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The John Dewey Academy

SOON-TO-BE OCCUPANT OF AN HISTORIC NEW MARLBOROUGH SITE

By Barry R. Shapiro

New Marlborough is about to get some new neighbors. Dr. David Baum, the owner of the John Dewey Academy, currently located at the imposing Searles Castle in Great Barrington, has announced that the Academy will be moving this summer to the Cassilis Farm property on Route 57 in New Marlborough.

“We hope to be all moved in by July 31,” said Dr. Baum. “We are very excited about this move and to become part of the New Marlborough community.”

Founded in 1985 and located at Searles Castle since its inception, John Dewey Academy (named in honor of the influential American educator) is a residential, year-round college-preparatory high school. Its mission, according to its website, “is to empower bright but underachieving adolescents to overcome social, emotional, and academic challenges in order to attend quality college and lead healthy, productive, and successful lives.” Its entering students exhibit a range of problems, from depression and



photo by Larry Burke

Cassilis Farm sits quietly, awaiting the next chapter in its history.

anxiety to eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicidal gestures and attempts.

What unites them is their failure to respond to such traditional psychotropic remedies as outpatient therapy and psychotropic drugs. John Dewey Academy uses none of these. Its approach relies on providing a structured environment to help students gain control of their lives. It attributes its success to its small size, a rigorous while individualized curriculum, and its ability to get students to take on responsibilities and develop leadership skills. It limits admission to those it believes will respond to this more holistic methodology. Test scores and grades are rarely considered.

The academy, fully accredited by the New England Association of Schools, is coeducational with a maximum enrollment of twenty-five students, ages fifteen to twenty-one, typically starting at grade 10, up through college-level and even postgraduate courses. The student-teacher ratio is 3:1 and the student-clinician ratio is 6:1. Class size averages three to four. Remarkably, since 1985, its graduates have had a 100 percent acceptance rate to colleges, including such competitive schools as Columbia, Cornell, Holy Cross, Mount Holyoke, Vassar, Wellesley, and Williams. Tuition for the fifty-two-week school year for 2020/21 was \$98,000. School districts sometimes reimburse parents for part or all of the tuition, some or all of which may be tax deductible.

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Cassilis Farm, continued

Dr. Baum, 66, earned a Ph.D in renaissance history at Yale and has taught at New York University, Skidmore College, Union College, and, most recently, Bard College at Simon's Rock. He joined Dewey Academy in 2015 as Dean of Students and was subsequently promoted to Head of School. Unable to keep students on campus because of the Covid pandemic, the school closed last March and was sold to Dr. Baum in May.

The purchase did not include the Searles Castle property. The Bratter family is expected to seek a buyer for it in the future who can maximize its potential. "It really is a fabulous property and includes fifty acres right in downtown Great Barrington," said Baum.

Reopening the school in the time of Covid was a challenge. "I believe we were the first residential school in New England to bring its students back," said Dr. Baum. "We worked very closely with Community Health Partners in Great Barrington to figuratively 'bubble wrap' the building, and to perform all of the testing and protocol necessary to preserve a safe environment for our students and staff. We've quarantined everyone and, happily, we've not had one case."

Knowing that he wanted to find a permanent home for the Academy and knowing that the Blatter family intended to sell Searles Castle, Dr. Baum began a property search in earnest. "We needed a place that could accommodate our residential, classroom, and office needs, and that is both special and has curb appeal so that parents would want to send their children there and which would provide a wonderful home for them. We looked at other places, but Cassilis Farm is just what we needed."

The farm was listed for sale at \$2,195,000 in May 2018. The listing described Cassilis as a 10,000 square foot, historic property, offering, "an enticing combination of elegant architectural details, a beautiful landscape with views, and the opportunity to add your own vision and style to make it your own. The property includes two homes, connected by a porte cochère, for a total of nine bedrooms and six-and-a-half baths. Mechanicals are updated. Historic horse and cow barns, an antique icehouse, and a garden house add to the appeal of this unique eighteen-acre Berkshire estate." The Academy closed on its purchase on November 2, acquiring the main property and two small houses, for a purchase price of \$1,600,000.

Photographs of the property interior available online belie the rosy description in the real estate listing. Some rooms have peeling wallpaper, missing plaster, cracked walls, and bathroom fixtures that have seen better days. There are also many large rooms which cry out for renovation and modernization. Dr. Baum is nonetheless enthusiastic about the project.

"It needs updating but no major structural work. Sprinklers will be installed, the bathrooms updated, and

handicapped access provided. It will ultimately have seven bedrooms, which will each typically house three or more students. I think it will turn out great, and I'm really optimistic that we can be in by the end of July. Our goal is eventually to convert the main house to student residences, offices and classrooms, the smaller houses to staff housing, the horse barn to science labs and indoor recreation space, with the remaining buildings razed to create additional grounds."

Financing for the acquisition and renovations is coming from private investors along with a capital campaign focused on the Academy's parent and alumni community. Dr. Baum has converted the Academy's status from a business corporation to a charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3), meaning that it can now raise tax deductible contributions from donors to help achieve its mission. The impact of the Academy's newly obtained tax-exempt status upon the Town's property tax income is not known at this time.

The Academy employs twenty-one full and part-time employees, some of whom, Dr. Baum noted, may be looking for residences in town once the Academy relocates. He also notes that, while much of the maintenance on the property is performed by the students, he will look to local businesses for the skilled trades which the students do not handle.

Dr. Baum is excited about this entire project and relocating the Academy to New Marlborough. "We will miss downtown Great Barrington and access to the Mahaiwe and Triplex along with the stores and coffee shops which our students used, but we won't miss the noise. We're very excited about the property and becoming a part of the community. I think our students will welcome some of the volunteer opportunities which I understand are available and, while I now live in Pittsfield, I'm certainly open to relocating to New Marlborough."

"I'm proud of our students, adds Dr. Baum. "They are all good kids who have made a few poor choices and I'm confident that they will do well here." □



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A BRIEF HISTORY OF CASSILIS FARM

Cassilis Farm, which looks out upon Mount Everett from its perch on Route 57, just a bit north of New Marlborough Village, may be a mystery to newcomers to town, but it has a storied history. In its first incarnation, it was known as Brookmead Farm. The original house burned to the ground but was rebuilt in 1890 just as it had been. Around that same time, during the so-called "Gilded Age," a small number of men of New York patrician families discovered the rustic beauty of New Marlborough and began to acquire tracts of land here. Foremost among these was Hildreth Kennedy Bloodgood, who was looking for a good place to bring the Hackney horses and ponies, numbering around 200, that he had purchased in England. He acquired large parcels of land to the north and east of New Marlborough Village, established Mepal Farm, and built a manor house on the property. After that house burned down, he built another, this time of stone. Today, after a long succession of owners, this manor is the home of the Center for Motivation and Change.

Howard Willets, another wealthy New Yorker and good friend of Hildreth Bloodgood, had a disaster (yet another fire!) at his extensive Jersey cattle and thoroughbred horse farm, known as Gedney Farm, in White Plains, New York. As a result, he bought a down-at-the-heels farm in the center of New Marlborough Village, built a magnificent horse barn and dairy which exist today, and which we know as...Gedney Farm.

But what's that got to do with Cassilis Farm, one might ask. Both the Bloodgood and Willets families were deeply involved in breeding and showing their horses and dogs, as well as in competing, particularly in the National Horse Show and the Westminster Dog Show. Howard Willets's son, J. Macy Willets, and Hildreth Bloodgood's daughter Gladys knew each other from a young age, being in the social fabric of "Old New York" and from participating in these shows. They were a proper match, and, in 1910, they married. The young Mr. Willets bought Brookmead Farm. The couple renamed it Cassilis Farm and set about breeding their own prize-winning Hackney horses and ponies, as well as cocker spaniels and Jersey cows. Eventually, the farm had a stable of sixty horses, along with a souvenir room with hundreds of trophies won at horse and dog shows. The Willetses were quite active for decades in the horse show association and annual exhibitors at Madison Square Garden. In fact, in the November 1, 1958 issue of *The New Yorker*, in the Talk of the Town section, there appeared a thoroughly informative and complimentary story on Gladys Bloodgood Willets, as she was preparing to participate in the seventy-fifth annual National Horse Show.

Sadly, in October of 1940, Mr. Willets, apparently with intention, shot himself in the head with a .22 caliber rifle in Canaan, and, then, incredibly, managed to drive home to Cassilis Farm, where he ignored his guests, went up to his room, was discovered by a maid, and rushed to Fairview Hospital, where he died. The farm stayed in the Willets family ownership until Mrs. Willets sold it in 1975, but she lived on until 1984. Her granddaughter, Angie Pell, a lifelong accomplished equestrian in her own right, has sustained the Bloodgood/Willets family connection to New Marlborough, returning here each summer to her rustic home at the base of Dry Hill.

A notable chapter in the history of Cassilis Farm occurred between the years 1976 to 1978, when the founder of the international art movement known as Fluxus, George Maciunas, resided there. According to an article by Adele Holman in the July 2007 *New Marlborough 5 Village News*, "...John Lennon and Yoko Ono, who were early and very active Fluxus artists, staged a 'Happening' at the New Marlborough dump on Halloween...." John and Yoko must have had an extended stay at Cassilis Farm, or a number of visits, as there is a photograph of John sledding with his young son Sean down a snowy embankment with the house in the background.

In the mid-1980s, the property was acquired by Jane Carpenter. Jane was a nurse, a local business person, and a caregiver of abused children. After her death in 2017, her son Jeff and his wife Winona continued to live there until the sale of the property to the John Dewey Academy. A new chapter now begins in the saga of Cassilis Farm. □



Cassilis Hackey ponies posing at an undated horse show, likely in the early 1960's, with Mrs. J. Macy Willets at the reins.

Archival photo courtesy of New Marlborough Historical Society

HAIKU IN NEW MARLBOROUGH: CATHARSIS IN THE TIME OF COVID

By Robbi Hartt

There are many metaphors used to describe haiku, the beautiful art form introduced by Japanese poets 1,300 years ago, but “water cooler” is not likely one that comes to mind. Debra Herman suggests, however, that it may be the most fitting image to capture the haiku craze that has taken over Maggie’s List the past month, bringing people together in meaningful and light-hearted ways around a shared passion at a time when we are feeling isolated.

According to Ms. Herman, creator and “keeper” of Maggie’s List, the idea of inviting readers to share their own haiku came to her after watching the video series “James May: Our Man in Japan,” in which a British journalist discovers haiku while exploring the cultural richness of Japanese society. Her first haiku post last March about her dog, who is going blind, read:

Anxiety rules
My dog demands food at dawn
Tummy rubs ease all

Although her post invited others to join in writing a few lines about their life in the time of the coronavirus, fewer than a dozen readers responded at that time. “People were just beginning to realize the seriousness of the situation and craved factual information more than a creative outlet, I think. It died out quickly,” she notes. In late fall, Laura Endacott resuscitated the haiku posting, and this time the mood seemed different. People were in desperate need of an escape from Covid-19, election and post-election anxiety, and social distancing. They found distraction and comfort in this simple form of expression and relished the opportunity to share their observations and connect with others in the community.


