



New Marlborough 5 Village News

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Clayton • Hartsville • Mill River • New Marlborough • Southfield

A PHOENIX IN FULL FLIGHT

Risen from Its Ashes, a Library More Active Than Ever

By Barbara and David Lowman

The New Marlborough Town Library, now going into its ninety-second year, has never looked younger – or more vibrant. Given the long history of the library, its transformation seems to have occurred overnight. Actually, the present vitality can be traced back fifteen years to the 1999 opening of the new library that replaced the structure destroyed by fire in 1996. Librarian Debora O'Brien views this as "a perfect storm – in a good sense." The loss of the old building and collection created a clean break with the past and paved the way for the progressive attitudes not only of Ms. O'Brien, but also of the Board of Trustees, the Friends of the Library, and its patrons. They have kept the library moving forward, expanding its offerings, and adapting to changing technology. Furthermore, the flexible space of the new structure has allowed the library to become not just a place for reading, but a center of civic and social activities as well. "I think," says Ms. O'Brien, "it's important for a library, especially in a small town, to serve the educational, social, and recreational needs of its residents, and to continually broaden its role in the community."



photo by Barbara Lowman

New Marlborough Public Library today

In 1923, the first free-standing library in New Marlborough opened its doors in Mill River. A Carnegie Corporation grant of \$5,000 was instrumental in covering construction costs, as it was for small-town libraries throughout the country. This building served the town for more than seventy years. In addition to lending books, the library also hosted community events and activities, although the space for such programs was limited and inflexible.

Debora O'Brien began as librarian in 1993, and started to expand the library's breadth of activities, especially for children. With considerable community assistance, a small side room was turned into a children's room: Ms. O'Brien's husband, Kevin, built child-size furniture and shelving; Owen Wright provided a cheerful paint job; and Pat Nourse made curtains for the room. A summer reading program was established, along with monthly story hours. In 1994, Claudette Callahan began to offer valuable guidance as a trustee, a position she continues to hold.

On the night of June 16, 1996, Father's Day as it happened, the library caught fire. Because of the timing, the fire was not discovered until the building was engulfed in flames; despite the best efforts of the New Marlborough Fire Department, the building was a total loss. The decision was made to rebuild the library, and a nearly

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three-year process of planning, fund-raising, designing, and construction began. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners provided funds for planning and design; insurance funds were augmented by \$60,000 in contributions from town residents.

In the meantime, however, the Western Massachusetts Regional Library System sent an old bookmobile, which was parked behind Town Hall, with a small, core collection, augmented by monthly visits from the regular bookmobile. The facility was cramped and inadequate. When Ms. O'Brien began scraping frost from the inside of the windows, she knew it was time to move to another transitional space: two construction trailers placed end-to-end in the Town Hall parking lot. With the generous contribution of local skills in electrical work and water supply and donations of furniture and carpeting, the space became homey and welcoming. The library programs continued without interruption.

Construction of the new building continued with the constant oversight and problem-solving by Ms. O'Brien, the library's Board of Trustees, and an ad hoc Library Building Committee. The new library opened on January 2, 1999. In the ensuing fifteen years, the library has continually expanded its offerings, activities, and technology. It has become a focal point for

community activities for both children and adults, such as the summer reading program, movie nights, monthly visits by all classes from New Marlborough Central School, a book group, and a knitting group.

Computer technology has vastly increased the resources available through the library. When the new library opened, it had a stand alone computer system, including computers and wifi for public use. Over time a statewide network has developed, giving access to online databases throughout Massachusetts, the ability to search any library, including university libraries, and to put books on hold. Now home computers can access this information digitally. If an actual book is desired, the library receives interlibrary loan deliveries three times a week. It's no longer just

a small-town library but also a hub with access to resources throughout the state, a resource especially helpful to home-schoolers, local writers, and the staff of New Marlborough Central School. Further information and links to these resources are available at the library's website, <http://www.newmarlboroughlibrary.org>.

The fire destroyed bricks and mortar, but it also opened the way for creative initiative and community involvement. It was, in retrospect, an unexpected gift to the people of New Marlborough. □



*After the fire, a temporary home in a construction trailer.
photo courtesy of the New Marlborough Town Library*



*Debbie O'Brien started as librarian in 1993.
photo by Barbara Lowman*

\$\$\$ BUYING GOLD \$\$\$

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IN MILL RIVER, A TROPICAL MENAGERIE

By Martha Bryan



Oh, to be a red-eyed tree frog, oh to be an iguana – in Liz Goodman’s greenhouse!

Late January in Mill River the earth is covered in a foot of drifted snow. Outside there are few signs of life. Even the streams are still, frozen due to this winter’s prolonged stretch of sub-zero nighttime temperatures. But inside Liz’s glass greenhouse,

tomatoes are ripe on the vine, crickets are gorging on sweet potato rind, and tree frogs wait for the night to hunt their supper. It is seventy degrees inside the twelve-by-thirty-two foot glass house — warm enough for the comfort of the amphibians and reptiles Liz has chosen to collect. This is a climate zone miracle for sure — one especially challenging to manage this winter!

Led by pure delight minus any business plan, Liz has built a tropical habitat for her frogs and lizards complete with a small pond and lush vegetation. Bougainvillea vine swallows the interior steel structure of the house; the pitcher plant has a dozen exotic blooms; an orange hangs from a three-foot tree, and the lemon trees are budded. This is paradise for Liz’s favorite iguana, Shauna,

who basks in her new glass terrarium, custom built by Liz with woven cut bittersweet vine for climbing and fitted with the special spectrum light bulbs required for the reptile’s health. As the propane heating system kicks on in the late afternoon, she points out a tree frog asleep on the edge of a pot. One of her tasks, Liz explains, is to fatten the crickets — that’s where the potato rind comes in – and then dust them with calcium powder so the tree frogs, not only red-eyed but also white, green, and golden, get nutritional meals.

