



New Marlborough 5 Village News

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SPACE AVAILABLE HERE!

New Marlborough's Short-term Rental Market Blooms

By Barry R. Shapiro

A visitor taking a leisurely drive through New Marlborough would see beautiful country, charming small villages, but not much in the way of industry, other than the farms which grace our landscape. The buggy whip industry is long gone. So are the paper mills. And, at least for now, the 21st century industries of cannabis production or large-scale solar farms are yet to establish a presence here.

But despite the town's current lack of decent internet connectivity, a 21st century, internet-driven industry has been thriving in town. Many residents are completely unaware that this stealth industry is here and appears to be growing rapidly, not only in New Marlborough but also in neighboring towns.

This under-the-radar-industry is the short-term rental market made popular by Airbnb. In New Marlborough, a quick internet search revealed that there are now over twenty properties listed for rental on Airbnb and its competitors, HomeAway and VRBO. These properties cover a wide gamut of tastes, styles, and sizes, ranging from a quirky apartment sleeping two, to a spacious three-bedroom, three-bath house sleeping eight. Nightly costs for these accommodations range from about \$100 to \$500.

"Our experience with Airbnb has been quite positive," said resident Kenzie Fields who manages a one-bedroom suite at The Whip Shop. "I like Airbnb as a consumer, and I've seen others have success with it. Their customer service is excellent and supportive. Our property is heavily booked in the summer and the fall, and many weekends during the rest of the year. It is very popular with Gedney Farm wedding overflow guests. We've had completely positive experiences with our guests and enjoy offering this service."

Lifetime resident Scottie Mills has had a similarly positive experience renting out part of her family home on New Marlborough Branch Road. "I started doing this about a year ago," she said. "I have a large, historic house and I've been renting it out for financial reasons. It's expensive to keep it up and my experience with Airbnb and

continued on page 2



A view of the suite available for rental through Airbnb at Scottie Mill's home.

photo by Scottie Mills

INSIDE:

Board of Selectmen	4
Special Permit Public Hearing ...	11
Caucus Results	12
Planning Board	13
Conservation Commission.....	14
Cannabis Decision	15
Ambassador Fass	15
Southfield Fire	16
Upcoming	19
Your Turn	20
Neighbors	22
Wildlife Neighbors.....	22, 23
The Log	24
The Way We Were	26
School News.....	28
Recipe of the Month.....	29
Library.....	30

**Special Town Election on Marijuana Businesses
Monday, April 8, Noon to 8:00 p.m. at Town Hall**

Lead-up Informational Meeting Wednesday, April 3, 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall

[For more information on the vote, turn to p. 15]

Space Available, continued

my guests has been quite positive. Many guests have been wedding-related, such as from Gedney Farm and Cantina 229, but also parents visiting their kids at Shakespeare & Co.'s summer program. The house is important to me. It's been in the family for generations and was actually a wedding gift from my grandparents to my parents. Renting out a portion really helps me keep it in the family."

Although most of the rentals in town appear to be offered by resident homeowners (or those who live nearby), some are offered by second homeowners and at least one is managed by an out-of-town property management company.

For those unfamiliar with how it works, Airbnb (like its competitors, HomeAway, its subsidiary, VRBO, and, increasingly, local real estate agencies) facilitates the rentals of rooms and entire homes by homeowners through its website. It has proven so popular that its market capitalization is greater than any hotel company (estimated at over \$31 billion) and is the largest player in the short-term rental market. It claims to have about three million hosts worldwide, with over 49 million stays in 2017, and 14,000 new hosts joining every month.

Homeowners desiring to rent out all or part of their homes first register with Airbnb, uploading a variety of information relating to their background and the property to be listed. After they are approved, their property then goes up on the Airbnb website. All reservations are made directly through the Airbnb website and the renter can communicate directly with the host by email through the Airbnb site. Until the rental is confirmed, Airbnb redacts any information, such as phone numbers and email addresses, which would allow the host and the guest to communicate directly other than through the Airbnb website.

Hosts sets the nightly charge for their properties, although Airbnb will, if asked, assist to determine an appropriate price. The renter pays the host through the Airbnb website, with Airbnb keeping 3 percent of the revenue as its fee and remitting the balance to the property owner.

The company also takes steps to make sure that both the hosts and guests are kept safe through background checks, risk scoring, terrorist watchlist checks, and the use of reviews (both of the hosts by the guests and the guests by the hosts) which would disclose any issues with



The Whip Shop Airbnb suite managed by Kenzie Fields.

photo by Kenzie Fields

either the host or the renter. Liability and property damage insurance, each in the amount of \$1 million, is provided by Airbnb for the hosts.

The rapid growth of Airbnb has taken something of a bite out of the hotel industry, siphoning away potential guests interested in lower rates and perhaps a more personal experience, or those interested in renting a house or apartment rather than a hotel room. It should

therefore come as no surprise that the hospitality industry has reacted in, well, an "inhospitable" manner to its new competitor and has worked hard to obtain what the industry has called a "level and legal playing field within the lodging sector."

Acting through its trade associations, such as the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) and the Massachusetts Lodging Association, the industry has lobbied state legislators, Congress, the Federal Trade Commission, and the media to highlight the need to take action to protect its members' financial interests.

A "white paper" prepared by the AHLA in 2017 points to a litany of perceived issues with Airbnb rentals including: 1) discrimination against renting to the disabled; 2) commercial operators or so called "Millionaire Airbnb Landlords" who own multiple properties and are not the "Mom and Pop" landlords who are trying to augment their sometimes limited incomes by renting out a room in their home; 3) unsafe and insecure rentals; 4) illegal rentals; 5) adverse impacts of short term rentals on surrounding neighborhoods, such as drunken tourists, and the evictions of tenants so that the properties can be put into a more profitable Airbnb pool; 6) the failure of Airbnb rentals to comply with applicable federal laws, such as the Hotel-Motel Fire Safety Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act; and 7) the impact of short-term rentals on tax revenues and affordable housing.

Peter Platt, chef/owner of The Old Inn on the Green in New Marlborough, has mixed feelings about the growth of Airbnb. "It's a complicated issue and clearly has an effect on everyone in the hospitality industry. It's a trendy thing to try an Airbnb but I would worry about the property and whether it has been properly inspected and insured. However, I suppose that having more people in the area is a good thing for everyone, but I can't see it as positive for my business, except for the occasional dinner guest."

The efforts of the hospitality industry to restrain the

growth of Airbnb have begun to have an effect, both statewide and locally.

Hosts of short-term rentals in Massachusetts will now have to register with the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and to maintain minimum amounts of insurance either directly or through their hosting site (such as Airbnb, which currently appears to be making such insurance coverage available to its users). Additionally, those owners who rent their property for more than fourteen days in a year will have to pay the same 5.7 percent state tax as hotels (on all rentals of thirty-one days or less). The new law, signed by Governor Baker on December 31, 2018, applies to all reservations made on or after January 1 of this year for any date after July 1.

The regulations also permit local municipalities to levy their own taxes of up to 6 percent (up to 6.5 percent in Boston), if those properties are rented for more than fourteen nights a year. There is also the possibility of an additional 3 percent community impact fee, if local municipalities choose to impose it, subject to certain statutory requirements.

Some towns surrounding New Marlborough have attempted to regulate short-term rentals, so far without success. For example, Lenox proposed bylaws which would have restricted short-term rentals, limited the months during which rentals could be offered, and imposed requirements that the property be the primary residence of the owner with lodging a secondary use. Annual registration and inspection would also be required, and rentals of an entire house would have required a special permit. This proposed bylaw was overwhelmingly shot down by voters in late 2018, many of whom stressed the importance of the income they receive from their rentals and the adverse impact which the proposed restrictions would have on them.


Great Barrington's consideration of a bylaw which would, among other things, limit short-term rentals to an aggregate of ninety days per year, is pending and would similarly require approval at a town meeting. Stockbridge

is also reportedly looking into some form of bylaw to deal with the issue.

According to Michele Shalaby, chairman of the New Marlborough Board of Selectmen, the Town is aware of the issues which the short-term rental market raises. "We are still gathering information, and our town administrator, Mari Enoch, recently attended a workshop held by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. How we comply with Massachusetts regulation requirements and if and how this will financially benefit the Town, are yet to be determined."

This important issue was raised at the Board's March 18 meeting, where the Board postponed a decision on whether the Town will impose a local excise tax on short-term rentals. A local excise tax would be on top of the 5.7 percent already being levied by the state. The Board did not appear to be opposed to the tax, which could be between 4 to 6 percent, but is wary of time constraints; the imposition of the tax requires a vote at a town Meeting, and the Board questioned whether there is sufficient time to draft the necessary language in order to get the article on the warrant for the Town Meeting scheduled for May 6.

For now, the burgeoning industry of renting out all or part of a home in New Marlborough remains unregulated by the Town, with homeowners subject only to the newly adopted state regulations. In any event, the virtual explosion of the Airbnb model has provided those entrepreneurial residents willing to become landlords with a valuable source of income and has given visitors to our town a wide spectrum of housing options from which to choose beyond the town's established commercial lodging establishments. Whether the rapid growth of this new industry will have a long-term positive or negative impact on New Marlborough, and whether the Town will seek to restrict this industry or impose a local tax, remain important, and as yet unanswered, questions. □



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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

February 20: Because of Presidents' Day holiday, this week's meeting was convened at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday. The Board, with all three members present, considered the appointment of a **Cable Advisory Committee**. The purpose of the committee, as outlined by the Board, will be to keep the selectmen and the town informed of Charter Communications' progress in creating the town's broadband network.

Five people expressed an interest in serving on the committee. They were Doug Newman of Adsit Crosby Road, Michael Shocket of Arroyo Way, Broc Kerr of Hartsville Mill River Road, John Valente of Wright Lane, and Steve Klein of Juniper Hill Road. As Ms. Shalaby reminded the Board, the goal was to appoint a committee of three to five members, and it was her recommendation that they appoint the five candidates. However, Selectman Nat Yohalem raised an objection to Doug Newman, saying, "I believe he has good intentions, but at times he can be difficult to work with." He ultimately voted against Mr. Newman's appointment, but the other Board members voted to appoint all five. Committee members will serve until June 30, at which point they'll be subject to reappointment.

The Board voted to award ten of the sixteen highway materials contracts to Century Aggregates of Falls Village, Connecticut. The contract awards covered various sizes and grades of crushed stone, topsoil and fill. There were no bids for processed gravel, bank run gravel, or washed winter sand, and the only bid for the washed stone contract was from Segalla Sand and Gravel Inc. of North Canaan, Connecticut, which the Board declined to award on a recommendation from Highway Superintendent Loring. The contracts are also subject to approval by the Sheffield Board of Selectmen as it's a



joint bid by the two towns.