For those who haven’t experienced Maggie’s List, perhaps a little background is in order. Maggie’s List originated in April 2008 when Debra Herman launched a local email list and recruited a handful of people to

join. Initially, the email group was used to provide town meeting notices, updates on library events, and background information on Board of Selectmen candidates. Over time, it expanded to include more community updates, such as contractor requests and recommendations, cultural events and nature walks, and occasionally lost dogs (or cows).

Over the past fourteen years, Maggie’s List has grown, now boasting 712 subscribers, each with some connection to New Marlborough (that and an email request to debra@dtrain.com are all that is needed to join). Although other neighboring communities have similar venues, they tend to have strict rules governing buying and selling, personal interactions, and political discussions, while Maggie’s List is (according to Ms. Herman) more “free form.” Periodic “flare-ups” over guest speakers, local issues, and national politics are allowed, for the most part, with moderating from Herman only when a post or response is perceived to push the envelope too far. With the changes in the Mill River Post Office and General Store, and ongoing restrictions of the pandemic, Maggie’s List has gained more prominence in the past year as a source of community connection. Whether you enjoy getting “into the weeds” or not, it is for many a valuable source for learning what is on people’s minds as they live together in this small, rural community.

Why has the virtual haiku chain on Maggie’s list gone viral? According to Debra, the recent surge is a sign that we have all been stuck at home for too long and are eager for a fun way to test our creative powers and connect with each other. The approachable form and quick personal responses have created a contagious, uplifting phenomenon.

While their brevity may make them appear simple, the art of haiku is actually quite intricate, tracing back to



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four master haiku poets from Japan known as “the Great Four”— Basho, Issa, Shiki, and Buson. From the Japanese words “hai” meaning unusual and “ku” meaning verses emerged a genre of poetry that Michael Burch describes as “the flash photography” or “Zen snapshot” of literature. The “hokku” (verse) originally consisted of three playful, unrhymed lines having a 5, 7, 5 syllable pattern and written in collaboration with other poets, forming linked poetry known as “haikai no renga” (comic linked verse). These verses typically consisted of 36 “hokkus” (though earlier aristocratic renga consisted of as many as 10,000 verse games!).

Many modern American writers (including Sonia Sanchez, Cor van den Heuve, Jack Kerouac, and Langston Hughes) have also practiced this popular genre, which Edward McFadden in *Kyoto Journal* describes as being both mirage and tension. “What you see isn’t what you are seeing... [it] vanishes before your eyes. The framing lines tug at the center line, each claiming it as their own,” he writes. Because they focus on objective sensory images, haiku allow readers to infer the meaning. They are therefore considered unfinished poems by some, the seventeen syllables introducing a thought that readers finish in their minds. (For those wanting more detailed instructions, Michael Dylan Welch offers ten tips on the site www.haikuworld.org.)

Emily Newman Stanton was so impressed by the Maggies List haiku that she began gathering them into a collection. “I was watching all these wonderful haiku come through and thought it was too lovely an idea to get buried in a pile of emails,” she reflects. She was particularly moved by the unique “time stamp” they held as records of the writers’ thoughts and experiences during this pandemic, noting: “I loved how much like a diary they felt, capturing these magical moments and offering drops of wisdom. At a time when we are missing a bigger sense of our shared humanity across the country, these small poems helped us stay connected to people of different spiritual and political beliefs and made me appreciate our small community even more.”

Jodi Rothe is currently the keeper of the full collection.

She and Emily believe that once the pandemic is over, these haiku will be invaluable to our community as a way of preserving this history. Many ideas about what to do with the collection are being discussed, including binding them and having them available at the New Marlborough Library, inviting local artists to create accompanying photography/visual art pieces for a larger display, or posting some of the haiku along the many hiking trails in town. (Those with additional ideas are welcome to share them on Maggie’s List, in a haiku or email.)

In closing, a small sampling to honor the deep well of creativity that nourishes our community:

we’re each in our box
family love fragmented
Thanksgiving on Zoom
-Robin Tost

A comma of light
In darkening sky now shines
Moon hides, not for long
-Mary Kephart

Stuck on the west coast
Dreaming of the Berkshire light
With you in spirit
-Michelle Joyner

The sun shines on me
Not so for many others
Gratitude and grief
-Billie Williams

shadows of branches
across snow blue with moonlight
unbroken silence
-Doug Kutney

woman then blue jay
both tangled in thorns—then saved
what a miracle!
-Sarah Jackson

Starlit fiery stripe,
Short day’s rage, rage against the
dying of its light
-Joyce Hackett

Art - New Marlborough
The five seven five poets
Haiku of our days
-Laura Endacott



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November 23: With all three members participating remotely, the Board convened tonight's meeting at 6:01 p.m., where the first order of business was to consider whether to renew the Internet hot spots outside the three public buildings in town, the library, Town Hall and firehouse.

The hotspots, which have been in operation since early in the pandemic, cost \$1,465 per month each. However, the state has been funding the one at the library through its Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI).

As Chairman Tara White noted, they're coming up for renewal at the end of December, and with schools increasingly moving to remote learning as the Covid numbers worsen, she thought it likely the state would continue to fund the library site, a fact that was immediately confirmed by Town Administrator Mari Enoch, who said the Town had just gotten word today that MBI would continue the funding from January to June of 2021.

Marc Trachtenberg, who was also on the call and whose idea it was last March to create the hotspots in the first place, reported that each of the sites was being used "fairly aggressively," as he put it, with the greatest usage of data being at the firehouse, while the largest number of users is at the library, followed by the Town Hall. But, he noted, overall utilization is still within the usage cap of 250 megabits and suggested as a cost-saving measure keeping all three sites operating but dialing down the maximum capacity from 250 MB of bandwidth to 100 MB, thereby realizing a potential savings of approximately \$1600 a month. He thought it likely, based on the usage numbers, that very few users would notice the difference.

However, that idea was quickly set aside in favor of one put forth by Selectman Richard Long, who wondered

whether it might be possible to somehow extend the library's coverage to include Town Hall, and thereby have one hotspot serve both locations.

"That's a very good point," Mr. Trachtenberg said. It would be very doable and inexpensive, he said, to slightly angle one of the library's two antennas towards the Town Hall, shut down the Town Hall's direct connection and have it piggyback off the link to the library. "That would probably be the most cost-effective and beneficial [solution] for the community," he added.

As Town Administrator Enoch reminded the Board, "So far, the Town hasn't paid any taxpayer money towards any of this. It's been fully funded by the CARES [for Coronavirus, Aid Relief, and Economic Security] act and MBI." But the CARES money is due to expire on December 30, she said, and it's unclear at this point whether there will be any additional federal funding for the towns. "So I think what we're looking for tonight is a commitment from the Board to at least plan on covering these devices for January, and maybe February." And that's exactly what the Board did, voting to renew the firehouse and library hot spots for the first two months in the new year and to re-aim the antennas so the Town Hall can piggyback off the library's bandwidth. Then at Ms. Enoch's suggestion, the Board asked Finance Committee Chair Steve Klein, who was also on the call, to be prepared to have Finance fund both months out of the Reserve Fund in the event there's no further federal funding.

Following up on the previous week's discussion, the Board voted to grant a request from the Department of Agriculture to shorten the notice period to 60 from 120 days of the state's acquisition of farm land owned by Scott MacKenzie as an Agricultural



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Preservation Restriction, and to provide public notice of the acquisition via the Town website and on the Town Hall bulletin board.

Ms. White had raised a number of questions about the proposed acquisition at last week's meeting, including how much land was involved – around fifty acres, Ms. Enoch said – and whether the land is now in Chapter 61, the state's program providing for a property tax abatement on land which the owner agrees not to develop – which it's not, according to Ms. Enoch. Ms. White had also wondered what the rush was in getting the Town's approval to shorten the waiting time.

Noting tonight that it seemed likely that the MacKenzie land, which is located on both sides of Adsit Crosby Road and is used for hay, would in fact end up in Chapter 61, Ms. White acquiesced to the requested reduction of the notice period to sixty days. "There's nothing we can do about it either way," she said. "I mean we could hold it up another sixty days, but we're not going to gain anything out of it if we do." At that point, the Board granted the request and moved on.

There were no Town Administrator updates, while, under Selectman updates, Mr. Long said the Town has worked out some of the performance problems with Tasco Construction Corp., the Route 57 culvert contractor, and will be making an initial payment to the contractor.

And finally, the Board granted a business license approval to Mark D. Carlson of Carlson Builders, a construction company at 987 Cross Road to Canaan Valley Road and then voted to adjourn at 6:48 p.m.

Peter Schuyten

December 7: The regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen convened at 6:01 p.m. via teleconference with all three members of the Board present, along

with Town Administrator Mari Enoch, Administrative Secretary Sharon Fleck, Town Clerk Kathy Chretien, Dave Herrick, and Robert Hartt.

In the first order of business, the renewal of liquor licenses for the Old Inn on the Green, The Southfield Store, Cantina 229, and Gedney Farm, all were approved, with temporary certificates to the Old Inn and Cantina 229 pending some additional work that needs to be performed before the building inspector, Mr. Torrico,

issues his final approval. The Board then considered the application for a liquor license at Mill River General Store submitted by Dave Herrick, and, hearing no objections from abutters, unanimously approved the license.

At the request of the State of Massachusetts, **Chairman White then read a notification from the Department of Conservation and Recreation that it is acquiring 109 acres on South Sandisfield Road near York Lake**, from Melissa McCarthy. Ms. White explained that

the property will now be protected as open space, and is connected to Cookson State Forest. When Selectman Long asked if the transfer means the property will be removed from Town tax rolls, Ms. White responded that she wasn't sure, but the amount of money the Town already receives for this property is miniscule.

The next item of discussion was about the Town website, and it was a long and often contentious one. Pertaining to the Board's having appointed Tom Stalker as webmaster at the November 16 meeting, Administrative Secretary Sharon Fleck and Town Clerk Kathy Chretien submitted two letters to the Board, one dated November 23 and the other December 7, both of which Ms. Fleck proceeded to read to the Board.

In essence, the letter of November 23 stated the authors were pleased Mr. Stalker had been appointed as webmaster, as it would free them up to do more

It would be very doable and inexpensive, he said, to slightly angle one of the library's two antennas towards the Town Hall, shut down the Town Hall's direct connection and have it piggyback off the link to the library.

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important Town business. The letter stated that they had volunteered to get the new website up and running and were happy to do so, but, as of December 11, they were resigning their volunteer positions with regard to the website, and would only post agendas on the bulletin board outside Town Hall, leaving website management to someone with more technical knowledge and experience.

The letter of December 7 said that staff had not been consulted about proposed changes and no consideration had been given to those who had worked for months setting up and posting to the new website, receiving more criticism than praise for their efforts. The letter then circled back to support the selection of Mr. Stalker.

