



New Marlborough 5 Village News

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THE GENERAL STORE, PART II:

Mill River's Gordian Knot

By Robbi Hartt

Watching locals and visitors stop in for a last sandwich, cup of coffee, or day-ending beer the past few weeks felt like a bad dream we all hoped to wake from. The reality, however, is that Mill River's "Little Shop around the Corner" is closed, and not because it was pushed out by a Big Box Store but rather because the price was too high and the structure too broken



The Mill River Store

for Jess and Todd Holcomb, the business owners, to justify buying the building from Dave Herrick – which was their dream. While the community anticipated that it would no longer be operating under their proprietorship after January 31, health and building inspections forced the store to close earlier than planned.

"I made a promise this fall to stay open through the end of hunting season for the boys [meaning the local hunters]," Jess explains. And she did, often keeping the lights on long past closing in order to accommodate their last prize of the day. The hunters were not the only ones who appreciated her staying open this long. From toddlers to tradespeople to seniors, the universal affection for Jess and Todd intensified as closing day drew nearer. Those who frequented the store were friends, not customers, and few left without getting a hug and a compliment—the kind that lifted them through the week. Even Una the German Shepherd knew she'd get a slice of bacon before leaving.

For many patrons of the Mill River General Store, the building's old bones were part of the charm. How many places are left where you can stand on old, sagging wood floors, lean on a counter with a long history, remember your

now grown children eating ice cream cones on the same railing outside? Old bones need lots of TLC, however.

In her January 19 MLS listing, Mary Jo Piretti Miller (Dave Herrick's sister) describes the property as "The heart of Mill River, currently home of the US Post Office, the Mill River General Store and a 3 BR apt.," noting its "great rental potential" and suggesting "additional cosmetic work needed but a great opportunity for either owner occupied with a commercial space or rental." The new list price of \$295,000 is significantly lower than the previous asking price of \$699,000. In addition to the purchase price, however, significant capital upgrades would be required to operate a business there long-term, which only a building inspector and experienced contractor could determine.

Behind the curtain of nostalgia and charm is a 180-year-old building that was under review for building safety and health code compliance. Owen Wright, building inspector, and Scott McFarland, Board of Health agent, received a complaint from Courtney Davis, tenant in the upstairs apartment back in September and performed an inspection in early October. The Post Office filed a complaint about leaking ceiling tiles as well. Dave Herrick hired Allegrone Construction of Pittsfield and

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The General Store, continued

made significant repairs to the roof and exterior wall in November. Timing for completion of the remaining work was said to be weather dependent. Thus, the permit remained open and the final inspections were not made. Holes in the front porch flooring and interior back wall, among other things, caused Jess to push for an additional inspection of the store.

There's an old saying that it's easier to keep up than to catch up, and that may be the key to understanding why Jess and Todd chose to step away from the store rather than extend their lease or make additional offers. To repair the aging building would mean more losses than gains, Jess believed, and would be making too much of a compromise. Operating the past three years has exhausted all of her personal resources and patience. "If I pay what the current owner is asking, I'll still need to invest that amount and more into renovating the building to bring it to code," she states. "I can't justify giving in to that, financially, emotionally, or morally."

While Dave and Jess had discussions in the past, the dialogue seemed stuck between a very big rock and a very hard place by January. According to Mary Jo, "Jess chose to leave by January 31 rather than pay the back rent she owes, and Dave can't pay his mortgage without rent coming in." According to Jess, "I've been withholding rent because we have some major issues that need to be addressed. I wanted to make sure that baby living upstairs had a roof over her head and no one got hurt on those stairs."

Although there is clearly a deep sense of loss in not being able to fulfill her dream of running the store and eventually expanding her catering and restaurant, Jess does not regret the past three years as owner/operator of the business. "What was this for?" she asks. "The people. I love this community."

That love was evident in a quick scan of the interactions in the store on the second-to-last Sunday before closing, as Christian got an update on Right to Farm efforts, Mary got help from Todd with a laptop

problem, someone needing American cheese was sold the last remaining slices, and a chronic cougher was offered a cup of Gypsy tea—none of which were represented in the price they were charged. By the last day they were open those interactions had turned to grief and disbelief.

"We'll see what happens," Gloria Levitas commented. "We're a small town. We don't need another Southfield Store. It's great, but this is more than a general store; it's our community center." There have been outpourings of appreciation and concern on Maggie's List (a resource many locals rely on for news and discussion) but no easy solutions among the many commenters. While some have suggested "angel investors" or making the store a co-op, at this point no formal solution has been proposed. One person noted "We'll have to wait and see if the right buyer comes along" — to which Roy Blount responded, "We already have the right person in Jess!"

Indeed, many share his feelings. "This was so much more than a store and Jess was so much more than a storekeeper," Dave Hastings noted. Deb O'Brien, New Marlborough Library director, ended a recent string of emails with an invitation for the community to say "Thank You" to Jess and Todd on February at 2:00 p.m. at the Library. Many have speculated that they'll need outside tents to accommodate the crowds expected to attend the gathering.

This story continues to unfold, almost on an hourly basis. In the interest of getting this issue to the printer, however, subsequent events will be covered next month.

Louis L'Amour's famous quote is perhaps the most hopeful note to end on: "*There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. That will be the beginning.*" The Mill River/New Marlborough community fervently hopes this is the case for Jess and Todd, who have given so much of themselves to serve us. We also hope this will be true for the Mill River General Store, which holds memories and connections too numerous to count, too deeply felt to let go. □



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THEN AND NOW

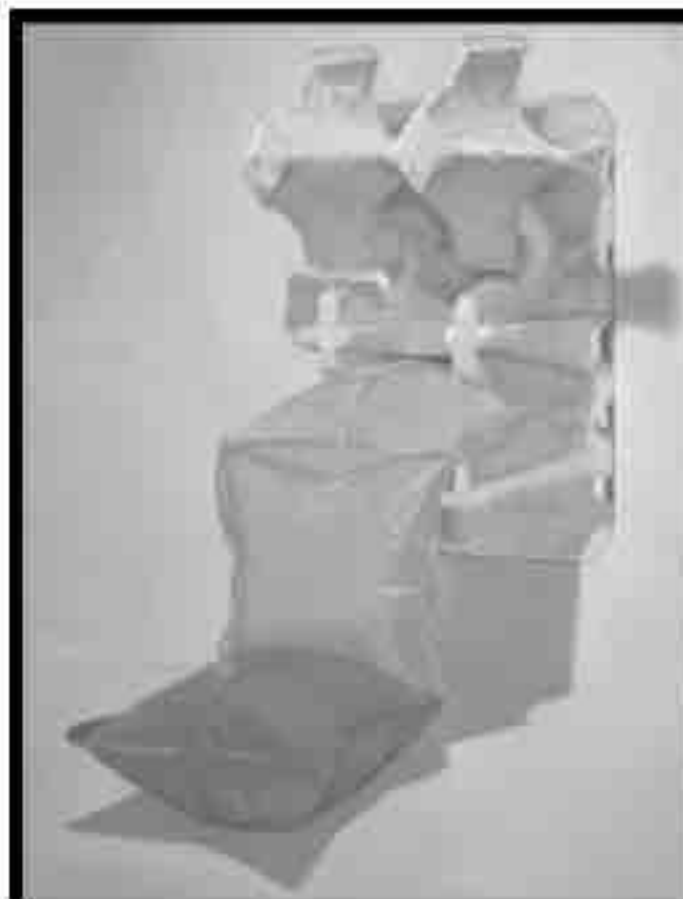


The first car in Southfield, owned by my great grandfather, Howard A. Cook, was given the plate number 9429 in 1905. Over the decades the plate has stayed in our family. It was passed down to my grandfather, Palmer J. Cook, and then to my parents, Bud and Martha (Cook) Stiles. Today, 115 years later, I continue our family tradition of retaining that plate number on my own car. When the time comes, I shall pass it on to my only Massachusetts relative, who lives in Great Barrington. □

Janice Stiles Boults



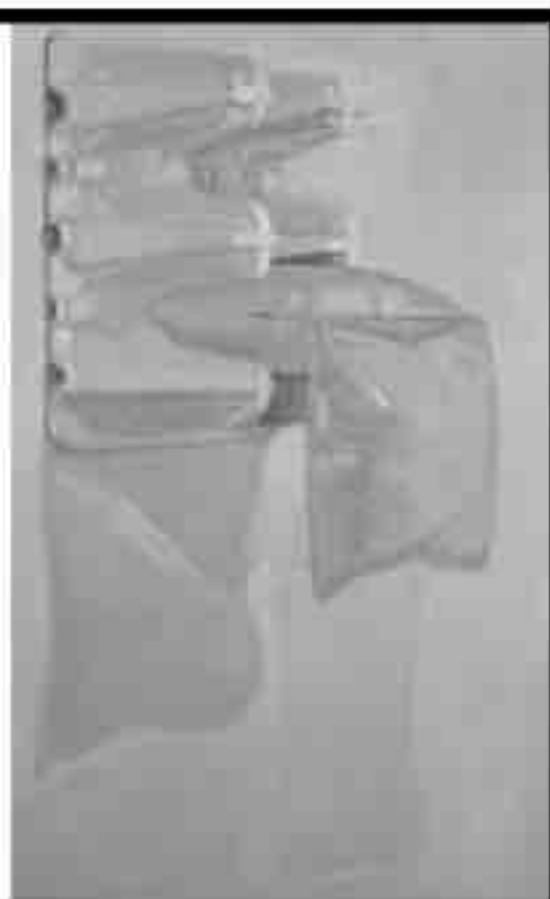
Clockwise from top, Howard A. Cook, Palmer J. Cook, Bud and Martha Stiles's car, holding the champagne toast for Janice's wedding with Chris Boults in 1989, and Janice's car today.



