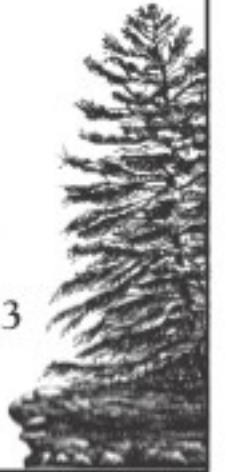




New Marlborough 5 Village News

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Clayton • Hartsville • Mill River • New Marlborough • Southfield

A NEW MARLBOROUGH SWAN SONG

by Larry Burke

In April of 2000 there appeared in the Mill River, Hartsville, and Southfield general stores a six-page publication. Under the headline which read "Let's do it!" followed these lines:

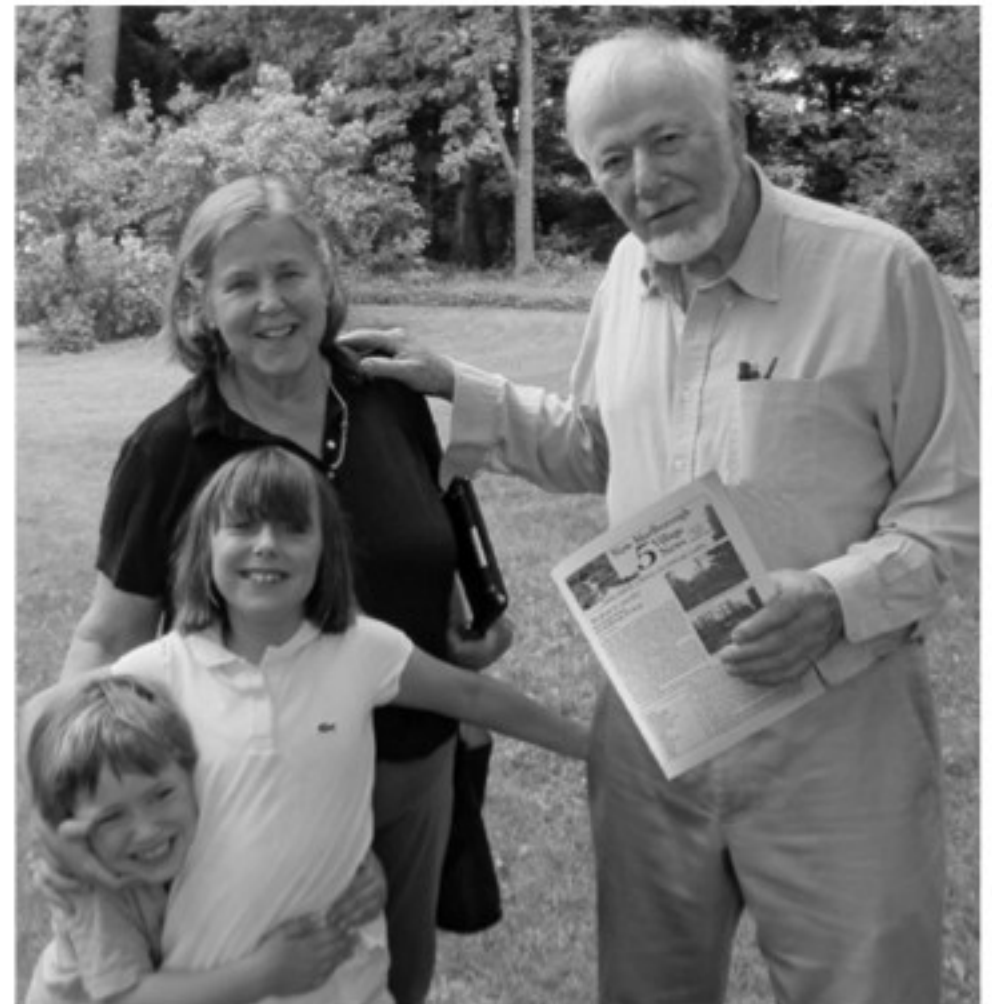
New Marlborough! What is it? Where is it? We all live in it – all 1,107 of us, according to the last census – but it's a town with a difference. It's scattered all over the countryside in the form of five villages. It takes eighty-nine miles of road to connect us. We're so far-flung that news of what's going on in one village is not likely to reach the others until the event is all over. That's why we feel it's time to connect us all with each other in the form of a monthly news-letter we're calling *The New Marlborough 5 Village News*.

The writer of those lines, and lead editor of that first issue, was Jon Swan, and the layout designer was Marianne Swan. Now, twelve years and nine months later, 153 issues later, Jon and Marianne, among the instigators and enablers of *The New Marlborough 5 Village News*, are signing off from our masthead. Sometime in late January they expect to be the newest residents of Yarmouth, Maine.

It is not possible to overstate the role that Jon and Marianne have played in the creation and sustained existence of this publication. When we began, Jon was the only one of us with professional experience in writing and journalism. His poetry had appeared in numerous magazines, including *The New Yorker*, and he had served as senior editor of *The Saturday Review of Literature* and *The Columbia Journalism Review*. Marianne was the only one of us who had the knowledge, computer skills, and artistic sense to put our early efforts into print.

Jon has been our mentor, our taskmaster, our critic, and our cheerleader through these nearly thirteen years. Marianne has been the one with the voice of common sense, of practical solutions, and of constant good humor. It has been the practice of *The 5 Village News*, from the very beginning, to distribute proofing copies of the next issue to every staff member, early in the week before publication. The idea is that we each inspect the pages, checking each other's facts, looking for typos, and generally making any suggestions to improve the final product. We pore over the articles line by line, and we all spot errors, but even now, after so many years of doing this, none of us sees the mistakes that Jon picks up. His proofing pages are filled with corrections... *filled!* Whether it be the misplaced modifier, the errant comma, or the endlessly debated use of "Town" versus "town," Jon is on it like

continued on page 2



Marianne and Jon Swan, with grandchildren Alexander and Zora.

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A New Marlboro Swan Song, continued from page 1

a guinea fowl on a tick. And, to complement Jon's acute editorial discipline, Marianne, when she is in charge of layout, smoothly transfers all corrections, adjusting fit where necessary, and that, dear reader, is why you rarely get to spot typos in this publication! (Jon promises that he will be our emeritus, Down East proofreader, so we can all breathe a sigh of relief on that count!)

Although Jon and Marianne will always be identified for their pivotal, founding roles with *The 5 Village News*, their roots in this town, and the important contributions they have given to this town, extend back to 1973, when they moved to Clayton from New Milford, Connecticut. Their three daughters, Claudia, Izette, and Anna grew up here, attending school in Mill River and Sheffield. Marianne's civic activity included time spent with the fledgling New Marlborough Parks Commission. Marianne also created and maintained the New Marlborough Village Association's website, an invaluable tool that now also contains two years of back issues of the *5 Village News*. Both Jon and Marianne have been exemplary in their attention to Town governance, rarely missing an Annual Town Meeting, and in 2008 Marianne, who is Dutch by birth, enjoyed the privilege of her newly-gained citizenship by voting in this country for the first time.

