



New Marlborough 5 Village News

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Clayton • Hartsville • Mill River • New Marlborough • Southfield

A HEARTFELT RESPONSE

In the Face of a Challenge, New Marlborough Unites

By Joe Poindexter

What happens when medical and social upheaval roils a community? One answer is the extraordinary outpouring of empathy and generosity in the town of New Marlborough. Even as Covid-19 evolved from a threat to a pandemic, New Marlborough residents and businesses were reaching out to one another in gestures large and small. While establishments were being shuttered and medical authorities were telling us to keep our distance from one another, we were finding inventive new ways not only to protect each other but also to draw together.

As this issue of the 5 Village News goes to press in late March, here are announced closings and cancellations:

- New Marlborough's four restaurants (as well as restaurants throughout the Commonwealth) until at least April 7 — takeout, however, permitted
- Southern Berkshire Regional District Schools (including New Marlborough Central) until at least April 7



photo by Larry Burke

Laurel Hobart-Brazie making a home delivery of milk and meats from The Farm New Marlborough - no extra charge for a smile to light up your day!

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- Town Hall, except by appointment (meetings open to the public may be attended remotely by phoning in to 1 (717) 275-8940 and then entering the access code 7711868)
- The Cultural Council's Potluck Dinner, April 4
- The Land Trust's Red Hot Blues Bash, April 18
- New Marlborough Fire Company's annual Rabies Clinic and Bake Sale, April 19
- The New Marlborough Historical Society's opening First Friday program, June 5

At an emergency meeting on March 16, the Board of Selectmen awarded up to fourteen days of paid leave to anyone exhibiting symptoms of the Covid-19 or to those obligated to remain home to care for children who would ordinarily be at school at this time. (Current employee regulations allow just three paid sick leave days a year.) On March 20, it elected to close the New Marlborough Town Library. The library's plan to establish a "Curbside Service" met opposition from Governor Charlie Baker and has been discontinued.

Residents and commercial establishments of New Marlborough have also been responding.

continued

Heartfelt Response, continued

- Dr. John Schreiber, an immunologist and resident of New Marlborough village, urged us all, via Maggie's List, to exercise caution and to rely on updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). His comprehensive advisory appears on page 3.
- Josh Irwin and Emily Rachel voluntarily closed down Cantina 229 (and Mooncloud, their bar in Great Barrington) but offer a takeout (and delivery) operation for people who still wanted to enjoy their cuisine. Contact them at cantina229.com.
- Gedney Farm has chosen to suspend all operations, at least until April 7, out of a concern for the safety of its employees and their families, and to be as compliant as possible with Governor Baker's actions to control the spread of the virus. Michael Smith says that he and his staff are in conversation about how they can be of service to the community in the coming weeks and months.
- The Old Inn on the Green guaranteed refunds to anyone who wished to recover a deposit on a reservation. Both the Old Inn and the Southfield Store are offering takeout, which can be ordered by calling (413) 229-7924.
- Tom Brazie, in a throwback email entitled "The return of the milk man!" announced delivery of meat and vegetables and, yes, milk from The Farm New Marlborough on Tuesdays and Thursdays. (He suggests establishing an account by emailing thefarmnewmarlborough@gmail.com.)
- The Mill River Farm: The Mill River Farm self-



A sign of the times graces the front window of the Southfield Store. photo by Joe Poindexter

serve farm store is open daily from 9:00 to 5:00; orders can be made on the website, millriverfarm.org. Credit cards are accepted.

- Farm Country Soup is open for curbside pickup and for delivery in Southfield and Great Barrington by placing orders at farmcountrysoup@gmail.com.

- Travis Brecher will be selling his bread through The Farm New Marlborough and Mill River Farm. Orders can be placed by emailing creaturebread@gmail.com.

Town department heads were being instructed in the protocols of decontamination — wipe down keyboard, doorknobs, bathrooms on a regular basis. New Marlborough Fire and Rescue is receiving regular updates from CDC and the states's DPH. "Please note that our staff will be asking additional questions of patients and household members when responding to 911 dispatches," says Maureen Krejci, medical officer, New Marlborough Ambulance. "Please be assured that these questions are intended to ensure the safety of our members, and minimize possible virus transmission, as they continue to treat those in need."