Next week Liz will sow vegetable seeds for her summer garden and start a cutting of a passion flower vine she relies on to shade the west end of the greenhouse come mid-summer.

Oh to be a visitor to Liz Goodman’s greenhouse in late winter! □



photos by Martha Bryan



Liz and Shauna



Les Trois Emme

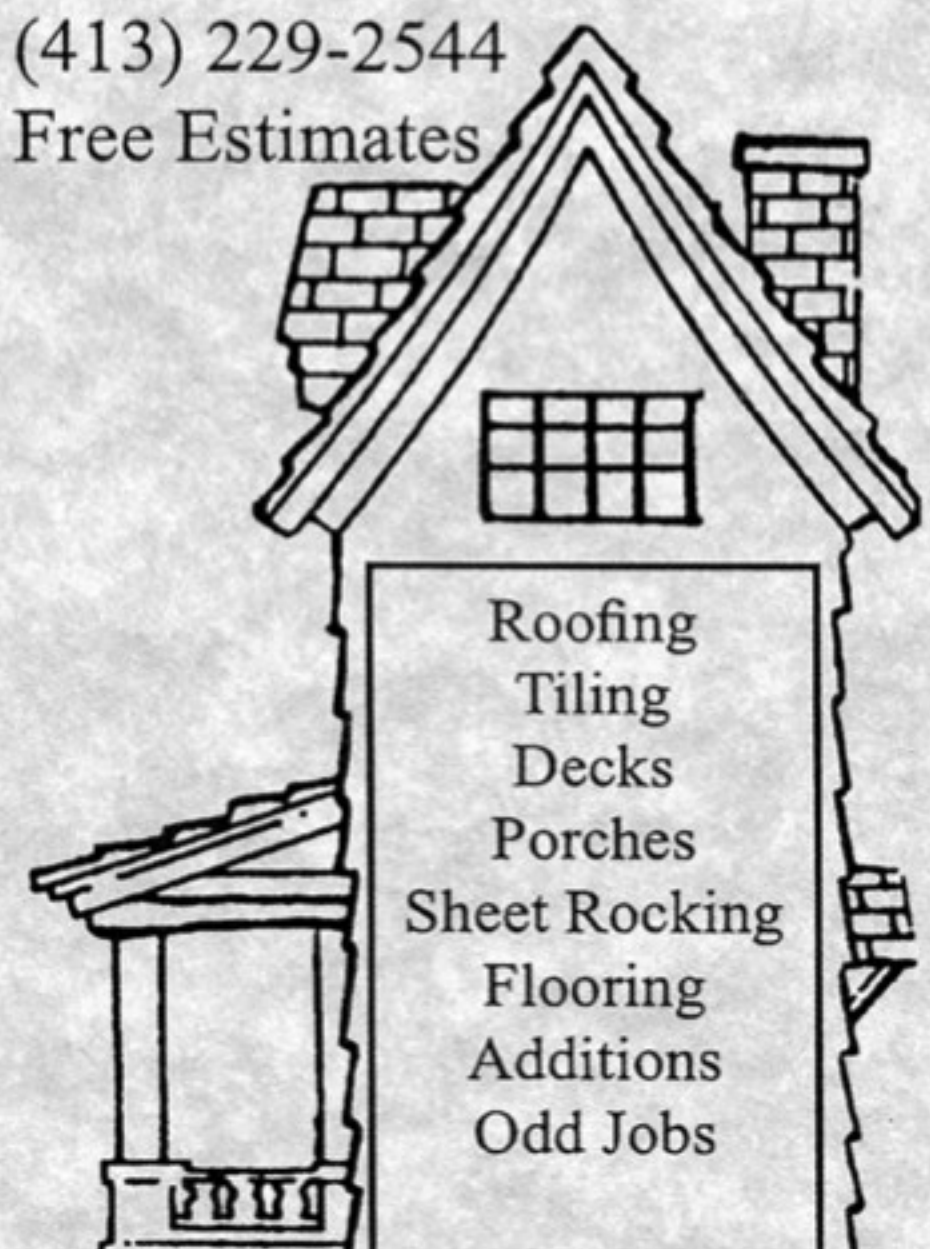
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Town Business Is Your Business BOARD OF SELECTMEN



January 28: All three selectmen were present for a meeting that began at 7:00 p.m., so that Chairman Nat Yohalem could attend a meeting of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District Finance Subcommittee (for his comments on that meeting, see below).

First on the agenda, members of the Planning Board, represented by Chairman Jamie Mullen, Patricia Hardyman, and Charlie Parton, answered an invitation from the selectmen to share their views on the rejection of the proposed revision of Town by-laws and their plans going forward. **“Clearly the Town Meeting didn’t go our way,”** said Mr. Mullen. **“We did a lot of work; we weren’t prepared for the setback.”** Mr. Mullen voiced his disappointment in the lack of support from the Board of Selectmen. **“There was no acknowledgement of our efforts,”** he said. He also faulted the meeting moderator for abruptly closing off debate before potentially misunderstood issues could be addressed. **“The moderator asked for questions but then never opened the room to discussion,”** said Mr. Mullen.

In response, Mr. Yohalem noted that by the time the meeting had been called to order, Town Hall was occupied beyond its capacity – voters lined up outside were being turned away – and both town counsel and the police chief **“were concerned.”** As a result, the article on the by-law revision was moved to the head of the queue and speedily brought to a vote (an action expedited by the fact that police chief and moderator were one and the same, Scott Farrell). **As to the lack of selectmen support, Mr. Yohalem was frank: “My personal opinion was that the proposal was too broad, too much to digest. I personally had mixed feelings about it.”**

A lengthy speculation on the reasons voters turned down the Planning Board proposal followed. Mr. Yohalem: **“People don’t like government regulation – plus there was the erroneous fear that the Town would have to build a water treatment facility.”** (The tax collector was reprimanded for telling residents that their taxes would increase because of the need for such a facility.)