Selectman Long offered that the task of transitioning to a new website is an onerous and tedious effort, and the staff had indeed invested a lot of time. He added that Mr. Stalker prefers not to be called webmaster, but wants to help by working in the background, supporting the staff and the town administrator, who has the ultimate supervisory authority over the work. Ms. White then said that her perception was that Mr. Stalker's first goal would be to "do things like find broken links on the website." Mr. Long responded that Mr. Stalker had submitted a list of many technical activities and quality control items needed for the site, but he would need access to the site to do them.

Focusing on the future of the website, Mr. Long made a motion to rescind the previous action of November 16 and clarify that the town administrator has overall supervisory authority on the website. Ms. White seconded and then asked if that means that town administrator is going to have to look and approve everything being done on the website. Mr.

Long responded the supervisor doesn't do the work, but if an issue arrives that needs input, she has authority to make the ruling. Mr. Carson stated that, as long as the town administrator has final say and is working with the administrative secretary and town clerk, he just hopes everyone can cooperate.

Town Clerk Kathy Chretien then spoke up saying, even if there is a motion, she and Ms. Fleck are not rescinding their decision not to post to the website as of Friday, December 11. Mr. Long responded that it is part of Ms. Chretien's administrative duties to post to the website and it was not a volunteer activity. Ms. Chretien replied that it was not her duty, and that many town clerks don't post to websites. Ms. Enoch then clarified that Ms. Chretien is also paid for the role as a part-time administrative assistant for the Town, and the website is part of those duties.

Ms. White then said she was offering two motions, the first to rescind the vote of November 16 making Mr. Stalker the webmaster, which was seconded and approved. The second motion proved more difficult, as Ms. White went back and forth on whether the Board should propose the establishment of a new position to manage the site. Mr. Long asked Ms. White why she would do that when the Town has a volunteer (Mr. Stalker) with experience, along with an administrative staff already paid to do the work. He said the Board should simply reassert that these are administrative duties and part of the administrative secretary and town clerk's jobs. Despite Ms. Fleck interjecting, "We were not paid for this, we were volunteers," Mr. Long persisted, saying, "This is part of your regular day-to-day work, which includes posting, and is done during Town time."

The virtual temperature in the virtual meeting room continued to rise as a clearly frustrated Ms. White stated she is not sure where to go from here, and she

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added that she hates the new website and maybe there could be something better in the future, but she didn't think the issue was actionable at this moment. Mr. Long reiterated the town administrator has overall supervisory responsibilities for the website.

The matter went on for more minutes with continued disagreement, primarily between the selectmen and Ms. Fleck over the scope of her and Ms. Chretien's responsibilities. In an effort to salvage something from the evening, Ms. Enoch reminded everyone that there were two different issues being addressed, one, setting up the new website and the other, posting, which has always been part of the administrative jobs in Town Hall. **Mr. Long proposed they do an analysis of how the employees' administrative time is being spent, and then the Board, without any resolution, moved on to the next item on the agenda.**

Town administrator updates began with Ms. Enoch reporting on the Design Review Committee. Having met with the architects, she said they were at a point where some decisions needed to be made before they finalized the plans. She added that, **while the Committee is proposing renovations related to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility, there may also be other areas the Board wants to address during a renovation such as the electrical system of the building.** Mr. Long clarified that the Town is seeking grants for the ADA project but those funds must be strictly related to ADA renovations, and other items like air conditioning or electrical updates would be an additional cost to the Town. Mr. Long added that if the Town wanted to make improvements to the main electrical system, it would be best to do them at the same time as the ADA improvements.

Ms. White spoke of the unknowns of the building's electrical system, and said the Town doesn't have the

money to hire an expert to come in and assess the work needed. But Ms. Enoch reminded everyone that there are funds put away in the Town Hall Renovation account. The Board agreed on the areas needing to be addressed: the electrical system, flooring, ducting, and air conditioning. Ms. Enoch said that the Design Review Committee was meeting next on Friday, December 11, at 8:45 a.m.

Mr. Long persisted, saying, "This is part of your regular day-to-day work, which includes posting, and is done during Town time."

Moving on, Ms. Enoch advised that fourteen residents had applied for the federal Homeowner Rehabilitation Program grants totaling \$200,000 for New Marlborough in FY18. Six applicants were eligible, four were not, two withdrew, and two were bumped to the next year. The balance of funds left for FY18 is uncertain, as the work is not yet complete.

Grant money for FY19 totals \$240,000. One resident's work is nearly complete, but there is still room for more qualifying projects. Ms. Enoch urged interested residents to use the application on the Town website.

Ms. Enoch next updated the Board that, with Covid-19 increasing everywhere, Governor Charlie Baker announced an increase in testing sites, and people do not need to have symptoms to be tested. Tests are free and available without a referral to all Massachusetts residents, and a testing site is located in Great Barrington, by appointment. For details, visit <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stop-the-spread>

Lastly, Ms. Enoch reminded the Board that the state will continue covering the cost of one Wi-Fi hotspot in town until June of this year.

In Board of Selectmen updates, Mark Carson said that the Highway Planning Working Group proposed signs be placed at the end of dirt roads with something like "Save our dirt roads, drive slow."

Chairman White adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Sandra Fusco-Walker



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December 9: With all three members participating by phone, the Board convened a special mid-week morning session for the purpose of holding a property tax classification hearing with Board of Assessors' Marsha Pshenishny. As in the past, Ms. Pshenishny said the assessors are recommending a single tax classification for both residential and commercial properties and a proposed tax rate of \$9.94 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. That's a \$.37 decrease from last year's rate of \$10.31. The Board approved the single tax classification, and the new rate is subject to verification by the state's Department of Revenue. The rate will be reflected in the tax bills going out later this month and due February 1.

Peter Schuyten

December 14: At 5:30 p.m., the selectmen, with all three members present, opened a brief meeting to clear up some outstanding business before meeting jointly with the Finance Committee at 6:00 p.m.

After approving the addition of Joe Poindexter to the Housing Committee, the Board moved on to a request initiated by Karen Robarge, Sheffield postmistress and district U.S. Postal Service supervisor, on the possible installation of individual mailboxes in a spot outside Town Hall, as it grappled with a decision on its space in the Mill River General Store.

The selectmen raised a number of questions to which they would need answers before entertaining the request: Who would be responsible for the maintenance of the boxes and for wintertime plowing of the area around the boxes, asked Tara White. Mark Carson asked how many boxes were being anticipated. Richard Long wondered whether they would become an excuse for never opening the Mill River Post Office. The Board put its response on hold and asked Town Administrator Mari Enoch to get

clarification – in writing – of their concerns.

The Board moved on to an application for a state grant to help pay for further separation of recyclable waste. As Transfer Station users are aware, separation of metal, glass, and plastic began last September, with the compactor being restricted to paper, with cans and bottles going into bins. The Board, with Solid Waste Coordinator Freddy Friedman on the Zoom conference

call, concurred that the initial grant application should request funds to purchase a second compactor, with the Town footing the cost of installation.

It is a first step. Mr. Friedman informed the Board that the state has mandated a closing of all landfills in Massachusetts by 2030. Tom Stalker, who is assisting in the writing of a grant and was present at the meeting, agreed to have a draft of the grant application ready for perusal by the Board in the near future.

Finally, the Board agreed to recommend to the Finance Committee that \$2,930 be transferred from the Reserve Fund to pay for continuation of a WiFi hot spot at the firehouse in Southfield, for the first two months of the new year. Under the guidance of town tech whiz Mark Trachtenberg, the installation at the library will soon begin beaming its signal to the Town Hall parking lot, thereby eliminating the need – and the cost – of this hot spot. The state will continue to finance the hotspot at the library.

Shortly thereafter, the meeting adjourned and immediately segued into its joint meeting with the Finance Committee. Under the guidance of Finance Committee Chairman Steve Klein, the session was largely devoted to establishing a template for the creation of an FY22 budget and strategies for anticipating major capital expenses in the future. "It's fair to assume that we won't have a consensus on every policy or strategy, but critically important that we agree on principles so that we can give guidance to operating departments," said Mr. Klein.

To get things started, Ms. Enoch took the assembled through an explanation of income and expenditures in the fiscal years ending in June 2020 and 2021. In sum, total revenues were \$6.7 million in FY20 and \$6.6 million in FY21; expenditures, \$6.4 million and \$6.3 million respectively. Mr. Klein, noting that the portion of Town valuation represented by new growth had risen by just around \$40,000, asked why that was such a low number. Assessor Marsha Pshenishny responded that Covid-19 restricted access to sites to carry out inspections and that the pandemic had slowed new construction. **With Ms.**

The Board, with Solid Waste Coordinator Freddy Friedman on the Zoom conference call, concurred that the initial grant application should request funds to purchase a second compactor, with the Town footing the cost of installation.

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Pshenishny stating that last fiscal year saw only two-thirds the number of building permits as in a normal year, Mr. Klein expressed concern that the number, “a critical component of our budgeting ability,” seemed low, but then agreed it was time to move on.

Turning attention to the FY22 budget (the one that begins July 1, 2021), Ms. Enoch turned first to Highway Department expenditures and asked about recommendations, if any, from the Highway Planning Working Group. Barbara Marchione, present at the meeting, said the group was just getting under way and belatedly realized that it needed to post agendas and open its deliberations to the public. Its first official meeting was to have been held December 21.

The same question was asked of Mr. Klein about the deliberations of the Capital Budget Planning Group, and Mr. Klein gave essentially the same answer. “The problem,” he said, “is we don’t have the kind of representation we ought to have.” It needs members not only from the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee but among the town’s citizens. He said he has an agreement from a fellow townsman to join but would like others.

In response to a question from Ms. Marchione about the function of the Capital Budget Planning Group, Mr. Klein said its basic purpose would be to “develop a forward-looking plan for the town that would prepare the best way to finance” big-ticket projects. Mr. Long added that the group would need to be ongoing, “so as to respond to capital budget changes.” In further discussion, the Board and the Finance Committee agreed that the

Capital Budget Planning Group have as many as seven members, and it was decided to broadcast a need for volunteers on the Town’s website, Maggie’s List, and in the 5 Village News. Following a clarification from Ms. Enoch that the Planning Group would be free-standing, not a sub-committee, and subject to open-meeting rules, Mr. Long volunteered to draft an announcement.

Ms. Enoch then opened discussion to the FY22 budget as a whole. According to current calculations, she said, the levy limit would be \$5.5 million. She then mentioned a few additional expense categories that would warrant special attention: among them, Highway Department labor, cost of living adjustment, broadband, school budget, retirement costs, Covid-related costs, and health insurance. She also mentioned new revenues: \$45,750 from the Knight Road Solar project and possibly a lesser amount from the project on Mill River Southfield Road.

Mr. Klein declared that the overview was “very helpful,” then added that “it would be enormously helpful if we had a clearer idea of upcoming compensations obligations.” To the silence that followed, he observed wryly, “I know, you’re all just taking the fifth on this subject.”