In looking back over his nearly forty years as a New Marlborough resident, Jon is most proud of his participation

in the creation of *A Pictorial History of New Marlborough*, his editing of Lion Miles' *Life of John Konkapot*, and his and Marianne's efforts on the forthcoming *The New Marlborough Land Trust Trail Guide*. Marianne designed all three publications.

As he and Marianne prepare to move on to Maine to be nearer their daughter Anna, Jon offered some thoughts on the future of the newspaper he helped to create. Holding a copy of the December issue in hand, with its reporting of significant town (and Town) news and with its rich complement of letters from citizens, he said, "After twelve years we are engaging interest and getting response. We are now being used as a forum, and that is a healthy and welcome sign." He added that we are fortunate to have some new blood on our staff, with Joe Poindexter, Peter Schuyten, and Kenzie Fields, until her resignation to serve the school district, and he hopes that more will join the ranks to keep *The New Marlborough 5 Village News* purring along. He concluded with that characteristic sigh of his, "It's a lot of work, it's a lot of %#\$&! work!"

We thank Jon and Marianne for the gift of their friendship and for all that %#\$&! work on behalf of their hometown of nearly forty years. We wish them joy and happiness in their next home. □

Berkshire Groan



WALKING NEW MARLBOROUGH

Oh, those holidays – eat, drink, and be merry! But what do you do with the extra pound or two that is their legacy? One answer: *The New Marlborough Land Trust Trail Guide*, still in production as this issue of the *5 Village News* goes to print, is expected to be available sometime in January. This splendid publication has photos, trail descriptions, and geodesic maps showing

the terrain and trails in ten areas around town.

The list includes guides to Thousand Acre Swamp, Dry Hill, River Road, Lower Carroll Mill, York Lake, the Berkshire Hatchery, Campbell Falls, Questing, Cagney Hill, and North Road. The thirty-two-page guide has not yet been priced, but it's likely to be a mere fraction of a visit to the fitness center. □

Joe Poindexter

FINANCE COMMITTEE

June 28: Following a summer and autumn hiatus, the minutes of June 28, summarized below, were approved.

With David Herrick presiding and Bill Hattendorf, Burt Imberman, Ira Yohalem, and Prudence Spaulding in attendance, the following transfers from the Reserve Fund were approved:

Tax title: \$4,000 to cover attorney fees associated with an increase in Land Court filings;

Cemetery expenses: \$2,800 to replace an irreparable mower;

Police Department salary: \$2,400 to cover an increase to forty hours from thirty-two in the work week of a full-time officer;

Selectmen's Expenses: \$2,000 to pay for office equipment of the recently appointed administrative secretary.

Consideration of a ten-year projection of capital needs assembled by Selectman Nat Yohalem from discussions with department heads was tabled until the cost of repairing or replacing six bridges in town could be melded into the projection.

November 29: With Mssrs Herrick, Hattendorf, Imberman, Yohalem, and Mrs. Spaulding present, the committee elected Mr. Herrick chairman and Mrs. Spaulding secretary.

In response to a request from Fire Chief Peter Scala for the transfer of \$17,799 from the Reserve Fund to the Fire Protection account to cover repairs on its twenty-year-old truck, Mr. Yohalem asked if these repairs would give the truck two more years of service. Mr. Imberman inquired whether the repairs were guaranteed by First Line Emergency Services Inc., the company doing them. Mr. Herrick, an officer of the Fire Department, assured the committee that First Line had reliably stood behind its repair work for the department in the past. In response

to Mrs. Spaulding, who questioned the need for the transfer, given that the Fire Department currently has \$50,000 in its account, Mr. Herrick said that whatever money remained at the end of the year would be returned to the Town. The transfer was approved.

Mr. Herrick requested the preparation of two monthly reports: income generated through tax collection and other sources such as Police Department fines and building inspector fees, to be prepared by Mr. Imberman and Mr. Yohalem; and departmental expenses, to be prepared by Mr. Hattendorf.

The following 2014 budget requests were approved:

Council on Aging assessment of \$5,497 to the Town by the Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation Corporation for transporting seniors for shopping and doctors visits.

Council on Aging expenses of \$200 and \$100 for senior tax work-off were also approved.

Conservation Commission expenses: \$2,000.

Animal Inspector expenses of \$1,660 were approved after Mrs. Spaulding, the Town's animal inspector, explained her duties: responsibility for assuring that the farm animals in New Marlborough had adequate water, food, and shelter; the placing in quarantine of dogs that have bitten humans or themselves; and an annual animal census.

911 Coordinator expenses: \$500.

Cultural Council: \$1,000.

Zoning Board of Appeals expenses: \$600, which is used for advertising hearings.

Finance Committee expenses: \$500.

Reserve Fund: \$50,000. □

*Joe Poindexter from minutes
prepared by Prudence Spaulding*

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Town Business Is Your Business

BOARD OF SELECTMEN



November 26: All three selectmen were present to consider a request by the Monterey Board of Selectmen to take part in a meeting with state representatives to discuss the **flooding that occurs at the end of Lake Buel near Adsit Crosby Road in Hartsville.** Monterey said it would also like someone from the Town's Conservation Commission to attend. The flooding has been a long-standing problem and impacts homes on both the Monterey and New Marlborough sides of the lake. In the end, the Board agreed that Selectman Nat Yohalem would attend, but only as an observer, since the Board was uncertain as to what kind of support Monterey is looking for from the Town.

In response to a question from Chairman Larry Davis, Board secretary Mike Skorput said he had tentatively scheduled a meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers for Tuesday, December 12, to discuss the Corps' allegation that the Town did unauthorized work in both the Konkapot and Umpachene Rivers as part of its Hurricane Irene cleanup in 2011. **The Corps' concern, as outlined in an August 28 letter, is that the Town did not obtain the necessary permits for the work and also may have violated the federal Clean Water Act or the Rivers and Harbor Act.** Town Counsel Jeremiah Pollard and Emergency Management Director Barbara Marchione will also be on hand for the meeting. (The meeting was subsequently moved to Tuesday, December 11.)

The subject of a possible lease between the Town and the Fire Department came up yet again, this time in the form of a letter to the Board from the Fire Company stating that any lease negotiations must be conducted with the Fire Company and not with Chief Peter Scala. The letter was received not long after the Board's November 5 meeting at which Chief Scala threatened to call off the deal after accusing the selectmen of being contentious and berating them for their leadership. (See Board of Selectmen report in the December NM5VN). The letter, signed by Fire Company president David Smith, explains that "although Chief Scala heads the Building Committee tasked with constructing the addition" to the fire station that would house the Town's Police Department, "conversations regarding any potential lease agreement must be conducted through the Fire Company," and, the letter continues, "As President of the corporation, I am happy to begin these conversations as soon as practically possible, as the outcome will affect our construction plans, which have begun to take shape." (Those negotiations began

on Monday, December 17, with the Board meeting in executive session with Mr. Smith and several other members of the Fire Company.)