The Board was to have approved the wording of the warrant articles for the special marijuana opt-out election ballot scheduled for April 8, which had been distributed to the Board last week by Town Administrator Mari Enoch, but it was postponed until next week at the request of Selectman Tara White who wanted more time to review it. The Board also directed Ms. Enoch to forward the draft to the Planning Board for its review and comment.

The Board voted to authorize Chairman Michele Shalaby to sign the Council on Aging's annual grant from the state's Executive Office of Elder Affairs. The grant is worth \$6,000, with most of the money going to various senior benefits, including transportation, informational lunches, swimming sessions at Bard College at Simon's Rock and other senior outreach services, according to Council on Aging's Prue Spaulding.

In other business, the Board approved annual business license renewals for the following local businesses: Tony Pontier Construction Inc., Bob Wuori's East Hill Services, Ronald Clavette's Pro Detailing, and Southfield Wood Products/Neil Lidstone – Electrician.

Under selectmen Updates, Mr. Yohalem reported that the Southern Berkshire Regional School Committee meeting that was to be held at New Marlborough Central School, had to be cancelled at the last minute. He said Superintendent Beth Regulbuto informed him that a town resident complained the site was not ADA compliant. So, after checking with counsel and being told there was not enough time to give proper notice that the meeting was being moved to another location, the School Committee had no choice but to cancel it. The meeting has since been rescheduled for the following Thursday at its regular location at the Mount Everett High School library.



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February 25: After approving the minutes of the February 20 meeting, **the Board, with all three members present, discussed next steps regarding the replacement of the Town website.** Virtual Town Hall (VTH), which currently operates the site, notified the town earlier this year that it will stop supporting the existing platform as of April 30. After looking into the possibility of going with another developer, the Board agreed to sign a new contract with VTH to build the replacement platform at a cost of \$4,500, payable over three years.

The new website will feature text searching, will be ADA compliant, and will be easier to update and navigate. Initially, text searching will only go back three years, but older documents, such as meeting minutes, can be added to the file by converting them to PDF. Further discussion focused largely on what will be shown on the home page, something the developers need to know in order to get started. It will feature the Town's News & Notices service and there will be buttons with links to online permitting and bill paying, meetings and agendas, and a separate button to access news on the latest broadband developments.

The developer's estimated is that it will take the developers ten to twelve weeks to get the new website up and running, which is very close to the April 30 shutdown date.

Under public comments, Barbara Marchione asked the Board to consider holding the Annual Town Meeting at the new firehouse instead of moving it to the school district's Sheffield Campus, as was decided at the Board's January 2 meeting. She said when the firehouse was built in 2010, it was specifically designed to be handicapped accessible, and that the Fire Company owns three hundred chairs. She said, in fact, it was Fire Chief Chuck Loring's feeling that the capacity of the firehouse, which he estimates at between two hundred

and fifty to three hundred people, is actually greater than that of the Town Hall. She said if the meeting were to be held there, he would move the fire trucks down to the Highway Department garage and ask the Monterey department to be on standby during the meeting.

"Yes, Mount Everett [High School] is handicapped accessible, too," she conceded, "but the parking spaces there are very far from the school, and it's a long walk for the elderly. I have a feeling a lot of them wouldn't attend."

In response to a comment from Ms. Shalaby that there's not a lot of parking near the firehouse either, Ms. Marchione said, "we could park the elderly close to the building, and there's parking at the church, the post office, at the Southfield Store and all along

one side of the street. "I think it's really doable," she said, "and I would just like permission to meet with one member of the Board and Chuck to discuss it further," to which Ms. Shalaby seemed to agreeable.

Moving on, the Board met with Patricia Mullins of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission regarding the \$1.3 million Community Development Block Grant the Town is applying for in partnership with Sheffield and Otis. She reported that she met with the

After looking into the possibility of going with another developer, the Board agreed to sign a new contract with VTH to build the replacement platform at a cost of \$4,500, payable over three years.

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selectman and finance committee member from each of the five District towns, chaired by Ms. Shalaby, has been working since last summer with School District Business Administrator Chris Regan to revise the assessment formula. The goal was to minimize the year-over-year variances in the budget assessments paid by the individual towns.

In order for the change to go into effect, approval by the voters in all five district towns will be required. To that end, Ms. Shalaby said she has scheduled a meeting of the Assessment Committee for March 12, with hopes of getting an agreement from all five towns to bring a warrant article forward to be voted on at each of the towns' Annual Meetings. If passed, the revised formula would likely be applied for the first time to the District's 2021 fiscal year budget. (An article on revising the school budget appears on page 28.)

The Board finalized the wording of the special election ballot for the marijuana opt-out vote set for April 8. There will be eight questions on the ballot, corresponding to the eight marijuana businesses allowed by the state. They are:

1. commercial marijuana cultivation
2. craft marijuana cooperative
3. marijuana product manufacturers
4. marijuana retailer
5. marijuana research facility
6. marijuana independent testing laboratory
7. marijuana transporter
8. marijuana micro-business

Following each question is an explanatory paragraph developed by Town Administrator Enoch and Town Counsel Jeremia Pollard and referred to as "Counsel's Summary," which describes in layman's terms what the

bylaw would ban. But in order to further clarify for the voters what a "Yes" vote and "No" vote means, the Board voted to add the following verbiage immediately beneath the Counsel's Summary, as follows: "Yes = Prohibit; No = Allow."

Under selectmen updates, Ms. Shalaby reported the Governor's office is estimating the Town will receive \$340,708 in Chapter 90 road repair funding, pending approval by the legislature. This compares with \$405,893 in the current fiscal year.

March 11: After approving the minutes from the March 4 meeting, the Board, with Michele Shalaby and Tara White present and Nate Yohalem conferencing in by phone, discussed appointing Richard Long, previously

chairman of the Broadband Committee, to the Finance Committee. This was in response to a request by Finance Committee Chair Steve Klein, who would like to fill the seat recently vacated by Marilyn Fracasso as quickly as possible, this being the heart of budget season. However, the Board at Ms. Shalaby's urging, agreed to put the appointment on hold to see if other candidates signal their intention of running by filing for the caucus.

Similarly, the Board deferred acting on a request by Commission on Disabilities Vice Chairman Tom Stalker to appoint a Board of Selectman liaison to the Commission, which he indicated in an email to the Board was required by the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD). But Ms. Shalaby could find nothing on the MOD website indicating that the liaison must be a member of the Board. In addition, it was her recommendation that the Board wait at least until after Town elections in May to fill the position. Since she's not running for reelection that leaves only two members of the Board eligible to serve, in the event Mr. Stalker

At Chairman Shalaby's urging, the Board informally adopted a proposed change in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District's budget assessment formula, one that is based on a five-year rolling average of the state's required minimum contribution.

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is correct about the requirement that it be a selectman. Mr. Stalker indicated he was okay with that and that he would research the issue further.

The Board discussed the effort to educate voters in advance of the special marijuana opt-out election set for April 8. The selectmen agreed to send a letter to voters making them aware of the election, when and where it's taking place and why, and they agreed the letter should go out soon – within the next ten days, if possible – since the special election is just four weeks away. The Board will first seek input from the Planning Board. The letter will be followed by a public information meeting to include both the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen, and it was agreed that this meeting, subject to approval by the Planning Board, will be held on Wednesday, April 3 at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall.

The Board met with Solid Waste Coordinator Freddy Friedman, who was there to discuss recycling at the transfer station in advance of the Town's contracts with its waste haulers coming up for renewal at the end of the year. This includes the single stream

recycling contract for paper, cans and bottles, as well as contracts for the Town's wet, or non-recyclable, garbage, tires, metal, electronics, and the bulky waste contract for large items, such as easy chairs and couches. He said he's expecting increases in all of them, "but unfortunately we won't have any answers until after budgets are due. All I know is we're definitely going up, they've made that very clear."

The Board voted to add the following verbiage immediately beneath the Counsel's Summary, as follows: "Yes = Prohibit; No = Allow."

He cited a number of factors contributing to the impending increases. The major one, he said, is that the Chinese, as of about eighteen months ago, stopped buying recycled materials from the U.S. due to contamination problems. As a result, recyclers are not covering their processing costs, and instead are pushing them back on their municipal customers. In addition, Mr.

Friedman said, "there's apparently a shortage of truckers, which has added to the cost big time."

Mr. Friedman said he is looking at two different options for the single stream contract. One would be to stay with an independent contractor and the other to join the Materials Recycling Facility, in Springfield, which would require the Town signing a ten-year agreement. Town Administrator Enoch noted that it would have to appear on the warrant at the Annual Town Meeting, since contracts of more than three years have to be approved by the voters.

"But what's very tricky about the timing," she said, "is we're going to be putting our [waste hauling] contracts out to bid probably after the town meeting, so the Board needs to decide if they are going to be putting an article on the warrant asking the voters' permission to enter into a ten-year contract, and then not use it, if it turns out to be more advantageous for the Town to continue using an independent contractor."

Another complicating factor, as Mr. Yohalem pointed out, is that the Town's lease on the transfer station is up for renewal at the end of the June. "We can't obligate ourselves to delivering trash and recyclables if we don't have a transfer station. So we have to coordinate these two factors." He then suggested that whoever ends up negotiating with transfer station landlord Maurice Brazie should see if he would consider a lease with options exercisable by the Town to renew for a period of up to ten years. After all this discussion, the Board agreed to put off any decision on the lease question to a later date, and instead to include the ten-year agreement on the warrant.

The Board reviewed and approved the minutes from CPV Solar Special Permit Hearing held February 25.

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That was followed in turn by Town Administrator updates from Ms. Enoch, who mentioned that Town Clerk Kathy Chretien has arranged for a demonstration of a voting tabulator, for which she is asking funding in this year's budget. The demonstration, to be conducted by a representative of LHS Associates of Salem, New Hampshire, which markets the machine, will be held on Tuesday, March 26, at 1 p.m., downstairs in the Town Hall.

Ms. Enoch also reported the state recently enacted a tax of 5.75 percent on short-term rentals of the Airbnb variety, to go into effect July 1. As she explained, towns have always had the option of imposing an additional local lodging tax of up to 6 percent on hotels, inns, and the like, and that short-term rentals, which for the first time will have to start registering with the state, would fall under that. But in order to start collecting the tax, towns must first get voter approval at a town meeting. The 6 percent tax, by the way, she said, would be on top of the 5.75 percent state levy.

