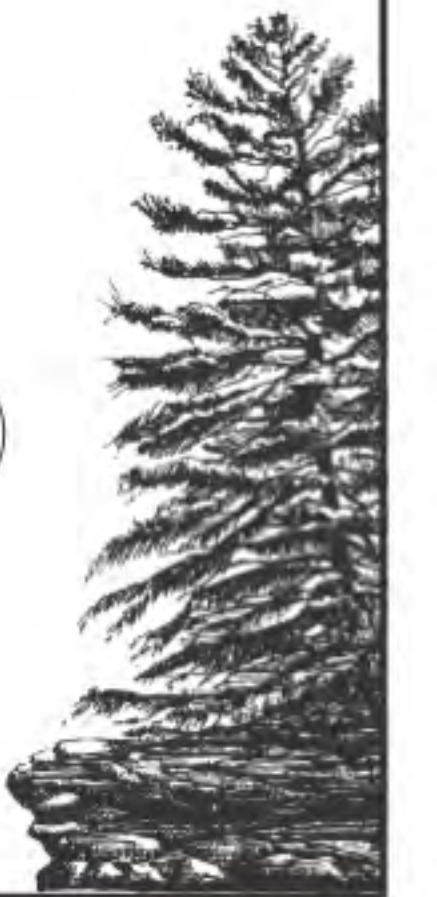




# New Marlborough 5 Village News

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## BUS STOP

By David Lowman



photo courtesy of Anita Ormsbee Cook

Ormsbee Bus drivers gather in 2007 to honor the retirement of long-time driver Wally Hitchcock (4th from left.) Founder John Ormsbee is at left.

No, it's not the Marilyn Monroe film, it's the bitter-sweet end of a half-century story: the demise of the John B. Ormsbee Bus Company. Started in 1967 by legendary New Marlborough businessman and selectman John B. Ormsbee, the school bus company bearing his

name is preparing to end its days. The business will close down at the end of the school year in June.

Since Mr. Ormsbee's death in 2012, the businesses he started and ran, Ormsbee Gas Company, Ormsbee's Garage, and the bus company, have been operated by his three children living in New Marlborough: John E. Ormsbee, Anita Ormsbee Cook,

and Robert Miller. The bus company has been under the stewardship of Ms. Cook and Mr. Miller.

For years their buses transported school children to the New Marlborough Central School in Mill River, the Monterey Kindergarten in Monterey, and the Undermountain/Mount Everett campuses in Sheffield. They have also provided transportation for field trips and sporting events for the schools. In addition to school bus transportation, the staff of the company has been kept busy year round providing busing for local camps and weddings, as well as handling private charter work. Typically, the bus company worked under the terms of five-year contracts entered into with the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD). Its current contract with the District expires this June. Ms. Cook and Mr. Miller, in consultation with their brother, John, decided not to seek another five-year contract. Mr. Miller, who will be sixty-six on his next birthday, has decided to retire. (More about that later.)

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*Bus Stop, continued*

For its entire history, the Ormsbee Bus Company has been a family operation. Not only were all the Ormsbee family members involved, but many drivers, substitutes, mechanics, and others over the years came to be considered as part of an extended family. A group photo (page 1), taken in 2007 on the occasion of the retire-



Anita Ormsbee Cook and Robert Miller, proprietors of the Ormsbee Bus Company.  
photo by Jennifer Miller

ment of one long-time driver, was in essence a family photograph. And many, if not all, of this expanded family will feel the impact of the demise of the company.

When the current school year ends, the summer will be spent liquidating the company's bus fleet. The Ormsbee Gas Company will continue in operation. So will Ormsbee's Garage, which may suffer from the loss of business maintaining the buses, but Mr. Miller thinks the impact will be minimal and might even offer greater opportunities for day-to-day automotive work.

Looking ahead, the transportation of SBRSD school children will be taken over by the Dawn Massini Bus Company. Cost increases under a new five-year contract, initially estimated at \$750,000 in year one, have been reduced through negotiation and route consolidation to under \$230,000, of which New Marlborough's share will be \$51,257. The contract calls for increases of about 15 percent in the second year and 8 percent thereafter, according to Christine Regan, the District's business administrator.

Ms. Cook started driving a school bus when she was eighteen. This fall, after thirty-nine years behind the wheel, she will re-open The Inn at Freeman Elms,

the bed and breakfast that operated for years in her late parents' house. She'll miss the school kids and their families and the warm relationships developed over so many years. Two large photo albums will help keep the memories alive.

Robert Miller and his wife, Jennifer, have recently acquired an RV and plan to visit

many United States National Parks in the years to come. They, too, will miss the people and the relationships. But they won't miss the reality of operating a school bus business in the 21st century: greater complexity of rules, regulations, and laws affecting transportation of school children; the expense of maintaining a large fleet of vehicles and of often buying new buses; the increased difficulty in employing and training bus drivers; record-keeping; 4:00 a.m. phone calls about a sick driver who needs to be replaced for a day or two, or dangerous road conditions, or mediating a dispute about an unruly student among the driver, the school, and the student's parents. Mr. Miller told of two extraordinary instances where wives called to say that their husbands would be unable to drive tomorrow, because they each had unexpectedly collapsed and died.

Stepping away from a business that is a mixture of bottom line and big family brings mixed emotions. The day-to-day stresses and the mounting regulation will not be missed, but the satisfaction of having provided a half century of service to the community remains. The family is grateful for the opportunity to have served New Marlborough. It is a bitter-sweet departure. □



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## BROADBAND? THE WAIT IS OVER!

By Special Correspondent Lars de Burgho

As readers of the NM5VN learned in March, Dan Weston's classroom at New Marlborough Central School is a hotbed of science innovation. It turns out, however, that those iPad-assisted experiments with gravity and air resistance were just a warm-up for this brainy band of second and third graders. These young scientists have now turned their attention to solving a real-world problem — namely, New Marlborough's need for broadband internet access.

We grown-ups have been chasing our tails for some years now, confounded by the technical details and staggering costs associated with fiber optic cable, but the kids in Mr. Weston's class took the simple, intuitive, and direct approach of a generation that is innately skilled in the ways of the digital age: Avrile LaCabra, age 7, armed only with her iPad, googled the phrase "Internet Access." She discovered that Google itself, and, in particular, Google X (the company's somewhat secretive research and development division), has been sinking millions of dollars into "Project Loon" — which hopes to provide wi-fi access to vast underdeveloped regions of the world via transmitters lofted above the landscape by large weather balloons. Armed with this information, the rest of the class put their heads together to design and build a local version of Google X's global project.

Beta testing was well underway by mid-March on the NMC wireless access system, which Mr. Weston's class has dubbed "Project Red-Red Robin," in honor of the noble bird that will be returning to our neighborhood just as the system becomes operational. A request by the NM5VN for a photograph of the device was turned down, after one of the children's parents, a lawyer, advised the students to secure a patent before revealing it to the public. What we have been able to learn, however, is that the components of the system include a red balloon, a canister of helium (both supplied gratis


by Tom's Toys), a rebuilt wireless router (found at the Transfer Station Gift Shop), a large ball of baling twine from Freddy Friedman's farm, a reel of AC cord from the back of Dan Litchfield's van, and a large box of rubber bands from the NMC supply closet (to be reimbursed, with interest).

Following Google X's lead, Project Red-Red Robin has been developed in a shroud of secrecy, with test launches being conducted between 3:30 p.m. and dinnertime at various undisclosed sites around town. According to Hartsville resident Ben Webster, who was ice fishing at York Lake one afternoon in late March — a spot with absolutely zero internet reception — his cell phone suddenly starting humming with incoming texts and emails. While he couldn't say positively, he was pretty sure he saw a balloon on a long tether about 500 feet above him. (Being color blind, he could not say for certain if the balloon was red.)

Billy Gaits, age 8, who has taken on the role of spokesman for Red-Red Robin, was asked about the intentions of his classmates, with regard to covering the entire town of New Marlborough, and what the costs might be to the residents: "We fully expect that the system will become operational town-wide come the first Saturday in April," he said. "We are still in negotiations with Tom's Toys over bulk purchase of red balloons and helium as we go forward, and with the Board of Selectmen on the rates that will be offered to the internet-needy citizens of New Marlborough. So far the only deal-breaker we can see would be the failure of Town Counsel to make our parents agree to extended TV privileges for all students in Mr. Weston classes, present and future."

"This is all utter nonsense," said Broadband Committee Chairman Richard Long, "and please stop bothering me until I figure out why my internet connection is suddenly so blazingly fast."