And finally, there are assorted offerings, via Maggie's List, from those who would like to shine a little light into the abyss of the newly encouraged social isolation. Among them, a free half hour of instruction in meditation from Sandrine Harris; the link to a digital concert hall of symphonic music from Joyce Hackett; an hour and a half of yoga on YouTube from Beryl Birch. If community can help navigate the difficult terrain ahead, New Marlborough is a place you are likely to find it. □

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THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Why the Disruption in Our Lives is Critically Necessary

By John Schreiber, MD MPH

By now everyone in town is well aware of the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic, sweeping the world. Why is this happening? What are the unique aspects of this virus that have resulted in such dramatic worldwide disruption? And what does it mean to us in New Marlborough, a rural, Western Massachusetts community?

We know that this virus is entirely new to humans. It is a virus that naturally infects bats and jumped to humans most likely in a market that sells bats for food in China. Unfortunately, humans have never been exposed to this virus and thus have absolutely no immunity to it. And because it is so new, we have neither the medicine to treat it nor a vaccine to prevent it.

Covid-19 is spread in three ways. Most commonly by droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes; second by touching surfaces such as counters or tables contaminated with the virus (which can survive up to three days on hard surfaces) and then touching the face or eyes; and third, through possibly the ingestion of fecal material. Approximately 80 percent of those infected experience fever and flu-like symptoms but never become seriously ill. Children in fact rarely seem to get severely sick and may have only mild cold symptoms. The mortality rate in children and most young adults is low, essentially the same as influenza, the common flu.

If most people don't get that ill with it then what's the big deal? Well, approximately 10 percent of Covid-19 infected people do get sick enough to be hospitalized, many of them in the intensive care unit. The mortality rate rises with age: around 3 percent if you are in your 60s, 8 percent in your 70s, and an alarming 15 percent if you are 80 or above. Individuals with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, smokers, and lung disease are particularly likely to be in that ill, hospitalized category.

These are startlingly high mortality rates that far exceed those for the common flu in these age groups. A further challenge of this pandemic is that the numbers of sick grow very fast. The health care system in this country is not designed to handle thousands of very ill people all at the same time. For example, if one-sixth of the 6 million residents of Massachusetts were to become infected with the Covid-19 virus in the coming weeks, and 10 percent of those required hospitalization, that is 100,000 very sick people. The state's health system would become drastically overwhelmed. We simply do not have nearly enough intensive care beds, nurses, and doctors for this kind of surge.

What we have seen in other countries such as Italy (which has a very advanced health care system) confirms these worries. As the virus spreads easily among people who do not get very sick, hospitals and intensive care units are overwhelmed with very sick elderly and vulnerable people with underlying medical conditions who became infected through social interactions with other less ill people. The Italian health care system is close to collapse, many have died, and other European nations are suffering similar rapid increases in ill people requiring hospitalization. There is reason to believe that the spread of the virus in the United States will be similar to that of Italy — an accurate count awaits an adequate supply of testing equipment, which should be available by the beginning of April.

What should someone living in New Marlborough do? It is not time to panic or become paralyzed with fear. As noted, most people infected with Covid-19 will become only mildly ill. But it is time for us to roll up our sleeves and get to work to protect our community. We must slow the spread of this virus immediately so that we can prevent our health-care system from becoming

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overwhelmed while it takes care of those among us who become seriously ill. Every one of us can play a role to slow down the spread of this infection by taking these concrete actions:

- Raise the bar for personal hygiene — wash hands before and after any activity that involves touching things. Twenty seconds with soap and water works well. A 60 percent alcohol gel is a satisfactory substitute for hand washing. Cover your cough! Expect the same attention to personal hygiene from others.
- Disinfect household common areas such as the kitchen table, computer keyboard, and bathroom surfaces frequently. Ditto at work. Or better still try to work from home.
- Avoid crowds, meetings, and other social interactions for now. Really! If you have a town or club meeting or social gathering on your schedule, cancel it. Go virtual if you can and call in.
- No hand shaking! No hugging. Stick with elbow taps. Keep your distance to six feet unless it is an immediate household member. Yes really, for everyone!
- Do not go to work or any other place if you have cold or flu symptoms. Call your health care provider right away. Avoid going to the emergency room unless it is an emergency. Personal use of masks only depletes the critical supply for hospitals. Use them at home only if you are ill with the virus and trying to prevent it from spreading to members of your family.
- Let's keep our elderly safe! Distance yourself from your elderly friends and neighbors. Don't visit your elderly relative in a nursing home right now — call instead. If you are fifty or younger, volunteer to shop for home-bound elderly, then leave the shopping bag at their door. Teach your children good personal hygiene, but instruct them to maintain their distance from the elderly — the kids may have an infection, with only mild symptom, not realize it.