In response to a question from Mr. Yohalem, Ms. Enoch said a number of area towns, including Lee, Lenox, Great Barrington, and Pittsfield already have the 6 percent lodging tax in place, and that most of them are collecting the full 6 percent, although some are at 4 percent. That led to a brief discussion by the selectmen on whether to include a question on the Town Meeting warrant seeking voter approval of the tax. "It's an important item for us," said Mr. Yohalem. "We've been dancing around the issue for several months now." Ms. Shalaby felt, given the unusually large number of items already slated for this year's warrant, that consideration of a short-term rental tax would have to wait until after Town Meeting. But she did agree, at Mr. Yohalem's insistence, to include it for discussion by the Board on a future agenda.

Mr. Friedman said he is looking at two different options for the single stream contract. One would be to stay with an independent contractor and the other to join the Materials Recycling Facility, or MRF, in Springfield, which would require the Town signing a ten-year agreement.

Finally, under selectmen updates, Ms. White reported on last week's Southern Berkshire Regional School District Finance Subcommittee meeting, where the FY20 budget was unveiled. She said the operating and transportation budget is up 2.3 percent, the capital budget wasn't raised at all, and the annual repayment on the roof and boiler bond is up by 37.7 percent, but as she explained, last year there was money left over from the

bond, which the District applied to last year's repayment amount, and that this, in the absence of that extra money, accounts for the very large increase this year.

She also noted that of the five district towns, New Marlborough's assessment was the only one that went down, by \$92,097, which is a decrease of 3.2 percent. She said there were questions but no opposition to the budget, and that

it was approved by the subcommittee and then sent on to the full School Committee, where she fully expects it to also to be approved.

Peter Schuyten

March 18: Chairman Michele Shalaby called the



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meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. **Robert Twing, chair of the Umpachene Park Commission, provided some history on the damage/erosion caused by major storms along the riverfront at the park.** In 2013, the willows, now at the river's edge, were fifteen feet from the water. In addition, the area used by swimmers has become hazardous due to loose stones and holes. The state had earlier disapproved a proposal the Commission made to remedy the situation because it wants the repairs to be composed of all-natural materials.

Mr. Yohalem added up the cost estimates provided by Mr. Twing for fees, permits, and engineering, and arrived at a number of around \$13,000. Town Administrator Mari Enoch suggested that the project be viewed as a capital project. As a solution is at least several months off, immediate safety concerns were discussed, especially since rain and snow storms will further damage the park. As a temporary measure, the Board asked the Committee to post signs warning of the hazardous condition.

The recent resignation of a Finance Committee member left the Committee with an even number of members, making it difficult to resolve deadlocked issues. Consequently, the Committee asked the Board to appoint a new member, to serve until the upcoming election. At first, the Board hesitated because it did not want to give anyone running for the office an edge. However, as the empty Finance seat is uncontested, the Board **felt comfortable nominating Richard Long to fill the seat.** Mr. Long has been attending Finance Committee meetings and is up-to-date on pending issues. His appointment is effective immediately.

Ms. Enoch returned to the topic discussed in the previous week's meeting, that of taxing short-term

rentals, and the Board discussed the process for getting Town approval of a local lodging tax. The tax cannot be levied until the first day of the quarter following the Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Yohalem questioned whether there is time to draft a warrant article in time for that meeting. Told the state had provided sample warrants for framing the measure, he still wants more time to review the measure. Ms. Shalaby concurred. She wants to gather input from business owners in town, to learn more about the legislative process, to see what surrounding towns are doing, and to nail down what the Town's responsibilities would be going forward. The Board opted to take no action on the excise tax at this evening's meeting.

Ms. Shalaby, announced that a regional emergency services meeting will be held on Friday, April 16, 6:00 p.m., at the Great Barrington firehouse, for review of the results of a recent survey. She also reflected positively on the regional response to the recent tragedies in Sheffield and Southfield. Ms. Shalaby also announced that the Town had received a letter from the state in which it approved the Town's contribution and assessment agreement for broadband internet service.

The Board continues to consider the Southfield firehouse for the location of the May 6 Annual Town Meeting. While the building is large and accessible enough, there were serious concerns about parking. The Board deferred a decision on using the building until Town Building Commissioner Owen Wright and Police Chief Graham Frank can take another look at the facility. □

Anne Sommers

CAUCUS: DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

The meeting room downstairs in the Town Hall was jammed, as Town Clerk Kathy Chretien called New Marlborough's 2019 Caucus to order. With the election of Caucus officers swiftly dispatched, Sharon Fleck, as Presiding Officer, read the rules, and the Caucus was off and humming. By the time it was officially adjourned at 8:05 p.m., sixty-nine citizens had come forward to determine what names — the top two vote getters for each contested office — would be placed on the 2019 Town Election ballot. Here are the results:

Moderator, 1 year, vote for 1

Barry Shapiro 63

Selectman, 3 years, vote for 1

Richard Long 45

Douglas Newman 23

Planning Board, 2 years, vote for 1

Eric Schaefer 57

Finance Committee, 3 years, vote for 3

John Pshenishny 40

Michele Shalaby 51

Barbara Marchione 18 (write-in)

Tree Warden, 1 year, vote for 1

Nathan Redmond 62

Cemetery Commissioner, 3 years, vote for 1

Tammi Palmer 64

Assessor, 3 years, vote for 1

Marsha Pshenishny 29

Scott Walker 31

Library Trustee, 3 years, vote for 1

Carrie Ann Liba 63

Board of Health, 3 years, vote for 1

John Bellinger 60 □

THE CPV SOLAR FIELD SPECIAL PERMIT PUBLIC HEARING

Neighborhood Residents Express Their Unease

March 4: It was standing room only in the basement-level offices of the Town Hall for the Board of Selectmen's special permit hearing regarding the solar field application by Competitive Power Ventures, Inc. (CPV). After receiving the ground rules for the meeting from Chairman Michele Shalaby, the crowd settled in to hear an overview of the proposal from spokesperson Briony Angus, who is the project manager from the engineering firm of Tighe and Bond. Also part of the presentation was Brian Huntley, Tighe and Bond's lead engineer on the project, and Mike Resca, representing the entity he identified as "CPV Mill River." [According to its website, CPV is "a leading North American electric power generation development and asset management company headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, with offices in Braintree, Massachusetts, and San Francisco, California." CPV, in turn, is a subsidiary of Global Infrastructure Partners, which bills itself as "a leading global, independent infrastructure investor," headquartered in New York City.]

As detailed by Ms. Angus, the property in question is a parcel of 68.6 acres on Hartsville Mill River Road, owned by Greg and Dawn Massini of Sheffield. CPV hopes to lease the land, 21.3 acres of which will be occupied by solar photovoltaic panels, from the Massini family for a period of thirty-five years. The plan is to locate the solar panels on two separate areas of the property – the larger being an abandoned gravel pit, alternately named the Upper Site or the Northern Site, and the other (Lower, or Southern Site) occupying what is presently a wooded spot that is closer to the road and to residences.

Mr. Huntley explained that his company had made a number of revisions to the application, based on suggestions and requests from the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and several of the abutters. He assured the gathering that the Town's protective bylaws pertaining to commercial solar fields are being observed, and that "the project will not result in any adverse effects," and, in fact, will benefit the Town in that the property taxes will rise significantly. He further stated that the project will not be detracting from scenic views, and will have "minimal visual impact."



Broc Kerr, at right, the closest abutter to the proposed solar field in Mill River, expresses his concerns to Brian Huntley of Tighe and Bond. Project manager Briony Angus is at left.

photo by Larry Burke

CPV have someone close by to deal with any problems that might arise on the property? A: Yes, "within the general area," maybe up to an hour's drive distant; Q: What is the estimated cost of the project, when would construction begin, when would it be completed by, and what would be the work hours during construction? A: Around \$10 million, beginning in the fall of 2019, completed within four months, with work during daylight hours and perhaps some Saturdays.

In the days following this hearing (which was continued to March 25, as the reader will see below), the Board of Selectmen developed a longer list of questions for CPV, twenty-one in all, requesting further information on such things as its plans to safeguard the drinking water supply for abutters, storm water management, erosion control, noise impacts, screening, decommissioning, and meetings with all concerned parties, including abutters, school officials, emergency services, and highway officials. The final request to the applicant was to determine if CPV would be "willing to amend the application and eliminate the Southern Site."

This last request on the Board of Selectmen's list of inquiries, on the possibility of eliminating the lower, or southern site, echoed much of the concern expressed by abutters through the remainder of the public hearing. The first abutter to speak was Deanna Mummert, who drew from language in the New Marlborough Protective Bylaw, Section 3.4.4 (Uses by Special Permit Only) to pose the question, is the project "in harmony with the general purpose and intent of this by-law and not offensive or detrimental to the neighborhood?" In her view, the plan represents a potential detriment to all those who depend on the property, particularly the Southern Site, as their water source. She went on to suggest that,

The meeting was then opened to questions from the individual selectmen, with Nat Yohalem leading the way. Most of the points raised by Mr. Yohalem were addressed by Mr. Resca, as follows – Q: Would CPV be open to entering into a PILOT (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes) program for the full thirty-five years? A: Yes; Q: What is the amount of the decommissioning bond, and will it be adequate? A: \$163,000, and yes, that should be sufficient; Q: Will



Tighe and Bond engineer Brian Huntley (back turned to camera) holds the full attention of the room at the February 25 public hearing for the CPV solar field application. photo by Larry Burke

going forward, there be established a Town negotiating committee to review projects of this magnitude, so “we can be more a part of the project, and CPV [or future applicants] can be more a part of the town.” Such a committee would not only examine the plans beforehand for risk analysis, but would provide for ongoing safeguards such as hydrogeological studies on a yearly basis.

The next abutter to speak was Broc Kerr, whose home is closest to the proposed solar fields, and, like Ms. Mummert, is most concerned for his family’s welfare over the development of the Southern Site. He wondered if CPV had identified all water sources on the property

and argued in favor of aquifer mapping. Briony Angus replied that she was not aware of a requirement to map subsurface water sources, and Mr. Huntley added that he expected that water quality would actually be improved through CPV’s presence.

Mr. Kerr continued to question the applicant’s awareness of existing cisterns on the property, and went on to list other concerns – the need to designate the interconnect point and placement of new poles precisely, to deliver an analysis of the levels of noise to be produced during construction and after, to provide a guarantee on workday hours during construction, and to bolster the screening to include a berm and two rows of trees.

Other abutters came forward to express their concerns – Don Bertolli, Prui Simonelli, and Josh Knox representing the Trustees of Reservations. All brought up issues about water, both for drinking and for storm management, and Mr. Knox added his concern about the apparent lack of a maintenance plan that would provide protection from invasive plant species, as well as protection of wildlife. Then other neighbors and townspeople had their turn. Tom Sachs, who lives on Shea Lane in Mill River, said that, while he is not a direct abutter, his home looks directly down on the Southern Site, so the solar array there would be clearly in his and his wife’s view. Lucinda Shmulsky asked if there might be any way to calculate the impact of the CPV’s project on the resale value of homes in the neighborhood.