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## Town Business Is Your Business



### BOARD OF SELECTMEN

**February 27:** With all three members present, the Board met with the Planning Board's Jamie Mullen to discuss the Open Space and Recreation plan. According to Mr. Mullen, the plan is ready for the Board's review, after which it will be finalized and submitted to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs for certification. "There's not a lot you'll need to comment on," Mr. Mullen told the Board. "There are roles and responsibilities, some of which involve the Board of Selectmen, and there's a five-year action plan at the end of the document." Chairman Yohalem replied the Board would review it and put it on the agenda for discussion at next week's meeting. According to state regulations, a new plan must be updated and certified every seven years.

**Mr. Mullen also reported that the Planning Board has drafted a warrant item for a proposed moratorium on large solar arrays for voter approval at the Annual Town Meeting.** He said it should be finalized by the Planning Board later this week, at which point it will be ready for the selectmen's review and comment. As previously reported, the moratorium will also need approval by the state attorney general.

In broadband developments, Mr. Yohalem reported that the four-town Municipal Lighting Plant (MLP) consortium of New Marlborough, Sandisfield, Tolland, and Monterey, has agreed to meet Wednesday, March 1, to evaluate the responses to its recent request for broadband proposals. "Hopefully, by the end of that meeting," Mr. Yohalem said, "a recommendation will be made as to which company, if any, will be selected to build and/or operate the Town's system." He said the evaluation committee would comprise two representatives from each town's MLP. For New Marlborough, that will be Mr. Yohalem and Broadband Committee Chairman Richard Long, who were appointed to the committee by the Board of Selectmen acting in its de facto role as the Board of the MLP. The evaluation of the bids will be conducted in closed session, Mr. Yohalem said, and nothing about the proposals will be made public until after a selection has been made. However, he did indicate there were three bidders, Frontier Communications, Westfield Gas & Electric, and Matrix Design Group.

Separately, Mr. Yohalem said the Board of Selectmen and the Broadband Committee would hold a joint meeting with WiredWest to hear its proposal for operating the town's broadband system and that a list of written questions is being prepared and will be submitted to WiredWest to respond to in writing in advance of

that meeting, which won't be scheduled until the responses have been received.

Meanwhile, Town Administrator Mari Enoch reported that Alice Boyd, chairman of the Sandisfield Board of Selectmen, sent an email earlier in the day reporting that **MBI liaison Bill Ennen has indicated that MBI, in an apparent reversal of its earlier position, has decided to award qualifying towns both construction and professional services grants.** Originally, the Town was expecting to receive a total of \$1.7 million in broadband funding from the state, but when MBI indicated in January that the state would not be awarding professional services grants, that number dropped to \$920,000. Now the Town will presumably be receiving the full amount. But as Selectman Tara White said, "I'd like to see it in writing first."

The final discussion of the evening — and it was a lengthy one — concerned the upcoming FY18 budget. The discussion was conducted largely in generalities regarding budget goals, strategies, and priorities, mainly because a lot of the numbers haven't come in yet.

However, the ones that have come in are not encouraging. According to a preliminary estimate by the Board, the Town may be facing a \$216,000 increase in its share of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District budget. Additionally, the amount to be raised and appropriated in taxes this year has to be increased by \$55,000 because last year the Town paid that amount from Free Cash to offset the amount of taxes used to pay last year's school assessment.

At the same time the Town is limited by Proposition 2½ to an increase in taxes of only \$185,000, based on estimated revenues and projected growth for this year. As a result, the selectmen are starting to talk about the possibility of an override. (See "View from the Board," page 9.)

**March 6:** With all three members present, the Board met with New Marlborough's two School Committee representatives, Fran Lartigue and Dave Travis, for an update on the Southern Berkshire Regional School District budget, due to be finalized and adopted later this week. As Chairman Yohalem described it, the Town "is in a financial hole that's getting deeper every day, and that for every dollar the school budget goes up it costs the town roughly 25 cents," based on the Town's school assessment. He asked if the preliminary assessment of \$216,000 could be reduced.

In response, Ms. Lartigue explained the School Com-

mittee is recommending a mix of budget cuts totaling between \$275,000 to \$380,000 to Superintendent David Hastings and District Business Manager Chris Regan. **These include suspending the Egremont school program and integrating the sixth grade into the middle school, which would allow the district to remove two teachers at a savings of \$100,000.** The committee is also recommending that the duties of the curriculum director be divided among several other school administrators thus saving another salary, and they're also looking at the possibility of consolidating advanced placement classes. And all of that, she noted, is on top of a \$500,000 reduction that has already been made in the transportation budget, achieved through the rerouting and consolidation of school bus routes.

Next on the agenda was a discussion with Solid Waste Coordinator Freddy Friedman who is proposing a \$20-per-household increase in the cost of the basic transfer station fee to \$125 a year from \$105. Since most households have at least two vehicles, the fee would entitle permit holders to two transfer station stickers. As he noted, approximately 400 permits are sold each year, so the proposed increase would bring in additional \$8,000. He said the late fee for residents purchasing stickers after August 15 would remain the same at \$150. The Board approved the increase.

Selectman White asked Mr. Friedman to devise a system for prorating the cost of a permit for people who move into town later in the year. She also wanted him to consider the idea of setting up an enterprise fund, which communities increasingly are employing to collect user fees for such municipal services as sewer and water. In New Marlborough, an enterprise fund would collect a town-wide assessment to cover transfer-station operating costs and thus eliminate permit fees altogether.

***Proposed: a \$20-per-household increase in the cost of the basic transfer station fee to \$125 a year from \$105.***

Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring said state funding may be available through the Department of Transportation's Capital Investment Plan for survey and engineering work on Route 57. Conceding "it's something of a long shot," he estimated the cost of the work at between \$300,000 and \$400,000 but emphasized that the work needs to be done before the Town would be eligible for state funding for reconstruction of the road, which he estimates at "not less than \$5 million." To support the Town's application, he is asking residents as well as non-residents from nearby towns to fill out the Capital Investment Plan comment form, available online through a link on the front of the Town website.

Following up on last week's discussion of the Planning Board's Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Board voted to accept the plan and authorized Mr. Yohalem to sign a letter of transmittal forwarding it to the state's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for certification.

Noting that "It's going to be an eventful week," Broadband Committee Chairman Richard Long said that the selection committee of the four-town MLP will indicate its choice of three competing proposals on March 7. On March 8, the Committee and the selectmen will meet in a joint session to hear WiredWest's proposal. And the Committee's work will culminate on the 10th with a recommendation of its choice among the various broadband options — in time for Board consideration on the 13th.

The Board reviewed an Open Meeting Law complaint filed with the state attorney general by town resident Tom Stalker, the gist of which is that Highway Superintendent Loring appeared before the Board to speak about two issues at its January 24 meeting. One was a change in

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the Clayton Mill River Road reconstruction project, and the other involved the Clayton Mill River Road culvert replacement, which had gone over budget. The complaint alleges that both of these issues should have been listed as separate agenda items, but instead were brought up as updates by the Town Administrator, "thus obscuring from the public significant issues." According to the law, the Board has fourteen business days to review and respond to the complaint, which was signed by Mr. Stalker on February 22, and send copies to both the attorney general and the complainant.

Before addressing the substance of the complaint, Mr. Yohalem had this to say to Mr. Stalker, who was in attendance at the meeting: **"While you're within your rights to file such a complaint, this is the Town of New Marlborough, and if people have a question, a comment or a complaint, they're accustomed to coming in and voicing it.** Filing something like this," he went on, holding up a copy of the complaint, "without at least trying to sit down and find out the facts, just causes us legal expenses, staff time, and, unfortunately at this particular time of the year, when we're attending meetings night and day, it's a diversion of our time and energy. So in the future," he continued, "if you have a problem, or if you want something, I urge you to please come in and ask for what you want, voice your complaint, or come to a meeting of the Board, and if you're still dissatisfied obviously you can bring the state in." He also noted that Mr. Stalker had issued an extensive records request to the Town — and copied the state on this request.

"My fear," said Mr. Yohalem, "is that the state is wondering what the hell is going on in this town. 'We've gotten a complaint; we've gotten a request for records. We've gotten two items from someone who's complaining.' And the Town's applying for grants all

the time, and now we've got people looking over our shoulder, thinking maybe we've done something wrong. When instead these things can be easily resolved just by walking in the door and saying could you show me this. So I would really request that you try that route first. If it doesn't work, sure, go ahead and write, and copy anybody you want. But to start off this way just puts us at odds when we really shouldn't be."

Having said all that, Mr. Yohalem, with the Board's concurrence, scheduled the two issues referred to in the complaint as agenda items for its March 20 meeting and said he will draft a letter to that effect with copies going to the attorney general and the complainant.

The final forty minutes of the meeting were devoted to a discussion of the budget, but nothing was finalized and no actions were taken.

**March 13:** With all three selectmen present the meeting was convened before a packed house of townspeople waiting to hear the Broadband Committee's recommendation of which broadband option to pursue, followed by a go-no-go decision from the Board of Selectmen on the multi-town procurement award. But first the Board took care of some routine business, voting to approve the minutes of the previous three meetings.