- If you are are sixty or older, avoid social interactions, yes, even those that include a few close friends coming over. Avoid shopping. Use take-out services from the restaurants; better still have it delivered. I am sure our town restaurants will want to fill this need. No air travel, and no out of state domestic travel unless it is urgent.
- Stay informed. CDC.gov has much of the latest information. The Massachusetts Department of Health is a critical force in guiding all of the towns in the commonwealth, and its site at Mass.Gov/dph (click on "read more" on the second line from the top of the home page) will provide important information and guidance in the coming days. Avoid the fake and erroneous advice sweeping the internet. (No, staying hydrated does not prevent infection! Hand washing and social distancing will reduce the chance of infection.)

If all of us in our town and across the country embrace these actions, we will reduce the speed of the spread of this infection, help protect our elderly and vulnerable neighbors, and accelerate the end of this pandemic. This will buy us the time we need until a vaccine is available, probably next year.

We can expect further disruptions in our lives in the coming weeks. But if these disruptions result in fewer people getting sick and fewer of our loved ones dying, it is well worth the effort! Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work! □

Dr. John Schreiber, a resident of New Marlborough village, is an infectious diseases and public health specialist practicing at Connecticut Children's Hospital in Hartford.

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN



February 24: For its first order of business the Board met with Lucinda Shmulsky of Adsit Crosby Road to discuss and act on a citizens' petition she filed to place an article on the warrant at Annual Town Meeting on May 4. The petition, which was signed by sixteen residents – six more than required – seeks to amend the protective bylaw governing the issuance of special permits to require written approval by two-thirds of the abutters before a special permit can be granted. In New Marlborough it's the Board of Selectmen that is the special permit granting authority, and it requires unanimous approval by the Board.

As Chairman Nat Yohalem said, the petition has already been submitted to the Board of Registrars to verify the signers are all registered voters, and then sent on to Town Counsel, who advised that the proposed bylaw change is in fact illegal since it would essentially take away the power of the Board as the special permit granting authority and give it to the abutters. Mr. Yohalem said the Board would also recommend to the voters at Town Meeting that they not approve the article, and that counsel would do the same.

Nevertheless, Ms. Shmulsky and her supporters, many of whom were present for the meeting, insisted they still wanted to move the petition forward, to which Mr. Yohalem replied, "I guess there's nothing more to say. If it's not being withdrawn, then it will be included on the warrant," which by law the Board is obligated to do. Also required is a public hearing on the proposed amendment, which Mr. Yohalem pointed out will cost the Town \$600, which the Board went ahead and scheduled for March 18 at 6:00 p.m.

(Subsequent to the meeting, Ms. Shmulsky in an email to

this reporter indicated she's now planning to submit an amendment to her article from the floor at Annual Town Meeting that would add language to the effect that when the Board approves a special permit for a new permitted use it would also require a two-thirds approval vote at a town meeting.)

Moving on, the Board addressed a February 15 letter from Kathleen George regarding a tree on her property at 358 Mill River Southfield Road, which she said was mistakenly cut down by the Highway Department.

According to the letter, Highway Superintendent Loring had been asked by her friend Brian Richard, who also lives at that address, to trim back an overgrown bush at the end of her driveway, as it was blocking the view of the public roadway. Instead, the letter goes on to say, the Department cut down what she described as a thirty-year-old, twelve-foot-high aromatic honeysuckle tree about twenty-five feet further up the road, and now she's asking the Town to replace it with a similar tree, or to reimburse her for replacing it.

But, according to Highway Superintendent Loring, who was present for the meeting, when he went out to the location he saw what he described as a "brushy, scrubby" tree growing all the way out to the road's edge which in spring and summer, when it's heavy with leaves, would overhang the road. "It was clear this tree was blocking the view [from] their driveway," Mr. Loring explained. So he told his crew to remove the overgrowth the next time they were going by with the chipper. "I thought I was doing them a favor by making it safer for the residents and other travelers," he said.

But according to Mr. Richard, who was representing Ms. George at the meeting, there was no problem with the tree. "I had the thing trimmed in a nice arch so I



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could see underneath it. That tree that he took down was not a problem.”

As for the original, or “offending bush,” as Mr. Richard described it, that’s also been taken care of it – by the Highway Department. “Once I redirected the crew up there and explained to them what was going on, they promptly took care of it,” he said.