Finally, the six members of the Finance Committee present at the meeting (Steve Klein, Barbara Marchione, Robert Miller, John Pshenishny, Michele Shalaby, and Sandra Fusco Walker) endorsed a Reserve Fund payment of \$2,930 to keep the fire department WiFi hot spot going for the months of January and February. And the meeting was adjourned. □

Joe Poindexter

VIEW FROM THE BOARD

Happy New Year everyone. We have made it through an extremely difficult year, and everyone is looking to the New Year to bring a more normal life with friends and family meeting face-to-face instead of by Zoom. Who knew we would miss seeing everyone as much as we have?

As I write this, we are receiving our first real snow of the season with another one on the way later in the week. Just a reminder that our Highway Department will be out taking care of the roads. The varying elevations throughout the town can make some roads snowy, some icy, or some just wet. Please take care and drive safely.

The Town Hall is still closed to the public. If you do need to come in and see someone, please call ahead and make an appointment so you are sure that they are available. If you need to leave anything, you can use the drop box which is available 24/7 outside of the Town Hall door.

The Wi-Fi is still available at the following sites: The Firehouse, Town Hall, and Library. We understand the importance of this for those of you who need to have high speed access for school and business purposes. For

updates on the status of the fiber connections, you can go to the Cable Advisory Committee’s page on the Town’s website: www.newmarlboroughma.gov to get further information.

We will begin the budgeting season shortly in preparation for the Annual Town Meeting in May. This process is always challenging, deciding what the Town can and cannot afford, and how to adjust accordingly. These meetings are public, so if you want to understand more about how and why some things are budgeted and some are not, you can join the meetings by Zoom or telephone. To do so, access the Town website, and choose the meeting you wish to attend from the dropdown menu, where you will find the information you need to connect to the meeting. Public comment is always appreciated.

Mark Carson, Richard Long, and I are available if there are any questions, comments, or suggestions you may have. Feel free to email or call us anytime, and we wish everyone a safe and happy 2021. □

Tara White, Chair, Board of Selectmen

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

December 12: Commission members, Freddy Friedman, John Schreiber, and Nanci Worthington conducted the month's meeting via conference call. First up was the continued hearing for the Request For Determination (RDA) by Margaret and Joseph Koerner of 2128 Canaan Southfield Road. Emily Renshaw of Morgan, Lewis and Bocklus LLP joined the call on behalf of her clients. The Commission voted to close the RDA and conclude that further permitting was not required. The Commission stated that analysis and review of the gravel pit operation and the storm water runoff on the site was not possible due to the lack of contemporary site data and an inability to access the site. The Commission advised Ms. Renshaw that, should there be additional or new data concerning the gravel pit and storm water runoff, a new permit should be submitted and the Commission would review accordingly.

Next Terry McKeon on behalf of the Gibson Grove R. O. W. members addressed the Commission on the continued hearing for an RDA (submitted October 17) involving tree work and tree removal on Lakeside Drive. Mr. McKeon had submitted the additional information requested by the Commission. Discussion clarified that the tree would be cut down but that the tree roots would not be removed so as to prevent destabilizing the grade

on the bank of Lake Buel. It was agreed that, should the retaining wall be restored, a Notice of Intent would need to be submitted. The RDA was given a negative determination meaning no further permitting was required.

Finally, Tom Scheffey addressed the Commission on finalizing the paperwork for the dam restoration on his property on North Road. The Commission agreed to sign the form certifying that the order of conditions was satisfactorily completed. Following Commission member Friedman's attaching pictures of the final site visit with the form, the completed certification will be filed at the Registry of Deeds by Mr. Scheffey.

Moving on to new business, the Commission discussed recent communication with Mark Stinson from the Department of Environmental Protection regarding an inquiry from property owner Dr. Cory Len Herr at 167 Hartsville Mill River Road. Mr. Len Herr sought advice on what permitting was necessary for work on his property. The Commission agreed that, due to the proximity to the Konkapot River, an NOI would be required.

Finally, the Commission noted that they would like to revisit the goal of convening the Lake Buel Association and the New Marlborough Planning Board to look more closely on advising future development around the lake. □

Martha Bryan

A WETLANDS PRIMER

John Schreiber, vice chairman of the New Marlborough Conservation Commission, has, with the permission of the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC), excerpted and adapted sections of a MACC publication that asks and answers questions about the Wetlands Protection Act and the duties of the Conservation Commission, as follows: What is the Wetlands Protection Act?

The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (GL. Ch. 131 sec. 40) originated in 1972. It prohibits filling, excavation, or other alteration of the land surface, water levels, or vegetation in wetlands, floodplains, riverfront areas, or other wetland resource areas, regardless of ownership. Regulations for the act are issued by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and are among the strictest in the United States. These regulations are one of the key reasons Massachusetts and Berkshire County remain beautiful with clean wetlands, lakes, rivers and streams.

What is a wetland?

Wetlands include not only areas such as marshes and swamps but also intermittent streams, riverfronts and other areas that may be dry part of the year. In addition, the Act regulates activities in bordering areas to wetlands and riverfronts, called buffer zones.

What is a floodplain and what other areas are protected?

A floodplain is an area that experiences surface water

flooding after storms, rainfall, or snow melt. In our area floodplains often include areas that border rivers and streams that flood during a theoretical 100-year flood. The Wetland Protection Act also covers areas such as beaches and dunes, vernal pools, land under lakes and

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photo by Larry Burke

ponds, and land within 200 feet of rivers and streams that flow most of the year.

Why is protection of the Massachusetts wetlands so important?

Wetlands provide critical protection to roads and property by channeling and absorbing storm and other water runoff. Naturally vegetated riverfronts also provide flood protection and trap sediment and debris. In addition, wetlands are the source of public and private water supplies, and help purify groundwater and runoff, and absorb toxins and heavy metals. Wetlands also provide critical habitat to wildlife that lives in or near water as well as for other wildlife that depends on wetlands vegetation for sustenance.

What specific activities are prohibited in wetlands riverfront lands and other resource areas?

Under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act no one may “remove, fill, dredge, or alter” any wetland, floodplain, land under a water body, land within 100 feet of a wetland, or land within 200 feet of a perennial river or stream without a permit from the Conservation Commission. Normal maintenance for land currently in agricultural use is exempt from the Act, but the creation of new agricultural land is not exempt from the provisions of the Act. The regulations prohibit most destruction of wetlands and vegetated riverbanks and require restoration of flood storage if floodplains are filled.

How can I find out if my property is in or near a wetlands resource area and what must I do if I want to conduct a regulated activity on or near wetlands?

Some areas of rivers, ponds and lakes and marshes are obvious. Many have already been mapped by the state and these maps are available on line. If you wish to develop any questionable areas on your property, they must be mapped and you must contact the New Marlborough Conservation Commission prior to any disturbance being done. Small projects located, for example, in a buffer zone should submit a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) which describes the proposed work and any measures you will take

to protect nearby wetlands from alteration to the Conservation Commission. These forms are available from the town clerk. If the project is determined to have no wetlands impact, the Conservation Commission will give you permission to proceed.

If your proposed project does impact wetlands, land within 200 feet of a riverfront or other jurisdictional areas, you must submit a “Notice of Intent” application to the Conservation Commission. These permits require the assistance of wetlands consultants and/or engineers and show all the details of the proposed project according to the standards and criteria defined in the Act. A public hearing will be scheduled and advertised at your expense. The Commission will usually issue a decision within twenty-one days after the hearing is completed.

What are the penalties for violating the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act?

Violations are punishable by a maximum fine of \$25,000 and/or not more than two years imprisonment. In addition, the landowner will be required to restore illegally altered land to its original condition.

Who is the New Marlborough Conservation Commission and how do they work?

The members of the New Marlborough Conservation Commission are unpaid volunteers who live in town and have been appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The members have attended various courses given by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions to familiarize themselves with the regulations. The Commission works closely with the Western Region of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, which reviews all permit applications and partners with the Commission to help landowners comply with the regulation and protect local wetland resources.

The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act helps preserve our beautiful, clean rivers and streams and our wildlife and helps decrease flooding and maintain quality of our drinking water. When in doubt contact the Conservation Commission and we will assist you! □

PLANNING BOARD

November 25: For the first time in over a year, the Planning Board met with its full complement of five members (Chairman Mark Carson, Paul Marcel, Bob Hartt, Jon James, and Tom Sebestyn), plus the board's new secretary, Tom Stalker.

Updates on previous agenda items were first up, with Paul Marcel saying he was intending to pass out copies of the Sheffield junk car bylaw to members when they met in person at a site visit on Lake Buel, scheduled for Saturday, December 5. Bob Hartt said that he and Tom Sebestyn would work together on a draft of a press release on a possible Dark Skies bylaw within the next two weeks.

Discussion then turned to that upcoming site visit, to a property owned by Carla and David Hoffman, at 120 Hillside Road, which is on the east side of Lake Buel, at the far end of Laurel Lane. Mark Carson informed the board that his understanding was that the owners of the house, which is on a non-conforming lot of approximately one-quarter acre, were planning to double the size of the house.

Bob Hartt, who had lived part-time on Lake Buel for years before moving to Mill River, said that he was aware of a general concern on the part of homeowners around the lake toward the "intensive development" of the shoreline. And he added that he had gleaned over the years that Lake Buel residents, or at least those in the Monterey sections, viewed the New Marlborough Planning Board and Special Permitting Authority (SPA) as having "an anything goes attitude."

Turning back to the specific case at hand, Mark Carson said that, in his experience, the aim is always to make a non-conforming lot less non-conforming, not more. He knew of cases around Lake Buel where homeowners seeking to expand their house were able to buy abutting property, thereby reducing the non-conformity. He also reminded the board members that it would be the Board of Selectmen, acting as the SPA, that would ultimately make the call, and it was the Planning Board's and the Conservation Commission's role to study the plan and advise the SPA.

The discussion then widened out again, with Bob Hartt wondering if the Planning Board should think about proposing a separate zone for the New Marlborough sections of Lake Buel that would allow for clearer regulations. Mark Carson thought that the Lake Buel Association would need to be a partner in any discussion of that type, to which Bob Hartt agreed, saying the current Lake Buel Association president, Peter Hagen, would welcome the chance to engage on the topic.

As the meeting showed signs of concluding, Mark Carson brought up the subject of needed regulations on curb cuts for new driveways that drain surface water downhill onto gravel roads, causing erosion. Paul Marcel suggested checking with other towns to see how they handle the problem, and then added that, it being Thanksgiving Eve, it might be a good thing to adjourn and get on with preparing the turkey! All agreed, and the meeting ended at 8:03 p.m.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Board of Selectmen seeks qualified and interested individuals from New Marlborough to participate in a Capital Planning Committee. This recently-formed committee is mandated to create, update, and maintain a Town Capital Plan. As the Town is facing some potentially very large capital investment needs in the next few years, it is critical that we have representative input from town residents. If you are willing to help the Committee address these important issues, please send a short letter of interest to the Board in care of Administrative Secretary Sharon Fleck at:

sfleck@newmarlboroughma.gov or PO Box 99, Mill River, MA 01244 by 3:00 p.m. on January 4.