Then it came time to hear the Broadband Committee's choice. But rather than making a formal recommendation, Chairman Long said it was the consensus of the committee that the Town should begin negotiations with Frontier — without dismissing WiredWest as an option. As he put it, "Since the Town doesn't know what the final deal [from Frontier] will look like, it's in our interest to join the negotiations and see what develops." The committee, he said, took no action with regard to WiredWest, although it did identify a

***The amount to be raised and appropriated in taxes this year has to be increased by \$55,000 because last year the Town paid that amount from free cash.***

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number of concerns with the WiredWest model. Noting that the basic issue “boiled down to a town-owned versus a privately-owned system,” Mr. Long said the committee would prepare a PowerPoint presentation that compares the two.

Mr. Yohalem then teed up the MLP vote on the multi-town procurement. “Now it’s up to the MLP of each town to decide whether or not to pursue contract negotiations with Frontier,” explained Mr. Yohalem, adding that the negotiations have to be completed in sixty days from the date of the award and that each town has the right “to withdraw from the negotiations at any time for any reason.” But he also made clear that a vote for negotiating with Frontier does not preclude evaluating or even going with another option. “It does not mean we are ending discussions or options with any other provider,” he said. **The Board then voted unanimously to accept the four-town MLP recommendation to enter into negotiations with Frontier.**

Under Town Administrator updates, Ms. Enoch reported that a draft of the proposed zoning moratorium on large-scale solar arrays is ready for the Board’s review and approval. Developed by the Planning Board and approved by town counsel, the warrant item, if approved by the voters at the Annual Town Meeting, would amend the Town’s protective bylaw to suspend the deployment of solar arrays greater than 10 kilowatts for a full year starting May 1. The draft will be available at Town Hall for public review and notice of a public hearing sometime in April will be issued this week. The Board will decide whether to authorize inclusion of the bylaw change in the Town Election warrant at its next meeting.

In other matters, the Board accepted a \$60 increase to \$2,580 to renew the Town’s contract with Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association. Mr. Yohalem reported that

Monterey, Sandisfield, and New Marlborough all indicated an interest in sharing ambulance services, possibly involving Southern Berkshire Volunteer Ambulance Squad (SBVAS) and that a meeting is being set up with SBVAS to discuss it. The Agriculture Commission, which received Board approval in December to hold a farmers market in New Marlborough, has indicated that the market will be held on the Village Green on Saturdays between of 10:00 a.m. and noon, starting May 13 and going through October.

The Board received a letter from the assessor’s office clarifying the tax status of two parcels of land, formerly part of the Kolburne School, recently sold to the New Marlborough Land Trust. The parcels had been in Agriculture Chapter 61A, a partial tax shelter. The

Town would have been eligible to collect a \$14,000 tax “rollback,” the difference between 61A and full taxation, had the land been sold to a private individual or corporation, but because the Land Trust has non-profit status, the parcels, according to Mr. Yohalem, will be permanently removed from the tax rolls starting in FY18. This means that the Town will forego not only a rollback payment but also some \$3,000 annually of 61A taxes it had been receiving.

The final discussion of the evening concerned the budget. Mr. Yohalem, summarizing the latest developments in the school budget, said that a March 9 meeting of the School Committee agreed on \$390,000 in budget cuts, including the suspension of the Egremont School program. **The impact, Mr. Yohalem said, is a net increase to the New Marlborough school assessment of \$222,000 (a figure that includes the \$55,000 that was not paid from revenues last year).** As Mr. Yohalem observed, that is \$37,000 above the Proposition 2 ½ levy limit of \$185,000, “and that’s if we don’t increase any other expenses in the town by even a penny.”

*‘My fear is that the state is wondering what the hell is going on in this town. ... now we’ve got people looking over our shoulder, thinking maybe we’ve done something wrong.’*



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Ms. Enoch noted, however, that the Town's department heads have already proposed increases in their budgets totaling \$117,000, and not all budget requests are in, making it a virtual certainty the Town will need to obtain approval of an override. Taking account of one more item of budget stress, Mr. Yohalem reminded the Board that the Town also has to pay its share of the School District roof and boiler bond, which this year comes to \$98,161, although, as he noted, the amount is excluded from the Proposition 2½ limit.

Before going further, the Board adopted some guidelines for dealing with the operating side of the budget. These included:

- Tying passage of the school budget to passage of an override;
- Keeping town services level, with no increase in hours or staff;
- Tentatively approving a 2 percent cost-of-living increase for town employees;
- Holding stipends at their current level;
- Returning to the practice of transferring \$50,000 from Free Cash and raising and appropriating \$50,000 for the Stabilization Fund.

And that was it for the night, as the meeting was adjourned. □

Peter Schuyten

## CONSERVATION COMMISSION

**February 18:** Commission members Ned Wilson, Freddy Friedman, and John Schreiber presided over the month's meeting.

The meeting opened with Sam Mercier addressing the Commission seeking information about a property he is considering purchasing on New Marlborough Branch Road. Mr. Mercier sought the Commission's informal review about the wetlands on the property and how the Wetlands Protection Act might impact

future residential development of the site.

With no scheduled hearings on the agenda the Commission moved to reviewing the mail. A forest cutting plan was received for cutting thirty cords of wood on Clayton Mill River Road from Specialty Minerals. With no further business to review, last month's minutes were read and approved with minor edits, after which the meeting was adjourned. □

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## VIEW FROM THE BOARD

This year, we waste no time holding our Annual Town Meeting (ATM). Our by-law requires that it be held the first Monday in May, which this year lands on May 1. Please mark your calendars and plan to be at Town Hall on that evening. The meeting starts at 7:00 p.m., but come early to give us time to register you and give you a voting card. Also, set aside 10:00 a.m., Saturday, April 22, when the Board of Selectmen will explain our decisions in putting together the Fiscal Year 2018 budget.

With little leeway between this year's budget and the amount we can increase it through Proposition 2 ½, the FY18 budget will require citizens to make some serious choices. For the Town operating portion of the budget, we hope to present a budget that delivers the same services as the current year. As evidenced by resident-initiated changes to the budget via motions from the floor at the ATM and votes at Town Election, this is a strategy that best reflects the wishes of the town residents. If, however, the same services require a dramatic increase in funding, we may elect to present a budget with some reductions.

The school assessment portion of the budget presents a greater challenge. Because of changes in the population of resident students among the five towns, New Marlborough's share of the assessments is increasing. Even if we spend not \$1 more in our Town operating budget, the proposed increase in our school assessment alone would take us beyond our Proposition 2 ½ limit. The Southern Berkshire Regional School District School Committee heard our concern about this in the early stages of their budget development and worked diligently to address it. Most years, the Committee follows the same path as the Board: presenting a budget that reflects the cost of delivering the same programs and quality of education as in the current year. The Committee's current proposal, however, attacks costs by reducing services: bus routes are being eliminated, staff is being reduced, and there will be no school program held at the Egremont School. Despite these reductions, the increase in New Marlborough's assessment still pushes

our total budget beyond our revenue-raising capacity.

Absorbing the FY18 proposed school budget assessment is all the more challenging because we used \$55,000 of Free Cash — the amount of the assessment error in FY16 that was returned to us by the School District — to help pay our assessment this year. In effect, the \$55,000 of FY17 assessment we did not raise in taxes becomes a levy increase for FY18 and further pushes us beyond our Proposition 2 ½ limit. As a result, we will request an override — the amount as yet to be determined — on the ballot of the Town Election. It is possible that we will make an approval of the school budget contingent on passage of an override.

Here is the risk in our decisions: If we don't approve an override and the school budget is approved (it takes only four of the five district towns to approve), the cuts we would have to take to bring expenditures in line with revenues would all come out of the Town operating budget. This, as you recall, is what happened in the current fiscal year. A second year of cuts is likely to put a strain on services. We will work hard to limit the amount of the override to what is needed to meet the needs of FY18, nothing more.

The other major consideration for our Town is a broadband project. As you have likely read, this is a work-in-progress — and a decision that, for legal and practical reasons, must be carefully considered. We remain committed to a solution that directs costs toward system users and away from taxpayers.

There has been much discussion in town and on line about broadband, and we expect an equally robust debate about the budget. Please don't hesitate to contact any member of the Board or our town administrator for further clarification. We're always happy to have the opportunity for person-to-person discussions, as they usually lead to greater understanding on all sides. Meanwhile, we look forward to seeing you at the FY18 Budget Presentation, Annual Town Meeting, and the Town Election. □

*Michele Shalaby*

*New Marlborough Fire Company*

# *2017 Spring Dance*

**Saturday, April 22 at Gedney Farm 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.**

**Buffet Dinner - Cash Bar - Live Music & Dancing**

*Tickets \$35 each. Available at the Mill River General Store or from any Fire Company Member*

**More Info: 413-29-0291**

## CULTURAL COUNCIL NEWS

### Grants Awarded

The New Marlborough Cultural Council has announced grants awarded to twenty-five applicants for programs to take place in 2017. Cultural Council grants support activities in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences that focus on New Marlborough. Priority is given to proposals from New Marlborough residents, activities taking place in New Marlborough, or activities elsewhere which serve New Marlborough residents.