The Board held a property tax classification hearing with the Town's Board of Assessors to set the tax rate for the 2013 fiscal year. As in the past, the assessors recommended a single classification for both residential and commercial properties, and proposed a tax rate of \$8.98 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. **That's a 21 cent increase over the previous year's rate and would mean the owner of an average home assessed at \$200,000 would see a \$42 increase in his or her annual property tax.** The Board, with Chairman Davis opposed, approved the new rate and the single classification. The new rate will be reflected in the tax bills going out around December 14 and due February 1.

December 3: With all three members present, the Board's first order of business was to approve a slight change in the property tax rate approved at the previous week's meeting. The new rate was approved at \$8.97 per \$1,000, a penny lower than the original rate of \$8.98.

The Board began its annual budget review process, approving the first set of Town budget items that previously were approved by the Finance Committee. There were a total of ten budget items, and all of them were unchanged from last year. It was also noted that the Finance Committee had approved the transfer of \$17,799 from the reserve fund to the Fire Department for the repair of Engine No. 1. This is the same fire truck the department had proposed replacing with a half million-dollar custom pumper truck that was defeated by the voters at last June's annual town meeting.

Selectmen Yohalem and Tara White gave a brief recap of the conference call with the Monterey selectmen to discuss the Lake Buel flooding problem. However, according to the selectmen, the call focused not on the flooding problem per se but on an engineering report to study the problem that had been commissioned by the Lake Buel Prudential Commission four years ago. **It's not clear, according to the selectmen, whether the report was ever produced, and this despite the fact New Marlborough contributed \$10,000 towards its cost, while Monterey put up either \$10,000 or \$20,000, although no one seemed to know which.** The only action item to come out of the meeting was that the Monterey Board agreed to track down the report, if in fact it existed, or to determine what happened to the money if it didn't.

The Board held a special permit hearing for filmmaker and Southfield resident Doug Trumbull, who is planning to build an addition onto an existing building on his property on the New Marlborough Southfield Road. As envisioned, the expanded structure would be used, in Mr. Trumbull's words, "as a virtual movie studio" engaged in the "design, development, and production of motion picture productions, including research and development of photographic, editorial, and projection technologies." As he noted in a letter to the Board, "We are hoping that we can begin doing business as a small studio that from time to time employs fifty people, many of whom would be independent contractors working from their own homes/workshops." Only one abutter, Kim Wyatt-McCrea, had raised a concern about the project and that was regarding the additional traffic or media attention it might generate. But Mr. Trumbull noted he had ample parking on his property and, if necessary, would consider widening his driveway. The Board approved the permit in a unanimous roll call vote.

December 10: All three members were present for a liquor license hearing to consider license renewals for the Mill River General Store, the Southfield Store, Old Inn on the Green, Gedney Farm, and Mepal Manor. The board gave its outright approval to the Mill River General Store and tentative approvals to the others, pending certification of their fire alarm systems. The \$500-fee, it was pointed out, goes into the Town's coffers.

Superintendent Peter Marks said the Highway Department is taking on the work to repair both the Lumbert Cross Road and Keyes Hill Road bridges. These would be temporary fixes that would need state Highway Division approval, but the goal is to extend the life of both structures by several years and in the process save the Town an as-yet-to-be-determined amount of money. He said the work on the Lumbert Cross bridge, which involved removing rust, painting the steel support beams and railings, and placing supporting wooden blocks under two of the steel cross members, has been completed and that he is just starting work on the Keyes Hill Road bridge.

December 11: Two Selectmen, Chairman Larry Davis and Nat Yohalem, along with Town Counsel Jeremiah Pollard, Emergency Management Director Barbara Marchione, and Highway Superintendent Peter Marks, were present for the Board's meeting with the Army Corps of Engineers. The purpose of the meeting was to learn more about the Corps' claim that cleanup work done by the Town in the Konkopot and Umpachene Rivers after Hurricane Irene may have violated federal regulations. According to the Corps' Karen Adams, the **Town appears to have taken material, mostly rocks and stones, from the stream beds of the two rivers and deposited it on their banks, and in so doing narrowed**

their channels and changed their hydrologic character, that is to say the movement and velocity of the water. Ms. Adams is Chief of the Permits and Enforcement Branch of the Regulatory Division of the Corps' New England division. The meeting, which lasted about forty-five minutes, was followed by a visit to the site on the Konkopot River near the Hartsville bridge on Route 57 where the some of the work was done (For a related article see "When FEMA Came to Town in the February 2011 NM5VN). Ms. Adams said she would like to find before and after photographs of both sites, and that she would be getting back to the Town in due course.

December 17: All three selectmen were present for a brief, pre-holiday meeting where the first order of business was to review the next set of Town budget items to come over from the Finance Committee. There were only four this time, and like the previous set of budget items all four were level funded, or unchanged from last year.

Selectman White gave an update on the December 13 School Committee meeting where the newly-elected committee members were installed. Alford's Carl Stewart was named chairman, Sheffield's Bonnie Silvers vice chairman, and the various subcommittees were formed. It was also at that meeting that Louise Yohalem, chairman of the Elementary Task Force, presented highlights from the much-anticipated report on the future of elementary education in the district. **Of particular note to the Town was a recommendation that the New Marlborough Central School remain open and be used as an innovative school for the district.** It was Ms. White's understanding that the full report will be posted on the school district's website. (For more detail on that report, see page 8.)

With Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve both falling on a Monday, the next meeting of the Board will be on January 7. □

Peter Schuyten

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Neighbors



Nicholas Dirks of Cagney Hill Road in Southfield has been appointed Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley. Nick has been at Columbia University for the past fifteen years, the last eight as executive vice president of the university and dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. His wife, Columbia professor **Janaki Bakhli**, will be joining the Berkeley faculty as a member of the history department. They, their thirteen-year-old son, **Ishan**, and their white labrador retriever, **Kulfi**, will be relocating to California from New York City in the spring. Nick is also very much a scholar, specializing in South Asian history, with three books to his credit. He will be U.C. Berkeley's tenth chancellor



Nicholas Dirks and Janaki Bakhli.

– essentially its president – when he assumes his new position on June 1. Prior to joining Columbia he taught at the University of Michigan and before that at Cal Tech. The family is very torn about what to do about their much loved Cagney Hill Road home, which they've owned since 1999 — whether to keep it or sell it — but they say they won't be making that decision until later in the year.



Tom and Joyce Weeks are pie-eyed.

Joyce and Tom Weeks, of Southfield, attended an unusual community event while visiting their son and his family in Park City, Utah, at Thanksgiving: a pie breakfast. About ten years ago, several families involved in a Bible study group decided to initiate the pie breakfast, and swung into pie-factory mode. By now, there are dozens of varieties of pie and multiple pies of each type; the same families do all the preparation, and the hosting family rotates each year. It's an open invitation to the community: family and friends invite their family and friends, and on and on. More than 300 people attended this year's event, and the open, relaxed atmosphere encouraged broad social interaction. Hmmmm We have a Pig Roast and a Pasta Dinner Any interest in a Thanksgiving Pie Breakfast?