And that’s basically where it was left, except for the question of compensation. But after another fifteen or so minutes of discussion, the Board agreed to recommend to Mr. Loring that he reimburse Ms. George \$125 out of the Highway Department budget in return for her releasing the Town from any and all claims and that further she agrees to obtain Highway Department approval of the location of the replacement tree. For as Mr. Yohalem said, “We don’t want a duplication of what just happened.”

And on a somewhat related note, the next agenda item was to have been a discussion and signing of an extension of the Town’s contract with John W. Field Tree Service, but because of confusion on Selectman Richard Long’s part regarding the state’s procurement laws, the contract signing was put on hold for at least another week. Field Tree Service has a one-year agreement with the Town with two one-year renewals at the Town’s option.

Under Selectman updates, Ms. White reported on a follow-up meeting with Egremont regarding the sharing of a human resources officer. She said there are now four South County towns committed to the idea. In addition to Egremont and New Marlborough, they include Stockbridge and Sheffield. She said that the next step will be to come up with a cost estimate, to include benefits, and that Egremont will take the lead on that.

The last hour, as usual, was taken up with a review of the minutes of the January 16, February 3, and February 11 meetings. □

Peter Schuyten

March 9: Selectmen Tara White and Richard Long began the meeting at 6:03 p.m. and then invited Nat Yohalem to participate by phone.

Dr. John Schreiber, a New Marlborough resident and an infectious disease specialist was present to discuss Covid-19, or as it is more commonly called, coronavirus. He began by wiping down the tabletop and chairs with sterile wipes, explaining this exercise should be done before every meeting at Town Hall to help eliminate germs before everyone is seated. He disclosed that he was only speaking for himself and not as a representative for his employer or any public agency.

Dr. Schreiber then delivered a thorough discourse on the new corona virus (which appears in full on Page 3 of this issue). In closing, Dr. Schreiber again recommended that everyone wipe everything down when the meeting was over and left to a loud round of applause.

Ed Harvey of Emergency Services, who was present in the audience, told

the Board he is putting together a message to send out to the community and will send that messaging to Board Secretary Sharon Fleck so she can post it on the Town website. Prue Spaulding, present at the meeting, said she could also put out a mailing to the senior citizens in town.

Town Administrator Mari Enoch suggested holding a staff meeting on Tuesday to follow up on Dr. Schreiber’s suggestion that each department go over training to sanitize their respective departments. Ms. Enoch then asked the selectmen what people should do who are ill and who have either used up their sick time or are part-time and not entitled to sick time. She was concerned people might come to work when sick because they are not paid. Mr. Loring stated the Town payroll is a budgeted item and the selectman could say stay home if you are sick, as the money is already budgeted anyway. Ms. White responded that everyone is struggling with how to make it work, but this was not a discussion that

Also required is a public hearing on the proposed amendment, which Mr. Yohalem pointed out will cost the Town \$600, which the Board went ahead and scheduled for March 18 at 6:00 p.m.

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could be completed at this meeting. Ms. Enoch requested sick time be put on the agenda for another meeting.

Moving on to the next item, Mr. Loring, in his position as Fire Chief, made a reserve fund request in the amount of \$18,000 to replace the engine in the 2011 brush fire truck that recently blew. The truck is nine years old and only has 6,600 miles on it, and, after doing some research, Mr. Loring found the truck engine had been recalled by Ford and there is a class action lawsuit. Mr. Loring stated the truck is definitely worth replacing the engine. The new engines have been updated, fixing the fault, and the Town will pursue reimbursement from the Ford Motor Company. The selectman unanimously approved a recommendation to the Finance Committee to use \$18,000 of the Reserve Fund to purchase a new engine for the brush fire truck. The Board then approved vacation request by Mr. approved a request for vacation time from Mr. Loring from March 15 to March 29.

Next on the agenda, the selectmen unanimously made two appointments: Marjorie Robbins Boscarino was appointed to the Cultural Council as requested in a letter from Chairperson Nancy Barbe, effective immediately and expiring on December 31, 2022. Fiona Kerr was then appointed to the New Marlborough Historical Commission until June 30 of this year, as requested in an email from John Schreiber, Deanna Mumert, and Claudette Callahan, all of whom are on the Historical Commission.

The selectmen unanimously approved a one-year extension of the contract with the John W. Fields Tree Service. Ms. Enoch then presented the information that a three-year contract renewal with Colonial Power for the Town's electricity would be up for bid on Monday, March 16, after an afternoon conference call. The Town would have to exercise its approval of the contract that same day. Mr. Long was authorized by the Board

to attend the conference call and approve the renewal at the rates which would be disclosed during the conference call, as they were expected to be at historical lows and favorable to the Town. Ms. Enoch also stated residents will have the option to pay a regular rate for their electricity or a 'green' rate which, according to Ms. Enoch, was a minimal rate increase.