As the meeting neared the two-hour mark, and with so many questions having been raised, the Board of Selectmen determined that the appropriate next step was to continue the meeting, and to reconvene on March 25, allowing CPV the opportunity to make an informed response. But, in the days just prior to the resumption of the public hearing, CPV requested more time to rework the application, so, at the March 25 Board of Selectmen’s meeting, the continuance was further postponed to April 25. □

Larry Burke



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PLANNING BOARD

February 20: The New Marlborough Planning Board gathered on this Wednesday morning meeting with the intent of finalizing its public statement on a cannabis bylaw strategy. (For a look at that document, see p. 17 of the March NM5VN.) This reporter was not in attendance, but according to the minutes of the meeting, “At approximately 10:30 a.m., Mr. [James] Mullen left the meeting following an exchange with members of the audience.” *Berkshire Record* reporter Hannah Shirley was present and wrote in the February 22-28 issue of her paper that the cause of Mr. Mullen’s departure and subsequent resignation was a sharp disagreement and verbal sparring with three members of the audience. One of those three, former selectman and Cannabis Ad Hoc Committee member Barbara Marchione, appealed to Chairman Peter Tiso, saying, as quoted in the *Record*, “I hate the anger coming out of this committee. It’s not appropriate.” Mr. Tiso, in attempting to mollify the situation, apparently angered Mr. Mullen further by seeming to give Ms. Marchione’s point some credence, whereupon Mr. Mullen left the room.

After the dust had settled, the remaining members of the committee, Lon Combs, Mark Carson, and Peter Tiso (Eric Schaefer was not present at this meeting), completed the task of editing the public statement, and the meeting concluded at 11:30 a.m.

February 27: At this regular meeting of the Planning Board, all remaining members were present, with Eric Schaefer attending via telephone. According to the minutes of the meeting (an NM5VN reporter was not present), shortly after the meeting’s 7:07 p.m. start, the Board reviewed the mail, which included James Mullen letter of resignation. In it, he catalogued his accomplishments on the Board over an eighteen-year period, including ten years as chairman, and he identified as the reasons for his resignation “ad-hominem attacks” on him by members of the public, as well as a failure of the chairman to support him against those attacks. Chairman Peter Tiso, according to Hannah Shirley’s account in the March 8 – 14 *Berkshire Record*, then spoke in praise of Mr. Mullen: “The loss of James’s expertise is huge. I am deeply indebted to him for helping me overcome the steep learning curve in my first years on the board, and will miss his guidance moving forward.”

Turning to the more and more pressing need to develop a set of cannabis bylaws, Mr. Tiso announced the good news that funding in the form of professional consultancy has been awarded via a District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grant from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). The Board members then discussed aspects of the opt-out vote scheduled by the Board of Selectmen for April 8, with

the goal of providing as complete as possible information to the voters on the eight opt-out choices. Mark Carson suggested that language be added to each of the eight questions to the effect that, even for the license types that are not prohibited, a special permit will be required. Audience member Lucinda Shmulsky pointed out that the wording of the opt-out vote, as to what a “yes” or a “no” actually mean, could be confusing. The Board agreed to forward this concern on to the Board of Selectmen.

A worksheet designed to aid the Planning Board in designing new bylaws was provided by Daniel Doern, who had headed up the Cannabis Ad Hoc Committee, and Mr. Tiso recommended that the members use it in preparation for the next meeting. The Board then turned to non-cannabis related business, including resolving questions on non-conforming lots with the building inspector, a statement from Mr. Combs on bridge design guidelines, and a motion to notify the Board of Selectmen on the need for an interim appointment to the vacant seat on the Planning Board. The meeting ended at 9:30 p.m.

March 13: At this meeting all members were present, but, with Chairman Peter Tiso attending remotely via phone, Mark Carson took on the duty of running through the agenda. Also at the table was Zack Feury, who will be supplying his planning expertise through the DLTA grant from the BRPC. Mr. Feury brought with him a twenty-one page document that he had assembled in the previous week, containing background information on the cannabis-related steps taken so far in New Marlborough, options for regulation of adult-use marijuana, and examples of bylaws and ordinances enacted by other Massachusetts municipalities. The three options are outright prohibition; use of existing bylaws, state regulations, and special permitting; or regulation through newly established bylaws.

In Mr. Feury’s view, the best of the three would be the last, involving the crafting of specific new bylaws that, hand in hand with the passage of village center zoning, would locate marijuana businesses “where they are best suited.” He added that, by not allowing any commercial cannabis licenses to be “By-Right” – all subject to close review – the townspeople would receive maximum protection. Lon Combs said that he thought this approach would be similar in practice to the current solar bylaw, which serves as “a set of tools” for the Board of Selectmen to use in its status as the Special Permit Granting Authority.

Moving on, Peter Tiso spoke up in favor working with the Historical Society to strengthen the historical district designation of the two villages in New Marlborough which currently have informal status – Mill River and New Marlborough Village. Zack Feury pointed out that

such a step, which brings great restrictions, might not be necessary if the Town adopted a bylaw similar to that of Easthampton, where strict screening requirements are designed to maintain the character of a given neighborhood or village. And he added, in relation to the siting of particular uses, the “license type may be the wrong entry point. Regulation of the given activity may be more effective.”

The Board members, with Mr. Feury’s input, spent the remainder of the meeting honing in on specific next steps: deciding on how many of each type of license

should be allowed, developing a “purpose section” of the proposed bylaw as another tool for the Board of Selectmen, and, for Mr. Feury’s homework for the next meeting, to research more existing bylaws on such things as light and odor pollution, visual impact of security fencing, and, especially, water protection measures such as independent, third-party verification and analysis of water usage. With a last request by Mr. Tiso that the members prepare to tune up the existing village center zoning language for the March 27 meeting, adjournment was called at 8:50 p.m. □

Larry Burke

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

March 16: All Commission members – Freddy Friedman, David Hosford, Rona Easton, Dave Herrick, and John Schreiber – were present to address the month’s business. Mike Parsons of Kelly, Granger, Parsons and Associates started the meeting by presenting a Request for Determination (RDA) for Al Lenardson of 33 Mill River Great Barrington Road. At issue was a failed septic system. Mr. Parsons described the work to repair and replace the system. The Commission gave the permit a negative determination meaning no further permitting was required and the work could proceed as proposed.

Mr. Parsons then asked for a preliminary review of an emergency certification to replace another failed septic system at 327 Konkapot Road, the residence of Marie-Ann Hamm-Reagan. The Commission agreed to allow the work to proceed pending a site visit by commission member Freddy Friedman in the following few days. The formal permitting for an RDA and the public hearing would occur at the next meeting of the commission.

Next, Mathew Puntin of SK Design Group addressed the commission on behalf of his client, the Kutsher Sports Academy on 170 Deerwood Park Drive. Mr. Puntin explained that the RDA was for the installation of new leach fields for the facility. The Commission agreed to a negative determination allowing the work to proceed without further permitting.

Shannon Boomsma of White Engineering then submitted to amend the Order of Conditions issued to Michael Mawn of 108 New Marlborough Sandisfield Road on a Notice of Intent (NOI) approved in July, 2015. Ms. Boomsma explained that the amendment involved changing the location of the driveway and resolving the required mitigation to the site. The Commission concluded that the amendment did not increase the total disturbance to the site over the original NOI. The amendment was accepted with one additional condition: that the stockpile of material currently in a jurisdictional area be removed and that area be restored

to its original condition.

The Commission then approved an extension and amendment to the bundled NOI issued to the New Marlborough Highway Department in July of 2016. The amendment covered the addition of fifteen beaver flow devices needing maintenance throughout town. A three-year extension to the NOI was also granted.

Next, two residents, Deanna Mummert and William O’Brien, asked the commission questions about the Special Permit for the CPV Mill River Solar Project. The residents expressed concerns about the impact of the project on their neighborhood. The Commission explained that unless and until the project is formally permitted, they have no grounds to regulate the project. They further explained that their review only applies to jurisdictional areas defined by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

Lastly Mr. Friedman asked the commission to vote on whether to request that the commission be given discretion to ask for “peer review” at the cost of the applicant when vetting large and complicated projects. The members unanimously voted to request this option for the commission. □

Martha Bryan



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CANNABIS: DECISION TIME

On April 8, New Marlborough voters will get a voice on whether or not the town should host adult-use marijuana businesses. A Special Election (noon to 8:00 p.m., downstairs in the Town Hall) will ask for a yes or no on each of eight kinds of cannabis enterprises. The prohibition of any of these will require a simple majority vote. To take effect, however, the verdict of the Special Election will have to be formulated in a general bylaw and presented in a Warrant at the Annual Town Meeting, May 6. And, finally, any type of cannabis business that survives these votes would be subject to marijuana-specific zoning bylaws, to be presented to voters at yet another special election, date to be determined.

Back to April 8, here are the eight kinds of marijuana businesses voters will be asked to consider. In each case, a “yes” vote will indicate that the voter wants to prohibit the business within the Town of New Marlborough; a “no” that he or she would allow this business.

1. Marijuana cultivator, any grower without regard to size but restricted to a single location
2. Craft marijuana cooperative, a grower organized as

- a limited partnership, all of whose members must be residents of Massachusetts
3. Marijuana product manufacturer, an operation that converts the raw product into a product ready for consumption
4. Marijuana retailer, an establishment licensed to sell (no consumption on-site and no deliveries) to the consumer
5. Marijuana research facility, an enterprise investigating the possible uses of cannabis
6. Marijuana independent testing facility, a laboratory testing for contaminants of commercial cannabis
7. Marijuana transporter, a company licensed to deliver marijuana products
8. Marijuana micro-business, a grower and/or manufacturer whose size is limited to 1,000 square feet of growing space and whose raw material purchases from other growers is limited to 2,000 pounds per year.

A meeting to explain all this will be held at 7:00 p.m., April 3, in the Town Hall.