JACOB FOSSUM: Musings
February 7 - March 28, 2020
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In this new body of work, Fossum reassigns the role of the queer artist as a spiritual mystic of the past and for the future.



Town Business Is Your Business BOARD OF SELECTMEN



December 30: The Board, with all three members present, held a brief – thirty minutes! – end-of-year meeting, the main purpose of which was to renew liquor licenses for the town's four restaurants – Gedney Farm, The Old Inn on the Green, The Southfield Store, and Cantina 229 – and a package store license for the Mill River General Store. **By unanimous voice vote the licenses, which carry a \$500 fee and require the restaurants to be inspected by the Building Department and Fire Department, were renewed.**

Before adjourning, the Board authorized Chairman Yohalem to sign the identification page of the Service Zone Agreement between Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance Squad (SBVAS) and New Marlborough Rescue (NMR). The agreement, which codifies the mutual aid arrangement between SBVAS and NMR, was approved by the Board last week, but the selectmen, according to Mr. Yohalem, didn't realize the Service Zone Identification page has to be signed.

January 6: With all three members present, the Board took a next step in its regional school consolidation efforts by agreeing to solicit volunteers to serve on a three-person Regional School District Planning Committee (RSDPC). Once formed, the committee will join with similar committees from other area towns to explore the pros and cons of consolidating Southern Berkshire Regional School District and Berkshire Hills Regional School District. By law, one member of the RSDPC must be a member of the local school committee, and all three must be town residents. Applicants are being asked to send their qualifications and background to the Board, which will recommend candidates to the Town Moderator, who, according to state law, is the appointing

authority. In the discussion, the Board made it clear this is a commitment not to be taken lightly, as it could last two or more years.

The Board voted to authorize Chairman Yohalem to sign applications for two District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grants from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). The first would provide assistance in getting the newly-formed Housing Committee off the ground, and specifically to assist the Committee in preparing a plan to create more affordable housing in New Marlborough. The deadline for submitting the application is January 10; DLTA grants typically provide technical resources rather than actual funding.

The other grant, if awarded, would provide additional support to the Town in updating its hazardous mitigation plan. As Town Administrator Mari Enoch reminded the Board, the Town received a similar DLTA grant from BRPC last year, and the work to update the plan is still ongoing. According to Ms. Enoch, it was only this afternoon she learned that there are additional resources from BRPC available to continue the work.

Under administrative updates, the Board approved and signed business license renewals for the following local businesses: William West's Paladin Sales and Services, which sells and services firearms, the Law Offices of Susan Smith, Wyman & Son lumberyard, Flying Cloud Institute, The Little Store Antiques, Herb Eichstedt Contracting, Mackenzie Excavating, Pamela Read Hardcastle's Floral Garden Design. Also, Michael White Contracting, Elizabeth Lombardi's Hayes Hill Studio, Mill River Farm's Berkshire Wildflower Honey, The Inn at Freeman Elms, David M. Weiss Antiques, Appalachian Trading Post, Carlson Builders,



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Reading from the state's most recent Transportation Improvement Program list of prioritized projects, Mr. Yohalem said **there are five bridges in New Marlborough due for repairs or replacement over the next three years, all at the state's cost.** They are the Campbell Falls Road bridge over the Whiting River scheduled for later this year; the Canaan Southfield Road bridge, the Norfolk Road bridge, also known locally as the steel bridge, and the Lumbert Cross Road bridge, all in 2021, and the Keyes Hill Road bridge in 2023.

And for the final item of new business, Ms. Enoch reported the **Town has been awarded a \$2,700 Emergency Planning Grant from the state.** This is an annual grant, and this year Emergency Management Director Ed Harvey plans to use the money to **upgrade the heating and air conditioning system at the fire station, which is the Town's heating and cooling center and emergency shelter.** There is a match required, according to Ms. Enoch, but she indicated the Fire Company will cover it out of its budget. The Board voted to accept the grant and authorized Mr. Yohalem to sign.

As seems to be happening with increasing frequency, the Board then spent almost as much time reviewing and correcting the minutes of three previous meetings – December 9, December 16, and December 30 – as it did on new business, before adjourning.

Peter Schuyten

January 13: With all three selectmen present, Chairman Yohalem opened the meeting at 6:02 p.m. by welcoming Ms. Carrienne Petrik, the Municipal Preparedness Program Regional Coordinator. Ms. Petrik

introduced herself to the Board, stating she moved to town about a year ago and is the coordinator for Berkshire County for this program. Town Administrator Mari Enoch reminded the Board that the Town has submitted two grants to this program: one, a planning grant for the Town, and the second, a grant in partnership with the town of Sandisfield. Ms. Petrik stated she would be working closely with New Marlborough and looked forward to helping the Town.

The second agenda item addressed the **Employee Pay Rate for Holiday Pay policy.** Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring had submitted a memo to the Board asking it to confirm whether the procedures he has followed in the past, were, in fact, the policy the Board intended him to follow. Mr. Loring added he had based the procedures on a memo providing him instructions about holiday pay that he'd received from the Board the first winter he

was superintendent. Bill Ruane and Pete Wilson of the Highway Department were present and discussed the **lack of clarity in the Personnel Handbook** regarding holiday pay. Mr. Ruane stated the policy language could be interpreted differently by different readers.

A long discussion ensued with all parties trying to understand the policy as it is now and whether or not the procedures being followed were consistent with the handbook. Almost an hour and half later, with all parties interpreting the language in the handbook differently, Mr. Yohalem and Ms. White, **voted to continue the current compensation policy until a revision of the Personnel Policy Handbook is adopted.** Selectman Long, stating that he could not vote for a policy he viewed as wrong, abstained. The Handbook is expected to be completed before the end of the fiscal year, June 30.

Volunteers for New Marlborough's three-person Regional School District Planning Committee, to consider the possibilities of consolidating Southern Berkshire and Berkshire Hills Regional School Districts, are asked to send their qualifications to the Board of Selectmen by January 24.

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Town Administrator Enoch then presented the service agreement between the Town and the Emergency Communications Services and the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office. The assessment for this agreement in the amount of \$10,591.92 was already approved at Town Meeting in May of 2019 and just required a signature from the Board.

The next item on the agenda was for the Service Agreement with BETA Engineering for Route 57. Mr. Long advised he had not received anything from the company yet and asked that this item be placed on the next meeting's agenda.

The Planning Board's recommendation for an alternate delegate to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission was quickly accepted when the Board appointed Mark Carson to be the alternate delegate until June 30.

Mr. Long informed the Board that he will attend a meeting with the Town of Egremont on January 22, in which the two towns will open discussions on a search for a joint personnel director.

Ms. Enoch shared the news that Governor Baker and Lieutenant Governor Polito had informed the Town in writing that an additional \$20 million was added to Chapter 90 aid for fiscal year 2019; **New Marlborough has received an additional \$34,071 for this year only.** This addition to Chapter 90 aid gives the Town a total amount of \$374,778 for FY19.

Board of Selectman updates began with Ms. White informing the Board that Bill Kelly passed away suddenly on Friday. She reminded the Board that Mr. Kelly helped obtain the hearing aids for Town Hall. The Board agreed to send a letter of condolence to his family.

Ms. White then updated the Board that the towns involved in the school consolidation discussions had

agreed to choose their planning committee members. Some of the towns have already done so; **once all the towns have appointed their committees those people will come together to plan next steps.** Ms. White stated that New Marlborough has put out information requesting volunteers for the school planning committee and asked interested parties to submit a written letter with their experience by January 24.

Mr. Yohalem then reminded everyone there would be a Board meeting on Thursday, January 16 at 3:00 p.m., for an employee performance evaluation and a joint meeting with the Finance Committee at 6:30 p.m. on the same day.

Business applications were then signed. The Board reviewed and made corrections to the minutes of January 6, before approving the minutes as amended.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Sandra Fusco Walker

The Town has been awarded a \$2,700 Emergency Planning Grant which Emergency Management Director Ed Harvey plans to use to upgrade the heating and air conditioning at the fire station, which is the Town's emergency shelter.

January 16: The Board met in special session Thursday afternoon to review the job performance of Town Treasurer Marilyn Fracasso, and, after an hour and a half of sometimes contentious discussion that included members of the audience, voted to extend her probationary period for another ninety days and to give her more training.

As Chairman Yohalem explained at the beginning of the meeting, three options were on the table: one, to take her off probation and give her the salary increase which was approved by the voters at last year's Annual Meeting retroactive to July 1; terminate her effective immediately; or continue her probation.

There were actually two votes taken. The first, on a motion by Mr. Yohalem, was to dismiss her effective immediately. But the motion failed when Selectman

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Richard Long voted against it, with Selectman White abstaining. **The second vote on a motion by Mr. Long was to extend her probation, and it passed** by a vote of two to one, with Mr. Yohalem voting against and Mr. Long and Ms. White voting for.

Ms. Fracasso, who was hired in June 2016, has been on probation for poor job performance since August of last year.

January 16: With all three members present the Board met in joint session with the Finance Committee at 6:30 p.m. to lay the groundwork for the FY21 budget. The meeting was led by Town Administrator Enoch who distributed to the group a FY20 recap worksheet, a debt service schedule, and a current certified Free Cash analysis prepared by the state. Additionally, she handed out a proposed FY21 budget calendar and the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) FY21 budget calendar. Attending from the Finance Committee were Finance Committee Chair Steve Klein, Michele Shalaby, Sandra Fusco Walker, Rob Miller, Richard Long, Doug Newman, and John Pshenishny.

Ms. Enoch opened with a quick look at closing out FY19, "because that's what gives us our certified **Free Cash number,**" which this year she said totals \$550,086. She then highlighted some of the areas in which Free Cash was generated, including so-called budget efficiencies of more than \$212,000, money that was budgeted but not spent, and \$39,000 in receipts that were not anticipated. Budget accounts that were underspent included winter roads, health and general insurance, SBRSD operating costs, transfer station expenses, Town Hall operating costs, and police salaries. However, the state penalized the Town by holding back \$68,000 because of deficits, overdrawn accounts and

cash variances, but that's down from \$151,000 from the previous year.