Selectman Michele Shalaby: **“There was more urgency from people who thought they had something to lose.”**

Selectman Tara White: **“I didn’t hear any negatives. You made some really valuable changes, especially in the use table.”** But she went to imply that the measure was too complex. **“If there were one small section you could start on, you might be able to get something through.”**

Mr. Mullen concluded by saying that the Planning Board had met in mid-January and resolved to “reach

out to those folks who organized the opposition. **“We would like to find out what was the real fear, what was so powerful, so motivating. But first,”** he added, **“we have to identify who they are. We are not giving up.”**

Next on the agenda, Martha Bryan, executive director of the New Marlborough Land Trust, stepped forward to emphasize her organization’s dedication to New Marlborough and its resolve to making education a priority. Its purchase from the Town of a 2.01 acre parcel adjacent to the Joffe preserve is to be a part of this commitment, she said. She asked for a breakdown of the offering price of \$7,091 (not the \$13,300 price tag that had erroneously been put on the parcel), and Mr. Yohalem promised it would be provided. (The agreement has since been rescinded; see page 15.)

The following budget requests were approved...

Moderator \$145

Fire Department Dues \$200

Fire Protection \$60,900

Fire Department, Clerical \$1,700

Highway Department

Uniforms & Gear \$3,000 (a \$500 increase)

Diesel \$59,000 (a \$5,000 increase)

Electricity \$4,500

Training \$1,500 (a \$300 increase)

Roads and Bridges \$190,000 (a \$3,000 increase)

Propane \$18,000

...while these were held until details could be provided:
New Marlborough Rescue Expenses \$46,350 (an increase of \$19,800)

Town Garage Maintenance \$11,500 (a \$2,000 increase)

Machinery Expense \$71,046 (a \$5,000 increase).

The question of overtime pay for highway department employees working on holidays was resolved by referring to a policy statement that said that **“any and all hours”** worked on a holiday would be compensated at double normal pay. The notion that holiday work in excess of eight hours, which on a normal workday would receive time and a half, should receive, in effect, triple pay, was rejected.

The application of David and Heather Ralph for a permit to build a new structure over an old foundation (see Board of Selectmen report in the January, 2014, issue) was once again put on hold until it could be determined that a passable roadway to the structure was a prerequisite for the permit.

The Board decided not to pursue a grant that would pay the salary of an energy consultant for two years,

because it would have obligated the Town to pick up the salary for an additional two years.

Mr. Yohalem reported on his meeting – also attended by Alford Selectman Charles Ketcham – with the school district's Finance Subcommittee. **He learned that the district budget was projected to increase by 2-1/2 percent in the next fiscal year and that New Marlborough's portion of it would also go up a tick. As a result, the Town's allocation is projected to be \$133,000 more than in the present year.** The Subcommittee, however, agreed, at Mr. Yohalem's urging, to eliminate certain capital improvement expenses assigned to the three neighborhood schools. These included \$5,000 for scheduled improvements at New Marlborough Central that would have been undertaken without prior approval by the health inspector – \$15,000 for a kitchen area was retained. The Subcommittee also dropped \$1,200 worth of new windows and doors for the Egremont school.

With this, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

February 10: (A heavy snowstorm on February 3 caused the cancellation of the meeting on that day, and an early starting time for the present meeting was necessitated by the unusual length of the agenda and the invitation to Vito Valentini, chairman of the Finance Subcommittee of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District to discuss the decisions that went into the creation of the FY2015 school budget.) At 5:20 p.m., Martha Bryan, executive director of the New Marlborough Land Trust came forward to present an alternate plan to the purchase of 2.01 acres on Cagney Road adjacent to the trust's **Joffe Preserve**, part of an 8.11 acre parcel the Town has seized for tax delinquency. She proposed that the entire parcel be made available to Gretchen Long, who has expressed an interest in preserving it as a wildlife habitat and would then deed to the Land Trust the 2.01 acres it desires.

The Board explained that the Town would be liable for the 7 percent commission due Sullivan and Sullivan, the firm that is auctioning Town properties on March 29 (for a description of the auction, see page 15), Ms. Bryan said **that Ms. Long and the Land Trust would continue to pay property taxes on the parcel and that the Land Trust would return the Joffe preserve to the tax rolls.** Chairman Nat Yohalem asked Ms. Bryan to draft a letter specifying those obligations, and the matter was put forward to the following meeting. (The agreement has since been rescinded; see page 15.)

Next on the agenda was an issue raised by John Hotaling that the Police Department was making too little use of civilian flaggers to direct traffic around roadwork. "For the cost of one police officer," said Mr. Hotaling, "you could employ two flaggers." Police Chief Scott Farrell explained that "it is the standard of practice for third-party contractors to go through the police department"

when it needed traffic control. "We oversee police officers; we don't oversee flaggers." Even when the work is being done by town agencies, such as the Highway Department or the tree warden, "we have an obligation to assure safety on the road," he added. Mr. Yohalem directed that the matter be put forward to the next meeting, at which the highway superintendent and the tree warden would be asked to attend to discuss their policies.

In response to a request from Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring for clarification of his vacation time, the Board voted unanimously that Mr. Loring was entitled to a third week beyond the two provided for in his contract.

Kenzie Fields and Kristen Sparhawk, New Marlborough's members of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District School Committee, invited to the meeting at the initiative of Selectman Michele Shalaby, revealed that **the District is discussing adding pre-K to the early-K program already being offered. This would result in a tuition-free program for every four-year-old in the District.** The state, they said, may help finance this expansion, which, at any rate, would not require additional facilities or teaching staff.

The District, they said, is also planning a reorganization of the food service. Now operating independently, food service would be integrated with other elements of the administration, with an expectation that this would help trim costs.