A total of \$15,780 (\$4,400 from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and \$11,380 from contributions from community residents) was granted to the twenty-five awardees. Thirty-six applications were received.

This year, grants ranging from \$90 to \$5,000 support a broad variety of activities. For example, students at Mount Everett will participate in a nine-week residency culminating in a complete production of a Shakespeare play at the school and at Shakespeare & Company's Founders Theater. Two programs will support on-going activities at the New Marlborough Library. Students in grades three and four at Undermountain Elementary and New Marlborough Central Schools will learn about the music and dance of Africa, augmenting the social studies and language arts curricula. The renowned Music and More series of concerts sponsored by the New Marlborough Village Association will present its twenty-sixth season. Several components of the ever-expanding Flying Cloud Institute programs will be supported. And the New Marlborough Historical Society will offer honoraria for presenters in its First Fridays series, helping to insure high quality programs of local historical interest.

### Wanted: White Elephants

Once again the New Marlborough Cultural Council is collecting items for the annual white elephant sale on Elihu Burritt Day, August 19. It's time to gather

strength to plumb the depths of your cellar, attic, garage, or scary closet in search of treasures – things that you no longer need or want, but might be just perfect for someone else. Please, no clothing, obsolete electronics, skis, or large pieces of furniture!

This year, thanks to the New Marlborough Land Trust, items will be collected at Rooney House, on the campus of the former Kolburne School, located on the east side of the New Marlborough Southfield Road. The house was part of the recent 114-acre purchase of the New Marlborough Preserve by the Land Trust. The collection will begin on Saturday, May 13, from 10:00 until noon. Subsequent collection dates will be June 10, July 8, August 5, and August 12. It is imperative that the collection times be respected; otherwise, your contributions will be open to the weather. If these dates or times are inconvenient, Council members will be happy to pick up donations. Please call Barbara Lowman at 229-2369 or Louise Yohalem at 528-1409.

In addition, the Council will conduct a silent auction at Burritt Day. If you have an item that is unique or of greater value than usual for a white elephant sale, please consider donating it to the silent auction. This is a good way to ensure that the item draws the greatest value. All proceeds from the white elephant sale and silent auction go to support grants for programs in the arts and sciences for New Marlborough children and adults. □

Barbara Lowman

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## FIRE AND ICE

By David Smith

On Sunday, March 5, New Marlborough Fire and Rescue was dispatched at 1:47 a.m. for a possible structure fire near the intersection of Route 183 and Route 57 in the village of New Marlborough.

Mutual aid was quickly summoned from departments in Sandisfield, Monterey, Sheffield, and Great Barrington, as well as from Canaan and Norfolk, Connecticut.

Within eight minutes of receiving the call, New Marlborough firefighters arrived at the scene on South Sandisfield Road (Route 183) at 1:55 a.m. to find a fully involved structure fire. The fire was consuming a large garage that previously housed the operations of The Master Garbologist. The fire had already destroyed approximately half of the building, which measured approximately 50 x 100 feet, and the remainder of the garage was fully involved in fire. Strong winds had also blown the fire into the woods at the southern end of the property.

Fire was not the only challenge emergency crews faced. The temperature at the time was 4 degrees, with the wind chill reported as minus-25 degrees. A large propane tank outside the fire was also venting, its contents impacted by the heat of the fire, which also melted the siding on a nearby building. That building was otherwise not damaged.

New Marlborough firefighters established a water supply approximately 1,200 feet further south on South Sandisfield Road, cutting through ice to do so, and pumped water from that source to the scene, where another engine pumped to supply the Monterey Fire Department's ladder truck. A second water supply was also established at the scene, where tankers from mutual



photo by Larry Burke

*By the time, just before 2 a.m., fire engines arrived at the South Sandisfield Road fire, the garage there was engulfed in flame. It was a smoldering heap of debris when this mid-morning photo was taken.*

aid departments emptied water into two portable ponds, from which it was pumped to the scene, then to the Monterey ladder, which was set up to battle the fire from above. The tankers filled both at the South Sandisfield Road water supply and from an additional water supply set up at York Lake.

The temperature and wind chill affected firefighters and equipment, causing at least two responding engines to temporarily freeze and causing nozzles and hoses to freeze throughout the night, but firefighters persisted, employing additional engines and resources as needed. The Hinsdale Fire Department's rehabilitation unit was also requested, providing firefighters with a place to get out of the elements.

The building was a total loss. It presently housed equipment of several local businesses, including Woodruff Mountain Landscaping.

Firefighters remained on the scene until just after 6:00 a.m. In addition to an ambulance crew from New Marlborough Fire and Rescue, also on the scene were the Massachusetts State Police. The New Marlborough Highway Department responded to supply sand and salt, as freezing water made for extremely slippery conditions. In all, about fifty firefighters responded. None were injured.

Members of New Marlborough Fire and Rescue wish to thank all of the mutual aid departments and other emergency crews who provided assistance during the hazardous conditions. We are truly grateful to these professionals. The department also asks the community to support the local businesses affected by the fire, as well as the property's owners, members of the Mallory and Weinstein families, who have long supported the Fire Department. □

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## BROADBAND-WAGON

### *The Town Talks to Frontier but Keeps All Doors Open*

By Barry R. Shapiro



photo by Larry Burke

*At its March 13 meeting, the Board of Selectmen decided to pursue negotiations with Frontier Communications.*

For the crowd of citizens who packed the downstairs room of the Town Hall, the March 13 Board of Selectmen meeting was something of a let-down.

Except for those who were paying close attention to the agenda, which called for a “Hearing Recommendation of Broadband Committee on Broadband Procurement,” those auditing the meeting apparently thought that the Board would make a definitive selection of a potential broadband provider. Many, perhaps were informed by a Maggie’s List post that erroneously stated, “The NM Select Board will be deciding our internet future....Now the decision is upon us.” What actually happened was far more preliminary.

At the request of the Board, Richard Long, the chairman of the Town’s Broadband Committee, stated that the Committee had met, reviewed a response from Frontier Communications to a request for proposals (RFP) issued by New Marlborough, Monterey, Sandisfield, and Tolland, and arrived at a consensus to recommend that the Town negotiate with Frontier. “Without negotiations, we don’t know what the deal will be,” said Mr. Long. “We would take no action at this time with respect to WiredWest. We have identified some concerns with it. It all boils down to a Town-owned system or one not owned by the Town. This is not a formal recommendation but our consensus is to recommend negotiating with Frontier.”

Mr. Yohalem stated that there were three respondents to the RFP issued by the four towns. Representatives of the towns’ municipal lighting plants (MLP), each of which would enter into an agreement with the provider, had lengthy meetings and found that two of the bidders (Matrix and Westfield Gas and Electric) were not qualified. That left Frontier as the only other bidder. “The four towns’ representatives agreed to recommend that we go forward with them [Frontier]” said Mr. Yohalem. “The other towns need to see if they will agree with that recommendation, and tonight our MLP board needs to decide if it will accept the recommendation and negotiate with Frontier. It’s a simple decision. It does not mean ending discussions with any other entity.”

New Marlborough’s MLP board (which is made up of the three selectmen) then unanimously agreed to proceed to negotiate with Frontier.

This left the crowd of citizens, gathered to hear something definitive, momentarily stunned and somewhat confused, but the questions quickly started flowing, with the bottom line response from the selectmen being, according to Mr. Yohalem, that while the Town will be negotiating with Frontier, “all other options remain open. If we reach an agreement with Frontier, we will then determine if a contract should be signed. If we don’t do so, we can reissue the RFP, either alone or with



other towns, or do anything else we decide.” Selectman Michele Shalaby similarly emphasized that no final decisions have been made. “The Broadband Committee will continue its evaluation of all options.”

Residents, Freddy and Mary Jo Friedman, left the meeting somewhat frustrated. “I don’t understand what’s taking so long,” said Mr. Friedman. “We need to get broadband in place fast and this seems like more delays to me. Without internet service our property values are being hurt. It is also hurting our long-term employment situation in town.” Mrs. Friedman echoed his sentiment. “I’m just sick of the whole thing.”

Mr. Yohalem, however, sees progress. “We are cautiously excited about this major step forward. There are still many things we need to negotiate with Frontier — some of them material — and nothing is a done deal until we’ve finalized all of the contract terms, but we’re optimistic. We have sixty days to negotiate. I’m not sure if this can be extended should that prove necessary.”