David Herrick and the **Mill River General Store** serve as the checking station for southern Berkshire County for hunting seasons throughout the year. For the first, and busiest, week of shotgun deer season, there are additional stations in Lee and Sandisfield, but for the rest of the year, the Mill River Store serves hunters from Stockbridge south. This year, Dave checked 116 deer during the first week, of which forty-four were brought in on the first day. This was comparable to previous years. The second week saw only eleven deer, substantially down from other years. Bow season for deer, which precedes shotgun season, saw a total of only forty-four



David Herrick, fence-mending.

in the six-week season. Dave reports that the Mill River station has checked in the most deer in western Massachusetts this year. And at various times during the week of November 26, Mill River was treated to honest-to-goodness traffic jams with trucks lined up in both directions, on both sides of the street. □

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OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

On November 18, **Ann Getsinger**, of New Marlborough village, writes: I'm writing while it's fresh. Just saw a **bobcat** about fifteen feet from my backdoor. He walked around casually, unconcerned about the racket I had just been making before I saw him. I knew it was a male because he was occasionally marking. He moved from the frame shop over to the art studio and then, as he walked up the hill, he was joined by **another bobcat** (who may have been checking out the antique peanuts in shells in my compost pile) about half his size and with much paler markings. His lady friend? The newcomer's markings were deeper brown and with gray spots, with white under the tail, black along the edges — she was like a bleached out version of him. An exquisite sight.

On November 29, **Don Beauchamp**, of Clayton, writes: Early this month I saw a **lone bat** flying around the house and barn. Then last Tuesday (the 27th) I heard a **dog** howling and then a **barred owl** hooting from the woods across the street and then another dog barking back at the first dog, so there was quite a conversation going on for a while around Clayton Corners. In a December 9 postscript, he writes: There were blue birds flying around over here and in the Swan's yard — looked like about three pairs — but when I crossed the Konkapot and walked up the lane toward the woods, not a bird to be found.

On December 5, **Helen Liveten**, of Hayes Hill Road, writes: No more porcupines these days, but almost daily a group of **six to ten hen turkeys** under the feeders. They are big! And drive my dog crazy! He has a turkey bark — quite different from the one for Porky and the deer. Lots of birds at the feeders — a **flock of evening grosbeaks** a week or so ago, but not lately.

On December 10, **Barbara Lowman**, of Southfield, writes: Our large Christmas cactus spent the summer on our deck, as it does every year. We brought it indoors in early October when frost threatened. Within a day or so, we realized that a **cricket** had come indoors with it, as we traced the chirping to its source. We couldn't see the cricket, let alone remove it and take it outdoors. Several times we encouraged it to rejoin nature by leaving the cactus outdoors for several hours, but each time we brought the cactus back inside, it soon greeted us again. By now we had named him (only the males chirp) Jiminy and looked forward to his chirping two or three times a day. We worried he would starve, until we read that crickets survive on plant material: given the size of our cactus, this guy is set for life! So Jiminy has joined **our dog and two cats** as a companionable — if somewhat unusual — pet.

On December 12, **Ed Harvey**, of Mill River, writes: I managed to get one halfway decent shot of mamma nature on the move. This **porcupine** was in my backyard recently.

On December 14, **Tara White**, of Southfield, writes in reply to the question of whether she has seen the **sandhill crane family** recently: I haven't seen them in the last month, but they were still hanging around in early November. Maybe it has gotten too cold for them now.

On December 12, **Tom Coote**, of East Hill Road, writes, in reply to the same question: We had the **cranes** all summer and into the fall, but we have not seen them in at least a month. They fly in and out of the Roston/Windemere fields directly over our house each morning and evening. I suspect they spend the night at the nesting site and feed in the fields during the day. The last time we saw them was right on East Hill just ten feet off the road; there were four of them. My guess is it was a pair with chicks. I would also guess that since we have not seen them at all in at least a month they have headed south.

On December 14, **John McGinley** of Sheffield writes, I've been working at a house overlooking Lake Buel, and I've been seeing two **bald eagles**, usually separately. Every once in a while one of them will perch in a tree near the house. The first time he did this, I was moving to get my camera but he spotted me through the window with his ol' eagle eyes and took off. Next time I saw him I hit the deck, crawled on my hands and knees to grab the camera, and then slowly I raised up and got a few slightly shaky shots through glass panes before he again got wind of me and flew away. Pretty exciting!"



photo by Don Beauchamp



photo by Ed Harvey



photo by John McGinley

A BLUEPRINT FOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

By Jane Burke

On December 13, after six months of often intense work, the Report of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District Elementary Task Force was delivered to the newly seated School Committee by Task Force chair Louise Yohalem. Its opening page makes clear that the group took a global view of its responsibility: "The Task Force recommends that elementary education (Pre-K through 6) in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District be configured to attract and retain interested and engaged students and serve the needs of all students. This shall be accomplished within the financial constraints of the district, changing demographics of the area, and the financial impact on each of the five towns in the district. Our mission is to present a comprehensive unified plan for the Elementary Schools that provides the foundation for all future learning."

The Task Force did not duck the central issue that led to its founding: What should be done with the outlying schools? Its recommendation: keep them, but with the proviso that Egremont and Monterey individually shoulder the costs of renovating or replacing the schools in their towns. The group outlined a series of renovation and code compliance measures that it said should be completed by September 2014. New Marlborough Central School would be renovated and brought into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) at the expense of the district. These renovations would include a new kitchen, an elevator, heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC), and whatever else is necessary to bring the building up to code. Any additions, such as a gymnasium or additional classrooms, would be paid for by outside funds that could be raised through donations, grants, or gifts in kind.

South Egremont School and Monterey School must also meet all code and ADA requirements, but the towns of Egremont and Monterey would be asked to cover all capital costs in either building anew or renovating their existing schools. The costs of major repairs such as roofs, HVAC, getting their buildings up to code and maintaining them at code would be borne by the towns, not the district. Monterey is already well along in the process of considering the construction of a new building in a more suitable and safer location than the present school building.

These recommendations were largely based on feedback from the community at public forums held in all five towns. The group took into consideration enrollment projections showing shrinking student populations, the school budget, and the requirements

of Massachusetts law. Business Manager Bruce Turner met with Task Force representatives and provided engineering studies, consultant reports on the cost of building renovations, and the 2009 Consolidation Study. Fred Finkle, the district's director of buildings and grounds, also provided information on the needs of the buildings and costs.