FASS IS NEW MARLBOROUGH'S AMBASSADOR

Project 351 was begun in 2011 by former Governor Deval Patrick as a one-day celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., statewide unity, and youth leadership. By the end of that day, the project had taken shape with an invitation to serve and lead for eighth-graders in each of Massachusetts's 351 cities and towns. These Ambassadors, as they are called, dedicate a year to building unity, cultivating kindness, and supporting communities through service activities. They work with mentors in their community, including educators, nonprofit organizations, and service programs with the long-term goal of building strong and inclusive communities that reflect this generation's optimism, idealism, and patriotism. New Marlborough's Ambassador for 2019 is Michael Fass, who shares his experience thus far:



Michael Fass

“My name is Michael Fass, and I'm the Ambassador representing the township of New Marlborough for Project 351 for all of 2019. Our launch day for the year was spent team-building and helping communities in the Boston area through various service projects. My service project was making meals in a homeless shelter. We met Governor Baker and his wife, who gave a speech to all of

us to celebrate launch day and kick off the year of service.

“As the first service project this spring, we're going to be collecting children's clothing for the charity Cradles to Crayons. Cradles to Crayons helps to provide low-income children with the things they need to feel safe and warm, and to thrive. We ask for new or gently-used children's clothing or footwear, which I will deliver to Cradles to Crayons. They will then distribute those donations to the needy.

“Our collection started on March 25 and ends on April 4. Items can be dropped off at the New Marlborough Public Library in Mill River. I ask anyone reading this to help spread awareness of my and other service projects, in order to help expose the real and prevalent issue of families living in poverty.

“I'm happy that I was chosen to be a part of this and am proud to represent New Marlborough. Participating in this shows me how small the world can be. I have started to think about all of the 351 other kids that have also been doing this for the past few years, and it blows my mind to think about what they have achieved.” □

THE SOUTHFIELD FIRE

A Keystone of the Village Is Suddenly Gone

At around 3:30 a.m. on March 15, the car horn of a passing motorist awakened residents in Southfield village. One of them, seeing a house on fire across Norfolk Road in the middle of the village, called 911. At 3:42 a.m. word of the fire reached the pagers of members of New Marlborough Fire & Rescue. But by the time the first fire truck arrived ten minutes later, the house, at 155 Norfolk Road just north of the Southfield Store, owned by Emily Newman and Jeremy Stanton, was engulfed in flame. "The structure was fully involved," says Fire Chief Chuck Loring. "There was no saving it."

Other houses in the village, however, were suddenly imperiled. David Edelman, who lives two houses east of the Stanton/Newman house on East Hill Road, says that he woke up "because my window was all orange." Just outside his front door, Mr. Edelman says he felt extreme heat and could see water that had splashed onto to Norfolk Road turning to steam. With a light breeze blowing from the south, he feared that houses next door to the house would be ignited.

In fact, when Bobby Litchfield, alerted by the car horn, emerged from his house three doors from the Stanton/Newman house, he saw flames in the steeple of the one-time Baptist Church, next-door to the Newman/Stanton house. When Chief Loring arrived, the south wall of the church and its attic were afire. Even before leaving his house, he had called for mutual assistance from fire departments in Monterey, Sheffield, Egremont, Sandisfield, Great Barrington, Norfolk, Canaan, and Falls Village, some of which had ladder trucks capable of reaching the three-story steeple. They also supplied eight water tankers, which were refilled at sites on Canaan Southfield Road and behind the library in Mill River.

Because the fire had snapped an electrical wire to the Stanton/Newman house, and to protect firefighters who would run the risk of coming in contact with electric lines, Chief Loring asked National Grid to cut power to the village. A firefighter strapped to the ladder of one of the trucks and equipped with a chainsaw cut a hole in the roof of the church to release the heat from the attic fire. Firefighters down on the ground were then able to enter the building to fight the fire from the inside. "We couldn't have saved the church without the mutual aid," says Mr. Loring.

Remarkably, there were no injuries to any of the seventy-five or so firefighters, and fortunately, none of the Newman/Stanton family was in the house at the time of the fire. Because their kitchen had been damaged by what is thought to have been an electrical



photo by Tim Neuman



photo by Dave Edelman



photo by Dave Edelman

Top, the house owned by Emily Newman and Jeremy Stanton as it appeared in its prime; middle and bottom, the sight that greeted stunned neighbors in the early morning hours of March 15.

fire on February 23, they were temporarily quartered directly across Norfolk Road while the kitchen was under repair. While there were no personal injuries, the loss of a village landmark and, for the Newman/Stantons, irreplaceable artifacts of family history (see note from Emily Newman Stanton, below) is incalculable. A GoFundMe page has been



established to support the Stanton family, and can be accessed by going to [gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com). Click on “search” and type in Emily Newman & Jeremy Stanton Fire Recovery Fund. □

Joe Poindexter

By mid-morning on the 15th, the complete loss of the home and severe damage to the former Baptist Church next door was plain to see. photo by Larry Burke

Eulogy for My Beloved Home

Shortly after moving to the Berkshires for work, I fell madly in love with the area and wanted to own my own piece of this paradise. My mother — I had been her caretaker at the end of her life — had recently died. She had an amazing eye for decorating, was an ardent collector of antiques and art, and she loved fixing up old houses. I was not looking for a project, but when the house at 155 Norfolk Road came on the market, my father (who was at that point owner of the Southfield Store) insisted over and over again that I look at it, and I relented to quiet him up. I knew the house was too big and too much a mess for me to be interested.

The house was, to be honest, a bit of a wreck. She (we always referred to her as such) had not had the attention needed in recent years, though I know she had been a happy home with kids and fun for many years before. I cannot honestly imagine the lives she witnessed; it makes me cry now. I will never forget the feeling I had when I walked into the house; I think my mother possessed me — I was not able to stop thinking about “her” and what could be done, how lovely she would be, and that she needed me.

At the closing in July 2003, the poor old girl was a bit run down, with terrible alligator skin and missing siding; hilarious Mary White said “you young people have so much energy.” I didn’t know what she meant; now I do. I won’t go into the process of dressing my lady up, but the house had such incredible integrity in every way; she never gave us any ugly surprises in the restoration. It was exhausting to fix her up, but we all “felt” she was happy, and that made us happy, too.

The life I brought to that dear home has been very very full. We have been through a lot together — much much joy and terrible heartbreak. I imagine every family for the last 200 plus years has done the same. I feel that the loss of this jewel, this grandma house, is a deep, deep

injury for this town, for the feeling of peaceful safety that the old villages emit. Of all the personal items lost in the fire, only a few wrack me with grief. For one, irreplaceable photographs. After mom died, I was the holder of family lore; we lost photo albums, there are now no pictures of me or my brothers from our childhood. Large framed portraits of my family went up the stairs — my great-greats, and down the family line. The worst is that my father, who is an amazing photographer, took gorgeous portraits of my mother when she was young; all are lost of course. I had a framed self-portrait of Maia from when she was ten. Other things like that.

Living in Southfield for fifteen years has been a profound pleasure. I love driving up the hill from the bridge to our little hamlet and looking back down from East Hill Road, which at a certain point perfectly framed our beautiful home. Getting the kids in the car for school, neighbors waving, and in the summer the part-time friends wandering across the road with their Southfield Store treats and coffee. It’s been unexpectedly social and endlessly supportive of everything — the good times and the bad; I love this town deep deep. I cannot believe we will be leaving soon.

Our plans are shaky of course, but it seems we will try to put a trailer on our property on County Road — you know the place with the little black miniature horse that brings so much joy? We will build a house there. I hope you will visit and keep us close. For my beloved home at 155 Norfolk Road, I don’t know; we need to clean up the lot, and make it as beautiful as possible for you all to see, and then maybe build there, too — but that would be in the future. I don’t want to sell the lot. I want to make sure whatever is there will be right. I want to do right by my old friend who is lost to us, and to our lovely village. □

Emily Newman Stanton

LETTERS

To the First Responders and Firefighters of all the towns that came to our aid, twice,
It struck me yesterday how devastating it must be to lose an old house, that only two weeks earlier you had managed to save. You must have been so proud and glad on February 23, the night of our kitchen fire; we were incredibly grateful.

To have to come back to the exact same location, and after the recent other terrible loss nearby, seems unfair, exhausting, and depressing. You have such a hard job, emotionally.

Please know how grateful we ALL are to your work, for your sacrifice and effort.

Emily, Jeremy, Nina, and Lucca Stanton



We were deeply saddened by the loss of the Newman Stanton family home, and are thankful that they are safe.

Our most grateful appreciation goes to the New Marlborough Volunteer Fire Department, to the firemen of surrounding towns' fire companies, and their equipment. The combined and coordinated efforts of the untiring firemen to control and contain the blaze saved the church, and the potential risk of fire to other homes.

In addition, our thanks go to:

Neil Lidstone, Reiner White, and his sons Andrew and Kevin for rapidly securing the church
Debra Story for her numerous photographs to document the damage
Greg, John, and Cris for the preliminary clean-up
Fran and Jim Stevens for providing storage space

We are forever grateful,
Richard, Ellen, and Aline Bové

THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING LOCATION – SOUTHFIELD!

The Annual Town Meeting this year, for the first time in memory, will not take place in the Great Room of Town Hall in Mill River, but at the firehouse in Southfield. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the upper floor of Town Hall is not in compliance, and cannot be used for official public meetings.

The Board of Selectmen had previously decided to hold the May 6 meeting at Mount Everett High School in Sheffield. But at the February 25 meeting of the Board, Barbara Marchione asked that the firehouse be considered instead. Over the ensuing weeks, the idea gradually gained traction, and, after consultation with Fire Chief Chuck Loring, Police Chief Graham

Frank, and Building Inspector Owen Wright among others, the decision was made at the March 25 Board of Selectmen's meeting to go with the idea of keeping the Annual Town Meeting right here in New Marlborough.

Arrangements are being made for handicapped parking near the firehouse, with provisions in the works for general parking along one side of the street, as well as in the parking lots of the Southfield Store, the Whip Shop, and at the Southfield church.

Whether this year's change of venue is a one-off event depends on the progress that is made during the coming year on making Town Hall ADA-compliant. In any event, a great turnout is hoped for at 7:00 p.m. on May 6 at the firehouse in Southfield. □

Upcoming: Events Calendar for April and May

April 3: Commercial Cannabis Information Meeting, 7:00 p.m., upstairs in the Town Hall; the pros and cons of marijuana businesses in New Marlborough

April 6: Potluck Supper, 6:00 p.m. in the New Marlborough Meeting House Gallery with entertainment by singer-songwriter Christa Joy (see page 26 for details)

April 7: Rabies Clinic and Bake Sale, 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Firehouse in Southfield, \$10 for each vaccination of a dog, cat, or ferret, with Town Clerk Kathy Chretien on hand to issue dog licenses

April 8: Special Election on cannabis businesses, noon to 7:00 p.m., downstairs in the Town Hall; register your vote on what kinds of marijuana commerce, if any, should be allowed in New Marlborough; ballot questions are posted on the Town website, and absentee ballots are available from Kathy Chretien at Town Hall

April 13: John Sisson speaks of his World War II experiences aboard a B-17 Flying Fortress. 1:30 p.m., at the Library in Mill River, co-hosted by the New Marlborough Library and the New Marlborough Historical Society

April 15: Final day for voter registration, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., also 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Town Hall

April 20: Spring Egg Hunt, 10:30 a.m. at the New Marlborough Central School; rain or shine, and there will be a big bunny!