Next, Ms. Enoch discussed the upcoming calendar. First, she noted there would be a public hearing on a citizen-sponsored amendment to the zoning bylaw on Wednesday, March 18, at 7:00 p.m. Looking ahead, she stated the Board of Selectmen needed to set up joint meetings with the Finance Committee and department heads to review budgets. She added that, on March 19 at the Finance Committee meeting, Superintendent Regulbuto would be presenting the school budget, at which point Mr. Yohalem offered there wouldn't be a lot of questions as there was only a small increase proposed.


Ms. Enoch stated that the repairs to the Lumbert Cross Road bridge were completed and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation had sent a letter confirming the bridge remains at the weights it previously had been posted and will not be closed.

Mr. Long updated the Board that the Designer Selection Committee had approved the Request For Proposal, and it was posted for release on the central register effective March 11, and the newspaper ad has been placed. He continued with an update on the human resources consultant, the Collins Center, stating he hoped to have the final numbers for employee compensation by the middle of this month. He also said he was slogging away on the updating the Town's employee manual, and hopes to finish it in the next day or so. He said once the HR Committee and the consultant review and comment on the personnel manual, he will make the final

The Board addressed a February 15 letter from Kathleen George regarding a tree on her property which she said was mistakenly cut down by the Highway Department.

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changes and send a proposed draft to the Board.

Ms. White updated the Board that the regional district school committee on the consolidation question met on March 7, and twenty-two out of the twenty-four members were present. Lucy Prashker of Alford was named chair and Peter Taylor of Great Barrington was named vice chair. Marie Ryan of West Stockbridge will oversee the \$50,000 grant as treasurer and Ms. White will be secretary, overseeing the minutes.

Ms. White asked if the Board of Selectmen meeting usually scheduled on Mondays could be moved the following week to Wednesday, prior to the public hearing. The regional school committee will hold their next meeting on that Monday, and she'd like to be able to attend. The selectman all agreed the next meeting would be on March 18.

Ms. White then presented updates on the multi-town human resources position-sharing initiative, stating that, though Great Barrington wanted to be involved, it notified the group that it is unable to do so this year. Without Great Barrington, the hours divided between the towns for the position would need to be changed, and will be discussed at their next meeting on March 20.

After approving the minutes of the February 11 meeting and postponing action on the February 24 minutes, this meeting was adjourned at 7:42pm.

Sandra Fusco Walker

March 20: In what is believed to be a first, the Board scheduled a meeting at which no one was required to attend — in person. In fact, both Tara White and Richard Long were present at Town Hall for the special 10:00 a.m. meeting, while Chairman Nat Yohalem phoned in from home. (Town Hall had been sanitized by a special contractor during the previous two days.) At the top of the agenda, the Board declared a state of emergency for New Marlborough, a

strategic move to make the town eligible for whatever public-health related funding may become available.

It voted to post notice of a Town caucus for March 31, an action that, under normal circumstances, would have to be carried out by March 24. If the state legislature allows towns to postpone the caucus, the posting will be scrubbed. Similar postponements may be enacted for the Annual Town Meeting, currently scheduled for May 4, and Town Election, May 11. According to state regulations, if an annual meeting is not held by June 30, the town can continue to operate on a monthly budget based on one-twelfth of the previous year's budget.

The Board agreed to reach out to the Emergency Management Committee to offer help in developing a list of town residents who may need assistance in food shopping or procurement of medications.

It was also prepared to appoint Dr. John Schreiber as a special consultant to the Board of Health, but officials of that Board said they were

receiving sufficient guidance from state agencies and did not require further assistance. The selectmen expressed their appreciation to Dr. Schreiber for his offer.


The Board authorized a \$300 permit to allow an engineer to proceed with a study of the remediation of the banks of the Umpachene River where it cascades down Umpachene Falls.

The Board referred an analysis of the Town's employee practices — showing, for example, how salaries in New Marlborough compared with those of seven nearby towns — to the Human Resources Committee (HRC). Based on a study of this document, HRC will then make recommendations to the Board, which, in turn, will make its recommendations to the Finance Committee.