Mr. Yohalem voiced his feeling that the buck was being passed on too many school district issues by burying them in subcommittees. Ms. Fields responded that it could be hard to reach a decision when it was being debated by the full ten-member committee. "I do feel that our subcommittee work is pretty efficient," she said. "The division of labors helps get the work done," Ms. Sparhawk added.

After agreeing that meetings with the Board three or four times a year would be productive, the School Committee members were excused, and the selectmen turned their attention to two budget items: They approved an increase to \$46,350 (from \$26,550) in the New Marlborough Rescue expenses, when it was pointed out that the difference could be covered by the annual stipend from the Fire Department and funds paid into the Comstar account. They also approved a \$2,000 increase to \$11,500 in the highway garage maintenance budget to more accurately reflect actual outlays. Finance Committee member Mark Carson, present at the meeting, suggested that the Highway Department make use of the fuel value of trees cut along roadways by installing a wood boiler outside the garage. The Board thought the idea had merit and resolved to discuss it with the highway superintendent.

Starting at 7:00 p.m. and for the following hour and forty minutes, the Board discussed the FY2015 school budget with School Superintendent David Hastings

continued

Board of Selectmen, continued

and Finance Subcommittee Chairman Vito Valentini. In addition to Mr. Carson, New Marlborough Finance Committee members David Herrick, Burt Imberman, and Prudence Spaulding were also present. Details of the draft appear in the story below, but the thrust of the remarks from Messrs Valentini and Hastings was that **the main components of the 2-1/2 percent increase in the budget were contracted salary raises and a major boost in the cost of insurance.**

Most categories of expense, said Mr. Valentini, have been level-funded. "For any further reductions," he added, "what would have to be cut is bodies." This is not

a message the selectmen want to present to the taxpayers of New Marlborough. "As close as you can come to level funding [for the overall budget] is what we want to hear," said Tara White. Mr. Yohalem urged that the District find a workable compromise. "It's going to be a tough sell," he said of the budget. "Anything helps."

With that, the meeting adjourned four hours and twenty minutes after it was called to order. □

Joe Poindexter

INCHING UPWARD

A First Look at the FY2015 School Budget

By Barry R. Shapiro

If the preliminary fiscal year 2015 budget approved on February 6, 2014 by the Southern Berkshire Regional School District School Committee is ultimately adopted, New Marlborough residents will need to dig a little deeper to pay their share

The preliminary budget calls for spending of \$15,019,902, an increase of \$385,341 or 2.63 percent, from the FY14 budget of \$14,634,561. While many expense categories remained approximately the same as the prior year, there were significant increases in the cost of insurance and salaries as well as the addition of a food services director. Insurance, with a sizeable jump in contributions to retirement accounts and health insurance, rises 6.27 percent in the FY15 budget. The addition of a food services administrator adds 5.79 percent to pupil services.

In a presentation to the New Marlborough Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee on February 10, Vito Valentini, chairman of both the District's Finance Subcommittee, which helped formulate the budget, and the Buildings, Grounds and Technology Subcommittee, which has been studying the schools' capital needs, stated that there is "no fluff" in the budget and that keeping it at the proposed level had been "heroic."

About 81 percent of the revenue to fund the budget comes from the five towns – the balance from the commonwealth. This cost is allocated among the towns pursuant to a complex formula using a spectrum of factors that include property values and residents' earning capacity. New Marlborough's share for the FY15 budget increased to 20.80 percent from 20.49 percent in the prior year. The actual amount shouldered by New Marlborough under the draft budget would be \$2,539,076, an increase of approximately \$137,000 or 5.69 percent over the prior year (approximately \$38,000 of this increase reflects the Town's larger allocation under the state formula).

The capital budget of \$402,500 (down from \$418,800 last year) earmarks \$30,000 for some much needed repairs at New Marlborough Central (NMC), confirmed, said Mr. Valentini, by his personal inspection of the premises. Plans include updating the school's kitchen, installing or replacing railings on the steps, power washing and painting the steps, repairing part of the roof, adding lighting in the parking lot, and painting exposed wood on the building exterior. In response to a question about the boiler at NMC, Mr. Valentini stated that it had been inspected and did not need replacement. If it did, however, money previously reserved would be made available.

Except for \$2,800 earmarked for the school in Egremont, the balance of the District's capital budget will go to the main campus in Sheffield. Among the expenditures: \$103,300 for technology and \$25,000 each for carpeting, heating and air conditioning, ceiling tile replacement, and athletic field and tennis court repairs. The capital budget, he noted, addresses the "natural expenses for day-to-day running of the buildings." Mr. Valentini noted that this budget, now in the \$400,000 range, has increased by an average of 2.4 percent over the past seven years and that the proposed budget was in line with this amount.

The preliminary budget elicited some pushback from members of the Board of Selectmen. Tara White thanked Mr. Valentini and Superintendent David Hastings, who also attended the meeting, for their efforts but stated that she would have preferred a budget with no increase. She commented that the Board of Selectmen will be looking very hard at its own numbers as it develops the Town's budget and urged the District to do the same.

Similarly, Nat Yohalem urged that the District keeps its budget closer to last year's numbers. "Egremont and

Monterey are the elephant in the room," he added. "The District would save \$225,000 if those schools were closed and there is no economic reason to keep them open. People in Monterey seem fine with closing their school," said Mr. Yohalem, without substantiating this observation. "New Marlborough Central can absorb these students, and closing those two schools would result in a savings for New Marlborough taxpayers of about \$45,000, since the town contributes about 20 percent of the budget. We'd like to see some compromise."

Mr. Valentini replied that the Finance Committee and the District administration would go back and look at the budget and do what they can. "But everyone should recognize," he added, "that reducing the budget may well involve cutting staff."