April 27: The New Marlborough Fire Company Annual Spring Dance, music, dinner and a cash bar, 6:00 to 11:00 p.m. at Gedney Farm. Tickets, \$35, will be available soon from any New Marlborough firefighter. For more information, contact David Smith at 413-229-0291 or 413-429-6680

May 6: Annual Town Meeting, 7:00 p.m. at the firehouse in Southfield

May 8: Meet the Candidates, sponsored by the *New Marlborough 5 Village News*, Candidates Night provides an opportunity to ask questions of those running for Town offices; 7:00 p.m., Southfield Church Hall; all welcome

May 13: Town Election, noon to 7:00 p.m. downstairs in the Town Hall

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YOUR TURN

NMV5VN has established a place for our readers' stories. We encourage you to share your experiences, incidents, or thoughts through this space. Reviewing the rules: Up to 1,000 words, but short and succinct is best; no politics; points of view are welcome but civility is mandatory; editors reserve the right to accept, reject, and edit. Send your story to Joe Poindexter at joepoindexter@earthlink.net.

A Family Concern

By Janice Stiles

Turner & Cook Whip Manufacturing, or the Buggy Whip Shop, or simply “the shop,” as it was always referred to in my family – by whatever name you may know it, I have a lifelong connection with it, and am deeply rooted in its history. It was founded by my forefathers, and I am a direct descendant of Howard A. Cook, partner and original president of the factory.

From my earliest memories, starting back in the early 1960's, I recall the hot, dusty, rawhide smell when walking through the long corridors of loud machinery, grinding and sanding out buffalo hide riding crops, bullwhips, buggy whips, and flat machine belt pins. My dad, Bud Stiles, was a foreman, and later my mom, Martha, worked in the “pin department.” After school, I would go to the shop and visit with Mom and the other ladies who sat, quietly sorting, counting, and bundling the rawhide pins.

In the early part of the 20th century, as the automobile was taking over from the horse and carriage, the whip shop had to reinvent itself and come up with new products. Turner & Cook went into a partnership with the Clipper Belt Company in Michigan, to manufacture flat machine belt pins made of rawhide. Large machinery in that era was often belt-driven, and the belts were connected by small rawhide pins.

Many of the men who worked for Turner & Cook came up with inventions to better assist them working with rawhide, and one such device was the pin counter, which fascinated me as a youngster. A worker at the shop, most likely Wallace Hall (a local Southfield resident), invented the counter, which was used to count the small pins accurately to produce a gross bundle, or 144 pins per bundle. A large bucket of pins was delivered to the counting room, where each one would be hand-inspected to make sure the ends were not frayed and that the twisting was tight. The pin counter was on a large table that had a hole through which a rope was run from the counter to a pedal on the floor. The pins would be spread out across the iron slots, which numbered 144. The pedal would be pressed, and the iron pin holder would then retract, allowing the pins to be easily swept off the counter and then bundled. When my mom was working on it, she would sometimes let me try it.

In 1973, at age sixteen, I went to work at the shop, just as the factory was losing orders and slowing down. Besides the pins, the shop had been producing rawhide mallets, desired and preferred for auto body work to this day, as well as rawhide knitting needles, rawhide lacing for tennis rackets, and rawhide dog “chews.” The production of mallets was the last manufacturing being done toward the end of the buggy whip shop's long history. Pratt & Whitney, aircraft builders in Connecticut,

left: The Turner & Cook pin counter, an object of fascination for Janice Stiles Boulds back in her childhood. It is now on display as part of the New Marlborough Historical Society's exhibit in the Great Room at Town Hall.





At far left, an archival photograph of longtime Turner and Cook employee Toni Bianchi using a rawhide twisting frame, another time-saving invention by workers at the Whip Shop. At near left, the same twisting frame, now part of the Historical Society's collection.

ordered vast numbers of rawhide mallets to be used in hammering out fins and blades on the jet engines they built. By the time of final closing, in the early 1980s, Turner & Cook had become the last operating whip factory in the country.

Environmental concerns fed into the shutting down of this type of manufacturing, because buffalo hides were rinsed in lye to de-hair them, and, most often, these tanneries were on rivers which became polluted as a result. Synthetic products also led to

the demise of pure rawhide riding crops and whips. Dedicated equestrians will claim a rawhide crop is much more flexible than the synthetic ones available today, as well as stockyard workers, who use bullwhips to control herds of cattle. The plastic products are stiffer and don't have the recoil needed when using large bull whips or long buggy whips.

The Whip Shop, as it is known today, has been reinvented yet again, and now houses artists and craftsmen, as well as office space. Over the years, I continued to have a connection to the shop, working for Neuma Agins in the 1980's, when it was a local artisan and craft center, as well as housing Neuma's designs of famous sweaters. When it was transformed into an antique center by Hank Reeve, I joined him, clearing and cleaning out the shop and filling it with antique dealers. In more recent times, I have been a part of the Farm Country Soup team, when the kitchen was in the old boiler room of the factory, and I would do food prep. Now Farm Country Soup only has a kiosk at the shop, where soup and other food items can be purchased.

It was during the clearing of attics and rooms at the shop when I worked for Neuma and Hank that I came upon the old pin counter. I have cherished it for many years since, relocated to my porch, and bringing me wonderful memories of simpler times. Alvin Stalker, who worked at the shop for many years, saved several of the other inventions that were created by employees and valued at the shop for making the tasks easier. Pictured here, along with the pin counter, are a No. 8 clipper lacer, and a rawhide twisting frame. It is with pride and pleasure that Alvin and I have donated these examples of homegrown Yankee ingenuity to the New Marlborough Historical Society, and they can be viewed at the Town Hall. □

Upper right, The No. 8 Belt Lacer, a motor-driven lacer, also built by a Turner and Cook employee, now part of the Historical Society's collection, courtesy of Alvin Stalker. Right: This photograph shows the rawhide pins in the lower right corner, along with clips they joined, and a hand-operated joiner, or lacer.



NEIGHBORS



The Mount Everett seventh- and eighth-grade girls basketball team won the Berkshire County Southern Division Tournament on Sunday, March 3, played in North Adams. There were four teams in the bracket-play tournament. Mount Everett won the first game, but lost the second and had to play in the losers bracket.

They had to win the next two games to play Lenox in the finals. Honey Fields, of Mill River, was part of the team. □

compiled by Barbara Lowman:
deeuell@yahoo.com



photo courtesy Mt. Everett basketball team

In this coach's photo, back row, from left: Coach Eric Steuernagle, Olivia Pedretti, Emma Goewey, Coach Amanda Colpack, Margaret Sarnacki, Allison Steuernagle, Assistant Coach Joe Soudant. Front row: Emily Steuernagle, Julia Devoti, and New Marlborough's Honey Fields.

OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

On March 15, Don Beachamp wrote from Clayton, "Bluebirds are coming every morning, and maybe they will stay. Also I have seen red-winged blackbirds, robins, a Carolina wren, and a song sparrow. There have been many titmice all winter, and still as spring approaches, but nuthatches less and less.

Back on February 23, Larry Burke, who lives on South Sandisfield Road, spotted a red fox, a female almost certainly, from his office window, nestled in the snow far up the field to the north of his house. Over the next month, Larry has observed the same vixen choosing to sun herself in the exact same spot, almost every day. One day he was able to sneak up within about thirty yards of the fox to take the accompanying photograph.

Sometimes the vixen's male companion shows up, and he sits or lies down in various places, usually within twenty yards of her, but seldom closer. Larry suspects that the vixen's den is very nearby, and he expects that a litter of fox kits will be making an appearance soon. He hopes the fox family will enjoy dining on the voles in his field, and not his chickens! □

Got some wildlife stories?
Send them to lburke2@me.com



photo by Don Beachamp

Bluebird



photo by Larry Burke

A female red fox curled up for a late-winter sun bath

Angus Kerr, who has been busy with his studies and extracurricular activities at Mount Everett High School, has found a bit of free time to do some research on our foxy neighbors, as you will see below.

THE FOX

As we leave the long winter months behind and move into the muddy roads, blooming flowers, and rainy days of spring, we see a re-emergence of our local wildlife. Recently, there have been numerous sightings of red and gray foxes, two separate species, both dashing mammals perhaps best known, unfortunately, for their thefts of our smaller pets.

The red fox is the most common carnivore across the entirety of the Northern Hemisphere, and is regularly found in areas inhabited by people. Despite a general fear of humans, foxes can be a danger to small pets, particularly cats, as well as chickens, ducks, or rabbits, and, as we enter spring, we should prepare for a greater burst in fox sightings, and perhaps fox encounters.

During the 1930s and 1940s, and persisting to a lesser degree right to the present, fox hunting with dogs was considered a popular sport across New England, with thousands of animals taken each year in Massachusetts alone. During the latter decades of the 20th century, rabies, canine distemper, and growing competition from coyotes caused a decline in fox populations. Despite a lack of studies on fox populations, Vermont officials speculated that an estimated 80 percent of the fox population was killed off in New England between 1992 and 1996 due to a wave of rabies from Canada. Despite recorded higher populations of foxes over the last twenty years, rabies continues to be a persistent problem among fox populations, and caution should be taken whenever a fox is encountered.

From mid-January to late February, both gray and red foxes mate, and in late winter prepare to build their dens. These are often converted from abandoned skunk or woodchuck burrows, although it is common for foxes to build dens beneath human-made structures, especially old barns and under porches. The male, called a dog fox or a reynard, will often stay close by, and even bring his catches to the den, dropping them at the entrance for the vixen. After a gestation period of fifty-three days, the vixen gives birth to a litter of between two and twelve kits, who will remain by her side until autumn. Kits are typically more than three months old before they can hunt, making the mother the primary hunter for a den, and her appetite for quick meals large enough to feed an entire young family is what causes most fox attacks on our chickens during this season.

Every cat owner and chicken farmer may now be wondering how best to keep foxes from snatching up our smaller animals. The best way, as suggested by the Massachusetts Fish and Game website, is simply to create loud noises and disturbances to chase the sneaky foxes off your property. Mass Audubon, however, suggests allowing foxes to roam free until at least mid-spring, to ensure that newborn kits are old enough to follow their mother wherever she is chased off to, and to lock your pets up in the meantime.