The Task Force Report, however, goes well beyond bricks and mortar. A section on "Educational Philosophy and Content" declares that SBRSD benefits from its small size, which enables a personal approach to meeting the needs of all students. Task Force members were impressed with the excellence of the teaching but listed thirty specific suggestions for improvement. The most strongly promoted is the recommendation to provide "a true Berkshire education that embraces the local strengths and rich heritage of the Berkshires – the arts and environment . . . and prepares future workers with strong arts and STEM (science technology, engineering, and math) education." Another suggestion of note called for New Marlborough Central School to become an Innovation School as a model of whole-child education for the entire district. The Task Force recommended that the Innovation School application to the Massachusetts Department of Education, held up by the previous School Committee, be revisited.

A section on "Early Education and Extended Day" recommends expanding early education for children ages two years and nine months, to four years, and offering extended-day options to families who wish to have their children remain in school beyond the end of the regular school day. Parents would pay for these options on a sliding scale adjusted to their financial circumstances. Currently, district families have limited access to these programs, which are highly valued by education experts as a means to giving all children equal opportunity for success in school. The Task Force also called for the expansion of the pre-K to all four-year-olds, paid for by the district. The extended day option would add before- and after-school enrichment programs that could be grant-funded to include all families. Offering these programs, said the report, could help draw families to the district.

There were many suggestions for generating income to the district including renting space at the Sheffield campus, which was built to accommodate 1,500 students but now has fewer than 800. Possible users mentioned were colleges such as Berkshire Community College or MCLA (a state liberal arts college located in North Adams) for college courses in South County; Osher

continued on page 9

CHECKED YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE LATELY?

Now You Can Sign Up for a Renewal Reminder

By David Lowman

Near the end of November, I visited John Manikowski, friend, one of the 5VN founders, and cutler par excellence. I was a bit late for our meeting, as I had just returned from Pittsfield and a visit to the Massachusetts Department of Motor Vehicles to renew my driver's license. John inquired about the process and seemed somewhat mystified by it. Several years ago the Commonwealth stopped notifying people that their licenses were soon to expire, putting the responsibility to renew squarely on the licensee. John wondered about his own license expiration date, retrieved it from his wallet, and, lo and behold, found that his license would expire the following day, his birthday.

I felt bad that he hadn't known earlier so that we could have driven to Pittsfield together, but at least he wouldn't be driving about with an expired license.

Since then, I've learned the following:

- The DMV has, in conjunction with a private company, started a "reminder" service to notify license holders that their licenses are about to expire. The only catch is that you must sign up for the service. There is no cost to you, but you must sign up on-line. If you don't have a computer at home, the New Marlborough Public Library has several you can use. Go to Mass.gov and select the link to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Then select "Renew Your Driver's License." The first screen you'll see then will introduce you to the automatic reminder service. The reminder will come in the form of an e-mail, a phone message, or

a text message. Apparently a "snail" mail reminder is not an option.

- Those not yet seventy-five years old can renew their driver's license on-line, paying the \$50 fee with a credit card. If you are seventy-five or older, you will need to present yourself to the DMV for an eye test.

If, like me, you have to personally go to the DMV office, I'd suggest that you do it mid-morning on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, and definitely not on a day following a holiday.

So, John Manikowski could have renewed on-line and saved the trip to Pittsfield if only he and I had been better informed at the time.

One wishes for the good old days when the DMV had a branch office in Great Barrington. Those days appear to be ancient history, never to return. □



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A Blueprint for Elementary Education, continued from page 8

Lifelong Learning Institute for seniors, community service organizations, and summer programs. The report recommended hiring a grant writer to tap into the many opportunities for significant funding.

A section on leadership makes suggestions on the roles of the superintendent, the principals, the school committee, school councils, and boards of selectmen and how each of them can play a part in the success of the schools. The report also stresses the need for improved marketing of the district and communication of its successes through a better website, closer ties to media (both print and radio), stronger parent groups, creating opportunities for community volunteers, and improved e-mail connections to families.

As evidenced by the report's appendix, the Task Force recommendations are well supported. It reviewed

all student data collected by the district over the past ten years, financial documents including renovation costs and per-pupil cost, and an impressive list of studies, including the latest educational research and Department of Education recommendations.

The full report can be found at the district website, www.sbrsd.org. Click on Elementary Task Force in the lower right corner and then at the bottom of the ensuing page, "Final Plan Submitted to the SBRSD School Committee." The Committee, of course, has a number of immediate concerns: the selection of a new superintendent and the budget for FY14, to name two. But it plans to form a subcommittee to study the report, which, with its well-researched recommendations, can serve as a blueprint for a vibrant educational future at SBRSD. □

THE WIZ-KIDS OF UNDERMOUNTAIN

Text and photos by Larry Burke

In early December, a very talented troupe from Undermountain Elementary was swept to the land of the Yellow Brick Road, where they brought the Tin Woodman, the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow, and, of course, Dorothy to life in a wonderful, songful rendition of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Right: Mary Shalaby, as Dorothy, sang a rendition of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" that Judy Garland herself would have applauded. At her side is Toto, energetically performed by Ben Shannon.

Below left: Mickey Masters, in his defining role as the Cowardly Lion, brought down the house with his rendition of "If I Were King of the Forest." He is surrounded by Scarecrow (Elisabeth Enoch), Tinman (Luke Harvey), Dorothy (Mary Shalaby), and Toto (Ben Shannon).

Below right: Safely back home from her travels in the Land of Oz, Dorothy is surrounded by her family and friends. Left to right, Mickey Masters as Zeke, Luke Harvey as Hickory, Elisabeth Enoch (kneeling) as Hunk, Benjamin Salzmänn as Uncle Henry, Mary Shalaby as Dorothy, Sarah Markeham as Auntie Em, Ben Shannon as Toto, and Kolby Bleau as Professor Marvel.

Bottom: The entire ensemble of forty-three students of the Undermountain Elementary school sang a rousing finale of "We're Off to See the Wizard." Another eight students worked behind the scenes.



HELP STRIKE UP THE BAND

by Robert Twing, Booster Club president

Tickets for the Mount Everett Music Booster February raffle are now on sale. All the money raised is used to help augment funds for music and chorus programs at Mount Everett, where the district budget falls short. A portion will be added to a fund to purchase of a new baby grand piano. Tickets are \$10 each (that's just 35 cents a day).

One ticket is drawn on each day of February, with the winner taking all the prizes on that day. Then the ticket is returned to the box for a chance to win again. The prizes include ski passes to Catamount, tickets to a Springfield

Falcons hockey game, gift certificates to local stores and restaurants, locally made maple syrup, consultation with an arborist, and a reflexology session. The grand prize for a drawing on the 28th, worth \$500, is a two-night stay at Mayflower Farm Cottage in South Egremont.

Tickets can be purchased from any band or chorus student or parent, at Lindell's Hardware in Canaan, Connecticut (ask for Robert), or send us an e-mail at memusicbooster@yahoo.com to make arrangements to pick up a raffle entry at a convenient location. □

UPCOMING: Event Calendar for January and February

January 12: Wine, Beer & Food Tasting, a Kiwanis/Rotary Club fund raiser for scholarships; music by Tom Ingersoll, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Gedney Farm, raffles every half hour -- \$30 per person, \$50 per couple.

