ACCOUNTANT: Margaret McClellan

by appointment; 258-4711 x 5 or accountant@sandisfieldma.gov

TOWN CLERK: Douglas Miner, 258-4711 x 2

66 Sandisfield Rd, Ste. 2, Sandisfield, MA 01255
Email: townclerk@sandisfieldma.gov
Mon, Tues, Wed: 10 a.m.-1 p.m, or by appointment

TOWN HALL:

66 Sandisfield Road, Ste. 1, Sandisfield, MA 01255
Hours differ based on the Office in question.
Website: www.sandisfieldma.gov

TOWN MANAGER: Jonathan Sylbert, 258-4711, x 1

TRANSFER STATION: Attendant: Keith Larson

Winter Hours: Wed: 2-4 p.m.; Sat: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.; Sun: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

VETERANS SERVICES: Thomas Beasley

413-528-1580, Great Barrington Town Hall

THE SANDISFIELD TIMES



RELIABLE. REGULAR. RELEVANT.

P.O. Box 584
Sandisfield, MA 01255

Please support our annual appeal. See page 18. Thank You to all who donated in November. See list on page 13.

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

Donations of any amount are needed to ensure the continuation of this newspaper. Please send checks to: The Sandisfield

Times, P.O. Box 584, Sandisfield, MA 01255 or donate online at our website: . Donations to The Sandisfield Times are deductible under section 170 of the Federal Income Tax Code. Donations do not include subscriptions. Subscriptions do not qualify as donations.

The Times is distributed free of charge to all Sandisfield postal address and boxes. Free copies are available at the following town locations: The transfer station (Wed/Sat/Sun), the Library, and in New Boston at A&M Auto, the Farmington River General Store,

and the New Boston Inn. *The Times* is also available in West Otis at the laundromat, library, and the Farmington River Diner; in East Otis at Katie's, Pappas, and the Knox Trail Inn. Also at the Monterey Library (outside box), in Colebrook at the post office and the general store, and at the New Marlborough General Store and the Mill River General Store. Back copies are available for purchase.

The Times can be mailed to your home (non-Sandisfield addresses only) by paid subscription (see form at left) or you can read it (free) online as a PDF document at www.sandisfieldtimes.org. Classified ads, 30 words or less, are free.

We welcome submissions, comments and suggestions, including letters to the editor by the 15th of the month prior. Maximum 300 words. We may edit for space, style or clarity. We will try to publish Public Service Announcements when we have room, with priority given to Sandisfield organizations. No portion of the *The Sandisfield Times* may be reproduced without permission.

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THE SANDISFIELD TIMES
PO BOX 584, SANDISFIELD, MA 01255

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City, State, Zip _____

Email address: _____

Phone (only used if paper is returned by USPS) _____

Editorial Staff

Editor: Bill Price

email: editor@sandisfieldtimes.org

Advertising/Subscriptions: Ron Bernard

Graphic Design: Tina Sotis

Website: Jean Atwater-Williams

Now Hear This!: Laura Rogers-Castro

Founding Editor: Simon Winchester

How to Contact Us

Mail can be directed to

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

If internet accessible, all letters, news events and tips, ideas, obituary and family announcements, photos (600 dpi if possible) and advertisement queries to editor@sandisfieldtimes.org