If you are lucky enough to see a fox this spring, marvel at its gracefulness, and enjoy sharing our New Marlborough woodlands with these wildlife neighbors. □

Angus Kerr



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THE LOG

Police Department (selected entries)

- Feb. 1 11:00 p.m. Checking tire tracks in the snow leading to New Marlborough Village Cemetery, an officer discovers sled tracks on the cemetery's twin hills.
- Feb. 2 9:36 a.m. Officer assists a driver in moving his disabled vehicle to the side of Route 57 as he awaits a tow truck.
- Feb. 6 12:54 p.m. A Clayton Mill River Road resident reports a yellow Labrador retriever wandering in the road and narrowly avoiding being struck by passing motorists.
- 1:45 p.m. The lab turns up in the yard of another Clayton Mill River Road resident, about a mile north of the earlier caller.
- 5:22 p.m. A motorist reports hitting a deer on Canaan Southfield Road near Keyes Hill Road.
- 6:21 p.m. A Clayton resident alerts the Department to a blue pickup truck he has observed recklessly passing vehicles on Hartsville New Marlborough Road.
- Feb. 7 1:35 p.m. Verizon is notified after a resident alerts the Department to a tree on wires on New Marlborough Hill Road.
- Feb. 8 10:02 a.m. A caller alerts the Department to the dumping of beer cans and an old toilet on the side of Old County Road.
- 11:08 a.m. An officer assists in the corralling of cows loose on Mill River Great Barrington Road near its junction with County Road.
- Feb. 9 7:21 a.m. Following a call from a nearby resident, an officer alerts the Highway Department to a dangerous patch of ice on Adsit Crosby Road.
- 9:06 a.m. Officer assists a driver with a flat tire on Adsit Crosby Road.
- 4:59 p.m. Upon investigation of an unattended vehicle at the intersection of Hartsville Mill River and New Marlborough Hill Roads, officer learns that its owner was out jogging.
- 6:53 p.m. After locating a Clayton resident who has an outstanding arrest warrant, officers apprehend and transport the party to the Berkshire County House of Correction.
- Feb. 10 1:54 p.m. Officer locates the owner of a stray dog on Canaan Valley Road.
- Feb. 12 12:43 p.m. A caller advises the Department that a school bus, loaded with children, has slid sideways and is stuck on Canaan Valley Road; a half hour later the driver successfully extricates the bus under its own power.
- 12:44 p.m. A tractor trailer, having slid off the pavement, is disabled at the north end of Norfolk Road.
- Feb. 15 9:26 p.m. After a caller reports gunshots near his Foley Hill Road residence, an investigation reveals that there are coyote hunters in the area.
- Feb. 16 9:55 a.m. The Department joins the search for a rental car, taken without authorization from a Hewins Street, Sheffield, residence; it is located two hours later at the Roadside Cafe in Monterey and the driver taken into custody.
- 11:25 p.m. An officer calls for the tow of a vehicle after he determines that the operator's drivers license has expired.
- Feb. 18 12:32 a.m. A tractor trailer is disabled, blocking the southbound lane of Norfolk Road.
- Feb. 20 6:08 p.m. A resident registers her concern about a person in a hoodie carrying a teddy bear past her Bock Way property.
- Feb. 24 5:37 p.m. A resident reports that his two dogs have run away from his Mill River Great Barrington Road property.
- 12:18 p.m. Tree on wires on Hadsell Street.
- 12:41 p.m. Tree on wires on Rhoades and Bailey Road.
- 1:23 p.m. Large pine tree blocking Route 57 a mile east of its junction with South Sandisfield Road.

Graham Frank, Chief of Police

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FIRE AND RESCUE

Feb. 9	9:12 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Norfolk Structure Fire	Feb. 22	11:07 a.m.	Keyes Hill Road Chimney Fire
Feb. 10	3:52 a.m.	Corser Hill Road Fire Alarm	Feb. 23	7:30 p.m.	Norfolk Road Structure Fire
Feb. 11	5:29 a.m.	Canaan Southfield Road Medical Call	Feb. 25	9:03 a.m.	Church Road Medical Call
Feb. 13	5:06 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Sheffield Medical Call	Feb. 25	9:44 a.m.	Hartsville Mill River Road Medical Call
Feb. 15	2:04 p.m.	Hartsville Mill River Road Structure Fire	Feb. 25	1:22 p.m.	Church Road Medical Call

THE FIRE COMPANY SPRING DANCE

The New Marlborough Fire Company will hold its annual Spring Dance from 6:00 to 11:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 27, at Gedney Farm. Tickets, \$35 each, are available from any New Marlborough firefighter or at the Mill River General Store. The evening includes a wonderful dinner provided by Gedney Farm, a cash bar, and live music and dancing — all to support a worthy cause. For more information, contact David Smith at 413-229-0291 or 413-429-6680.

On Sunday, April 7, 10:00 a.m. to noon, members of the Fire Company will hold a Rabies Clinic at the New Marlborough Fire Station on Norfolk Road in Southfield. 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 that all dogs, cats, and ferrets be vaccinated against rabies. The cost is \$10 per vaccination. For more information about the clinic, please contact Fire Company President David Smith at (413) 429-6680, or David Herrick at (413) 229-8795.

About New Marlborough Fire & Rescue

Founded in 1930, New Marlborough Fire & Rescue includes more than thirty members who provide fire, ambulance, and other emergency services in the town of New Marlborough. For anyone interested in joining, training is held at 7:00 p.m. each Tuesday at the Fire Station in Southfield, with first Tuesdays reserved for the Fire Company's business meeting. New members are welcome. □

David Smith, Fire Company President



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The Way We Were

PAUL MARCEL

By Joe Poindexter

For Paul Marcel, there was before, and there was after.

The before was Washington Heights, a once-solidly middle-class neighborhood in the northern reaches of Manhattan that was roiled by the racial and civil unrest of the late 1960s. The once-uneventful walk to and from school was no longer safe. Paul, himself, as he recounts it, was the victim of several muggings. His solution: playing hooky — in early 1969, he was thirteen going on fourteen, he was a truant for 100 straight days, choosing to adventure around New York City rather than risk violence in school.

The after was New Marlborough — and just about everything that came with it. Mount Everett High School, for example. Paul, who had lost his wallet sometime during a school day there, received a note from the hall monitor telling him to report to the principal's office. There, his wallet was returned to him — with, to Paul's amazement, the money still in it, astonishing evidence of the benign civility of his new community. The transformation in Paul's behavior was, perhaps, equally astonishing. "Loved it," he says of his new school. "I went from maybe a record-breaking hundred days of truancy to perfect attendance."

When his parents were finally alerted to Paul's absence by an administrator at his Washington Heights high school, they called a family conference and decided to send Paul to New Marlborough. His Great Aunt Anna Field owned a house in Mill River, and she agreed to move up there with him. In some ways, it was an easy transition: Paul had been spending summers at the Field house since he was five, and by the time he arrived full-time, he had a built-in circle of pals: among them, Johnny, Jimmy, and Bobby Stanton, Scott Davis, and Fred Moore.



Paul Marcel today photo by Joe Poindexter



At six, during a visit with Uncle Bert — and his distinctly-finned '56 Dodge



Paul, left, and pal John Stanton in the summer of 1964

Consequently, he was already acquainted with life in a small-town New England community. He had spent time exploring the Konkapot River — it had a swimming hole just downstream of the Field house — and riding bikes to Umpachene Falls Park, where Bill Wuori (grandfather of Bob) had erected a rope swing that would drop fearless eight-year-olds into the middle of the river. He had become comfortable with BB guns, everyone seemed to have one, and even .22-calibre rifles.

New Marlborough seemed, quaintly, to have lost a step in time. His aunt's telephone, for example, had no dial and required an operator to connect a call. And the trusting nature of the community was a revelation. The milkman, Russ Guartha, would place bottles inside the back door when no one was at home — the doors were never locked. Lee Barnes, co-owner of the Mill River General Store, would deliver perishables directly into his customers' refrigerators.

The sense of community was expressed in myriad other ways. If your bike had a flat tire, whoever was on duty at the Stanton garage (now Ormsbee's) in Mill River would drop whatever he was doing and fix the tire. When kids were swimming in the Konkapot behind what is now John Sisson's house, Paul recalls, Bill Sisson, John's uncle and then owner of the



Paul, eleven, gets a lift from Mill River General Store owner Lee Barnes.

house, would come down and pass out sodas he had bought at the Mill River store.

For Paul, one of the more profound impacts of country living came from the clunkers Jack Stanton, his friends' father, had collected. "He had a lot of old cars that he would make available for buzzing around on a gravel pit off Clayton Mill River Road," says Paul. These provided an exposure not only to the wonders of automotive mobility but also to the mysteries of the internal combustion machine. "I learned to handle equipment by being around cars," says Paul. "Everybody fixed his own car." At sixteen, he acquired wheels of his own: a BSA 250 Starfire, which he rode to classes at Mount Everett High School. "Having a bike was definitely the cool factor," he says.

Upon graduation, Paul went on to Berkshire Community College and majored in environmental science, in the hope it would lead to work saving endangered eco-systems. To his regret, he learned that the work readily available for people in his field was a bit more mundane: solid waste and sewage treatment. The top student in his class, says Paul, found a job as a floor polisher. So Paul fell back on a skill that had entered his DNA from the time spent with Jack Stanton's clunkers: auto repair. (While at BCC, he would step forward when the instructor in a class on automobile emissions fumbled



Paul at sixteen, with his "cool" BSA 250 Starfire

the connection of, say, a carburetor to the fuel system.)

Paul joined his brother, George, twelve years his senior, at a foreign auto repair shop in Michigan, where he got a post-graduate degree, as it were, on the Fiat, the stylish but temperamental car from Italy. Two years later, he returned to the Berkshires and a job at Berkshire Autohaus in Lenox and was promoted to shop foreman after just one year. He has been fixing cars ever since, most recently, to the great good fortune of local car owners, at Ormsbee's Garage in Mill River.



With Aunt Anna during his 1983 induction as a Master of the Masonic Lodge in Great Barrington

In 1986, Paul married Lisa Miller. Their two daughters, Lindy-Ann and Jennifer, both now in their thirties, have moved away, but Paul and Lisa still live in the house he inherited from his great aunt. Every so often, misery, routine muggings on the streets of New York City, for example, turns out to be the spark for a lifetime of good fortune. □



Paul and Lisa at their 1986 marriage ceremony

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SCHOOL NEWS: REQUIRED READING!