The basic outline of the proposal from Frontier follows:

- The contract with Frontier would be with the Town’s MLP and not the Town itself. The MLP, which is a creature of Massachusetts law, was formed by the Town in 2011 to acquire broadband services. It is run by a board of directors consisting of the Town’s three selectmen.
- Frontier will build and operate a fiber to the premises (FTTP) network similar to those it operates in Connecticut. The top speed would be one gigabit per second (Gbps) download speed and 100 megabits per second (Mbps) upload speed (the more “bits” the faster; one gigabit is 1,000 megabits). Customers would also have the option of purchasing symmetrical speeds (meaning the upload and download speeds are equal) of 30 Mbps, 50 Mbps and 100 Mbps. A basic service of 12 Mbps download and 2 Mbps upload would be provided to residents who request it at no charge.
- Most subscribers would have service installed within two to three years from the date the contract is signed.

- A “triple play” of internet, phone, and television would be offered. Individual services could also be obtained if the subscriber didn’t want all three.
- All equipment which consumers need would be provided by Frontier. There would be a monthly charge for so called “set-top” boxes.
- There would be an installation charge of \$149 per residence, which would be waived (meaning installation would be free) if the user signed up for service within ninety days following availability date.
- Pricing is expected to be comparable to that charged by Frontier in Connecticut and would likely range for “triple play” packages from \$80 for 30 Mbps to \$180 for 1 Gbps.
- The Frontier agreement would obligate the MLP to pay a lump sum of \$920,000 at commencement of construction (this \$920,000 is equal to the construction allowance that the Massachusetts Broadband Institute would pay to the MLP, so it is basically a pass-through) and another \$6,026,400 in a lump sum when the network is complete. Alternatively, at the MLP’s option, the MLP could pay \$33,480 per month for 15 years (this computes to the same \$6,026,400). The proposal from Frontier contemplates that the MLP would get the money to make this \$33,480 monthly payment by imposing a charge of \$30 on all “units” in the Town, whether or not they request service. (There are, by Frontier’s count, 1,116 “units” — residents and businesses — in Town, which at \$30 per unit would fully finance the \$38,480 payment to Frontier.) The Town would also have approximately \$780,000 of additional MBI money, which it could apply to reduce these payments.
- The Frontier proposal is contingent on all four towns in the RFP request group (New Marlborough, Sandisfield, Otis, and Tolland) signing on with Frontier. If any town were to drop out, Frontier would not be required to honor its proposal with any of the other towns. As



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of this writing, both Sandisfield and New Marlborough have agreed to negotiate with Frontier.

Many of these proposed terms are roughly comparable to those offered by Frontier when it responded to the RFP that the Town issued in October 2016 with one stunning difference—an increase of \$920,000 (the Frontier proposal to the Town expired before an agreement could be reached). “We simply don’t understand what is going on with this increase and need to discuss it with Frontier. It obviously is quite troubling, but I hope we can sort this out,” said Mr. Yohalem.

According to its proposal, Frontier Communications Corporation was formed in 1935 as Citizens Utilities Company. As of June 30, 2016, the company had approximately 30,000 employees serving 5.2 million residential customers, 528,000 business customers, 4.5 million broadband subscribers, and 1.6 million video subscribers in 29 states. Included in Frontier’s customer count are approximately 1.2 million fiber-to-the-premises customers. In 2010, through an acquisition of certain Verizon markets, Frontier gained significant experience in operating FTTP markets in Oregon, Washington, Indiana, and South Carolina. Since that time the company has expanded its FTTP presence in certain additional markets, most recently in Connecticut, Florida, Texas, and California. Frontier Communications is a Fortune 500, S & P 500 Index Company focused on increasing broadband availability and services, enhancing video capabilities, and improving products and services for residential, business and commercial customers. Market analysts attribute a year-long decline in Frontier’s stock price to its difficulties in digesting its acquisitions of various Verizon units.

Tim Newman, the Town’s representative to WiredWest, has strong feelings about the process the Town is following. “I would like to see the Town talk to WiredWest at the same time it is meeting with Frontier,” he said. “The selectmen should be open to both proposals. I want a level playing field where the citizens are given ample opportunity to be educated on the details of both the Frontier and WiredWest models, to have input and then whatever the people decide, I’m happy with. WiredWest will be submitting to the Broadband Committee whatever it is that is needed to be formally considered as part of this process.”

As this edition of NM5VN was going to press, the Broadband Committee issued a statement to clarify where it stands in the process and inform the Town as to how it sees the Frontier and WiredWest proposals. The statement reiterates that the Committee wants to keep all options open but has recommended that negotiations begin with Frontier. As to WiredWest, the Committee repeated that it has taken no action, as it requires further

time to evaluate the significant amount of material presented, to make an “apples to apples” comparison, and to consider such issues as who bears the risk, business experience, pricing controls, and assessing just what WiredWest and Frontier bring to the table. Hence, the evaluation of WiredWest at this time is on-going.

The statement then summarized the “key facts” about the two approaches, the details of which are set forth below verbatim:

### **WiredWest**

“The WW proposal provides that WW will serve as a manager/coordinator/contractor between the Town MLP’s and subcontractors, hired by WW, on behalf of the towns, for on-going internet services, billing, maintenance, customer response, et cetera. These services would be provided by one of two subcontractors. Both are relatively small entities, but one, at least, is a known quantity, Westfield Gas and Electric. If WG&E should take on these subcontractor responsibilities for numerous towns, it will need to ramp up its capabilities substantially and quickly.

“Under the Wired West approach, the Town of New Marlborough, through its MLP, would be financially and operationally responsible for building a broadband network. It would be necessary to sell Town debt (bonds) for paying the costs of engineering and building. It would need to fund, continuously, depreciation reserves for the renewal or replacement of worn or obsolete equipment (primarily electronics). These costs must be added in to compare the WW approach to Frontier’s, where Frontier would finance, design, build and operate the system.

“The most likely WW internet subscription rate would be for the lower tier service of 25 megabits per second download speed and 3 megabits per second upload speed at a service cost of \$59/month. (WW also would offer a one gigabyte option.) To truly compare costs with Frontier, however, it is necessary to consider all costs. These costs include the Town-incurred depreciation reserves and debt service to repay the debt for twenty years, in addition to the subscription cost. As illustrated in one of WW’s spreadsheets, on this basis and at a take rate of 60 percent overall and 100 percent of the subscribers taking this tier of service, the total cost would be a \$96/month subscriber charge. Again, this rate is based on WW’s projections. Also, WW’s numbers reflect the application of MBI grants to the capital cost for the Town to build the network.”

### **Frontier**

“Under the Frontier model, all engineering design, make ready, construction, maintenance, and operation costs are assumed by Frontier. There will be no Town debt or the need to fund depreciation reserves. The Town MLP will pay a per premise fee of \$30/month to Frontier for the duration of the fifteen-year contract. There is no

interest charge associated with this fee payment over time, as there would be on Town-issued debt. This fee is intended to subsidize the cost of operations. None of it goes directly to finance the design and construction of the Frontier network. The MBI grants will be applied to the aggregate fee the Town MLP will pay. On this basis the aggregate payment by the Town MLP to Frontier will be \$4.6 million over 15 years with no interest charged. Not \$6.9 million which some have heard. This fee amount is based on 1,000 premises. WW has based its numbers on 893 premises.

“Frontier will offer a number of tiers of service including a base level service of 12/3 Mbps at no subscription cost, but the Town MLP would charge a fee of about \$40/month. The \$40 MLP fee covers the \$30 per premise fee owed by the Town MLP. The Town fee is higher because, realistically, not all household premises will subscribe. Other tiers include 30/30 Mbps symmetrical service, 50/50, 100/100 and a full gigabyte. Frontier will also offer a telephone option and video/TV packages.

“Frontier will rebate to all paid subscribers (not just the 12/3 tier) \$30/month, which effectively offsets most of the Town MLP fee. The Town MLP, however, will also bill the subscriber about \$40/month, or a net additional cost to the subscriber of \$10/month. The subscription rate for that tier after the first two years of lower promotional rates will be \$55/month or \$65 with the net MLP fee cost. Please compare this cost with the \$96/month under the WW proposal.

“While there has been considerable focus on a high aggregate payment to Frontier, that focus has failed to consider that Frontier actually rebates to the subscriber a significant portion of the operating subsidy it receives (which is somewhat analogous to the return of profit that WW suggests). Frontier does this because it recognizes that the more paid subscriptions it receives, the less it needs in an operating subsidy. While the rebate goes to the client, indirectly it helps the Town MLP meet its

obligation, as the rebate offsets most of the Town MLP fee for the subscriber.

“Costs under both WW and Frontier are potentially subject to cost inflation and, hence, possible subscription rate increases over the course of fifteen years.

## Total Costs Paid to the Providers over fifteen Years

“Because of the difficulties of an apples-to-apples comparison, we have made an initial calculation of total costs paid over fifteen years, assuming just one of the WiredWest’s spreadsheet scenarios.