Nevertheless, addressing Selectman Tara White, who is also the town accountant, Finance Committee Chair Steve Klein said that going forward the Finance Committee is going to insist on interim reconciliation reports to avoid this kind of thing from happening in the future. "I don't think it's acceptable for the Town to have to wait for a year-end full and final reconciliation to identify problems like this."

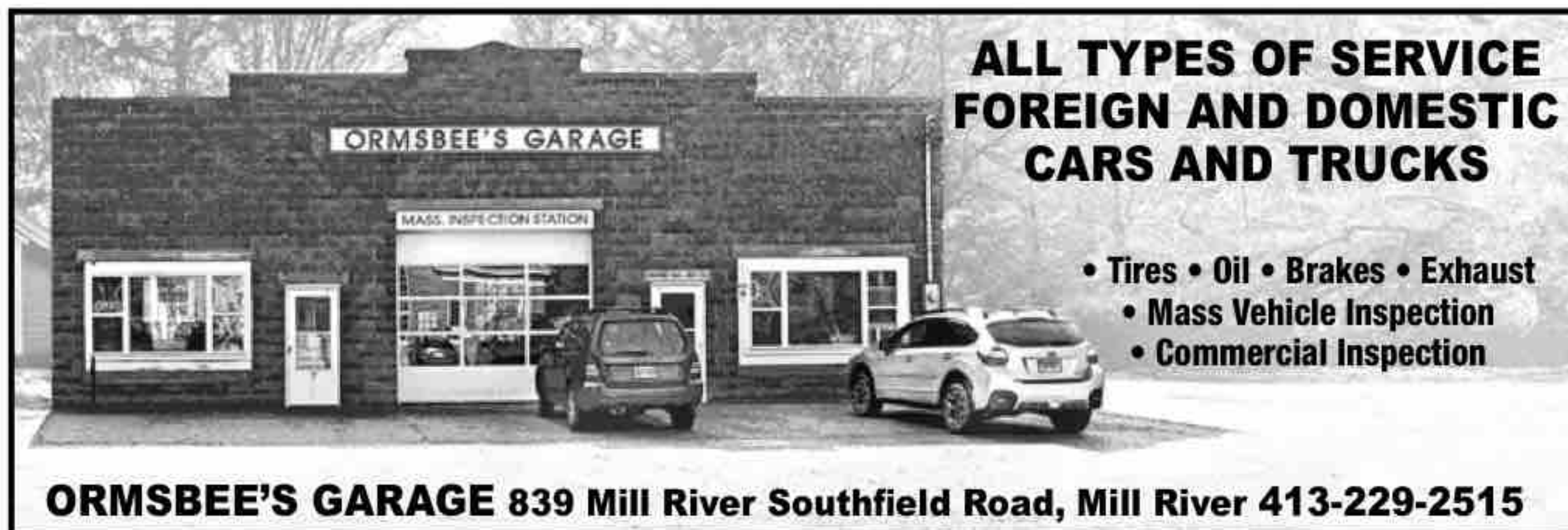
Moving on, Ms. Enoch noted this year's tax rate was reduced by \$.03, to \$10.31 per thousand of assessed value, from \$10.34, and that the taxable value of the Town increased quite a bit, to \$517,926,830 from \$493,511,800, to which she added somewhat parenthetically, "I don't know if anybody here noticed but your tax bills did not go down.

Even though the rate went down, your taxes went up because [property] values went up."

The Town's debt service picture remains stable. The FY21 debt service schedule shows the removal of a 2015 highway truck, leaving borrowings on just two vehicles: the fire truck, due for payoff in 2025, and the new grader, 2029. That results in a net reduction of \$48,992 in debt service payments this year. However, the Town won't know its share of the debt service payment for the New Marlborough Central School roof and boiler replacement project, which has ranged from \$67,553 to \$98,161, until late February when the school budget assessment numbers are released.

The levy limit, which is the amount the Town can legally raise taxes, is \$175,000, and that's based on a 2½ percent increase of \$128,985, plus estimated new growth of \$44,236, which is the value of new residential construction and improvements. Actually, that number, according to Ms. Enoch, is a placeholder, based on a five-

The lack of clarity of the highway employee holiday pay policy was discussed. It was determined to continue as has been done in the past until the Personnel Policy Handbook revision is completed, expected by June 30, 2020.



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year average, even though new growth has been steadily rising during that time, including an almost \$10,000 increase last year. "We're very pleased with the FY20 growth number of \$63,344," she added.

At this, Mr. Klein asked about the possibility of obtaining a more precise estimate on new growth going forward. "Can we do better than just straight-lining the historic growth, or at least have somebody do a quick check against active building permits underway?" he asked.

The outlook is less clear in terms of new or anticipated spending increases, Ms. Enoch said, but she listed several areas that are possibilities, including health insurance, always a safe bet for an annual increase, and the assessment premium from the Berkshire County Retirement Fund. She also noted there's a major human resources study in the works, which will likely include compensation recommendations. "I don't have a crystal ball of what the other anticipated expense increases are going to be, but the compensation recommendations could be big and retirement could be big, too," she said.

Jumping ahead to FY22/23, Ms. Enoch said the

broadband assessment from the state begins in the first fiscal year after completion of the project, and since Charter has twelve months to complete the project, assuming they start this February, "we will not be assessed until FY22 or FY23.

On the flip side, the Town currently has one negotiated and signed PILOT, or payment in lieu of taxes, agreement for a solar project on Knight Road. "Although there's nothing in the ground yet," she said, "if they start this summer and finish it this year, it will be assessed as of 2021 for payment starting in the 2022 tax year." **The broadband assessment is a fifteen-year payment of \$62,514 per annum and the annual solar PILOT payment is \$45,750**, "but neither of those," she said, "will affect this budget in any way that I can see."

According to the preliminary budget calendar, budget requests will be going out to the department heads the week of January 20, and the budget presentation to the Town is scheduled for the week of April 27. The preliminary school budget, which constitutes roughly half the Town's spending, will be unveiled February 20. □

Peter Schuyten

TWO NEW TOWN COMMITTEES

Housing Committee Meets

The newly-established Housing Committee held its first meeting on January 10. Its first order of business was the election of officers, accomplished unanimously: Elizabeth Rosenberg, chair; Teena Parton, vice chair; and Will Regan, secretary. Other Committee members are Richard Stebbins, Kenzie Fields, Dan Doern, and Richard Long.

Mr. Doern presented the Committee with the completed grant application for Direct Local Technical Assistance through the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. The application had been approved by the Board of Selectmen and was submitted the previous week. If approved, the grant provides a consultant to meet with the Committee, assist it in defining housing issues, and help in developing plans to address those issues.

The Committee then turned to a general discussion of needs and goals. The needs identified were affordable housing for young employees in town who can't afford to live here, as well as for senior citizens and long-term residents who can't afford to stay here. The complexities of state funding assistance were noted, as well as issues of management and repairs. The group also discussed various forms of housing: cluster, attached, single-family home, multi-family home, new construction, or repurposing an existing structure.

The Committee decided to begin its exploration by

contacting other towns to learn how they have been approaching the affordable housing issue. Towns identified are Stockbridge, Great Barrington, Lee, Egremont, and municipalities in Martha's Vineyard. The next meeting was tentatively scheduled for January 30.

Designer Selection Committee to Design RFP

The sole purpose of the Designer Selection Committee is to choose an architect who will design improvements at Town Hall that will bring it into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To do this, the Committee must develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) that specifies the Town's needs; the architects' proposals in response to the RFP will be the basis for the Committee's selection. The architect judged to have the best qualifications for the project, not the lowest bid, will be selected.

Currently the Committee, composed of Dan Doern, Mari Enoch, Robin Gerber, Joyce Hackett, Richard Long, and Scott Walker, is awaiting the receipt of sample RFPs from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Using these templates, the Committee will customize an RFP that reflects the Town's specific needs for Town Hall improvement. Once the architect selection has been made, the Committee's purpose will be fulfilled. □

Barbara Lowman

View from the Board

NEW MARLBOROUGH NEEDS YOU!

I spoke to a resident the other day. Let's call this person X to preserve the person's identity. The conversation went something like this:

Me: This spring the Board of Selectmen has a lot of open appointments to fill for various committees, councils and commissions.

X: Who you gonna appoint?

Me: How about you?

X: Why me? I have no time. I work. No thanks.

Me: Okay, but the Town can't function without volunteers. Do you watch TV?

X: Sure.

Me: How often?

X: No more than an hour a day.

Me: Say six hours a week. That's much more than you would spend on any committee.

X: Okay. What have you got?

Me: Glad you asked. There's the Cable Advisory Committee, which acts as our link to Charter Communications and the state. The Conservation Commission helps preserve our natural environment and meets once a month. The Council on Aging requires as much time as you want to give it, and you get some free lunches. Or how about the Cultural Council, which also meets only once a month? It runs Burritt Day and approves grants for local cultural projects.

X: Are you done?

Me: Nope. There is the Umpachene Falls Commission, which keeps the falls area safe and clean. Or the Board of Registrars, which supervises elections; the Historical Commission, which protects our historical properties in town; the Housing Committee, which will study affordable housing for town residents; the Commission on Disabilities, which deals with making Town properties ADA compliant; the Zoning Board of Appeals; or the Agricultural Commission. You can volunteer for the

Regional District Planning Committee, which will help determine if and how school district consolidation might be achieved; bear in mind, though, that this would probably be a two or three-year commitment. And, finally, there are the vital services provided by New Marlborough Fire and Rescue, but you do have to respond to calls and be trained.

There has got to be something in this list that appeals to you.

X: I'll think about it.