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December 9: It was a well-populated teleconference call for the bi-monthly meeting of the Planning Board. Along with all five board members, Tom Stalker was present as recording secretary, Lake Buel homeowners Carla and David Hoffman, builder Bob Goyette, and designer Robert Levesque, Board of Selectmen Chairman Tara White, as well as Mike Parsons, who was on the call in connection with the first order of business – two Form A (Approval Not Required) applications.

The Form A business was dispatched fairly quickly, with approval of a division of property on Foley Hill Road. The second, a plan for Grass Market LLC to create five building lots near the intersection of Cross Road to Canaan Valley Road and Konkapot Road, had not been seen beforehand by all members, so Tom Stalker advised the members that, legally, they could not sign off on the plan until all had a chance to view it.

Moving on to the main event of the evening, a hearing on a proposed renovation/construction plan at 120 Hillside Road, located on the high ground overlooking the east side of Lake Buel, member Bob Hartt said he would have to recuse himself from the discussion, because of his being a property owner on the lake. Chairman Mark Carson then spoke, saying, “As Chair, I find it hard to agree with this plan, as it [the enlarged building] will have a bigger footprint, and be less conforming.” He added that it appeared that the existing setback on the side facing the lake would be reduced from fifteen feet to five feet, increasing the non-conformity even more.

The project’s designer, Robert Levesque, gently countered that the owners, the Hoffmans, had taken great care in evolving a plan that would be sensitive to the neighbors’ properties, and had obtained letters, all positive, from their abutters. Paul Marcel interjected that the plan contained “ludicrous setbacks,” and, even if it was okay with the current neighbors, what about looking fifty years ahead? Mr. Levesque replied that, given the topography of the site, it would be “fairly unrealistic to think of further development being hampered on abutting properties, and simply not feasible, given wetland constraints.” David Hoffman then added that their house is the last one on the dead end road.

Not too many minutes into the hearing, Mr. Carson proposed a motion to approve or not approve the plan,

but Tom Stalker reminded Mr. Carson that the Board’s role was only to provide a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. Tom Sebestyn then asked that the Board table the motion until the following meeting, at which time more information could be developed. Things became a bit uncertain for a while, procedure-wise, but then Mr. Levesque, hoping for some resolution, said that his clients were open to compromise. Mr. Hoffman said that he had been a part-time resident of Lake Buel for sixty-one years, and only wanted to do what was best for all. It had become his and his wife’s dream that they could do this addition to the house so they could live there fulltime, with room for their children and grandchildren. Mrs. Hoffman echoed her husband, stating in heartfelt terms, their deep love for the community surrounding Lake Buel.

At this point Tara White spoke up to offer that, although there was no legal way to abandon the Special Permit Hearing set for Tuesday, December 15, the Hoffman’s team could certainly appear, if only to ask for an extension. David Hoffman appreciated that offer, but said he was concerned about any delays in construction, since he did not want to bother his neighbors with the noise and general inconvenience of building in the summertime.

Members of the Board and Mr. Levesque continued to debate and discuss for another twenty minutes, mostly about the setbacks – trying to find a number that would work for the Board and yet be feasible to modify and build. Eventually, an hour or more in, Mark Carson made another motion, this time to table until more information could be developed that would allow the Board to make its recommendation. Tom Sebestyn seconded the motion, and it carried.

Moving on to old business, there was nothing new on the junk car bylaw, and Bob Hartt and Tom Sebestyn said they would be putting out, on Maggie’s List and the NM5VN, an introduction to the Dark Sky Ordinance. (See page 16.) Finally, with a request by Tom Sebestyn that the members of the Board find a way to meet in person some time, since some of them had not yet met each other, all agreed in theory, but no plan was made. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m. □

Larry Burke

TOWN HALL ANNOUNCEMENT: The New Marlborough Board of Selectmen is pleased to offer for public review the Draft New Marlborough Hazard Mitigation and Climate Change Adaptation Plan. The purpose of hazard mitigation planning is to reduce or eliminate the need to respond to hazardous conditions that threaten human life and property. Hazard mitigation can be a policy, action, or physical project designed to reduce or eliminate the long-term risks from hazards. The Hazard Mitigation Plan complements the work and findings of the Town’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan that was finalized this fall.

The Draft Plan is available for review on the Town’s website beginning December 21. Paper copies are also available for review at the Library. Comments should be sent to Town Administrator Mari Enoch at:

nmbos@newmarlboroughma.gov by January 8.

PLANNING BOARD DARK SKY PROTECTION INITIATIVE

This is a brief introduction to the issue of enacting a Dark Sky Ordinance for New Marlborough. The intent is to highlight some of the main benefits of such an ordinance and does not try to encompass every aspect or detail. Please note that any such law would not require retrofitting any existing lighting and would only apply to future projects or modifications.

What is a Dark Sky Ordinance? These are some of the main objectives of enacting such an ordinance.

One of the principal objectives of a Dark Sky law is preserving the visibility of the stars and night sky to enhance the desirability of living in New Marlborough. Many of our residents and potential residents enjoy the rural aspect of the town. Light pollution detracts from the rural nature of the town. Most obvious is the ability to see the stars, planets, the Milky-Way, satellites, and other celestial objects in a dark sky at night. Light pollution also leads to light trespass, where one person's lighting intrudes on a neighbor, or neighbors, and can be disruptive to their enjoyment of their property and sometimes their ability to sleep well.

A Dark Sky law can also enhance public safety by having street lighting be more effective. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. Installing more directed

lighting where the light is limited to the area that is intended to be illuminated would reduce glare on the roads, which may be especially important to older drivers. Future lighting can also take advantage of new technologies, which not only use LEDs instead of incandescent bulbs, but also allow for color temperature control (warmer light versus bluer light), thereby allowing for lighting that is customized for specific purposes.

Energy conservation is yet another advantage. New LED lighting uses a fraction of the energy that conventional lighting uses. The new lights, which require much less maintenance, pay for themselves over a short period of time, and those savings continue long after the lights are paid for. This applies not only for the town but for individual residents and businesses.

Other techniques include using lights only when necessary. This can be accomplished through motion detectors, dimmers and timers. The town could also install physical shielding on existing lights as we phase in newer lights.

The issues brought up in this introduction require further research and discussion and the Planning Board would welcome input from all those interested. □

Robert Hartt and Tom Sebestyen



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LAND TRUST NEWS

Rest assured there is a quiet system at work taking care of the hiking trails despite the limitations and challenges of the pandemic. For example, a frequent hiker to the Goodnow Preserve might report to the Land Trust director that a tree has fallen across a trail. Depending on the scope of the work – does it require more than muscle, a chainsaw, how many hands and how to access the location – a pair of volunteers diligently take on the assignment. These challenging times have encouraged creative solutions to otherwise routine tasks. And we are making fun out of new strategies and managing to keep the trails clear and safe for hikers.

This fall three seniors from Mount Everett High School have volunteered their time to the Land Trust. We are focusing on two projects. The first, which is ongoing, is directional trail signage at the Goodnow Preserve. We have started installing new hand-made signs. As you walk by, admire the hand-painted ‘trail’ signs, and be reassured that you are, in fact, on the trail and moving in the right direction. Second, we are starting work on creating a “Dogs on the Trails in New Marlborough” calendar. The students are brimming with artistic ideas, formatting and color options, as well as envisioning drawing dog sketches to highlight certain important seasonal calendar days – for example, the Winter Solstice and the Vernal Equinox.

We would appreciate pictures of you and your dog enjoying the trails. If you (and your dog!) are interested in being included in the calendar, please send your pictures to nmlandtrust@gmail.com. We are looking for inspired pictures of canine play and joy on the trails. In addition, you might be asked by one of the students during your daily walk if she can take your picture. Smile and give your pup a treat!

Stay safe and get out daily, if you can, to breathe the fresh air and take a break from the four walls of your home. Out there is a beautiful big sky for each of us to look up to. □

Executive Director Martha Bryan



photo by Martha Bryan

Mount Everett High School student volunteer to the Land Trust, Isabella Kemp, installing a new trail sign at the Goodnow Preserve

ULMUS GENUS UPDATE

Despondent due to the daily dystopian diet of death and disease throughout country? Here’s some good news that will not only brighten your day but is also beautifying and brightening our byways:

New Marlborough’s elm trees (*Ulmus* genus), most of them, at least, are thriving and hopefully will be here for future generations to enjoy. Twelve years ago, a Land Trust committee, chaired by Patricia Hardyman, was formed to replace the many elm trees that once graced our town. Arborist Tom Ingersoll suggested the Princeton variety, because they were developed to be resistant to Dutch Elm disease. Well, Tom was right. Twenty-two elms were planted, and, with an assist from the tender care of amateur arborists Martha Bryan,



Just north of the Connecticut border, the Norfolk Road elm.
photo by Joe Poindexter

Patricia Hardyman, Leslie Miller, and myself, all but two have flourished.

They are now at rest for the winter, but come spring, take an elm-tree tour: to the west side of Norfolk Road just north of the Connecticut border; in front of the Highway Department Garage; north of the church in Clayton; at the Hartsville grange building, along Route 57 in New Marlborough village; and at the intersection of Mill River

Great Barrington and County Roads.

At maturity, they will reach the height of a seven- to eight-story building and are certain to enhance New Marlborough’s natural beauty, which surrounds and comforts us all. □

Owen Hoberman

YOUR TURN

NM5VN has established a place for our readers' stories. We encourage you to share your experiences, incidents, or thoughts through this space. Reviewing the rules: Up to 1,000 words, but short and succinct is best; no politics; points of view are welcome but civility is mandatory; editors reserve the right to accept, reject, and edit. Send your story to 5villagenews@gmail.com.

Maureen Krecji is a lifelong resident of Southfield, a daughter of the late Daniel and Beverly Litchfield, and a member of the New Marlborough Volunteer EMT's and New Marlborough Fire & Rescue for twenty-five years. She currently serves as Ambulance Medical Director.

A New Marlborough First Responder's Chronicle

By Maureen Krecji

Responding to 911 calls, during the early days of the pandemic, produced many emotions for EMTs. What would we be confronted with? Were we prepared? How easily could the virus spread? Had Covid-19 entered the Town of New Marlborough? Fear of the unknowns triggered a sting through the body as the pager sounded. The pandemic required thinking outside the box for EMS staff.

Meetings quickly changed from in-person to Zoom as we planned how to confront the pandemic and keep our staff safe. It was a challenge to procure the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Early contact with the state Emergency Management Agency, via the coalition of Berkshire County EMS providers (EMSCO), allowed us to gain access to the state emergency stockpile for a limited amount of PPE. Countless hours were subsequently spent contacting vendors to find elusive supplies – hand sanitizer, gloves, gowns, masks that would enable us to be prepared for anything that came our way.