“The numbers below are based on the WW scenario of a 60 percent take rate, the WW lower premises assumption and 100 percent of takers at the 25/3 speed (30/30 for Frontier). Both numbers are calculated after application of MBI grants. These payments are made over a long stretch of years and have not been discounted to net present value. This payment stream also does not include the final five years of debt payment under the WW proposal. [Note: The Committee has used the WW interest rate and depreciation reserve assumptions, even though we believe them to be too optimistic and would recommend a more conservative set of financing assumptions. More conservative assumptions, while realistic, would increase debt costs and depreciation reserves under the WW plan.]

**WW:** \$9.3 million (This cash outflow includes subscriber fees, depreciation reserve funding, and debt service payments on Town debt.)

**Frontier:** \$7.6 million (This cash outflow includes the Town MLP’s obligation plus the net subscriber payments.)

“While it is beyond the scope of this update to discuss qualitative factors, such as system ownership, risk, service provision to customers, ability to offer new and improved innovations, pricing control, and financial stability, all these will be considered in an ultimate recommendation.” □

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### UPCOMING: *Events Calendar for April and May*

**April 1: Potluck supper and musical program**, sponsored by the New Marlborough Cultural Council; 6:00 p.m. in the Meeting House Gallery, New Marlborough Village Green; no admission.

**April 2: Rabies Clinic & Bake Sale**, at the New Marlborough Fire Station in Southfield, 10:00 a.m. to noon; Massachusetts law requires rabies vaccinations for all dogs, cats, and, yes, ferrets; \$10 per vaccination

**April 11: Ballet Boys**, an award-winning documentary from Norway about three teenagers as they face the challenges of becoming professional dancers, the fourth in the New Marlborough Public Library's 2017 film series; 7:00 p.m. and free, but save a space with a call to the library at (413) 229-6668

**April 22: The Fire Company's Spring Dance**, Gedney Farm, 6:00 to 10:00 p.m.; tickets, \$35, available at the Mill River General Store or from any firefighter

**April 24: Voter registration**; if you are a resident of New Marlborough and not registered to vote, this is your opportunity: see Town Clerk Kathy Chretien anytime between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.; she will also be available for working folk 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.

**April 29: Land Trust Spring Road Cleanup**, meet at the Town Hall parking lot at 10:00 a.m., then work up an appetite for a noon picnic lunch at the Old Inn on the Green

**May 1: Annual Town Meeting**, 7:00 p.m. Town Hall, but come early to register and pick up your voting card

**May 8: Annual Town Election**, noon to 7:00 p.m. downstairs in the Town Hall

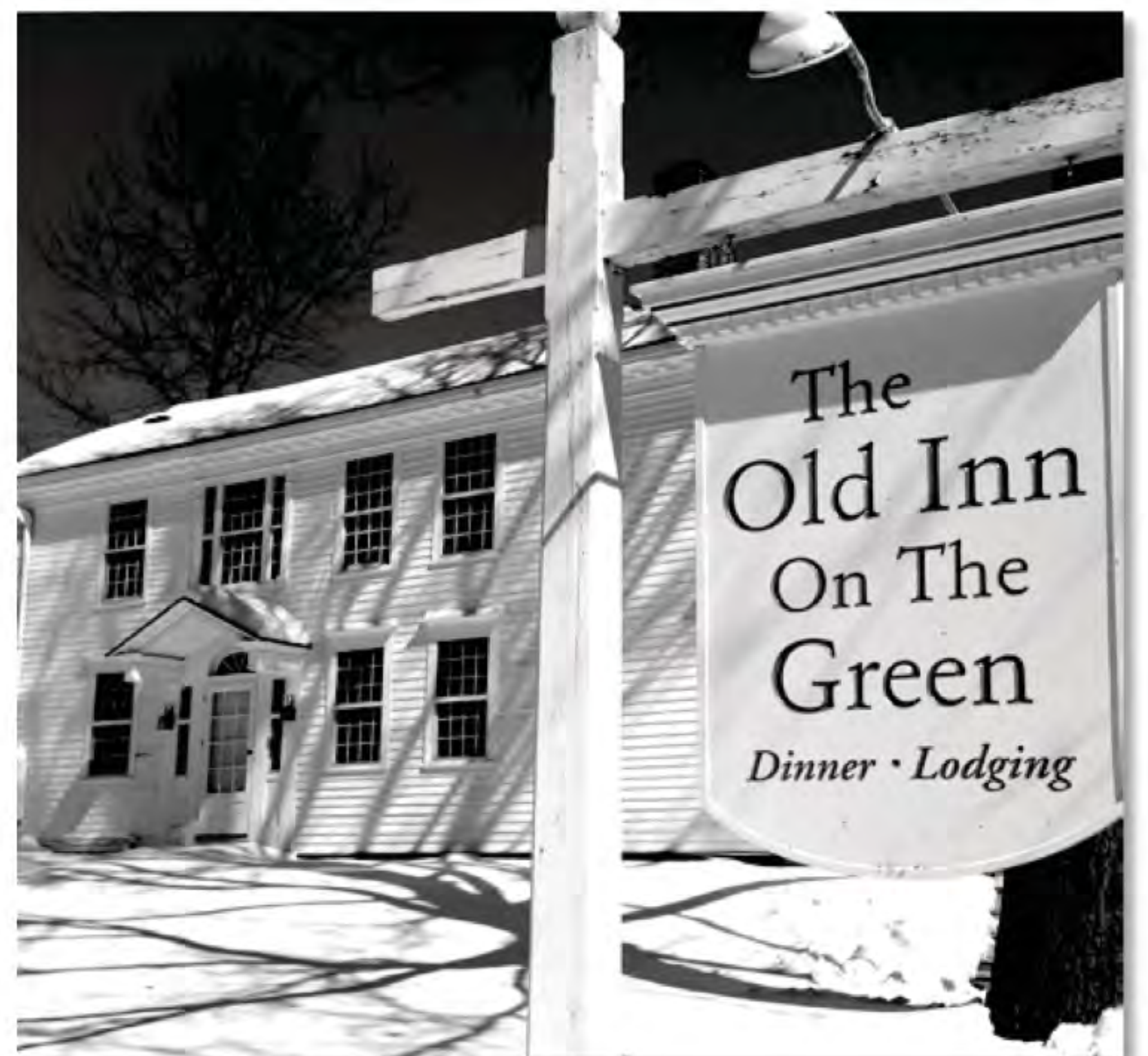
**May 13: Farmers Market**, the first of a weekly offering on the New Marlborough Village green, 10:00 a.m. to noon, every Saturday through October 28



## A FICKLE SPRING

March came in not like a lion but a lamb. And then we were reminded, as if we needed it, not to take New England weather for granted. One dividend of the mid-month storm: classic New England architecture exquisitely set off by a fresh snowfall. □

— Photographs by Erik Callahan  
[erikmichaelcallahan.wordpress.com](http://erikmichaelcallahan.wordpress.com)



## NEIGHBORS



**T**he Big Dig: On Tuesday, March 14, New Marlborough's schoolchildren and its Highway Department both got a snow day. But that's where the similarity ends. For the kids it was a day for snowballs, snowmen, and hours of free time during a suddenly school-free day. For the Highway Department, it was fifteen hours of combat

with a hard-driving blizzard, 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., on the Town's ninety miles of roads, as the winter's last (we hope) hurrah dumped up to two feet of snow on Berkshire County. But that wasn't all. After perhaps four hours of sleep, the crew was back at it Wednesday morning, reporting in to the highway garage at 4:00 a.m. and hitting the roads for another eleven hours.

The Tuesday snowfall was relentless. "We went around and around, just trying to keep up with it," says Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring. He and his crew (Foreman **Paul Krom, Dave Colucci, Robert Palmer, Bill Ruane, and Pete Wilson**) circled their routes at least five times, says Mr. Loring. In addition, the paved roads were salted, the dirt roads, sanded. As the snowfall intensified around 8:00 a.m., Mr. Loring called in contractor Keith Wilkinson to put a seventh plow into battle. At noon, he summoned grader operator Larry Davis to push back some of the larger accumulations at strategic points along town roads.

"We had two big advantages," says Mr. Loring. "We have excellent equipment that is well maintained — I heard from other towns that were having breakdowns; we didn't have any. And we are very fortunate to have a highly experienced crew. Their knowledge makes a huge difference in handling this kind of challenge."

Next up: mud season. □

*Neighbors compiled by Barbara Lowman: [deeuell@yahoo.com](mailto:deeuell@yahoo.com)*



photo by Joe Pindexter

*From left, Colucci, Wilson, Krom, Loring, Palmer, and Ruane*



## LAND TRUST NEWS

**E**ven as a late winter snow is only now beginning to melt from woodland trails, the Land Trust is lining up a full slate of activities for the upcoming spring. Here's what's on the calendar so far:

**Sunday, April 23, 10:00 a.m. to noon,** hike together to East Indies Pond in Cookson State Forest. Meet at the Land Trust's Hotchkiss Road trailhead, hike to the 1000 Acre Pond picnic site then over the suspension bridge and along the trail to the pristine East Indies Pond.