Me: Now we're getting somewhere. Just call Sharon at Town Hall (229-8116) and tell her where you'd like to serve. □

Nat Yohalem

P.S.: If X could be you, volunteer. You could have some fun, meet new people, and make a real contribution to the town.



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PLANNING BOARD

January 8: After a bit of house-keeping – appointing Mark Carson as alternate representative to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and hearing from Chairman Daniel Doern on a District Local Technical Assistance grant he is preparing that will help the Town's Affordable Housing Committee "define the problem," the Planning Board spent the remainder of this regular meeting laying out the agenda and individual responsibilities for the January 18 public hearing on the proposed marijuana bylaw. The Board, still short by one member, is currently composed of Daniel Doern, Mark Carson, Eric Schaefer, and Rob Hartt. With no other business before them, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

January 18: At 10:00 a.m. sharp on this Saturday morning with snow predicted, Daniel Doern called to order the public meeting on the Planning Board's draft of a marijuana bylaw. Along with the four members of the Board, there were sixteen interested citizens in attendance in the ground floor offices of Town Hall, including two selectmen – Richard Long and Tara White.

The first item on the agenda had to do with a stand-alone addition to the bylaws pertaining to all special permit applications. This proposed addition would give the Board of Selectmen, acting as the Special Permit Granting Authority (SPGA), the power to call upon the expertise of outside consultants to assist in the review of applications, at the applicants' expense. This authority is already written into the existing solar bylaw. Selectman Long spoke in favor of the proposal, saying it will be "a valuable tool, at the cost of the proponent," one that is



photo by Larry Burke

Planning Board Chairman Daniel Doern, second from left, responds to a question from the audience at the January 18 public hearing on the proposed marijuana bylaw.

already in use in municipalities across the state.

Moving on to a discussion of the Planning Board's draft of bylaws pertaining to medical marijuana and marijuana research facilities, Chairman Doern gave the audience a brief overview of the history of legalized marijuana in Massachusetts, as well as the steps taken in New Marlborough in relation to the commercial uses of cannabis. He concluded this rundown by saying that the aim of the Planning Board's work over the last six months has been to devise a protective bylaw that deals with the land use aspect of the general bylaw, which, as of the 2019 Annual Town Meeting in May, prohibits all commercial marijuana uses except medical marijuana and research facilities. He further said that the proposed bylaw invokes all the regulations in place statewide, but also "focuses on the local impacts that the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) does not cover."

Following this introductory overview, Eric Schaefer then described to the audience how the Planning Board

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had looked at thirty of the larger commercial and public spaces that already exist in town, with a view to seeing how to make new marijuana facilities blend into our landscape. This then flowed into a listing of the dimensional requirements that the Planning Board feels would be appropriate in scale and visual impact for the two zones that now exist in New Marlborough – Rural Residential and Village Center Residential. One of the innovative concepts of the proposed bylaw is the term “limit of disturbance,” by which the Board sets in place setbacks that include all aspects of the marijuana facility, not just the main building. This will provide a greater level of protection to abutters.

Members of the Planning Board took turns briefly outlining the contents of the draft, and then the meeting was opened up to questions and comments from the attendees. Alan Krantzler expressed his opinion that the language in the draft might not be strong enough to protect from eyesores such as ugly fencing, which led to some discussion about appropriate screening. Deanna Mummert said that she had reservations about giving the Board of Selectmen authority to waive certain filing requirements. Mr. Doern replied that the Board had gone back and forth on this subject before agreeing that the SPGA should have some discretion on waiving requirements for small-scale applications. Mark Carson added that the requirements of the CCC are the baseline, and cannot be waived in any circumstances.

John Schreiber praised the Planning Board for what he called “the best Planning Board hearing I have ever attended,” and then went on to suggest adding the Historical Commission to the list of parties that review special permit applications, since two of our villages – Mill River and New Marlborough village – are registered as national historic districts.

Rebecca Schreiber felt that the draft was lacking a sufficient odor control plan. Mr. Carson offered that the Board of Health is working on that issue right now, and Mr. Doern agreed with Ms. Schreiber that the

Planning Board needs to address that problem as well. Ginny Hyde brought up her concern over the possibility of light pollution from indoor growing facilities, and wondered how abutters might be protected. Mark Carson replied that all abutters are entitled to voice their concerns at Special Permit public hearings, and this led to a discussion on the CCC’s community outreach requirements, whereby the applicants must schedule separate meetings with town officials and abutters in an effort to iron out areas of potential conflict in advance of the formal application process.

Chuck Wyman, referring back to the discussion on regulating odor, wondered whether the highly restrictive language in the Hadley, Massachusetts, bylaw that Ms. Schreiber had read aloud, would, through similar over-regulation, cause potential applicants to stay away from New Marlborough. Mr. Doern replied, “We need to walk a fine line.” Lucinda Shmulsky then offered her opinion that, rather than the two licenses for each of the allowed uses that the Planning Board proposes, there should be just one medical marijuana and one research facility license for the entire township. This led to the expression of a range of opinions on the numbers of licenses to be allowed, and Chairman Doern reiterated the Planning Board’s position that allowing just one license per use would create an unwelcome monopolistic situation, not to mention the potential appearance of favoritism toward a single applicant. In concluding this particular discussion, Mr. Doern reminded all present that such details can be revisited and revised in the years to come.

With assurances to all that the comments and suggestions of the morning would be fully taken into account as the bylaw is fine-tuned for the Annual Town Meeting in May, Chairman Doern thanked the attendees and adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.. The Planning Board, in turn, received many thanks for the cooperative spirit of the dialogue throughout the meeting. □

Larry Burke



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EGGS FOR SALE

Brookmede Farm

By Barry R. Shapiro

On a sunny warm day, visitors to the farm store at Brookmede Farm are greeted by a diverse flock of hens dashing all over the driveway, the fields, and running in and out of the outbuildings and the stunning barn, part of which dates back to the 1880s.

"My chickens lead a very interesting life," says John Miller, seventy-five, owner of the farm. "Our chickens are pasture-raised, and are free to roam anywhere they want, although most stay close to the barn and the outbuildings where they live. They go where they want and eat whatever they want out in the fields."

Walking around the farm, chickens nervously scurrying out of the way, John seems like he's been around farming for his entire life. But that's not the case. In fact, John's path from Madison Avenue advertising man to farmer wound from New York to New Hampshire to Florida and ultimately back to his family's farm in New Marlborough.

"I was born in New Rochelle, New York," says John. "My parents had family in Pound Ridge and my dad, Jim, worked as a purchasing manager in Connecticut. We also had Brookmede Farm right here in New Marlborough where we spent time. The farm is on land once owned by the prominent Willets family and was part of their more extensive Cassilis Farm. J. Macy Willets and his wife, Gladys, kept their Hackney ponies in the big barn on the property where my chickens now roam. They used to take the ponies to Madison Square Garden by train from Great Barrington. My father bought the thirty-six acres on which the farm now sits from Willets's widow, Gladys, in 1944 and raised dairy cows here. My family also owned the big white brick colonial house across the road which is now owned by Tom Stalker and Richard Long."

Running around chasing free range chickens did not loom as a likely career choice for John.

"After graduating from Silvermine College of Fine Arts in New Canaan and attending the School of Visual Arts in New York City, I worked at several ad agencies, including Gray Advertising, doing television production, mostly for Proctor and Gamble. I was only twenty-seven, and producing commercials was great



John Miller photo by Barry Shapiro

fun. I hired actress Marsha Mason to do Top Job commercials and worked with Jean Stapleton of *All in the Family* fame on Gain detergent commercials."

When John decided that life in the big city was not for him, he left his apartment in Jackson Heights ("near runway four at LaGuardia") and bought land from a friend in Compton, New Hampshire, where he lived and served as a selectman for nine years. "It was a real New England town with deep-set Yankee traditions. I enjoyed it."

After taking care of his mother in Florida for a few years, John returned to New Marlborough in 1998 and with his wife, Wendy, whom he married in 1992, operated a bed and breakfast in what is now the Stalker/Long residence for a few years. "It was a low-key operation." John grins

at this point and adds that, "We basically tried to pick off some of the limousines heading to Gedney Farm for weddings."

When the Great Recession hit in 2000, John decided the time was right to return the land to farming. Through a process of trial and some error, he came to focus his efforts exclusively on egg production.

"This property was a dairy farm, operated for years by my father and then a tenant, but I didn't want to do dairy. I decided instead to raise meat goats which ultimately turned out to be a mistake. I did lots of infrastructure work on the farm, adding new buildings and fencing. I had about thirty Boer goats. They are a healthy meat, but the U. S. is a beef country and I needed to educate people about it. This climate is also an expensive place to raise goats since they can't pasture year-round and need to be fed expensive hay during the winter. So, goats didn't really work out for me."

John also had pigs on the farm, and, although he kept some until last year when an illness forced him to get rid of his pigs, they didn't provide an acceptable economic return.

"We had about twelve pigs, but the demand for large cuts of meat changed. No more Sunday dinner where people would buy a large ham, serve it on Sunday and then eat the rest during the balance of the week.

Today, people don't do that and are more interested in how many minutes it will take to microwave something."

Eggs, however, along with the occasional package of bacon and sausages, remain a top focus for his customers.

"Everyone knows about eggs and bacon," quips John. "No need to educate them about goat meat and no need to sell large cuts of meat."

The free-roaming flock, unrestrained by any fencing, typically consists of about 100 chickens, and are a mixture of Ameraucanas, which lay blue eggs, Barred Rock, New Hampshire, Silver Laced Wyandottes, White Langhans, White Rock, and Australorps. John says that he has built the flock without a master plan for the breeds.

The chickens typically lay about one egg each day except during the colder weather molting season, when production falls to almost zero eggs per day. "All their energy goes into re-furbishing their feathers. Raising them is really pretty simple. Give them shelter, clean water, and feed, and they will figure it out. They eat whatever they find in the fields, but I also feed them natural feed from Wirter Farm in Lanesboro. It's actually pig feed and has lots of corn and minerals. They love it."