Soon we saw the heightened level of anxiety within our patients, created by the overconsumption of information from media outlets. Patients were at times fearful to inform us that they were not full-time residents or had recently been in a high risk area, as if they wore a scarlet letter. As information flowed to EMS from various Health outlets, we felt reassured that our PPE and safety practices would keep us well protected. Our own fears were replaced by thoughts of compassion toward our patients as we treated the emergencies we were confronted with. Call volume began to decrease as residents had greater fear of going to the hospital than the medical emergency they were experiencing. Thankfully, the community at large has now returned to a higher level of comfort in calling 911 during their time of need.

New Marlborough's ambulance required more extensive disinfection than we were used to. Research on best practices led us to purchase additional devices to ensure the maximum protection possible for our staff and patients — UV air purifier, UV surface treatment, and aerosol disinfection.

A group of key Town employees was convened to ensure that New Marlborough confronted issues arising from the pandemic. It consisted of the town administrator, highway superintendent, health agent, police chief, ambulance medical director, and emergency management coordinator. Weekly calls addressed ways to minimize the risk of illness spread and how to keep staff and residents safe. Potential outbreak areas were often reviewed – Umpachene Falls, York Lake, hiking trails, restaurants, Town Hall, the transfer station. Preparing for the Annual Town Meeting was another project undertaken by the group. I am confident that the extensive planning and implementation efforts have helped minimize the spread within New Marlborough.

It has been challenging to endure ambulance rides fully suited in masks that restrict

breathing and gowns that increase our body temperatures! The inability to meet face to face as a group has been challenging when team support is needed more than ever. I am proud of all our EMS members who remained strong and put themselves in harm's way. If anyone is looking for a way to give back to this wonderful community, we could always use a few more caring community members to answer the call.

I had been anxiously awaiting the vaccine, and, as an employee of Fairview Hospital, received it on December 17. The ability to begin greeting the community at closer range will be most welcome. My hope is that in the very near future, we can resume the traditions that make our town special. □

BROADBAND UPDATE

THE WAITING IS ALMOST OVER!



The Cable Advisory Committee is pleased to report on the progress being made by Charter/Spectrum to provide the "Promised Land" of high speed internet for residents of New Marlborough.

At the last public meeting of the Board on Tuesday, December 15, Spectrum's Joe Volpe, Sales Manager for Massachusetts and Connecticut, outlined the plan for 2021. Residents will be able to place orders for services sometime in the early spring. Spectrum will contact residents to offer their products directly. Spectrum will roll out subscriptions by zones. Subscription and connection in each zone will take about two weeks depending on the number of installations, but the whole town should be completed within three months. We expect this process to be complete and all residents signed up and connected by early summer.

The Committee reports that progress continues on wiring the town for service, that all main backbone roads have been wired, and that work continues on secondary roads. Mr. Volpe explained that they are a little ahead of schedule, and, even in winter weather, they will

continue to hang fiber optic cable as long as roads are plowed and passable.

We're happy to report that the town's long and winding journey to internet connectivity will soon be complete. Stay safe and Happy New Year. □

The Cable Advisory Committee



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THE LOG

Police Department (selected entries)

- Nov. 2 8:09 a.m. National Grid is notified after a caller alerts the Department to a tree blocking the foot of Sisson Hill Road.
- 8:11 a.m. Tree down at the intersection of Hartsville New Marlborough and New Marlborough Hill Roads.
- 1:18 p.m. The animal control officer alerts the Department to a possibly rabid raccoon at a Hartsville New Marlborough Road residence.
- 7:17 p.m. National Grid is notified of a tree on wires on Umpachene Falls Road.
- Nov. 3 12:27 p.m. A Knight Road resident complains of a neighbor's barking dog.
- Nov. 5 12:00 p.m. A resident complains of speeders on Adsit Crosby Road.
- Nov. 8 10:06 a.m. A caller reports a rabid raccoon at his residence on Mill River Southfield Road.
- Nov. 9 5:44 p.m. Wires down on Clayton Mill River Road.
- Nov. 11 8:31 a.m. The animal control officer is alerted to cows wandering on Mill River Southfield Road.
- Nov. 12 9:07 a.m. Wires down on Aberdeen Lane.
- 11:85 a.m. A caller reports a sick raccoon near her Foley Hill Road residence.
- 12:17 p.m. After reporting a strange car parked in her driveway, a Foley Hill resident calls back when she realizes the car belongs to her neighbor.
- Nov. 13 8:19 a.m. An officer assists a Lumbert Cross Road resident who has locked herself out of her vehicle.
- Nov. 14 3:07 p.m. An officer notifies the Highway Department that a stop sign is missing at the intersection of Clayton Mill River and Konkapot Roads.
- 5:50 p.m. A caller reports being tailgated by what she described as a rageful driver on Great Barrington Mill River Road.
- Nov. 15 2:39 p.m. A hiker in the area of Thousand Acre Swamp reports hearing shots fired.
- 8:56 p.m. A caller reports a tree down on Clayton Mill River Road near Brewer Branch Road.
- 9:16 p.m. The Highway Department is notified of a tree down at the intersection of Clayton Mill River and Canaan Southfield Roads.
- Nov. 18 8:51 a.m. An officer assists a driver who has locked himself out of his vehicle in Southfield village.
- 9:43 a.m. The animal control officer is alerted to a small dog running loose in Mill River village.
- 10:36 a.m. The animal control officer informs the Department that she is checking out a report of an injured fox in Southfield village.
- 3:57 p.m. After reporting that her social security number had been breached, a Clayton Mill River Road resident is advised to keep close tabs on her credit/debit card charges and to change passwords to accounts on her computer.
- Nov. 19 1:27 p.m. A driver, stopped for speeding on Route 57, is unable to produce a registration or proof of insurance and has his vehicle towed; he is then given courtesy transport to Great Barrington after declaring he cannot pay for the tow and plans to abandon his vehicle.
- Nov. 20 11:46 a.m. A caller reports shots being fired near his New Marlborough Branch Road residence.
- 12:14 p.m. A Hartsville New Marlborough Road resident reports a scam in which a caller claims he is in possession of all her financial information.
- Nov. 21 1:37 p.m. A driver reports she has lost a chainsaw off the back of her truck while ascending Hayes Hill Road.
- Nov. 25 1:20 p.m. A driver is arrested at the intersection of Great Barrington and Adsit Crosby Roads for operating under the influence and without a valid license; his vehicle, its registration suspended, is towed.
- Nov. 26 2:57 p.m. A driver reports hitting a deer on Lumbert Cross Road.
- Nov. 28 10:04 p.m. A caller relays a message from three teenagers who have knocked on his door to report that their car lost its right front tire and ran into a tree on Adsit Crosby Road.
- Nov. 29 10:46 a.m. Verizon is alerted to downed wires on Hartsville New Marlborough Road.
- 2:34 p.m. An officer assists in locating a Rhoades and Bailey Road resident who has lost her way during a woodland outing.
- 7:29 p.m. An attempt to overtake a speeder passing through New Marlborough village is suspended out of concern for public safety when the pursuit east on Route 57 exceeded 100 mph.
- Nov. 30 4:09 p.m. National Grid is notified of power outages along Great Barrington Mill River Road.

Additionally, during November, 104 written and verbal warnings were issued to drivers for moving violations.

Graham Frank, Chief of Police

FIRE AND RESCUE

Nov. 3	10:55 a.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road Fire Alarm	Nov. 20	5:30 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call
Nov. 3	7:45 p.m.	Cagney Hill Road Fire Alarm	Nov. 22	1:37 p.m.	Canaan Southfield Road Motor Vehicle Accident
Nov. 4	4:07 a.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Fire Alarm	Nov. 22	8:14 p.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Fire Alarm
Nov. 4	10:25 a.m.	Peter Menaker Road Fire Alarm	Nov. 23	11:17 a.m.	Hartsville Mill River Road Medical Call
Nov. 6	11:28 a.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road Medical Call	Nov. 24	10:36 a.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road Fire Alarm
Nov. 6	2:04 p.m.	Brewer Hill Road Fire Alarm	Nov. 28	10:08 p.m.	Adsit Crosby Road Motor Vehicle Accident
Nov. 6	2:54 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call	Nov. 29	2:36 p.m.	Rhodes and Bailey Road Lost Hiker
Nov. 7	10:59 a.m.	East Hill Road Odor of Gas	Nov. 30	10:26 a.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road Medical Call
Nov. 8	11:52 a.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call	Nov. 30	4:08 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Monterey Medical Call
Nov. 8	1:17 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call			<i>Fire Company President David Smith</i>
Nov. 18	11:29 a.m.	Norfolk Road Furnace Fire			

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT NEWS

The highway department has had a very productive year. The following is a brief recap of our major projects.

Toward the end of spring we were able to begin the process of repairing the gravel roads throughout the town. Due to freezing and thawing, a great deal of repair work was needed.

As part of the pavement management process, an asphalt rubber surface treatment was applied to Clayton Mill River Road. This treatment has been around for many years, but this was the first time it was used in New Marlborough. To seal the surface, a combined mixture of hot liquid asphalt (more than 400 degrees) and a 20 percent rubber mixture (from recycled tires) was sprayed on the road. This was followed by a stoneware course. It is estimated that this process has extended the life of Clayton Mill River Road for eight to ten years.

A fog seal was applied to County Road. Fog seals are relatively inexpensive oil treatments sprayed on existing paved surfaces to help postpone the need for extensive repair or replacement by keeping water from penetrating to the base. It is estimated that this process has extended the life of County Road for four years when another treatment will be necessary. Both Hadsell Street and a small section of Adsit Crosby Road were resurfaced.

With funding from a MassWorks grant, work has started on Route 57. Most of the culverts were replaced along with the concrete structures in preparation for reclaiming the road in the spring.

Hurricane Isaias ripped through our town on August 2, leveling trees and knocking out power for most of New Marlborough. At one point, approximately 70 percent of town roads were blocked. The highway crew worked with National Grid, the police and fire departments, and outside contractors to clean up the roads. Clean up

continues as all of the trees have not yet been removed.

Thank you to town residents for supporting the purchase of a 2020 F550 Ford truck with a complete snow and ice package. This truck is the fourth out of seven Town trucks to utilize a ground speed control computer. The driver programs the application rate and the computer applies that amount regardless of the speed of the truck. This greatly reduces the amount of salt used, sometimes as little as 150 pounds per lane mile. This year we will be using salt treated with ProMelt Ultra 2000 on the paved roads. This blue salt is a non-hazardous de-icing, anti-icing inorganic salt solution.

Sand, for residential use only, is always available at the Highway Garage under the shed on the left upon entering the yard. New Marlborough residents, no contractors please, are asked to take no more than two buckets at a time.