January 20: House Concert, featuring the Memling Piano Quartet playing works by Mozart and Dvorak; 4:00 p.m. at a private residence in Stockbridge. Call 229-2785 for tickets (\$25, \$20 to members of the Village Association).

February 23: House Concert, with flutist Christopher Krueger and lutist Stanley Charkey playing renaissance music; 4:00 p.m. at a private residence (call 229-2785 for reservations) – tickets are \$25, \$20 to members of the Village Association.

WINTER HOUSE CONCERTS

The fifteenth season of the New Marlborough Winter House Concerts will commence on Sunday, January 20 with the Memling Piano Quartet. This ensemble is composed of members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and coaching staff. They will perform music of Mozart and Dvorak at a private residence in Stockbridge.

The second concert of the season will be on Saturday, February 23, and will feature flutist Christopher Krueger and lutenist Stanley Charkey, performing music of the renaissance. Chris and Stan played in our series several

years ago, delighting the audience with baroque gems that could have been private music entertainment for Frederick the Great of Prussia.

These intimate concerts in homes of Berkshire residents are sponsored by the New Marlborough Village Association. All concerts begin at 4:00 p.m. and last an hour, with wine and hors d'oeuvres served afterward. Admission is \$20 for NMVA members and \$25 for non-members. Seating is limited so please make reservations at 413-229-2785. □

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A COOL RECEPTION

Photos by Jane Burke



Guests attending SBRSD's annual senior citizen luncheon held in Undermountain Elementary School cafeteria on December 6 were ushered past a receiving line of frosty gentlemen with warm smiles painted by middle school art students taught by Kari Giordano.

THE LOG

Fire Chief Peter Scala may be reached at (413) 229-8100. The Fire Department meets at 7:00 p.m. every Tuesday at the fire station in Southfield. Police Chief Scott Farrell may be reached at (413) 229-8393. As always, dial 911 in the case of an emergency.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Nov. 2	5:36 p.m.	Alarm activation Hartsville New Marlborough Road	Nov. 13	4:15 p.m.	Domestic situation Southfield
Nov. 4	11:00 a.m.	Mutual aid to Sandisfield for lost 6-year-old in the woods		7:00 p.m.	Citizen reporting flashing lights inside Kolburne School. Requesting to check building.
	1:45 p.m.	Suspicious vehicle Hotchkiss Road	Nov. 14	12:30 p.m.	Assisted with investigation/arrest for larceny, Ashley Falls/Clayton
	2:30 p.m.	Patrol check revealed someone dumping garbage at York Lake	Nov. 16	1:30 p.m.	Report of unethical acts, landlord tenant issues, Sisson Hill
Nov. 5	12:00 a.m.	Fire alarm at Kolburne School	Nov. 18	12:30 p.m.	Found property, may have been involved in a larceny
Nov. 6	8:45 p.m.	Burglar alarm activation Great Barrington Mill River Road	Nov. 22	9:40 p.m.	Assisted with medical call, Canaan Southfield Road
Nov. 7	3:45 p.m.	MVA, car into tree; Great Barrington Mill River Road	Nov. 28	12:13 p.m.	Lost property on Route 57
Nov. 8	5:22 p.m.	Suspicious vehicle parked on Hotchkiss Road	Nov. 30	7:10 a.m.	Fire alarm Corser Hill Road
Nov. 9	9:30 a.m.	Citizen complaint of speeder on Brewer Branch Road		11:46 a.m.	Report of animal abuse, Mill River
Nov. 10	4:30 p.m.	Stolen rider lawn mower, Hartsville		1:30 p.m.	Motor vehicle lockout, vehicle opened, Mill River
Nov. 13	4:00 p.m.	VIN Verification Southfield			

FIRE AND RESCUE

Nov. 1	9:41 a.m.	East Hill Road fire alarm	Nov. 13	7:10 p.m.	New Marlborough Southfield Road fire alarm
Nov. 2	1:29 p.m.	Canaan Southfield Road medical call	Nov. 20	7:55 p.m.	East Hill Road fire alarm
Nov. 4	1:05 p.m.	Mutual aid to Sandisfield search	Nov. 22	9:30 p.m.	Mutual Aid to North Canaan structure fire
Nov. 6	12:06 a.m.	Tamaridge Road fire alarm	Nov. 22	9:45 p.m.	Canaan Southfield Road medical call
Nov. 6	9:40 a.m.	Tamaridge Road fire alarm	Nov. 23	2:10 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Monterey medical call
Nov. 7	4:00 p.m.	Mill River Great Barrington Road MVA	Nov. 30	6:55 a.m.	Corser Hill Road furnace malfunction
Nov. 10	10:55 a.m.	Mutual Aid to North Canaan stand-by			

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Ronald & Jean Paro; Don & Roberta Ferris; Adele & Alex Holman; Debra Balken;
Henry & Julie Jadow; Lawrence Rosenthal; Judith Friedlander;
Richard & Susan Silver; and Richard & Pamela Stebbins.

As one measure of the growing support for the 5 Village News, we are delighted to report that for the first time since we began publication, more than 300 readers have contributed to the paper. The number as of December 19 was 309 – and we still had another week and a half in the calendar year. Our last best year was 2011, with 289 contributors. Without you, the 5 Village News could not continue. Thank You!

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MAILBOX

To the NM5VN:

The Planning Board would like to thank John Schreiber for his letter and for opening to further discussion the proposed revision to New Marlborough's Protective Bylaws. All public response is valued.

The following quote from the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP, 2006) makes clear that the Board and Town residents share many of the areas of concern in John's letter.

"New Marlborough has become the 'new frontier' for unchecked building activity in the second home market. Results from the current survey indicate that 94% of the respondents wish to protect the historic character of the five villages as well as the surrounding landscape."

This sentiment is reflected in tools like our OSRP and the New Marlborough Comprehensive Plan. Together with public feedback, they have provided the impetus and shape of the current proposal. The Planning Board seeks to increase protection against "unchecked" sprawl. By distinguishing between the village centers and the rural areas, the current proposal is a vital step in that direction.