Spring is sure to be on display in the deciduous tree understory. Bring a light picnic lunch.

**Saturday, April 29, 10:00 a.m.,** Spring Road Cleanup. Yes, it has been a long winter, and the trash has accumulated along our roads. Come help with spring cleaning and bring a friend! We are always rewarded well with a picnic lunch at noon at The Old Inn on the Green.

Foraging Hike to be scheduled for late May. A guided hike learning from an expert forager about edible trees, shrubs, and plants. Oh my! Date and time to be confirmed shortly.

Please refer to our website [nmlandtrust.org](http://nmlandtrust.org) for updates and additional activities still in the works. □

*Martha Bryan*

## Thank You to Our Contributors!

Thomas M. Callahan; Jim & Pilar Oates; Joe & Debi Wilkinson; Alexandra Eidenschenk; and Fred Schoonmaker

## OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

It's been a quiet month for sightings, or people are just keeping it to themselves. People, we want to hear from you!

Fortunately, **Don Beauchamp** has been on the lookout in the Clayton neighborhood: "On February 26, **fox sparrows** arrived at the feeder and have stayed around, along with **song sparrows** and **chipping sparrows**. Then on March 5, two pairs of **purple finches** came by, and in the afternoon, I saw a **mink** in the water at the Keyes Hill Road bridge. There was evidence of **river beavers** along the Konkapot, debarking trees. Around March 1, I observed a pair of female **bluebirds** fighting on the ground for fifteen minutes, with a male standing right next to them, like a referee. With the warm weather in late February and early March, many song birds are arriving, and in a pond down across the town line there were about eighty ducks, **ring-necks**, a sure sign of spring!"

Don continues, "On March 16, with the return of deep snow, I saw an **eastern phoebe** under the feeder hopping around, and in the evening, just as I came in the door, I saw a **bluebird** go into its house, followed by three more, so they are still there, despite the bad weather." □

Compiled by Larry Burke, [lburke2@me.com](mailto:lburke2@me.com)



Purple finch



Bluebirds fighting

photos by Don Beauchamp

## VERNAL POOLS

by Angus Kerr

Never mind the heavy snowfall of mid-March, spring is just around the corner, and the woods are slowly awakening with the warmer weather. As the snow melts and the rain begins, you may notice small vernal pools forming in the forests. Inside each, there is a teeming ecosystem, filled with a diverse array of tiny creatures.

At the bottom of this vernal pool ecosystem are invertebrates, including aquatic insects and crustaceans. Among these, the fairy shrimp, a roughly half-inch-long crustacean, is the most familiar. They grow to maturity in just a few weeks, hatching in December and living until May, eating algae and plankton. At the end of their lifecycle, the fairy shrimp lay their hardy eggs that will remain dormant until the following winter.

Frogs and salamanders also play a vital role in the ecosystem. Wood frogs spend most of the year in the moist woodlands but mate near pools while making loud chirps to attract mates and then lay their eggs in these temporary oases in the spring. Here, the tadpoles mature and return to the forest once fully developed.

Some species of salamanders, including the Jefferson salamander, have a similar lifecycle. They spend most of the year in burrows in the forest floor, only making their move to the pools, where they mate and lay their eggs, during the dramatic "Big Night" (generally, the first rainy spring night after the ground has thawed and the temperature stays in the forties, when thousands of amphibians migrate en masse). The young salamanders mature in the pool, and then leave for burrows in the summer.

As we enter spring, look for these vibrant pools when walking through the forests or hiking through fields, and, if you can, come to the New Marlborough Library for a program on vernal pools, April 20 at 6:00 p.m. □



drawing by Ann Getsinger



drawing by Ann Getsinger

## THE LOG

### POLICE DEPARTMENT (SELECTED ENTRIES)

- Feb. 2 10:04 a.m. Receiving a report, via the Great Barrington Police Department, of an unresponsive three-year-old in a motor vehicle on Adsit Crosby Road, an officer discovers that the "patient" is the family's pet dog.
- 8:03 p.m. A driver who crashed his car on Route 57 is transported to Fairview Hospital and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol.
- Feb. 3 11:48 a.m. After being stopped on Mill River Great Barrington Road, a driver is criminally charged with operating a vehicle with a suspended registration.
- Feb. 4 4:15 p.m. A niece gives a statement regarding the theft of a Picasso painting from her aunt's Mill River Southfield Road residence.
- Feb. 6 3:03 p.m. A Southfield resident reports vandalism and harassment at her Norfolk Road residence.
- Feb 7 11:44 a.m. The driver of a pick-up truck reports hitting a deer on Hayes Hill Road; an injured deer is seen disappearing into the woods near Umpachene Falls.
- Feb. 10 8:08 a.m. A child, admitting to merely "testing the system" (but pleased with the response), agrees in future to dial 911 only in the case of emergency.
- 9:50 a.m. Officer frees a homeowner who has locked himself inside his Mill River Great Barrington Road residence.
- Feb. 11 6:27 p.m. Officer gives directions to a Connecticut driver lost on Mill River Great Barrington Road.
- Feb. 12 8:29 a.m. Officer dispatches a critically injured deer lying to the side of New Marlborough Southfield Road near the former Kolburne School.
- 5:35 p.m. Officer attempts to contact the owner of a vehicle parked at the intersection of Foley Hill and Canaan Southfield Roads that is impeding Highway Department snowplows.
- Feb 13. 8:52 p.m. A resident complains of snowmobilers roaring back and forth on Canaan Valley Road; state environmental police advised of the issue.
- Feb. 24 11:38 a.m. Officer opens a vehicle stranded on Lumbert Cross Road with the car keys locked inside.
- 2:03 p.m. Two pigs loose on Canaan Southfield Road at its intersection with Foley Hill Road; the owner was contacted by an officer.
- Feb. 25 6:50 p.m. A car, attempting to circumvent a tree that has fallen on Hartsville New Marlborough Road near its intersection with Adsit Crosby Road, gets stuck in a ditch and has to be winched out by A&M Auto.
- 6:50 p.m. Downed tree blocking Brewer Hill Road.
- 7:30 p.m. Tree on wires on Hartsville Mill River Road.
- Feb. 26 12:03 p.m. Tree on wires on Hartsville New Marlborough Road.
- 5:17 p.m. Cows loose on Clayton Mill River Road; an officer contacts the owner.
- Feb. 27 11:20 a.m. An officer returns a missing dog to its Mill River Southfield Road owner.
- Feb. 28 2:48 p.m. During a routine check of Umpachene Falls Park, an officer finds empty beer bottles and the remains of a fire fueled by wood pallets; extra patrols are requested.

*Police Chief Graham Frank*

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## THE LOG: FIRE AND RESCUE

Feb. 2	10:08 a.m.	Adsit Crosby Road Medical Call	Feb. 20	6:00 a.m.	Mill River Great Barrington Road Medical Call
Feb. 2	10:06 p.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road Motor Vehicle Accident	Feb. 20	3:45 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call
Feb. 5	11:22 a.m.	Mutual Aid to Canaan Structure Fire	Feb. 24	1:56 p.m.	Woodleigh Avenue Fire Alarm
Feb. 5	5:07 p.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call	Feb. 25	7:20 p.m.	Brewer Hill Road Trees/Wires Down
Feb. 14	4:22 a.m.	Canaan Southfield Road Medical Call	Feb. 27	10:25 p.m.	East Hill Road Medical Call
Feb. 14	10:46 a.m.	Mutual Aid to Sandisfield Medical Call	Feb. 28	2:50 p.m.	County Road CO Alarm
Feb. 14	2:44 p.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road Medical Call			
Feb. 18	6:54 p.m.	New Marlborough Hill Road Fire Alarm			

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**New Marlborough Fire Company Rabies Clinic & Bake Sale:** The annual Rabies Clinic & Bake Sale will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon on Sunday, April 2, 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. Massachusetts law requires all dogs, cats, and ferrets be vaccinated against rabies. The cost at the clinic is \$10 per vaccination.

**Spring Dance:** The New Marlborough Fire Company's Annual Spring Dance will be held on Saturday, April 22, at Gedney Farm in New Marlborough village. Tickets are available at the Mill River General Store or from any New Marlborough firefighter. Call David Smith, (413) 229-0291 for more information. □

*Fire Company President David Smith*

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY: UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Yes, the spring thaw has hardly begun, but it's not too early to start planning for the rich mixture of cultural and educational offerings that warmer weather brings to town each year like a swarm of butterflies. Here is what the New Marlborough Historical Society has planned.