Happy New Year and please drive carefully. □

Charles Loring

New Marlborough Highway Superintendent

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THE SCHOOL REPORT

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTIVE EDUCATION

By Jane Burke

It is the old story of the glass half-full or half-empty at Mount Everett Middle and High School during the hybrid schedule, where students are in the building for two days per week and work remotely from home the rest of the week. Administrators, teachers, and staff are putting everything they have into keeping the glass as full as they can. The director of student services has worked with administration and teachers to make sure that the most vulnerable students receive extra support. To make sure every student interacts personally with an adult each day, all teachers and staff have "adopted" a few students to connect with individually as part of the Student Match Program. Each one, every day. Teachers have office hours so students can have individual attention. Teachers have worked overtime to master the technology for remote learning and revamp their lessons to make their classes more engaging.

Despite these efforts, the students' learning experience is dampened by the lack of social connections so valuable to adolescents. School for these students makes more sense when there is conversation in and out of the classroom. When attending class in the hybrid model, half the class is at home and half in the classroom. The teacher tries to include both groups



On in-person days Lindsey Berkowitz works with a high school physics student to design and test ways to minimize the forces generated in a collision.



During Spirit Week Snowman Day, students posted photos of the snowmen they built.

in discussions that are central to learning for this age group. Everyone interviewed for this story remarked on how difficult it is to have successful conversations because the flow is often interrupted by poor connectivity. Students at home cannot hear students in the classroom. While highly motivated students soldier through this frustrating situation, some students find it stressful to stay focused on remote days. One student said, "School seems very flat.

My teachers are great but it is hard to stay tuned in from home." Students who have great difficulty working from home are given the option of being in the classroom more days per week, but most students are trying to make do. Students commented that it is great to be in the building but some miss their friends who come in on other days. The usual camaraderie in the hallways and in the cafeteria is absent since hallway traffic is controlled and the students eat lunch in classrooms. One bright light for spontaneous conversations has been the instituting of fifteen-minute mask breaks outdoors as a relief from the rigors of social distancing.

Student groups can meet by Zoom, but that takes motivation to initiate.

This is not to say that students are not enjoying their learning. At the high school several teachers have reported on progress in their classes. In the Psychology in Film class, students can view the movie by streaming or through the school portal. Using Google Meet, everyone can discuss what disorder is featured in the film. Alex Izatt said, "The kids are definitely interested in the psychology. Some of the examples like OCD, Massive Depression Disorder, and Narcissism are pretty relevant to a lot of them. They particularly enjoyed The Perks of Being a Wallflower. It follows high school students dealing with depression, bullying, homophobia and sexual assault."

Physics teacher Lindsey Berkowitz combines home design work and in-class testing in the engineering design challenge to minimize the forces that act on an object during an auto collision. She says, "They've conducted

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pre-tests on matchbox cars and collected data to calculate the impact force during a collision. Now they're beginning to modify the vehicles in ways that they think will reduce the overall impact force. In post-tests they will collect additional data to compare their results."

Students are focusing on helping others. A school-wide project initiated by art teacher Kari Giordano invites students to submit their Berkshire themed stories, essays, poems, photographs, paintings, and drawings to the Berkshire Arts and Activities Book, which will be distributed to elders in the community. Those who enjoy making puzzles, mazes, riddles, coloring pages, and other diverting activities can also submit. The deadline is January 15. Usually in December, students give back to the elderly through their work cooking and performing at the Senior Citizen Luncheon, so this is a welcomed alternative.

Other students are energized by their work with the Social Justice League which meets weekly after school by Zoom. They organized a Stockbridge-Munsee Education Awareness walk on November 28 on Main Street in Stockbridge. Student leader Cece Caldwell said "We stand united as a group of concerned young adults with the goal of promoting awareness and compassion through education." Christine Martin's English as a Second Language students have been discussing *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You*, by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi. They did an art project to show their understanding of the text.

Middle school students have been doing projects that have them considering issues of importance to them. In the sixth grade social studies unit about Mesopotamia, students learned about what defines a civilization. Next, each student created a brochure advertising the civilization of the United States. Seventh grade students were assigned an industrial design project to mitigate the harmful environmental effects of plastics. Designs included bamboo pens, paper

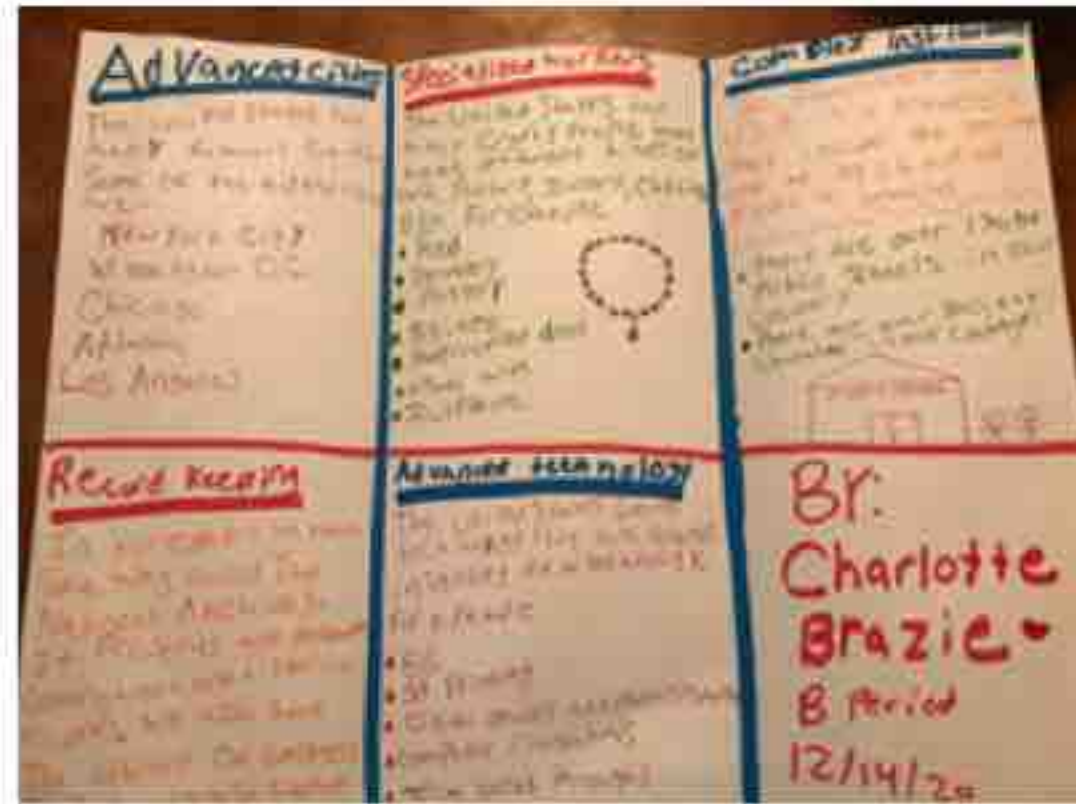
bottles, and biodegradable stuffed animals. The eighth graders are immersed in climate issues. They are making their own air pressure gauges, looking at average monthly temperatures around the globe over a twenty-year period, and finally measuring carbon sequestration from trees on campus.

Senta Reis, a special education teacher, is leading an elective for seventh graders called Thrive, which focuses on self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills. She incorporates many aspects of therapeutic art in her lessons. She said, "We made Worry Stones out of polymer clay, choosing colors that soothe us. After we baked them, we observed how comfortable and calming they felt in our hands." They also made snow globes.

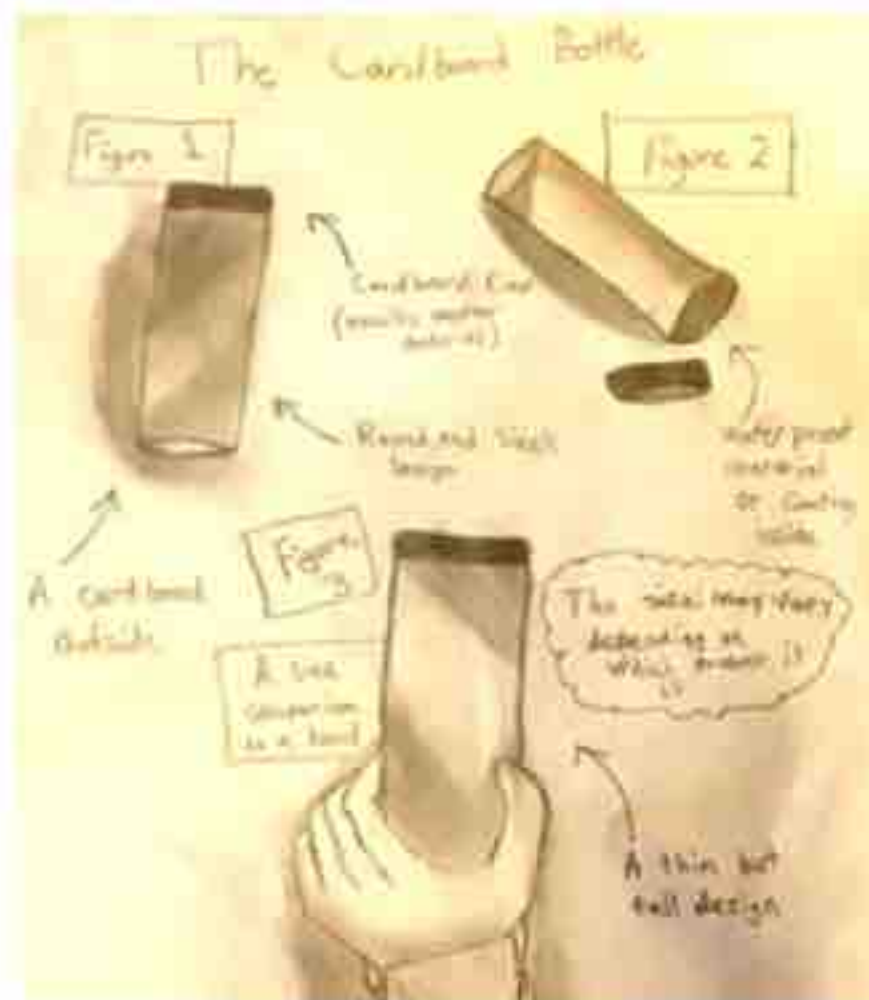
Spirit Week, in its hybridized form, was organized by the Mount Everett Wellness teacher Joseph McSpirt with student Blue Team Captains Jack Carpenter and Makenzie Ullrich for the last week before winter break. "There were four days that students could participate in, both in school and from home. The days were: Holiday Sweets, Build a Snowman, Holiday Outfits, and Pajama Day. Students can post photos of remote activities. A lot of students seem to be missing some of the usual school activities like pep rallies and assemblies, but hopefully with activities like this Hybrid Spirit Week, we can bring back some sense of normalcy. After the break, we are going to try adding basketball, and are looking at how we can offer after-school snowshoeing and hiking."