When advised of the capital improvements designated in the budget for New Marlborough Central, Francine Groener, the school's Building Leader, was pleased. "I

think it's very fair and reasonable and will give us some of the improvements we need. It's a terrific start, and hopefully they can put money aside each year." With respect to the idea of closing Monterey's school, she stated, "We could absolutely absorb them. They are here starting in first grade anyway".

The next steps in the budget approval process are an open hearing on February 27, starting at 6:00 p.m., and the adoption of the final budget on March 13, also starting at 6:00 p.m. Both meetings, open to the public, are held at the Mount Everett library. The final budget must then be approved by at least four of the five towns in the District at their town meetings held in the first two weeks of May. New Marlborough's meeting is scheduled for May 5.

"I would like all five towns to approve this," said Mr. Valentini. "I want everyone to feel it's a good product. No one should feel beaten up." □

FINANCE COMMITTEE

January 16: With Edgar Zukauskas presiding, and David Herrick, Ira Yohalem, Pat Mielke, and Prudence Spaulding in attendance, the Committee interviewed Emergency Management Director Ed Harvey on the Emergency Management budget, zeroing in on the doubling in the cost of the emergency notification system. Mr. Harvey explained that the system, set up not only to inform townspeople of an emergency, but also to alert them to such things as school and road closings, is now reaching a greater number of citizens. Thus, the rise in cost.

The Committee approved a transfer of \$3,104 to the **Worker's Compensation Account** to make up a shortfall in premium payments and then proceeded to approve the following budget requests:

Emergency Management Expenses, \$1,825; **notification system**, \$3,313 (up from \$1,616 this year), and **salaries**, \$4,250;

Umpachene Falls Park, \$4,000;
Constable Expenses, \$95 and salary, \$475;
Animal Control Expenses, \$1,660;
Mental Health, \$200;
Election Expenses, \$2,225;
Town Clerk Expenses, \$2,200;
Street Listings, \$1,000;
Town Records Preservation, \$5,000;
Assessors Tax Map Update, \$2,900, **revaluation**, \$5,000, **general expenses**, \$2,900, and **consultant**, \$5,000.

The **salaries** of the building inspector, the treasurer, the town clerk, the assessor, and the assessor's clerk were put on hold, as was the budget request for the assessor's computer contingency. □

*Joe Poindexter from minutes provided by
 Finance Committee Secretary Prudence Spaulding*



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EXTRA-CURRICULAR BONANZA

For Some, the School Day Begins After School

By Jane Burke



SCHOOL NEWS

A late afternoon and evening visit to the Sheffield campus of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District on Wednesday February 12 turned out to be an impressive view of the richness of programming offered there.

First stop, 4:00 p.m., at the unassuming maintenance building. Inside a half dozen third- and fourth-grade students and three volunteers were completely absorbed in constructing robots out of plastic cups. There was

great excitement about soldering wires, connecting batteries to propellers, seeing what would work. This was the District's new Makerspace, the first in Berkshire County, opened in late January thanks to the vision and generosity of New Marlborough's Tim Newman and Paul O'Brien, a retired technology coordinator for the District. High school student and New Marlborough resident Katie Brigham is also part of the team that delights in helping kids invent (see story, below).



photos by Jane Burke

Expo participants, top row: Antonio Romano, Sean Shalaby, Emma Mitchell row two: Lily Duval, Andrea Ferrara, left: Katelyn Dawson, Anthony Lupiani below: Students rehearse the rhythms and harmonies of Grease.



The next destination was the Mount Everett Middle School Expo, but on the way, spirited voices emanating from the theater demanded attention. At 5:30, well past the end of the school day, sixteen high school students, including New Marlborough's Kyle Carson and Samantha Twing, were on stage pouring their hearts into a song from the musical, *Grease*. New Marlborough Central's grade 3-4 teacher Tom Masters, choreographer for the show, was also on hand. It was hard to tear oneself away from this spirited rehearsal. (The show will be performed April 4 through 6 on the Sheffield campus.)

But the second floor of Mount Everett School had

another kind of enthusiasm on display. There, the hallways and eight classrooms were packed with friends and families of seventh- and eighth-grade students presenting their findings after months of research that ranged in subject matter from ancient Egypt to mathematics, science, and engineering.

Though the district is small, it provides extraordinary opportunities well after the school day is officially ended. For this, thanks go to the impressive support of community volunteers, teachers willing to go the extra mile, and families who enthusiastically celebrate their sons and daughters accomplishments. □

CREATE, INVENT, SHARE

Makerspace Comes to the Berkshires

By Jane Burke

As a child, Tim Newman wanted to be a rocket scientist, but, too late in his educational career, he discovered he had never acquired the requisite engineering foundation. Today, Tim is trying to make sure that oversight does not limit the aspirations of the students of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District. Together with Paul O'Brien, he has installed the first Makerspace in Berkshire County. Makerspaces, which have been popping up around the country since the mid-2000's, are facilities designed to provide a place where people can get together to share resources, tools, and knowledge. "Think of the feel of a woodworking shop, art studio, machine shop, and computer lab where people with ideas are trying new things," says Tim.

The Berkshire Makerspace opened on January 22 in a donated 30' x 26' space in the SBRSD maintenance building. It is starting small, available only Wednesday through Friday, 2:45 to 5:00 p.m., for children from grades three and four. The idea is to build the program to eventually serve students through high school.

After a career in movie-making that capitalized on his technological skills and interests, Tim moved to New Marlborough, converted the Southfield Store to a restaurant, and then turned his attention to addressing the town's lack of fast and reliable internet service. This soon led to another concern: student exposure to the myriad possibilities in the world of technology.