### FIRST FRIDAY PROGRAMS

7:30 p.m. at the Meeting House Gallery — with wine and cheese following the presentations:

**June 2:** A brief history of New Marlborough's eleven cemeteries.

**July 7:** The Civilian Conservation Corps in the

Berkshires — and how the CCC built York Lake.

**August 4:** The Knox Trail (it passes just north of New Marlborough) and its role in the transport of Revolutionary War cannon.

**September 1:** The production of clay in Clayton and the monuments in which it was used.

### CEMETERY RESTORATIONS DAYS

Continuing our work reviving historic headstones in the New Marlborough Village Cemetery, 10:00 a.m. to noon, followed by a light lunch. **August 12 and September 16.** □

*Joe Poindexter*

*The New Marlborough  
Agricultural Commission  
Announces*

## **A NEW FARMERS' MARKET**

*Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to Noon*

*May 13 through October 28*

*New Marlborough Village Green*

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

**BULK SILVER (FLATWARE, ETC.)**

**DIAMOND BROKERS**

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## NEW ACQUISITIONS AT THE LIBRARY

### Adult Fiction

*In the Name of the Family*, by Sarah Dunant  
*The Women in the Castle*, by Jessica Shattuck  
*The Young Widow's Handbook*, by Tom McAllister  
*Vicious Circle*, by C.J. Box  
*The Travelers*, by Chris Pavone  
*Right Behind You*, by Lisa Gardner  
*The Sleepwalker*, by Chris Bohjalian

### Adult Nonfiction

*The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*,  
 by Peter Wohlleben  
*The Lost City of the Monkey God*, by Douglas Preston

### Children's Fiction

*The Night Gardener*, by Jonathan Auxier  
*The Unexpected Love Story of Alfred Fiddleduckling*, by Timothy Basil Ering  
*Round*, by Joyce Sidman  
*Tidy*, by Emily Gracett  
*Priscilla Gorilla*, by Barbara Bottner

### Children's Nonfiction

*The Polar Bear*, by Jenni Desmond  
*Feel the Beat: Dance Poems That Zing from Salsa to Swing*,  
 by Marilyn Singer  
*Sir Cumference and the Fraction Faire: A Math Adventure*,  
 by Cindy Neuschwander

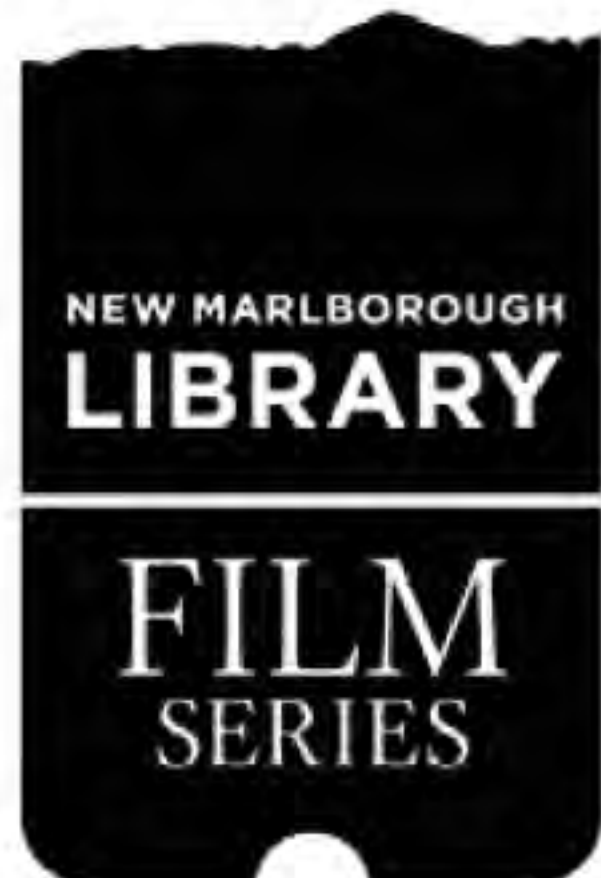
### Audio CDs

*In The Name of the Family*, by Sarah Dunant  
*The Chilbury Ladies' Choir*, by Jennifer Ryan  
*Mississippi Blood*, by Greg Iles  
*The Devil's Triangle*, by Catherine Coulter  
*The Dark Flood Rises*, by Margaret Drabble  
*The Fifth Petal*, by Brunonia Barry

### DVDs

<i>The Accountant</i>	<i>Fences</i>	<i>Moana</i>
<i>Allied</i>	<i>Hunt for the Wilderpeople</i>	<i>Moonlight</i>
<i>Arrival</i>	<i>Jackie</i>	<i>Sophie and the Rising Sun</i>
<i>Bleed for This</i>	<i>Loving</i>	
<i>Collateral Beauty</i>	<i>Miss Sloane</i>	

## The New Marlborough Library Film Series



Our fourth film in the series, *Ballet Boys*, will screen on April 11. Refreshments at 7:00 p.m. Screening at 7:30 p.m. RSVP 413-229-6668 or [newmarlborough@gmail.com](mailto:newmarlborough@gmail.com) Seating is limited.

### Library Summer Hours!

April 1 - October 31  
 Mon. Wed. Sat. 10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.  
 Tues. & Fri. 1:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
 Thurs. 1:30 – 5:30 p.m.



## Spring Egg Hunt

April 8 at 10:30 a.m.

At The New Marlborough  
 Central School  
 Bring Your Own Basket  
 The Easter Bunny  
 Will Be Stopping By!

In Case of Rain-  
 event moved to the  
 New Marlborough Library

For More Information  
 contact the Library  
 229-6668

## Vernal Pools Are Cool!

Join Dale Abrams from Mass Audubon  
 April 20 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
 at the New Marlborough Library  
 to learn about vernal pools  
 and the amazing animals  
 that need them to survive!

Admission is free!  
 For more information  
 contact the Library  
 229-6668



## *Contributions are needed to continue the paper!*

Please fill in the form and send with your contribution to:

New Marlborough 5 Village News, P.O. Box 243, Southfield, MA 01259

YES, I WANT THE *New Marlborough 5 Village News* TO CONTINUE!

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### Town Times

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

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

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

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

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

**Board of Assessors:** Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

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

**Building Inspector:** Monday 5 - 7 p.m., Wednesday 8:00 - 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 Window: Monday - Friday 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

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

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

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

(The Southfield Post Office lobby is open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)

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

**Tax Collector:** Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

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

**Dog and Animal Control Officer:** John Springstube 413-232-7038

**Town Clerk:** 229-8278; 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. weekdays; Saturday by appointment

**Town Hall:** 229-8116

**Police:** Business office: 229-8161

### 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

The fee of \$150  
can be paid by mail.

Please enclose a self-addressed,  
stamped envelope.

### Emergency calls:

**Police, Fire, Medical  
911**

### New Marlborough Highway Department

Located on Mill River-Southfield Rd.

Hours:

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

PO Box 99, Mill River, MA 01244

(413) 229-8165

*We welcome advertisements from businesses owned by New Marlborough residents.*

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

### NM5VN Editorial Team

Joe Poindexter, issue editor; Diane Barth, designer;

Martha Bryan, Jane Burke, Larry Burke,

Barbara Lowman, David Lowman, Jodi Rothe,

Peter Schuyten, Barry Shapiro, Pam Stebbins,

Jon Swan, Marianne Swan, Sandra Fusco-Walker,

Contributing writers and artists: Ann Getsinger,

Mary Richie Smith, Tara White. Index: Donna Weaver

### New Marlborough 5 Village News

appears monthly,

also online at our new website! [www.NM5VN.org](http://www.NM5VN.org)

The next issue will be dated May 2017.

All copy must be submitted no later than April 17.

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

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- ♦ **Design+Planning:** Christopher Blair; Since 1986, creative, budget aware design. Achieve your goals for additions, alterations to an existing home or new construction. 413- 528-4960. chris@design-planning.com.
- ♦ **DesignFirstBerkshires:** Architectural design, space planning and renovation management. 413-528-6169 or info@designfirstberkshires.com.
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- ♦ **Susan M. Smith:** Attorney At Law; Concentrating in the areas of Estate Planning, Estate Administration, Elder Law, Real Estate and Zoning Matters. [ssmithlaw@hughes.net](mailto:ssmithlaw@hughes.net) or 229-7080
- ♦ **Reiner White:** General Contractor; 413-229-8450
- ♦ **Ter Mar Triangle Farm:** 106 Sandy Brook Turnpike (Rte 183), Sandisfield; 413-258-2898; fruits and vegetables in season; pork; jam; eggs; honey; sawmill; kiln milling; firewood
- ♦ **Woodruff Mountain Landscaping:** Excavation and landscape contracting, all forms of stone work and masonry, and outdoor services, including lawn mowing and yard work. 413-229-2919 [woodruffmountain@aol.com](mailto:woodruffmountain@aol.com)

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