Overall, the school community is working together in a positive way. Students are really happy on the in-person days. The long days at home in front of the computer have been difficult. Teachers are working longer hours than ever to try to keep their students learning. Hopefully after the

winter break, with time away from screens and some outdoor social distancing with friends, both teachers and students will return to school in 2021 ready to see the glass as way more than half-full. □



6th grader Charlotte Brazie's brochure about civilization in the United States.



In 7th grade science, students designed ecological alternatives to plastic.



Senta Reis's students made snow globes in her therapeutic art program.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Happy New Year! The following recipe is perfect for New Year's morning, or for those wintery weekends when it is so cold outside you are wondering why you live here. Make a pot of coffee, put on some nice music and enjoy the process of turning two humble eggs into a comforting sauce that adds a bit of sunshine and warmth to a chilly day. ☐

Fiona Kerr

Hollandaise Sauce

Ingredients: 2 large eggs, separated
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon white wine or apple cider vinegar

1 stick (4 oz.) butter, softened
Salt and pepper
A small food processor, a blender, or an electric hand whisk.

Directions:

- Place the egg yolks in a small food processor or blender and add some seasoning.
- Heat the lemon juice and vinegar in a small saucepan until the mixture starts to bubble and simmer.
- Slowly pour the hot lemon juice mixture into the yolks and blend for 30 seconds until thoroughly combined.
- Using the same saucepan, melt the butter over a gentle heat, being very careful not to let it brown. When the butter is foaming, switch the processor or blender on once more and pour in the butter in a thin, slow, steady trickle; the slower you add it the better. (If your processor lid has a larger feeding hole, partly cover it with a piece of cling wrap, leaving just enough of an opening to pour the butter through to prevent the sauce splashing).
- When all the butter has been incorporated, wipe around the sides of the processor bowl or blender with a spatula to incorporate all the sauce, you should end up with a lovely, smooth, thick, buttery sauce.
- Season with salt and pepper, serve immediately with poached eggs, an English muffin, and bacon/smoked salmon/prosciutto/spinach/asparagus.

To make the Hollandaise into Foaming Hollandaise:

Whisk the remaining two egg whites to soft peaks in a large clean mixing bowl, fold into the sauce immediately. This makes the sauce lighter and it goes further. Foaming Hollandaise can be kept in the fridge, and then reheated in a bowl over a pan of gently simmering water, or you can even make it ahead and freeze it, unlike Hollandaise, which cannot be frozen.

Note: this recipe contains raw eggs.

The recipe comes from *Delia's How to Cook, Book 1* by Delia Smith, 1998

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LIBRARY NEWS: ADAPTING TO OUR NEEDS

Librarian Deb O'Brien and her assistant, Autumn Snyder, are continually tweaking their contingency plans to maintain the library's atmosphere as a community center. Deb characterized their efforts as essentially treading water: "We're making it up as we go along, doing what we can to find new ways to approximate normal."

The library's capacity is three or four patrons at a time to maintain social distancing, and so far, these limits have not been strained. Visitors have uniformly been wearing masks and using sanitizer. Every book that enters the library is sanitized, quarantined for four days, and sanitized again before being shelved. Likewise, books leaving the library are also disinfected. The library has responded to a greatly increased demand for e-books for those who prefer a download to a physical book. Patrons can also order books by phone or email; orders are bagged, labeled, and placed on a table by the library's entrance. Deb greatly praised Autumn's meticulous attention to safety procedures, as well as her initiative in coming up with new ways to improve the library's routine.

There are physical improvements in the planning stages. The Friends of the Library have already purchased a generator to help during power outages, so that patrons can charge their devices, get water, have a cup of coffee – or just get warm during a prolonged outage. The library is investigating a VL light system which eradicates impurities through the ventilation system. "Disinfecting has its limits," Deb said, "and this way the air is cleaned. It should help stop the spread of colds and flu, as well as Covid." She is also planning for a camera and sound system that could essentially Zoom library groups on the large screen at the library. She is investigating a virtual story hour at New Marlborough Central School. Plans are afoot to let kids come indoors in the winter with their computers to do their schoolwork, instead of outdoors in the car. "We have plenty of room," Deb noted, "so the kids can be safely isolated throughout the library."

The monthly book group has met once – windows open, coats on, socially distanced, masks on – and every-

one enjoyed the opportunity to converse in person about something other than Covid. The Friday Night Knitting group also met once, but found that the necessary restrictions were isolating and inimical to the usual atmosphere of this group.

For the time being, there are no kids' programs; Deb feels she can't keep them safely apart. She hopes that when warmer weather arrives, activities can take place outdoors, and that by then, social distancing will have become more of a norm among children. For now, she simply misses the kids, and the adults who used to stop by for a chat.

"We're doing our best to be a community center without infecting anyone," Deb said. But it's a challenge to continually examine procedures in light of the changing Covid situation. If the library is ordered to close again, curbside pickup will resume. In the meantime, she and Autumn will continue to invent new ways of fostering community for an appreciative public in spite of Covid. Deb wistfully said, "Back in the day, all I had to worry about was running the library!" □

Barbara Lowman

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Jingle All the Way, by Debbie Macomber
The London Restoration, by Rachel McMillan
The Lions of Fifth Avenue, by Fiona Davis
The Sentinel, by Lee Child
Ist Case, by James Patterson

Adult Nonfiction

The Language of Thieves: My Family's Obsession with a Secret Code the Nazis Tried to Eliminate, by Martin Puchner
Group: How One Therapist and a Group of Strangers Saved My Life, by Christie Tate
The Daughters of Yalta: the Churchills, Roosevelts, and Harrimans: A Story of Love and War, by Catherine Grace Katz
Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire: A 500-Year History, by Kurt Andersen

Library Hours

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 Tues. & Thurs. 1:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
 Fri. 1:30 – 7:30 p.m.
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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Children's Fiction

The Musician, by Xuefeng Liu
Unicorn Diaries: The Goblin Princess, by Rebecca Elliott
Turtle Walk, by Matt Phelan
Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Deep End, by Jeff Kinney
Two Many Birds, by Cindy Derby

DVDs

Back to the Future - Trilogy
Mulan
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Yellowstone Season 1 & 2

Audio CDs

A Time for Mercy, by John Grisham
Troubled Blood, by Robert Galbraith
Group: How One Therapist and a Group of Strangers Saved My Life, by Christie Tate



Book Discussion Group

Please join us (limit 10 people)
 January 30 at 10:00 a.m.
 to discuss the book,
The Vanishing Half, by Brit Bennett.
 Masks and social distancing required



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Board of Selectmen: Every Monday at 6:00 p.m.

Town Administrator: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Planning Board: Second and fourth Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.

Board of Health: First Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

Conservation Commission: Last Saturday of the month at 9:00 a.m.

Board of Assessors: Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Fire Department training: Every Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at the fire station

Building Inspector: Monday 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.; or by appointment.

First Responders: Meeting/training: First and third Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. at the fire station

Cultural Council: Second Thursday at 4:15 p.m. at the library

Post Office: Mill River (413) 229-8582 — if and when it re-opens:

Window hours: Monday - Friday 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Saturday 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.

Southfield (413) 229-8476

Window hours: Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Saturday 9:00 - 12:00 p.m.

Town Treasurer: Monday & Tuesday 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Tax Collector: Monday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Tues and Thurs 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Selectmen's Administrative Secretary: Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Dog and Animal Control Officer: Cassie Keeley, (413) 429-7603

Town Clerk: 229-8278; 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. weekdays; Saturday by appointment

Town Hall: 229-8116

Police: Business office: 229-8161

Library: 229-6668

Transfer Station Hours:

Wednesday: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

PERMITS ARE DUE JULY 6

and can be purchased for \$150

by mail or online at

www.newmarlborough.gov.

Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. No admittance without a permit after August 15

Emergency calls:

**Police, Fire, Medical
911**

New Marlborough Highway Department

Located on Mill River-Southfield Rd.

Hours:

Monday - Friday 7:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

PO Box 99, Mill River, MA 01244

(413) 229-8165

We welcome advertisements from businesses owned by New Marlborough residents.

Other businesses can be listed in the Service Sector (see back page). Questions, rates? Call Barbara Lowman: 229-2369

NM5VN Editorial Team

Larry Burke, issue editor; Diane Barth, designer; Martha Bryan, Jane Burke, Robbi Hartt, Barbara Lowman, David Lowman, Joe Poindexter Peter Schuyten, Barry Shapiro, Sandra Fusco-Walker.
Contributing writers and artists: Ann Getsinger, Fiona Kerr.
Index: Donna Weaver

NM5VN Board of Directors

Roy Blount, Jr., Larry Burke, Barbara Lowman, Deb O'Brien, Joe Poindexter, Peter Schuyten, Barry Shapiro, Mary R. Smith, Nan O'Shaughnessy Smith, and Tara White

New Marlborough 5 Village News

appears monthly,

also online at

www.nm5vn.org

The next issue will be dated February 2021.

All copy must be submitted no later than January 18.
For advertising, contact Barbara Lowman, tel: 229-2369
PO Box 243, Southfield, MA 01259

5villagenews@gmail.com

New Marlborough 5 Village News
P.O.Box 243, Southfield, MA 01259
e-mail 5villagenews@gmail.com

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SERVICE SECTOR 1/21

- ♦ **Dellea.biz Computer Services:** has provided local residents with on-site Windows computer repairs and technical support since 1996. Book appointments online at <https://dellea.biz> or call (413) 528-1141.
- ♦ **Design+Planning:** Christopher Blair; Since 1986, creative, budget-aware design. Achieve your goals for additions, alterations to an existing home or new construction. (413)528-4960. chris@design-planning.com.
- ♦ **Fine Jewelry:** Designers and manufacturers; custom orders/commissions welcome; expert repairs. 45 years experience. Sachs Reisman, Inc. 25 Maple Ave., Sheffield (413)229-0050
- ♦ If you are looking for short term rehabilitation, physical therapy, senior living, skilled nursing or memory care, look no further than **Noble Horizons**, proud recipient of Medicare's premier 5-star rating. Just over the border in Salisbury, CT. www.NobleHorizons.org 860-435-9851; 17 Cobble Road Salisbury, CT.
- ♦ **One call does it all!:** Vinyl siding cleaning; pressure washing; deck refinishing; floors refinished; window washing; odd landscape jobs; all odd jobs. David Goewey, (413)229-2787
- ♦ **Susan M. Smith:** Attorney At Law; Concentrating in the areas of Estate Planning, Estate Administration, Elder Law, Real Estate and Zoning Matters. ssmithlaw@barringtonlawoffice.com or (413)528-4300
- ♦ **Reiner White & Sons, Inc:** A family-run general contractor business serving the MA and CT area since 1988 - new construction, additions, remodeling, and more. Licensed and insured. Call (413) 229-8450 for free consultation.
- ♦ **Shift Happens:** causing stress, anxiety, depression. Take steps – feel better, in life, love, work, school. Psychotherapy works. Adults/adolescents. Susan Winston, Great Barrington 818-618-0775

To list your business here, contact Barbara Lowman (413)229-2369