Katie Brigham advises a Makerspace student.
photo by Jane Burke

"I am not a do-gooder," he says, "but I realized that an individual can make a difference in this town. I joined the Southern Berkshire Technology Committee in 2008 and met others interested in technology, including Paul O'Brien." This re-ignited his interest in getting young people on the path to careers in engineering and science. He became passionate about giving them early exposure and access to models to inspire them. The result is Makerspace, "an informal, play-focused environment that can cultivate an interest and learning in science, technology, and design in local kids." He, Mr. O'Brien, and other local technology "geeks" are volunteering their time to help run this after-school mecca for kids who like to invent.

Katie Brigham, a high school student from Southfield who helps out one afternoon a week said, "The kids are always excited to come here to design new things and learn the skills to make them. I am always impressed with what they come up with. I love to see their enthusiasm about science and art." □



Potential future aeronautical engineers stage an airshow.

A DAY OF SERVICE

By Sean Shalaby

On January 18, 351 eighth graders from every corner of Massachusetts converged on Boston for a day of community service to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. In Project 351, as it is called, a student from each of the commonwealth's 351 towns is chosen. I was the representative from New Marlborough.

We stepped off the bus into a cold and rainy day and were led up a large stairway into Faneuil Hall to join the other kids. To say the large, beautiful room was energetic doesn't really begin to describe it. When they chose the group leaders and chaperones, it became evident that they hadn't skimped on the energy.

After our briefing and a talk from Governor Deval Patrick, we departed for our service locations. I was stationed at a freshly reopened charter school that had earlier been closed due to low performance. We painted walls, made murals, made motivational cards, and did a whole host of other things in an attempt to improve this small and struggling school. At the end of the day, I think we helped every one of the young attendees of this school, and that in itself is what made the day special.

The whole time we were out working, the governor was coming around to all the service locations talking to all the kids and raising spirits. I happened to get a miniscule conversation going after I shook his hand. Fun fact: our governor was born and raised in South Chicago and now has a street named after him. We, again, hopped on buses bound for our next location, the Hall of Flags, in the capitol building to have a brief talk with the governor, dinner, and a farewell to our new friends, all of which happened as I was sitting



Eighth graders from throughout the commonwealth gathered in Faneuil Hall.

underneath the New Marlborough flag. We then hopped on a bus home.

Overall, this was a great experience for kids and adults alike. I made a bunch of new friends from all over the state and helped a couple hundred kids while doing it. I would do it again in a heartbeat, and I'd recommend it to anyone selected to go. □

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Up to five 8"x10" or 5"x8" photos in color or black and white
in a protective envelope or folder.
Identify each by subject, location and
approximate date taken, plus name of photographer.
All submissions will be exhibited

~ ~ ~ ~ ~
Exhibit April 5 and 6 in the
Southfield Church Hall
~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Sponsored by the New Marlborough Cultural Council

FROZEN BEAUTY

I cherish the visual wonderment that abounds in a snow-filled landscape, be it the slow, early morning mist drifting through Hartsville Valley, or the way it creeps along the Konkapot, kissing the frosted bushes and trees, the way it sticks to clusters of a staghorn sumac, the way the deep-blue sky and virgin-white snow and the hoarfrost opens up a visual palette that is other

worldly – like being on the surface of a newly discovered frost-cruled planet. I invite readers to view the black and white and the color versions of these photos side by side on my website: erikmichaelcallahan.wordpress.com, where they can find the images by clicking on the “on exhibit” tab in the navigation area and selecting “Frozen Beauty, 2014.” □

Erik Callahan



Neighbors



Catherine Twing, daughter of Robert and Belinda Twing of Hartsville, and a 2013 graduate of Mount Everett High School, was named to the Dean's List of Castleton State College, in Castleton, Vermont, for the fall 2013 semester. To qualify for this academic honor, a student must maintain full-time status and a semester grade point average of 3.5. A member of the class of 2017, Catherine is majoring in Communication: Journalism. Congratulations to you, Catherine!

David Carson, of Southfield, passed away after a short illness on February 3 in Ormond Beach, Florida. David was an accomplished musician, a member of the Will Sage Band and the music duo, Carson & Dempsey. A lover of antiques, he was joint proprietor with his wife, **Ellen Bove Carson**, of Kettering Antiques in Southfield. He also was skilled at repairing and tinkering with old clocks. A celebration of David's life will be held at a later date.

Playwright **Jodi Rothe**, of Cagney Hill Road, had a reading of her new four-character play, *Dueling Deadlines*, in New York City at the Abingdon Theatre on West 36th Street on Monday, February 10. It was well attended by New Yorkers and some very loyal Berkshire County residents.

Jodi also has a short play called *The Prompter* in Barrington Stage Company's new play festival, *10 x 10*, which opened Sunday, February 9, and runs until Sunday, March 2, at their smaller theater located at 36 Linden Street in



Jodi Rothe

photo by Barbara Lowman

Pittsfield. The format is ten ten-minute plays. Jodi's play is about a young woman who falls into a Picasso painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, a stumble that leads to a life-changing encounter. For information and tickets, visit www.barringtonstageco.org.

Martha Bryan, of the New Marlborough Land Trust, reports that on January 18, nineteen hardy souls gathered for a hike at Questing, The Trustees of Reservations property on New Marlborough Hill Road. **Odie Fields**, **Elizabeth Lombardi**, and **Lisa Federico** paused to take the measure of an old oak tree. □

Compiled by Barbara Lowman: deeuell@yahoo.com



photo by Martha Bryan

MAILBOX



To the Editor,

Thanks to all those who baked, worked, and bought for our Sweets for Your Sweets sale at the New Marlborough Library on Saturday, February 8. The outpouring of love was amazing. The candies, cookies, and other treats were absolutely beautiful and professional looking (they were also yummy). Those who helped at the sale and the special children's table were wonderful. The sale was very successful. Special thanks to Deb O'Brien who made it all possible (as she does for all library events).