John's letter was divided into five sections. The following are the Board's responses:

1. "The sheer scope of potential development is enormous and will destroy the rural village atmosphere of the town." The Planning Board does not agree with this particular assertion and has clarified at public meetings that the objective of the revision is "that any future growth reflects and preserves what currently exists in the villages" (see page 17 of the New Marlborough Comprehensive Plan). This is not a Community Economic Development Plan with a set of defined economic goals. There is no goal of "full development," and the envelope for each of the villages is consistent with the updated OSRP. Under the goal that "open space and rural character of the villages remain intact" is the objective that "flexible building envelopes containing small business, light commerce, and residences exist in village centers." Using both natural boundaries and settlement patterns, the Planning Board proposed boundaries for each of the villages to provide that "flexible building envelope" within the borders of each village. Under current zoning, the potential for development build-out already exists, which will continue to chip away at the rural atmosphere of New Marlborough. As pointed out in the OSRP, the one-size zoning of a minimum of one acre and 150' frontage for a buildable lot encourages a pattern of sprawl across the landscape, along all of our roadways. One-size zoning does not distinguish between town and country or enhance vibrancy in the villages but rather depresses their value relative to the countryside. The proposed revision is a step toward shifting some of the development burden from the rural district. John's recommendation that "only one of our villages, particularly one with a history of retail and commercial development" be singled out for "planned, careful development" is not practicable. All five of the villages have a history of retail and commercial development. New Marlborough's earliest settlers were enterprising individuals and New Marlborough's villages exist where they do because of the businesses these early townfolk built – the original blacksmith and brass foundries of New Marlborough, the paper mills and hotels of Mill River, the clay works of Clayton, and Southfield's tannery as well as other agrarian and industrial pursuits that supported Hartsville, whose sawmill is sometimes still active today. But the serious drawback to this suggestion is that it would have the undesired effect of sending development that did not meet those planning requirements to the other villages. Complex as it is, regulatory change for New Marlborough must address the Town, with all its villages, as a whole.

2. "The Township does not have the infrastructure to support this scope of potential development." John's concern that the revision would create densities too great for the current infrastructure was shared by some in town and addressed before his letter was published. Originally, the Board created dimensional standards based on current village lot sizes that would have brought into compliance many of the non-conforming lots. Since meeting health and building codes is a requirement before construction can take place, the Board felt confident that it could meet the goal of greater compliance for village lots without the risk of overburdening existing systems. In practice, new building lots, in the villages, would continue to require at least the acre necessary for non-municipal separation of sub-surface sanitation. Local zoning bylaws do not and cannot require the construction of a group sewer or a group water system. The minimum lot size for Village Center

lots has been revised back to one acre. Setbacks and road frontage still reflect measurements taken of all the existing village properties and are intended, if village development occurs, to replicate the historic pattern. The Planning Board will look again at the provisions within the proposal for multi-family dwellings. A balance has to be reached between the goal of diversifying housing stock to accommodate a range of income brackets, younger families and older residents, and the desire of the Town not to overburden existing infrastructure. The Planning Board believes we are there with this proposal, but we will look again.

3. "The Proposal has no specific provision for Historic Preservation." In Chapter Ten of the Comprehensive Plan, an Implementation Strategy is mapped out with goals and a timetable for action plan. The proposed bylaw revision is a step in that process. An action plan creating a "New Village Center District Within Existing Villages" falls within one to three years of the creation of the Plan, and is shown as the responsibility of the Planning Board, the residents, and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. The very next line on the timetable is to develop village center design guidelines with the same groups responsible. Some of these guidelines are rolled into the current revision in the form of the dimensional standards and scale restrictions. This is a form of historical preservation in the sense of requiring new construction in village centers to match historic patterns but not in the sense of specific design standards or provisions to protect historic structures. The design of new structures to "be compatible with existing village centers" will flow from this next step in the process of implementation. The Board is moving apace through incremental stages of the implementation process. The Historic Commission was delegated the responsibility in the 2006 OSRP, along with The Board of Selectmen, to implement the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to provide funds for land acquisition and maintenance of historical sites. John Schreiber recommends the CPA for the same purpose. It enables municipalities to enact a surcharge on the property tax bill of not more than 3 percent. In 2004 the Planning Board made an overture to the Board of Selectmen, whose charge it is to endorse such action, to have New Marlborough voters decide on the acceptance of a CPA. The BOS did not want to pursue it at that time. The percentage of state matching funds that Dr. Schreiber mentions, originally available for the CPA, have been reduced since its enactment. Another way to pursue historic preservation would be for the Town to seek to establish local historic districts - the strongest form of protection for historic structures in Massachusetts. This should be under the initiative of the Historical Commission. The Historical Commission has already sought and received National Historic Districts for New Marlborough and Mill River. Here is a description of local historic districts from the Massachusetts Historical Commission: "In a local historic district, before any exterior architectural feature that is visible from a public way is altered, the plans to carry out that alteration must first be approved by a local historic district commission. In this way, needless demolitions and alterations can be permanently prevented." The Board defers to the Historical Commission and Conservation Commission for follow up on interest representing CPA and/or local historic districts to the Town. The Board will follow up on the feasibility of John Schreiber's suggestion that a "knock down" provision be added to the current revision proposal.

4. "The Proposal will not encourage young families with children to move to New Marlborough and relies too heavily on the special permit process." It is precisely with young families in mind that many provisions in the proposed revision were drafted. John mentions home businesses such as landscaping, construction, welding, etc. that are the occupations of many current year-round residents. He correctly states that all those businesses will be grandfathered. However, he goes on to say that "new residents will not be able to do this without special permits." If by "this" he means the home businesses he describes, that depends. In the proposal, "Home Occupations" are by-right in both the Village Center and the Rural Districts. Home Occupations are defined as follows: "The use of a room or rooms in a dwelling or accessory building by a resident occupant for the practice of a recognized profession or by a resident carpenter, painter, plumber, electrician, or other artisan in connection with his/her trade, including display and sale of products produced on the premises, or by a resident engaged in the customary home occupation, provided there is no evidence of business other than a permitted sign." That covers a lot of ground. These are exactly the types of occupations a young family might engage in to make residence in New Marlborough feasible. Uses were assigned special permit if there were concerns for parking, contamination, and unsightliness and lighting — precisely the hazards that John mentions. In answer to the concern about over-reliance on special permitting, it should be noted that the number of permitted uses in the proposal is expanded in

both the villages and rural areas. The current table has thirty; the revised table would have fifty-three uses. The number requiring special permitting drops. Of the thirty uses detailed in our current Protective Bylaws, twenty-two (73 percent) require special permits. Under the revision proposal, within the Rural District only twenty-five of fifty-three (47 percent) uses would require special permits and within the Village Center Districts, only twenty-eight of fifty-three (53 percent) uses would require special permits. Nevertheless, the Board will go back through the permitted uses to see if some of the allowed uses should be excluded from the rural district as he suggests. The Board has agreed to take salvage yards off the table of permitted uses for the rural district because of the objections John raised.