Brookmede Farm is a one-man operation and very low tech.

"I do all the work myself and wash the eggs by hand in a two-gallon Igloo Industrial Cooler, such as you might use for drinking water."

Surprisingly, unlike other chicken farmers, John doesn't cull his flock when the chickens become less productive, which typically occurs after two or three



photo by Barry Shapiro

Come spring, these chicks will be foraging in the fields

years. "I'm not interested in that," says John. "I keep them until they meet their natural end, whenever that might be."

John's benevolence toward his chickens doesn't mean that he is easy-going when it comes to their *raison d'être*.

"I am very picky when it comes to the eggs I'll sell. If they are stained or misshapen, I won't sell them. Whenever there's a question of any kind, I'll keep it for myself or discard it. The public will never see it."

Predators, typically a problem for many chicken farmers, did not historically affect John's hens until a year ago when a family of raccoons decided to feast on the flock. Asked how he handled the problem, John chuckles and says, "Let's just say they moved on one day." A picture of a dead raccoon posted on the farm store wall suggests that the raccoons are not coming back any time soon.

John has an obvious affection for his animals, other than raccoons.

"My best friends have mostly four legs, while some have only two!"

His affection is also evident when he's asked about the taxidermed head of Buckeye the Goat hanging on the wall of the farm store, his somewhat imperious gaze surveying the room and his long, brown pendulous ears hanging down, a bit mournfully.

"He was one of the herd of Boer goats I owned when I first began operating the farm around 2000. He had hip issues, however, but I didn't want to just get rid of him. So, I found a wonderful taxidermist and here he is."

John, the former Madison Avenue ad man turned chicken farmer, looks a bit wistful when talking about Buckeye.

"He was a great goat," he says. □



Buckeye the Goat keeps an eye on things photo by Barry Shapiro

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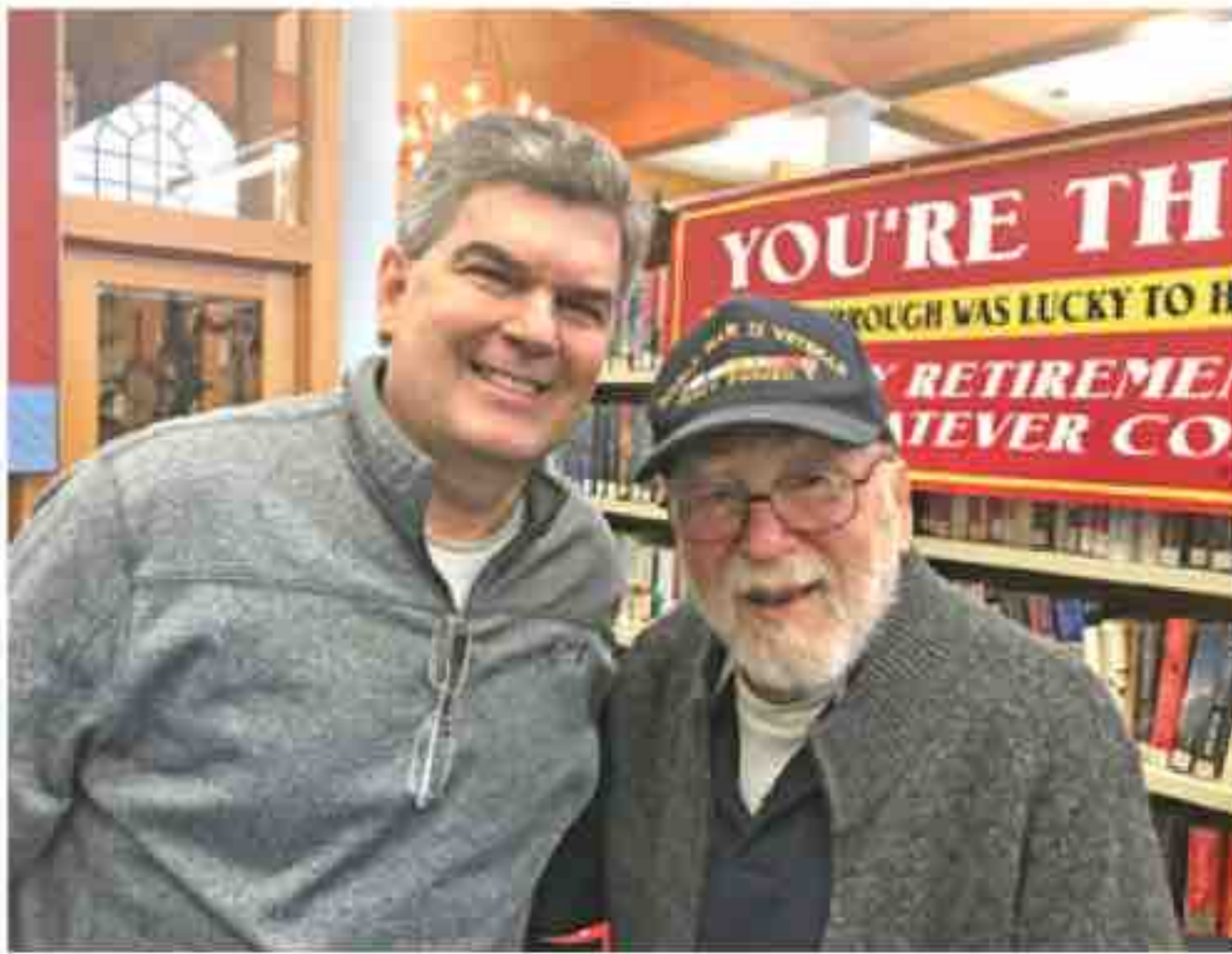


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PAUL'S PARTY!

A community send-off was held for Paul Borelli on December 26 at the New Marlborough Library, honoring Paul's United Parcel Service deliveries in town for more than twenty years. A banner at the Mill River Store proclaimed New Marlborough's gratitude for his service, and wished him well in retirement. Cards and gifts from community members were collected at the library and the Mill River Store. Selectmen Richard Long and Tara White presented Paul with a certificate of appreciation from the Board of Selectmen for his years of service. Turnout for the party was around eighty people, which filled the library and was a tribute to the friendships that have developed over many years. The senior, pictured with Paul, was Charlie Parton, who turned ninety-five at the end of January. □



OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

On the morning of January 16, I looked out the window to see if there were any birds at our feeders, and was greeted by the sight of 200 or more **red-winged blackbirds** moving, almost as a single organism, across the lawn. The flock was in constant motion, walking, hopping, fluttering briefly into flight – achieving a kind of folding-over-itself movement, with the rearguard leap-frogging the forward ones in a continuous flow. I called Jane to the window to see what was happening, just as the entire flock took flight as if one single entity – rising twenty or thirty feet in the air, swarming and swooping about, landing, and then soaring upward again.



photo by Larry Burke

Redwing blackbirds being chased away by bluejays

The term for what they were performing is “murmuration,” more commonly observed in enormous flocks of starlings and some shorebirds. The sight was so mesmerizing to me, with the red epaulets of the males flashing dramatically, that I could not tear myself away to grab a camera, and so was not able to record the beauty of the choreography. (Some minutes later, as the flock appeared to be leaving us, I did reach for a camera, but was only able to take one blurry frame of documentation.) The consensus among biologists on the purpose of murmuration is that it provides a form of defense against predators such as hawks, who would have great difficulty in zeroing in on a single member of the flock. In this morning’s case, while I did not see any hawks, a dozen or more **bluejays** were extremely agitated and vocal – seemingly quite disturbed by the presence of so many blackbirds, and eventually shooing them out of the yard.

One other note on this sighting: I thought it unusual to see red-wings up on our hill at this time of year, and checked back into some old calendar books in which I noted first arrivals of birds in the spring. In 1981, the first red-wing returned on March 12, with similar dates for first sightings in subsequent years back in the ‘80s. Perhaps, with our changing climate, red-winged blackbirds have become year-round residents? I’d like to know if others in New Marlborough have noted similar changes in the migratory habits of our bird populations.

-Larry Burke



photo by Liz Goodman

Liz's ice disk in the Konkapot River

While not exactly a “wildlife neighbor” item, an observation of a natural phenomenon by **Liz Goodman** seems too interesting not to be reported in these pages. During a walk along the Konkapot River behind her house in Clayton on January 9, Liz came upon an extraordinary sight at a bend in the river. There, in the water, slowly rotating in a clockwise direction was a large, **perfectly-formed circle of ice and slush**. Liz photographed it (seen here) and also took a video clip of it which reveals the stately, slow spinning of the object. Upon returning to her home, Liz checked online to find out what she had stumbled upon, and found this description in Wikipedia: “Ice disks form on the outer bends in a river where the accelerating water creates a force called ‘rotational shear’, which breaks off a chunk of ice and twists it around. As the disc rotates, it grinds against surrounding ice — smoothing into a circle. A relatively uncommon phenomenon, one of the earliest recordings of a slowly revolving disc was spotted on the Mianus River and reported in an 1895 edition of *Scientific American*.”

Liz’s video perfectly illustrates the Wikipedia description. What is lacking in that description, though, is the precise combination of elements – the temperature that day of air and water, the depth of water in the river at that bend, the velocity of the flowing water, even the lack of strong breezes – that were in place at the very time Liz

happened along to experience such an ephemeral moment in nature. What a stroke of good fortune for her, and for us in her having captured this rare occurrence! □

Compiled by Larry Burke. Send your wildlife sightings to him at lburke2@me.com

10-4 IN 2020: NEW MARLBOROUGH FIRE & RESCUE'S HIGH TECH COMMUNICATIONS

By Larry Burke

A recent visit to the firehouse in Southfield by this former New Marlborough EMT/firefighter brought to mind the old advertising slogan, "This is not your father's Oldsmobile." Things have certainly changed in the nearly twelve years since I retired! Not only is there more, and better, firefighting and lifesaving equipment, but the communications system has clearly moved into the 21st century. When I joined in 1981, the Fire Company was transitioning from an alert system based on a telephone tree (see *What's a Red Phone?*, NM5VN October, 2018) to pagers, known as Minitors, which allowed the individual responders to receive notice of a call directly from the dispatcher in Pittsfield – a great technological advance.