Marsha Harvey
President
New Marlborough Friends of the Library

OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

On February 3, **Don Beauchamp**, of Clayton, writes: Last Thursday, at about 11:00 a.m., I saw this **eagle** in a cornfield near the corner of Boardman and Kellogg Roads in Sheffield. He was still chowing down there the next day. I got ten good photos, but would have liked to have him spread his wings. Yesterday, four male **cardinals** and two females visited the house feeder area.



photo by Don Beauchamp

On February 7, **Ann Getsinger**, of New Marlborough village, writes: Tons of **robins** — literally hundreds up on the North Road, at the same place (near the Stebbinses) that I saw a **moose** about a month ago. Also **bluebirds**, a few traveling through, using my box as a B & B.

On February 8, **Tara White**, of Southfield, writes: The animals have been elusive with the snow. Lots of prints and pawing from the **deer** under the oak trees prior to the last storm, and I have seen some tracks through the deep snow. The bird population has been busy at the feeders with **red-bellied woodpeckers, blue jays, downy woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, snowbirds**, and even a **flicker**. There were sixteen **pigeons** flying above Joby Baker's barn yesterday. Some landed on the snow on the roof and some others went into the top of the silo, which is at the corner of Norfolk and Southfield Branch Roads.

On February 8, **Larry Burke**, who lives on Route 183, writes: No extraordinary sightings lately, but lots of signs of furry and feathered visitors — tracks in the snow everywhere. The **deer** have been rooting around the apple trees for leftover drops; **fox** and **coyote** have been nosing around the chicken coop; **porcupines** have been burrowing through the deep snow. As for bird life, many, many **bluejays** making short work of the birdseed, **gold-** and **house finches**, red capped **American tree swallow, downy woodpeckers**, and, oh yes, somewhat rare up our way, a **red-bellied woodpecker** (you know, the one with the red head and no red belly!), a lone male **cardinal**, and the usual suspects — **chickadees, nuthatches, and juncos**. I thought readers might like to see this frozen moment of a **chickadee** about to land on the bird feeder, as if putting on the brakes.



photo by Larry Burke

We had one interesting visitor who came inside to warm up a bit during our extended cold snap: a little **weasel!** Our young cat discovered it basking on the fins of a baseboard heater. The little guy escaped to the cellar, leaving behind a pungent, skunky aroma. □

Compiled by Jon Swan, joncswan@gmail.com

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THE LOG

Safe Burning Season Reminders

With burning season now underway the New Marlborough Fire Company and Fire Chief Charles Loring would like to remind residents of rules for open burning, which may take place through April 30.

Burning permits may be acquired, at no charge, at the Mill River General Store. Prior to burning on any given day, call 229-0246 to determine if burning is permitted that day. A change from previous years: you do not need to leave a message. Simply listen to the pre-recorded message to learn if burning is permitted. A reminder: burning is allowed between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. All fires must be out by 4:00 p.m. Call 911 to report any emergencies.

A few additional reminders:

- Avoid burning on days with high winds.
- Keep fires at least seventy-five feet from all dwellings.
- When possible, have a garden hose or other water supply available, as well as a rake and/or shovel.

- Do not leave fires unattended.
- Burn the fire down to coals and drown with water to extinguish.
- Call 911 if the fire gets away from you.

New Marlborough Fire Company Rabies Clinic: The annual Rabies Clinic will be held from 10:00 a.m. to noon on Sunday, March 23, at the New Marlborough Fire Station on Norfolk Road in Southfield. New Marlborough Town Clerk Kathy Chretien will be on hand to issue dog licenses, and the clinic will include coffee and a bake sale for pet owners.

Mark Your Calendars: The New Marlborough Fire Company's Annual Spring Dance will be held on Saturday, May 3, at Gedney Farm. Tickets will soon be available at the Mill River General Store or from any New Marlborough firefighter. Call David Smith, (413) 229-0291 for more information. □

FIRE AND RESCUE

Jan. 1	6:17 p.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call	Jan. 18	12:52 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call
Jan. 4	8:30 a.m.	Route 183 MVA	Jan. 19	1:40 p.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road MVA
Jan. 4	11:45 a.m.	Alum Hill Road Medical Call	Jan. 19	6:20 p.m.	Mill River Great Barrington Road Brush Fire
Jan. 12	12:21 p.m.	Stone Manor Drive Fire Alarm	Jan. 21	3:00 a.m.	Hill Heights Road Medical Call
Jan. 16	4:50 a.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call	Jan. 30	4:25 p.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call
Jan. 16	10:20 a.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call			
Jan. 16	8:12 p.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call			

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ONE-DAY SALE

Town Land Goes on the Block

By David Lowman

Maybe you've always wanted to own a little more of New Marlborough. Well then, on March 29, you will get your chance. That's auction day for three small parcels seized by the Town for non-payment of taxes. The sale begins at 10:00 a.m. at the Town Hall, registration at 9:15.

The seizure of land is highly unusual for New Marlborough; no one seems quite sure, but it probably hasn't happened in the last thirty-five years or more. The properties in question are a 1.01-acre lot on Lumbert Cross Road (at the junction of Lumbert Cross, Hadsell Street, and the Southfield Mill River Road), three-quarters of an acre less than a mile from the Southfield Store on East Hill Road, and 8.11 acres of vacant land bordering on Canaan Southfield Road and Cagney Road. (As this issue of the *5 Village News* goes to press, the Cagney Hill property, once considered for withdrawal from the sale, was back on the auction block.)

Taxes, penalties, and accrued interest owed (as of last October) on the Lumbert Cross Road property is \$16,600. Arrearage on the East Hill Road property is about \$6,000. It remains unclear as to whether a special permit would be needed to build on a less-than-one-acre lot that has been vacant as long as this one has. Back taxes, penalties, and interest on the 8.11-acre property on the Southfield Canaan Road total close to \$28,000. The Board of Selectmen has not yet decided the possible requirement of a minimum bid for each property.