By Jane Burke

There are two mind-boggling processes that go into every school budget calculation – the actual budget and the town assessments. Community members struggle to understand the separate operating, transportation, and capital budgets. When it comes to the assessment to the towns, who can understand such terms as “minimum local contribution” and “rolling average applicable percentage”? Two women have worked tirelessly for months on these issues. They are Chris Regan, business manager for the Southern Berkshire Regional School District, and New Marlborough Selectman Michele Shalaby. It happens that this is their final gift to the community, as they are both retiring from service this year. Luckily, New Marlborough residents can have confidence that the budget, as well as warrant articles to change the way towns are assessed, have been deeply considered and crafted under the guidance of these outstanding leaders.

Assessment – How Much Do We Pay This Year?

Well, there are two answers to this question, thanks to the work initiated by Ms. Shalaby and our Board of Selectmen. One answer is \$2,749,358, using the current state formula for the minimum required contribution, combined with another calculation outlined in the Southern Berkshire Regional Agreement of 2011, based on the number of students enrolled. The other answer is \$2,872,952, if the warrant article to amend the regional agreement to use a five-year rolling average of students passes. Confusing?

Why Is Paying More This Year Good for New Marlborough?

The following explanation comes from Ms. Shalaby:

The year-to-year variances in our share of the school budget have increased the challenge of Town budget planning. Remember the year the school budget passed at our town meeting but failed to pass the vote for an

override of the 2½ limit, forcing us to cut the budget on the Town operating side? Not a good outcome.

It seemed to the New Marlborough Board of Selectman that even slight changes in the year-to-year enrollment of students from each District town were causing significant shifts in assessments. The Town wanted to minimize these shifts for better budget planning. It asked the School Committee to consider a change, and the committee responded that the assessment formula is part of the Regional School Agreement, and it is therefore up to the boards of selectmen of each District town to change it.

New Marlborough requested a meeting of the five towns to consider it. A committee was formed, comprised of one selectman and one finance committee member from each town, and included Chris Regan, who offered her assistance. It was a months' long process. The Committee relied heavily on Ms. Regan to suggest formulas and create spreadsheets to show the effect. The largest towns, New Marlborough and Sheffield, were most interested in controlling unpredictable variances, and all agreed that the goals of a new formula should be to decrease the annual variances, while keeping each town's per-pupil spending approximately equal. Committee members conferred with their full boards of selectman and finance committees, with Ms. Regan attending many of the meetings. When the Committee came back together, there was agreement on a formula that uses a five-year rolling average to determine the share for each town. It was decided that all towns would include an article in their annual town meeting warrants this year to amend the Regional Agreement to include this formula. The other four towns wanted the new formula to go into effect for FY20, which makes sense because they all benefit.

Though the switch does not benefit New Marlborough in the coming fiscal year, it achieves the benefit the

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town is seeking over the long term. All five towns need to vote affirmatively on the warrant for this change to take place. They can't wait for a year in which all towns benefit, as that will never happen. Sheffield chose this formula knowing that in some years they may pay more because they understand it decreases annual variances and will be beneficial to the others towns.

Budget Numbers – What Is the Budget for FY20?

The painstaking process of determining the cost of sustaining the School District in FY20 began in November. Using a huge amount of input from staff, teachers, and administrators regarding their needs, Superintendent Beth Regulbuto and Business Manager Chris Regan worked with the Finance Subcommittee of the School Committee to create a budget that would keep costs as low as possible without compromising the commitment to the District goal of improving student achievement. At the March 7 public hearing, Ms. Regulbuto and Mrs. Regan made a clear presentation about this complex budget-making process and how the

final numbers were calculated.

On March 14, the School Committee voted to adopt the budget as presented at the hearing.

Final Budget: \$17,321,733, an Increase of 3.79 percent over Last Year.

Capital Budget	\$358,461	Increase – 0 percent
Debt Budget	\$375,950	Increase – 37 percent
Operating Budget	\$6,587,322	Increase – 3.3 percent

Most of the increases are part of previously negotiated contractual agreements with teachers, staff, and the bus company. Personnel costs increased by \$507,188, transportation by \$143,473, and debt service increased by \$102,933. All other items were held to a total of \$79,360 or 0.61 percent. Those interested in the public hearing presentation and more details can find them at www.sbrsd.org/budget.html. Also watch your mail box for an informative flier from the Southern Berkshire Regional School District with clear explanations of the budget and the proposed amendment to the assessment formula. □

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Owen and Arlyn Hoberman have provided this month's delicious recipe. It is sure to become a family favorite, as it is so simple, quick, and delicious.

Owen and Arlyn first visited Southfield in the summer of 1977, renting an old farmhouse on Foley Hill Road. In 1980 they purchased an undeveloped twenty acres on Canaan Valley Road, which they built upon and maintained as their second home until becoming full time residents in 1997. Owen and Arlyn enjoy cooking together and even have his and her stoves, as, on occasion, a plethora of burners are required, especially at Thanksgiving dinner when they cook a delicious dinner for over two dozen family members.

Owen and Arlyn adapted this recipe from Mario Batali's *Molto Italiano* cookbook. □

Fiona Kerr

Marsala Sauce

Ingredients:

1/2 cup olive oil	2 tablespoons small capers, rinsed and drained
1 medium red onion, cut into 1/4" dice	1 cup dry Marsala wine
1 celery rib with leaves cut into 1/2" pieces	1/2 teaspoon fennel seeds
4 medium plum tomatoes, roughly chopped	1/4 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes
1 tablespoon pine nuts	1 fresh bay leaf
1 tablespoon currants	1 teaspoon Kosher salt

Directions:

In a 10- to 12-inch sauté pan, heat the olive oil over medium high heat until almost smoking, add the onion and celery and cook until softened. Add tomatoes, pine nuts, currants, capers, Marsala wine, fennel seeds, red pepper flakes, salt and bay leaf and bring to a boil. Set over low heat and simmer for five minutes. Remove from heat, season with salt and pepper to taste, and allow to stand for five minutes, covered.

Serve with couscous, rice, pasta or quinoa and a side of greens.

nm5vn.org

NEW ACQUISITIONS AT THE LIBRARY

Adult Fiction

- Never Fail*, by Lisa Gardner
- The Island of Sea Women*, by Lisa See
- Unto Us a Son Is Given*, by Donna Leon
- The Malta Exchange*, by Steve Berry
- The Persian Gamble*, by Joel C. Rosenberg
- After She's Gone*, by Camilla Grebe
- The Chef's Secret*, by Crystal King
- Good Riddance*, by Elinor Lipman
- Lost Man*, by Jane Harper

Adult Nonfiction

- Upstairs at the White House: My Life with the First Lady*

Children's Fiction

- My Heart*, by Corinna Luyken
- The Lost Book*, by Margarita Surnaita
- The Good Egg*, by Jory John
- The Donkey Egg*, by Janet Stevens
- Rise of the Dragon*, by Angie Sage

Children's Nonfiction

- The Frog Book*, by Steven Jenkins
- Daring Dozen: The Twelve Who Walked on the Moon*, by Suzanne Slade
- Feather: Not Just for Flying*, by Melissa Stewart

DVDs

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>A Private War</i> | <i>The Happy Prince</i> |
| <i>A Star Is Born</i> | <i>Mary Queen of Scots</i> |
| <i>At Eternity's Gate</i> | <i>Overlord</i> |
| <i>The Gardener</i> | |

Summer Library Hours

(April 1 - Oct 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.

229-6668



Spring Egg Hunt
April 20 10:30 a.m.
New Marlborough Central School



Please join the New Marlborough Library and the New Marlborough Historical Society **April 13 at 1:30 p.m. at the Library** to hear John Sisson speak of his World War II experiences flying missions in a B-17 Flying Fortress against Germany.

John Sisson's B-17 Flying Fortress after crash landing on return from a mission over Austria. John is seen at the nose of the plane, removing its Norden bombsight, which bombardiers were sworn to protect with their lives.

(413) 229-2544
 Free Estimates

Roofing
 Tiling
 Decks
 Porches
 Sheet Rocking
 Flooring
 Additions
 Odd Jobs

Herbert W. Eichstedt III
Jason W. Eichstedt

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!

HERE IS A TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF \$_____ (payable to NM5VN)

NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

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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, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

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

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

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

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

Post Office: Mill River (413) 229-8582

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

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

Southfield (413) 229-8476

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

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

(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 Thursday 9:00 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; 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. weekdays; Saturday by appointment

Town Hall: 229-8116

Police: Business office: 229-8161

Library: 229-6668

Transfer Station Hours:

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

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

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

PERMITS ARE DUE JULY 1

and can be purchased for \$125 at Town Hall, the Transfer Station, or by mail. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Late fee of \$150 after August 15.

Emergency calls:

**Police, Fire, Medical
911**

New Marlborough Highway Department

Located on Mill River-Southfield Rd.

Hours:

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

PO Box 99, Mill River, MA 01244

(413) 229-8165

We welcome advertisements from businesses owned by New Marlborough residents.

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

NM5VN Editorial Team

Larry Burke, issue editor; Diane Barth, designer;

Martha Bryan, Jane Burke, Barbara Lowman, David Lowman,

Joe Poindexter, Peter Schuyten, Barry Shapiro,

Anne M. Sommers, Sandra Fusco-Walker

Contributing writers and artists: Ann Getsinger, Angus Kerr,

Jodi Rothe, Mary Richie Smith, Catherine Twing,

Tara White, and Michele Shalaby. Index: Donna Weaver

New Marlborough 5 Village News

appears monthly,

also online at www.nm5vn.org

The next issue will be dated May 2019.

All copy must be submitted no later than April 17.

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

PO Box 243, Southfield, MA 01259

5villagenews@gmail.com

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

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CHANGE SERVICE
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SERVICE SECTOR 04/19

- ♦ **Dellea.biz Computer Services:** has provided local residents with on-site Windows computer repairs and technical support since 1996. Book appointments online at <https://dellea.biz> or call (413) 528-1141.
- ♦ **Design+Planning:** Christopher Blair; Since 1986, creative, budget-aware design. Achieve your goals for additions, alterations to an existing home or new construction. (413)528-4960. chris@design-planning.com.
- ♦ **Fine Jewelry:** Designers and manufacturers; custom orders/commissions welcome; expert repairs. 45 years experience. Sachs Reisman, Inc. 25 Maple Ave., Sheffield (413)229-0050
- ♦ **One call does it all!:** Vinyl siding cleaning; pressure washing; deck refinishing; floors refinished; window washing; odd landscape jobs; all odd jobs. David Goewey, (413)229-2787
- ♦ **Susan M. Smith:** Attorney At Law; Concentrating in the areas of Estate Planning, Estate Administration, Elder Law, Real Estate and Zoning Matters. ssmithlaw@barringtonlawoffice.com or (413)528-4300
- ♦ **Reiner White:** General Contractor; (413)229-8450
- ♦ **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

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