Now, nearly forty years later, pagers are still in use, but they are definitely on the road to... becoming your father's Oldsmobile. With the patient guidance of Ed Harvey, who is an EMT, a captain in the NMF&R, and the Emergency Management Director for the Town of New Marlborough, I was introduced to the many layers of the modern emergency communications system. The foundation of the system is a comprehensive application called *IamResponding.com*, which uses the responders' smart phones as the primary device for communicating details of an emergency call. Upon receiving a 911 call, the dispatcher in Pittsfield activates, as before, the tones to the pagers, but now, in addition, he or she also sends out a text and voice message to the cell phones



NMF&R Captain Ed Harvey demonstrates some of the features of the IamResponding app that is becoming a central feature of emergency communications in New Marlborough.
photo by Larry Burke

of the firefighters or EMTs in a given town. (Those few without cell phones can be notified by email.)

As the individual responders receive the call, they can quickly indicate to the dispatcher – and, very importantly, to a number of screens in the firehouse as well as to the cell phones of fellow responders – whether they are going directly to the scene of the call or coming to the station to drive the ambulance or fire engines. In towns like New Marlborough,

where personnel may be few, particularly for daytime calls, the ability for all responders to track who is going where becomes critical information in using limited human resources to the best advantage. Other features of the *IamResponding* system allow the responders to listen to the details of the call more than once and also to access maps on their phones if there is any uncertainty as to location.

Ed Harvey is careful to make clear that there is a bit of a balancing act in using the system successfully – on the one hand there is the wealth of useful information for the responder, but there is also the safety concern that one could become distracted by the screens while attempting to drive to the scene. Another clear disadvantage to the system is that it is dependent on cell towers for the transmission of all this information, and here in New Marlborough, that is definitely a big disadvantage. Harvey says that most of the firefighters and EMTs know where the communication dead spots are in town, and

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will pick the right moments to access the application. To a great degree, until cell reception is much improved in town, the lamResponding app functions in emergency situations as a useful backup to the older methods of communication, particularly two-way radios.

The capabilities of lamResponding extend far beyond its uses in emergency situations, though, into such important features as calendars and alerts for training and duties, notifications to spouses or to employers when a member is responding to a call, tracking of which vehicles or equipment articles are in or out of service, and mapping of special features around town, such as water sources, KnoxBox homes, helicopter landing areas, or any helpful information homeowners might want emergency services to know about



A firefighter or EMT in New Marlborough now can access important dispatch information on his or her smart phone.

photo by Larry Burke

their property. If any readers did want to supply such information, Ed Harvey can be contacted at edharvey19@gmail.com, and he will enter the particulars into the mapping database.

The full depth of the lamResponding app is still being explored by Mr. Harvey and other officers of New Marlborough Fire & Rescue, but it is certainly taking its place as an important tool, alongside such relatively recent innovations as the reverse-911 calling system, which alerts townspeople of potentially hazardous situations within the township. With increased cell tower coverage in coming years (and, to a lesser extent the arrival of fiber-optic cable), the ability of our first responders to provide efficient aid in our times of need will continue to expand. □

Upcoming: Events Calendar for February and March

February 23: Emmanuel Ceysson, principal harpist at the Metropolitan Opera, will perform a celestial repertoire at the second and final Winter House Concert at a nearby private residence, starting, an hour earlier than usual, at 3:00 p.m.; \$25, \$20 to members of the New Marlborough Village Association; to reserve call 413-229-2785 or go online at www.newmarlborough.org.

February 24 to 28: Early voting for the state's Super Tuesday Primary, which will be held March 3; receive your ballot from Town Clerk Kathy Chretien during regular office hours, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

March 3: Massachusetts Democratic Primary; our state joins thirteen other Super Tuesday states in registering its choice for a Democratic presidential nominee; registered Democrats and Independents are eligible to vote; polls open at the Town Hall 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

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A NEW MARLBOROUGH ARTIST'S EXPLORATION: *Jacob Fossum's New Paintings and Sculpture*

Mill River resident and Bard College at Simon's Rock painting and drawing professor Jacob Fossum will be showing new work at the Jackson-Hillman Gallery on the Simon's Rock campus in February and March. The show, entitled *Jacob Fossum: Musings*, will feature paintings, sculpture, video, and even original music by Mr. Fossum – essentially, as he says, “combining everything I love.”

The impetus for this current work occurred during a residency in Wyoming, where he found an unlikely subject matter that continues to hold his interest – common packing materials, including form-molded paper pulp and air-filled plastic bags. A sabbatical last year at an art colony in Reykjavik, Iceland, introduced Jacob to other artists who pushed the boundaries of their art forms, inspiring Jacob to extend the range of his fascination with these objects beyond creating paintings of them, and into sculpting with them as well. Jacob says he has found these humble, utilitarian materials to be somehow aesthetically compelling, spiritual, ceremonial, and totemic.

While the hallmark of Jacob's painting has been his close observation of the world he sees, resulting in detailed, representational canvases, he says, “I really admire abstract art... but I don't know how to do it, and this [current work] feels to me like my way into abstraction.” And, in fact, while the paintings in this series feature the easily recognizable forms of the packing materials, the overall effect, through color and composition, transcends realism. One canvas, as an example, which Jacob refers to as his homage to the abstract-expressionist painter Mark Rothko, is a color field of vibrant greens against pinks and purples, in the midst of which a precisely rendered air bag appears, as if suspended by two strips of black electrical tape.



Jacob Fossum in his Simon's Rock studio
photo by Larry Burke



“How to Breathe Out”
To see this piece in color, visit the website:
www.nm5nv.org

On a deeper, more personal and philosophical level, Jacob Fossum says that the creation of these paintings and sculptures, “is, underneath, a spiritual practice for me.” He says that, having abandoned the religion of his youth (Jacob grew up in the Mormon faith in Utah), he has been seeking, “as a queer person who has lost my religion, how I can once again access spirituality.” The choice of this improbable, easily-overlooked subject matter has opened up for him many questions about the ways in which he observes and portrays these objects, and has given him feelings of reverence toward them.

Jacob feels that it is of great importance for him to identify as a queer artist, and, more importantly, as one who seeks what he calls “a queer spirituality.” With a gentle, self-deprecating laugh, he says, “being a queer spiritualist is an important thing for me to recognize in my work, and to be vocal about. It adds an element of understanding to the work.”

Mill River has been home for Jacob and his husband Jackson Liscombe for the last three years, and Jacob thinks of the village as, “a huge blessing to Jackson and me. To be surrounded by such open-hearted neighbors, both gay and straight, and to have the Konkapot River in our backyard has been emotionally and spiritually fantastic. The comforting sound of the river...”

Jacob Fossum: Musings opens on Friday, February 7 at the Daniel Art Center on the Simon's Rock campus. At 6:00 p.m., Jacob will give an artist's talk in McConnell Theater, and this will be followed immediately by the opening in the Jackson-Hillman Gallery. Both the theater and gallery are located on the lower level of the Daniel Art Center. The show runs through March 20. □

Larry Burke

WINTER HOUSE CONCERT SCHEDULED

The second Winter House Concert of 2020 will take place on Sunday, February 23, at 3:00 p.m., and hour earlier from the usual start time. The performer will be Emmanuel Ceysson, principal harpist of the Metropolitan Opera. Emmanuel was scheduled to perform in the Music and More series last September, but was forced to cancel at the last minute due to an injury. "We are pleased," says NMVA President Ben Harms, "to be able to schedule this performance in its place."

The program includes works by Bach, Debussy, Tchaikovsky, Fauré, and Pierné. This may be the last chance to hear Emmanuel in a concert recital in this part of the country. He has accepted the position of principal harpist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic starting next September.

Winter House Concerts are presented by the New Marlborough Village Association and take place in private homes. They last about one hour and are followed



Emmanuel Ceysson

by a reception of wine and hors d'oeuvres. Seating is limited. For reservations call (413) 229-2785. □

Thank You to Our Contributors:

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THE LOG

Police Department (selected entries)

- Dec. 1 3:18 p.m. Officer assists an Alum Hill Road resident who has locked herself out of her car.
- Dec. 2 2:42 p.m. A caller requests help in evicting a hunter on his Canaan Valley Road property without permission.
- 9:43 p.m. The Department calls in a tow service for a truck that has slid off the road at the intersection of Mill River Great Barrington and County Roads.
- Dec. 4 3:50 p.m. An officer intervenes when a Clayton resident reports that her neighbor has threatened to shoot her dogs, which, though they are off-leash, are contained on her own property; the neighbor complains that with shotgun season having just opened, the dogs will scare away the deer.
- Dec. 5 4:11 p.m. An officer alerts the Highway Department after a caller reports a sheet of ice on a Canaan Valley Road hill.
- 9:22 p.m. A motorist on Mill River Great Barrington Road reports kids throwing snowballs at passing cars.
- Dec. 6 1:19 p.m. An officer calls for a tow to assist a motorist who has slid off Mill River Great Barrington Road.
- Dec. 7 5:34 a.m. A caller reports a springer-spaniel-like dog loose on Hartsville New Marlborough Road near New Marlborough village.
- Dec. 11 12:14 a.m. An officer alerts the Highway Department to a tree blocking both lanes at the intersection of Mill River Great Barrington and County Roads.
- Dec. 12 10:45 a.m. Officer assists a driver locked out of his car at the Mill River General Store.
- Dec. 14 6:38 p.m. Officers assist in extricating passengers, including two children, from vehicles in a two-car collision on Clayton Road in Sheffield.
- Dec. 15 12:36 p.m. A caller, hearing gunshots near her Church Road residence, attributes them to hunting, which is prohibited on Sundays in Massachusetts.
- Dec. 16 9:54 a.m. The fax machine at Town Hall accidentally activates a 911 call.
- Dec. 20 6:41 p.m. A motorist reports hitting a deer on Southfield Branch Road.
- Dec. 21 7:30 a.m. Officer assists a driver stuck off of County Road.
- Dec. 22 12:59 p.m. A caller asks for help with trespassers on her Caulkins Cross Road property.
- Dec. 25 2:32 p.m. An officer assists a motorist following a one-car accident on New Marlborough Sandisfield Road.
- Dec. 28 9:47 p.m. An officer arrests a Mill River resident with an outstanding warrant and transports him to the Sheffield Police Department for booking.
- Dec. 30 7:27 a.m. A motorist collides with a utility pole on South Sandisfield Road.
- 2:25 p.m. A caller reports that South Sandisfield Road is completely blocked by a fallen tree and downed wires.
- 2:40 p.m. National Grid notified of a wire down on Norfolk Road.
- Dec. 31 2:07 p.m. A caller reports a driver speeding through Hartsville and crossing to the wrong side of the Hartsville New Marlborough Road.