According to Sullivan & Sullivan, the auctioneer handling the sale, prospective bidders must arrive with a \$5,000 bank check for each property on which they wish to bid – to be used as a deposit in the event they are successful. The winning bidder will be required to pay a 7 percent “buyers premium,” in effect the auctioneer's cut, on top of the sales price.

Massachusetts law establishes a procedure for local

municipalities, unable to collect property taxes from property owners, to place a lien on the property, and to begin the lengthy process of seizing the property for non-payment of taxes. The process, known as “tax title,” takes about a year, is brought to the Massachusetts Land Court in Boston, and is a final chance for the owners to redeem the property by paying the overdue taxes plus penalties and interest.

Because the New Marlborough officials responsible for the sale, Tax Collector Caren Adams and Treasurer Patricia Mielke, are new to the process, the Town hired a specialist law firm, Berenson and Bloom, of Easthampton, Massachusetts, to complete paperwork, notify all relevant parties, and represent the Town's interests before the Land Court. It was the firm's job to persuade the court that the Town's seizing of the property is, in the law's words, a “good, clear taking.”

Locals will need no prior warning. For others, buyer beware. The properties on Lumbert Cross Road and East Hill Road are described in the ads as being “single family home(s).” Each of these buildings, however, has been condemned by the New Marlborough Board of Health. □

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BACK TO SCHOOL(HOUSE)

By Joe Poindexter

The golden glow of maple flooring is the first thing to catch the eye of a visitor to the newly renovated schoolhouse, formerly American Legion Post 350, on the New Marlborough Southfield Road – then the pristine walls and the gleaming white schoolhouse light fixtures descending from bright nickel hardware. And then back to the floor, which is speckled with a seemingly random array of black dots. Random, perhaps, to most of us, but not to Michael White, the building contractor who bought the property last September. “Here is a circle,” says Mr. White, tracing the circumference. “and here’s another one,” he adds, stepping back three feet or so.

They are, he says, the vestiges of screw holes where rows of chairs and desks were attached to the floor when the building was a one-room schoolhouse from 1917 to 1943. Occupied from 1954 to 2013 as American Legion Post 350, the structure now contains the office of Michael

White Contracting, But Mr. White is determined to let the original purpose of the building shine through. He found the cast iron legs of a desk and the pedestal support of a chair in the basement, and he plans to replicate and re-install two or three sets “to suggest what it looked like,” his positioning of desks confirmed by the wear marks made by students’ shuffling feet. “I call it reading the floor,” says Mr. White, who is experienced in the restoration of old houses.



Michael White, at work in the one-room schoolhouse he is restoring
Photo by Joe Poindexter



Originally, the schoolhouse, as in this rendering, had a front porch.

Drawing courtesy Michael White

He discovered a source of slate blackboards in Ivoryton, Connecticut, and has determined where to hang them by the paint pattern left by the chalk rails. Old electrical wiring indicated where to place the four ceiling light fixtures.

Two additions have been added to the schoolhouse, but to Mr. White they are integral to the ongoing history of the building and he plans to restore them as well. The back one, once a gas station at the intersection of New Marlborough Southfield Road and Route 57, was moved to the Legion Hall in 1974. It contains the remnant of a soda fountain counter and a small patch of wallpaper Mr. White hopes to replicate and re-hang. (It has the added distinction of having been the place where Marjorie Stalker, sister of transfer station manager Alvin Stalker, was born. Their mother attended the school itself.) Eventually, says Mr. White, he plans to restore the four-pillared porch that originally graced the front of the school.

Sometimes, people who care about historic preservation get lucky. Mike White’s purchase of the New Marlborough schoolhouse is one of those times. □

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Unilateral Disarmament



Major Courtney Turner presided over the reception of the M114 in 1976



The armored vehicle outside the American Legion Hall will soon take up duty at a combined VFW-American Legion post in Housatonic, the move awaiting the construction of a concrete slab and some rust-prevention measures. This gives us just enough time to address a misconception about this familiar landmark.

"It's not a tank," says Courtney Turner, a career U. S. Army officer. "It's an M114 Command and Reconnaissance Vehicle, used to gather intelligence." It was equipped with a 50 mm machine gun and was capable of speeds up to 50 mph. Developed around 1960, the M114 served in various theaters around the globe, including Viet Nam, where its low profile and projecting front end proved to be a liability. "It got hung up in rice paddies," says Mr. Turner. He knows the vehicle well. He used it as the commander of a reconnaissance platoon in Baumholder, Germany, after his graduation from an ROTC program at the University of Massachusetts in 1967. (He retired from the Army in 1992 at the rank of colonel.)

Post 350's M114 (it's still owned by the Army) was transported to New Marlborough in 1976 from a weapons depot in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, by townsman Roger Emmons, with Mr. Turner, then a major, presiding at the ceremony. "I'm glad it's staying nearby," he says. □

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I Always Loved You, by Robin Oliveira
North of Boston, by Elisabeth Elo
Ripper, by Isabel Allende
The Swan Gondola, by Timothy Schaffert

Adult Nonfiction

Attracting Beneficial Bugs to Your Garden, by Jessica Walliser
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My Life in Middlemarch, by Rebecca Mead
The Wildlife-Friendly Vegetable Gardener, by Tammi Hartung

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

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

NM5VN Editorial Team

Joe Poindexter, issue editor; Diane Barth, designer;
Martha Bryan, Jane Burke, Larry Burke, Kenzie Fields,
Barbara Lowman, David Lowman, Charlie Parton,
Peter Schuyten, Pam Stebbins, Jon Swan, Marianne Swan
Contributing writers: Ann Getsinger, Barry R. Shapiro,
Mary Richie Smith, Jodi Rothe, Tara White
Index: Donna Weaver

New Marlborough 5 Village News

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All copy must be submitted no later than March 15.

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

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