5. There is no provision for new Town-owned and/or managed open space, parks, or agricultural land. Although the 2006 OSRP, in its statement of purpose, “addresses these concerns by proposing preservation of areas of unprotected open space with important natural or cultural resources (such as unprotected core wildlife habitat, prime agricultural soils, or remaining open fields),” New Marlborough simply does not have the revenue to purchase and maintain additional land at this time. Also, removing land from the tax base while increasing municipal costs for maintenance and care is a double-edged sword for New Marlborough. The Town already struggles to meet its budgetary needs. We do have agricultural protections under the Right to Farm provisions in our current Bylaws (these remain unchanged in the draft provisions). The assertion that Clayton has prime agricultural land within the new proposed village boundaries is wrong. Clayton’s proposed boundaries are two. They circle north and south Clayton, leaving the agricultural land, in between, in the rural district. Fortunately, The New Marlborough Land Trust has taken a significant role in open land conservation. An example was their 2007 support of the gift of a Conservation Restriction to The Trustees of Reservations by Edward (Ned) Goodnow. His 300 acres of ecologically and agriculturally important land, just to the south of Mill River, will “remain as it is seen today – rolling fields and forest – forever.” This restriction furthered the goals of the OSRP by allowing for “a public access trail to the historic Lower Carroll Mill site along the Konkapot River, and protecting the rural and scenic character of the roads and landscape near Mill River Village.” (thetrustees.org) Additional Town-owned parks within the villages would be wonderful. The village green of New Marlborough is an invaluable asset to the Town. The Planning Board does not believe a provision that mandates additional Town purchase of land is advisable at this time.

We are grateful to John to have asked us to clarify and review the proposal. Quite possibly, the response to his concerns will answer those of others as well. As always, we welcome feedback. It is important to the Planning Board that we aim for consensus.

Sincerely yours,

Jamie Mullen, *Chair*, Patricia Hardyman, *Vice-Chair*,
Holly Morse, Charlie Parton, and Judy Hattendorf

MAILBOX



To the Editor:

Jon and Marianne Swan recently announced plans to move to the north country. They will be truly missed in New Marlborough, particularly in East Sheffield (a.k.a. Clayton), their home of many decades. Most snowbirds plan their north-south movements according to the thermometer but leave it to the unwinged Swans to come up with a unique flight path: heading towards more snow and cold during winter months, not less.

We only hope they return to their nest on occasion, not entirely abandoning their adopted flock. The NM5VN will miss their maganimous efforts.

John Manikowski

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The Secret Chicken Society, by Judy Cox

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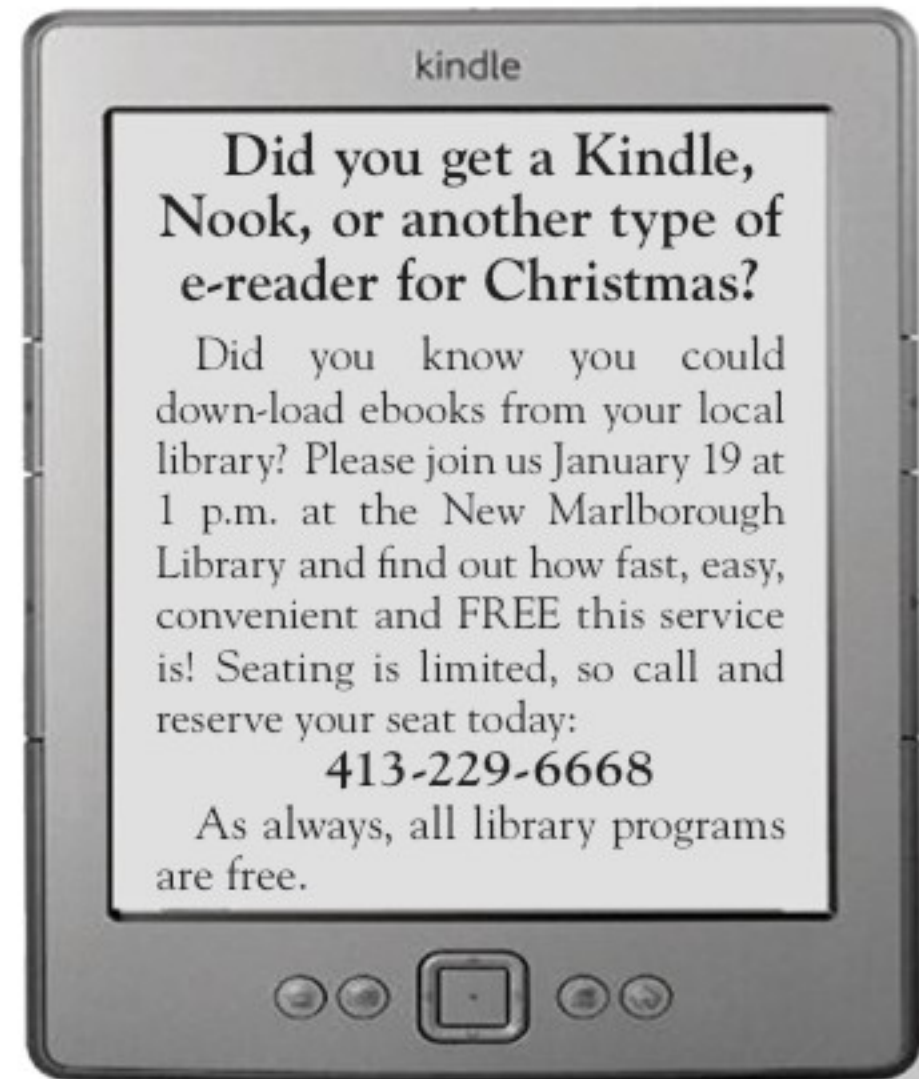
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IKEBANA

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Join us at the library in Mill River for a series of hands-on workshops led by Mill River resident Brian Mikesell to study this centuries-old art form from 10am-noon on January 26, February 23, March 23, April 27, and May 25. Due to space limitations, the workshops are limited to 10 participants, who must sign up in advance at the library. All you'll need to bring is garden shears. The cost for each workshop is \$25 per person (includes flowers). For more information, contact Brian at mikeselb@gmail.com.



About the instructor: Brian Mikesell has achieved the rank of Kakyo (assistant Professor, 3rd degree) in the Ikenobo School of ikebana under the instruction of Toshiko Shindo Alden (Sokatoku rank) and Michiko Baribeau (Junkatoku rank). He has taught ikebana workshops for adults at the New York Tachibana chapter of Ikenobo as well as lessons for high school students.

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- * **Board of Selectmen:** Every Monday at 6:30 p.m.
- * **Planning Board:** First and third Wednesday at 7 p.m.
- * **Board of Health:** First Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.
- * **Conservation Commission:** Last Saturday of the month at 10 a.m.
- * **Board of Assessors:** Monday through Thursday 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
- * **Fire Department training:** Every Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the Fire Station
- * **Building Inspector:** Monday 5 - 7 p.m. Wednesday 8 - 10 a.m.
- * **First Responders:** meeting/training: First and third Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the Fire Station
- * **Cultural Council:** Second Thursday at 4:15 p.m. at the library.
- * **Town Treasurer:** Wednesday 3:30 p.m. - 6 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. - 10 a.m.
- * **Tax Collector:** Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
- * **Selectmen's Administrative Secretary:** Monday - Friday 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
- * **Dog and Animal Control Officer:** John Springstube 413-232-7038
- * **Town Clerk:** 229-8278; 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. weekdays; Saturday by appointment
- * **Town Hall:** 229-8116
- * **Police:** business office: 229-8161

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NM5VN Editorial Team

Joe Poindexter, issue editor; Diane Barth, designer;
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