Graham Frank, Chief of Police

FIRE AND RESCUE

- Dec 1 5:39 p.m. Norfolk Road Medical Call
- Dec. 4 1:45 p.m. Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call
- Dec. 6 2:10 p.m. Norfolk Road Fire Alarm
- Dec. 6 8:38 p.m. Canaan Southfield Road CO Alarm
- Dec. 7 10:24 p.m. Hartsville New Marlborough Road Fire Alarm
- Dec. 13 6:08 p.m. Hartsville New Marlborough Road Medical Call
- Dec. 15 6:01 p.m. Norfolk Road CO Alarm
- Dec. 17 10:05 a.m. Clayton Mill River Road CO Alarm
- Dec. 20 3:06 p.m. Canaan Southfield Road CO Alarm
- Dec. 24 11:12 a.m. Mill River Great Barrington Road Medical Call
- Dec. 25 2:32 p.m. New Marlborough Sandisfield Center Road MVA
- Dec. 27 11:41 a.m. Woodleigh Avenue Fire Alarm
- Dec. 28 9:48 a.m. Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call
- Dec. 30 7:29 a.m. South Sandisfield Road MVA

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

This is a magic pudding. I have always loved the “mystery” around it, and I still get a little bit of a thrill pulling it out of the oven and seeing the cake on top of the sauce. There’s a science lesson here, but to be honest, I am sticking with “It’s Magic.” In Australia, this is such a common winter dessert that it is available as a packet mix (in lemon as well), which was so simple that we would have it almost weekly. I don’t make it as often anymore, not due to it being difficult — even from scratch, it’s quick and easy to make — but because I end up wanting to eat all of it.

Fiona Kerr



Chocolate Self-Saucing Pudding

Ingredients

- Butter, to grease dish
- 1 cup (150g) self-rising flour*, sifted (1 cup all-purpose flour + 1 tsp baking powder)
- 3/4 cup (175g) sugar
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup milk
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- Extra 1/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1-3/4 cup boiling water
- Ice cream and/or cream, to serve

Step 1. Preheat oven to 360°F. Grease a 6-8 cup capacity ovenproof dish.

Step 2. Sift the flour and 2 tablespoons of cocoa powder, add sugar and combine.

Step 3. Whisk the egg, butter, and milk together, add to the dry ingredients, stir until well combined. Pour the cake mixture into prepared dish and smooth the surface.

Step 4. Mix the brown sugar and extra cocoa in a small bowl until well combined. Sprinkle evenly over the cake mixture.

Step 5. Gently pour the boiling water over the top of the pudding. Bake for 40-45 minutes, remove from oven and let sit for 10 minutes. Serve with cream or ice cream.

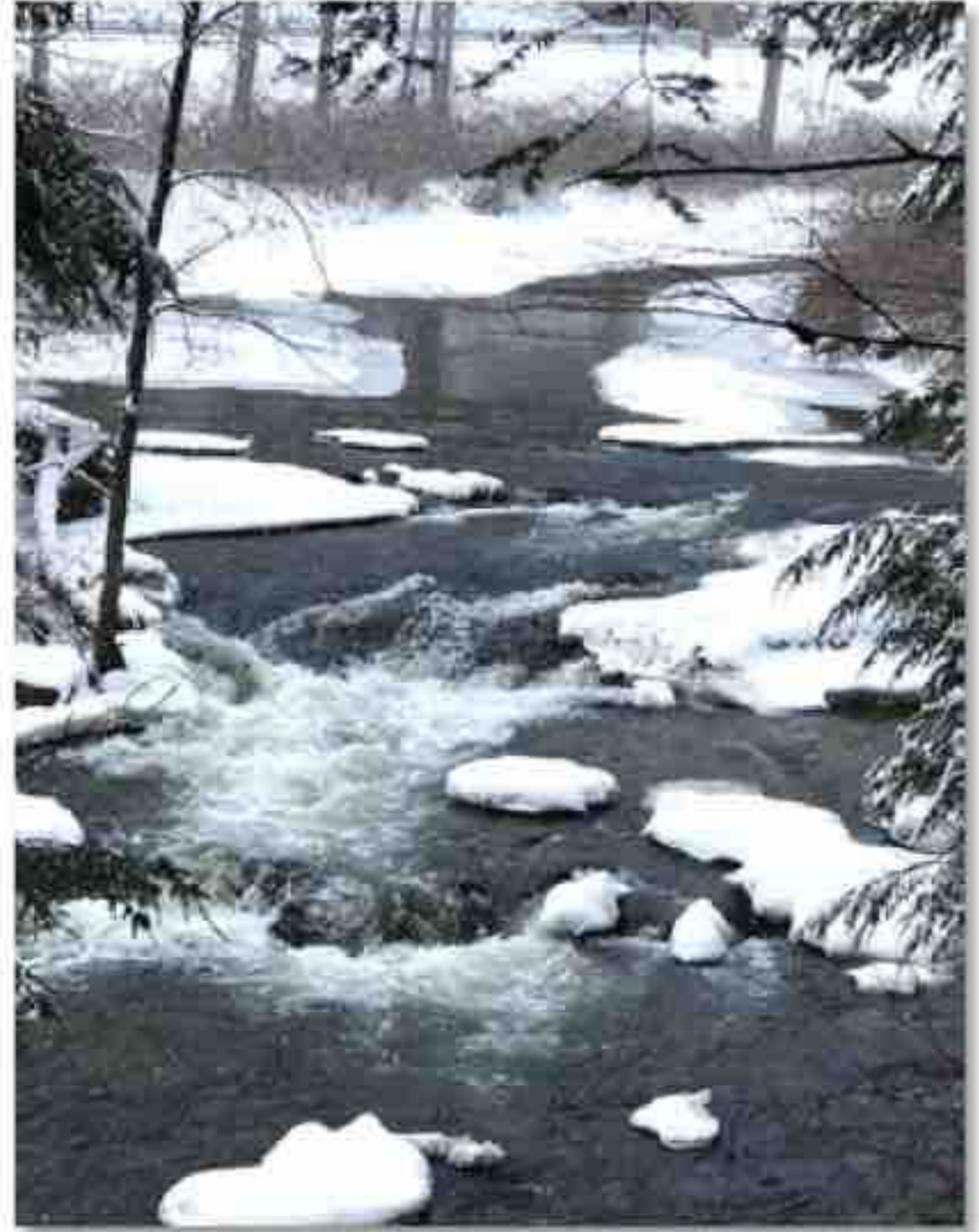
*Substitute the wheat flour with your favorite gluten free flour and continue as written

Tips:

- pour the boiling water over the back of a spoon when pouring on top of the pudding.
- the pudding can be microwaved - 12 minutes on medium/50%/500 watts, then cover with foil for 10 minutes and serve.
- The cake batter can be made in the greased dish that you will be baking in, saving a bit of washing up.

Note: this is a cake pudding, not the custard/jelly style pudding.

Librarian Deb O'Brien recently explored the Goodnow Preserve, and shares these winter views of the Preserve, the Konkapot River, and the Lower Carroll Mill.





LAND TRUST NEWS

Mark your early spring calendars: Saturday, April 18, Red Hot Blues Bash take three! The Land Trust is busy planning our third community extravaganza, a celebration of what makes New Marlborough special, its people and landscape. It will be another exceptional evening with great food from our host, Gedney Farm, dancing, specialty cocktails, a silent auction and some new surprises. Tickets will go on sale mid-March. Get your dancing shoes ready!

For hiking enthusiasts, you might be interested in being a “hike tester.” Bill Siever is proofing his soon-to-be-published book *100 Hikes in the Southern Berkshires and Just Beyond* and needs people to field test his hike descriptions and maps. The book covers Richmond/Lenox/Washington in the north, Hillsdale/Austerlitz in the west; Chester/Otis in the east; and Norfolk/Falls Village in the south. Bill has met several times with the Land Trust and will be including nine hikes in New Marlborough. This might be a chance to share your knowledge of New Marlborough territory and/or expand your horizon to the greater area outdoors. If you are interested, please email Bill at billsiever@gmail.com with the subject line “Interested in testing.” Bill will send you hike-testing guidelines.

With that said, yes, it is cold outside but don’t miss the chance to be refreshed. The expansive field at the Goodnow Preserve is spectacular under a full moon and perfect for cross-country skiing; the New Marlboro Preserve is always mysterious (and the trail sometimes icy...); and the creatures’ tracks in the snow remind us with whom we share this place and time.

Finally, despite the unclear, unpredictable network lines in New Marlborough, our connections are reliable... know that we are open and wanting to hear from you. Do you have any suggestions/ideas for the Land Trust for 2020? Please go to our virtual suggestion box at nmlandtrust.org/your-feedback. Thank you.

Hope you can get out and enjoy the winter wonderlands. □

Martha Bryan

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School News

COMBINING SCIENCE WITH SOCIAL ISSUES AT MOUNT EVERETT

By Jane Burke

When moving out of her home town of Great Barrington, Lindsey Berkowitz chose to rent a small house on Lake Buel. In an interview she said, "It wasn't hard for me to feel comfortable in New Marlborough. I attended Flying Cloud from age three and worked there for sixteen years, so I could easily find my way to all important places like the transfer station. Every time I went there, Bobby Litchfield and Alvin Stalker were so welcoming. They have introduced me to so many people. My neighbors are really friendly and offer help if I need it."

Since childhood she has been full of enthusiasm for learning. At twelve she was devoted to science and dance. As a teenager she discovered robotics and began to plan for a career in engineering. She attended Temple University for two years but found it lacked attention to pressing social issues. Next she went to University of Massachusetts at Amherst to explore environmental engineering. During this time, she was also working at Flying Cloud Institute where she discovered her passion for helping children explore science and engineering. This motivated her to enroll at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts to earn a degree in environmental science and sociology in 2018, followed by a course in engineering and literacy at Tufts University in 2019. She received her Massachusetts certification to teach science.

Still hungry for more knowledge about teaching, she decided to complete an accelerated Master of Arts in Teaching program at Mount Holyoke beginning in summer 2019. This program perfectly fit her concerns about social justice and attention to students as individuals. Her study focuses on how to create a culturally responsive classroom where the needs of students' backgrounds and abilities can be addressed. In choosing the best place to do her required teacher candidate pre-practicum this past fall, she picked the Mount Everett middle school because this approach is valued there. She said, "It was a very positive experience. The staff was welcoming to me as both a student and a colleague. I was able to learn from Director of the Student Support Team Elise Mercer, also of New Marlborough, and Asha Von Ruden, an experienced science teacher."



Lindsey Berkowitz, the new eighth-grade science teacher at Mount Everett, plans to create a culturally responsible classroom.
photo by Jane Burke

Unexpectedly, the eighth-grade science teacher at Mount Everett resigned in December to return to New Hampshire to care for her mother. Ms. Berkowitz got permission from her advisor at Mount Holyoke to apply for the job and continue to be in the graduate program. Principal Jesse Carpenter and seventh grade science teacher Ruden were both impressed with her interview and her performance in the pre-practicum. She was hired and starting teaching in January. Although this is her first official job as classroom science teacher, the transition wasn't stressful. She said, "It has been a smooth start in the classroom. Many of the students recognized me. For some it was the month-long robotics unit I did in their fifth-grade classroom. For others I was their leader in the after-school Girls Science Club or their coach in engineering projects done in the Maker's Space after school." She looks forward to helping her students get their EXPO projects underway. For decades this months-long exploration of a topic has been the high point of the middle school experience. Ms. Berkowitz is ready to inspire them to pick challenging science projects and help them be successful in presenting their results to the public.

In addition to her three regular classroom sessions with her middle school students, she is happy to have the opportunity to work more closely with some of them in the smaller group settings that occur in daily Tutorial or the Genius Hour. There she can attend to their social and emotional needs, helping them build confidence in areas where they struggle. She thinks group projects are important. Some students are now working on painting science murals in the classroom. She also teaches the high school environmental science class where she has her students teaching Undermountain Elementary School students how to compost waste from their cafeteria for use in the gardens in the spring.

Ms. Berkowitz is grateful to participate in an important aspect of the new middle school program – teacher team meetings. She said, "I enjoy the opportunity to work with other teachers both on curriculum and on supporting students. On a weekly basis I meet with all the teachers from grades six through eight to look at big-picture

issues; then there are meetings of the full eighth grade team and one with the other science faculty. I feel these discussions help us meet student needs, and I am getting a lot of support.”

When asked about being a young person living in New Marlborough, she said, “I love being outside and having immediate access to trails while being only fifteen minutes from town. My dog loves to swim. Everyone is so friendly. My family loves to come to visit, especially my dad, who likes to fish in the lake. I have met other young people in town, such as Josh [Irwin] and Emily [Rachel], who do such a great job with Cantina. I also know young families that I met while working at Flying Cloud.”

Ms. Berkowitz’s energy seems boundless. She is associated with the Women’s Fund of Western Mas-



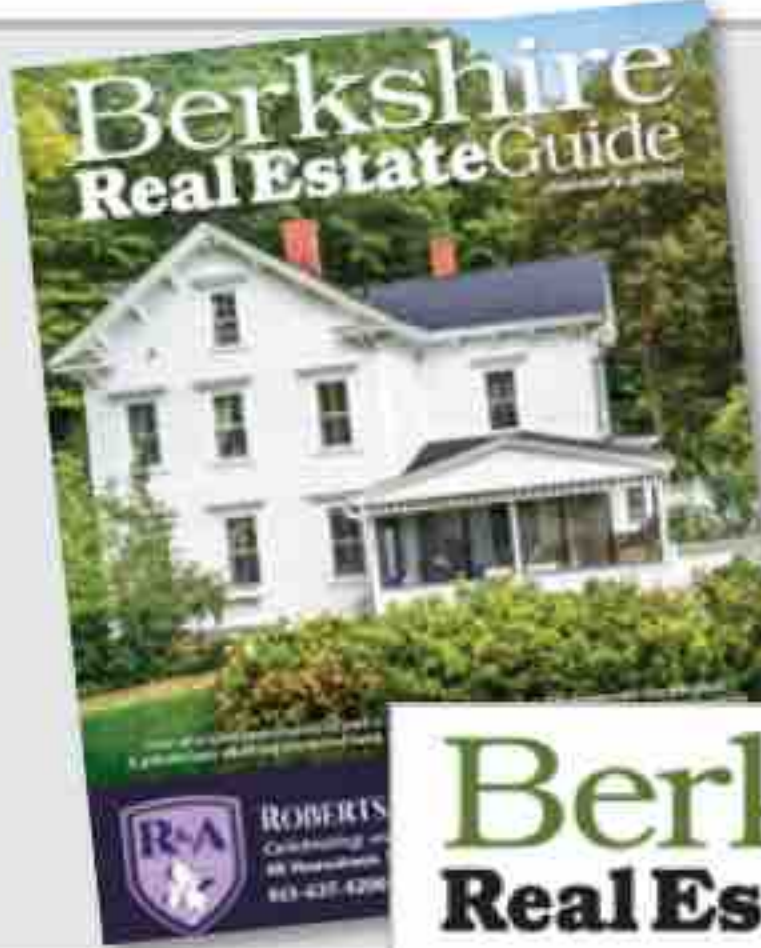
As a fourteen-year-old at Flying Cloud in 2004, Ms Berkowitz (center, rear, testing buoyancy by balance a bucket of water) got an early exposure to project-based learning. It culminated with the construction of a cardboard boat that was successfully paddled across a swimming pool.

sachusetts, volunteers at the annual United Way youth conference, and served on the youth board of Berkshire Museum. On Saturday mornings she brings her great enthusiasm to Berkshire Pulse where she teaches Zumba. Though classroom teaching requires stamina, she is already thinking about what she can add to make science more exciting for her students. Once she gets into the rhythm of the school routine, she plans to invite scientists from around the region into her class-

room, and organize field trips to STEM businesses so that students can see people enjoying their work in science. She doesn’t think twice about doing what it takes to bring science alive and make it relevant for her students. □

Author Interview

The newly-formed New Marlborough Women’s Collaborative invites everyone interested in attending a talk about domestic violence to get in touch with us. On February 6 in Pittsfield, author Rachel Louise Snyder will be interviewed about her book, *No Visible Bruises: What We Don’t Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us*. The event was organized by the Berkshire County District Attorney, Andrea Harrington, whose foremost goal is to lower the occurrence of domestic violence in Berkshire County. Members of the Collaborative can help you secure free tickets and can provide free transportation. Write to Newmarlboroughwomen@gmail.com for more information.



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A Door in the Earth, by Amy Waldman
The Swallows, by Liza Lutz
10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World, by Elif Shafak

Adult Nonfiction

Everyday Instant Pot, by Alexis Mersel
Mama's Last Hug: Animal Emotions and What They Tell Us About Ourselves, by Frans de Waal
Eat Happy Too, by Anna Vocino
Ottolenghi Simple, by Yotam Ottolenghi

Children's Fiction

Beware!, by Bob Raczka
We Don't Eat Our Classmates, by Ryan T. Higgins
Just Ask!, by Sonia Sotomayor

Children's Nonfiction

Voting, a Kid's Guide, by Nel Yomtov
Political Parties, a Kid's Guide, by Cari Meister
Electoral College, a Kid's Guide, by Cari Meister
Election Campaigns, a Kid's Guide, by Emma Carlson Berne

DVDs

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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 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.; Thursday 8:00 to 10:00 a.m.

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

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., Tuesday and Thursday 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: New Marlborough Police Department 229-8161

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 1

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Emergency calls:

Police, Fire, Medical
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New Marlborough Highway Department

Located on Mill River-Southfield Rd.

Hours:

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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

Barbara Lowman, issue editor; Diane Barth, designer;

Janice Boults, Martha Bryan, Jane Burke, Larry Burke,

Robbi Hartt, David Lowman, Joe Poindexter,

Peter Schuyten, Barry Shapiro, Sandra Fusco-Walker

Contributing writers and artists: Ann Getsinger, Fiona Kerr,

Mary Richie Smith. Index: Donna Weaver

New Marlborough 5 Village News

appears monthly,

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The next issue will be dated March 2020.

All copy must be submitted no later than February 17.

For advertising, contact Barbara Lowman, tel: 229-2369

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