Phone conferencing seemed to encourage brevity. The Board concluded its meeting well within an hour. □

Joe Poindexter

*Dr. John Schreiber,
a New Marlborough resident
and an infectious disease
specialist was present to
discuss Covid-19,
or as it is more commonly
called, coronavirus.*



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VIEW FROM THE BOARD

Safety First

On the evening of March 9, Dr. John Schreiber, a town resident who is a pediatric infectious disease specialist, appeared before the Board and department heads to educate us about the corona virus. When he finished, I knew that the most important duty of a selectman is to keep town residents safe. Not the budget, not the roads, not even the education of children. It is our job, to the best of our ability, to keep you safe and prevent the spread of the virus.

We are in uncharted waters, learning day by day. We started with a staff meeting and assigned tasks to keep Town Hall functioning. At an emergency Board meeting on March 16, we hired a professional cleaning company to sanitize the entire interior of Town Hall. We decided to close Town Hall itself to all but employees and individuals with prearranged appointments. At this same meeting we directed that all Town committees and boards refrain from holding any nonessential meetings. Essential meetings are to be held by phone, with the public participating through a call-in number.

Town employees have been directed to stay home

if any virus symptoms appear. They will be paid their normal wages for up to a fourteen-day period and then their circumstances will be reevaluated. This policy will also apply to an employee required to care for a family member or a child home from school.

The library is closed and its events canceled. The Cultural Council has postponed its annual potluck supper and the Land Trust has postponed its biennial major fundraising event.

As I write this article, Governor Charlie Baker has proposed legislation that will provide guidance on how we move forward with three major upcoming events – the Town caucus (March 31), the Annual Town Meeting (May 4) and the Town election (May 11). The governor's proposal would allow us to delay the Annual Town Meeting and operate the Town on a month-to-month basis using the current year's budget.

We will take this one step at a time. Our number one goal remains your safety. Stay tuned. □

Nat Yohalem

PLANNING BOARD

Home Stretch for the Marijuana Bylaw

Promptly at 7:00 p.m., Planning Board Chairman Daniel Doern convened the March 11 meeting, with members Mark Carson and Bob Hartt attending. Eric Schaefer was absent. The audience this evening was composed of John and Rebecca Schreiber, Deanna Mummert, and Julia Trumbull. Mr. Doern began the meeting by reading through the correspondence, which included an email from Lucinda Shmulsky regarding a citizen-sponsored petition to amend the Town's bylaw regarding special permits. A public hearing on this matter is scheduled for the following Wednesday, March 18. There was some confusion as to how to proceed, since apparently Ms. Shmulsky has changed the wording of the amendment since the posting of the public hearing, and, legally, the public hearing would have to stick to the original phrasing. Mr. Doern's understanding is that Ms. Shmulsky would present an amendment to the amendment when the warrant article comes up at the Annual Town Meeting in May.

Mr. Doern, as a sidebar, brought up the fact that, more and more, communication to the Planning Board, and other boards as well, is being made through email to

the Town website, and that a protocol needs to be created around that. In other business, he reminded the present members that they will have to sort out who is running for what multi-year term of office in the approaching elections.

The next hour of the meeting was spent combing through the eleven-page marijuana bylaw draft, making final corrections in preparation for submitting it to town counsel. There was a sense of urgency to this process, since the deadline for submission was the very next day. With attention to creating consistent capitalization and punctuation, and with a number of minor re-phrasings, the document was finally completed, at which point Mark Carson made a motion to accept this final version, seconded by Daniel Doern... and then things took a turn.

From the audience, Deanna Mummert interjected that Rebecca Schreiber had something to say, whereupon Mrs. Schreiber delivered an intense and lengthy discourse on her belief that the Planning Board had failed to acknowledge her strong objection at the January 18 public hearing to the maximum building sizes that the marijuana bylaw draft proposes (5,000 square feet for the village residential zone and 20,000 for the rural resi-

dential zone). Wielding documentation about cannabis operations that are current or pending throughout the state, Mrs. Schreiber argued that the sizing proposed by the Planning Board was inappropriate for New Marlborough's residential zones, and should be cut back to 2,500 square feet and 10,000 respectively. Dr. Schreiber added his perspective, which largely matched what Mrs. Schreiber was arguing for.

When it came around to their turn to respond, the Planning Board began with Daniel Doern pointing out that the Berkshire Springs water plant, which is in the neighborhood of 20,000 square feet, is quite unobtrusive to passersby on Norfolk Road. Mark Carson held that the Planning Board had listened to what was said at the public hearing, had increased the size of setbacks in the rural residential zone, and had changed the limit of each of the two allowable licenses – medical marijuana treatment center and marijuana research facility – from two of each town-wide to just one of each. Bob Hartt, referring to his notes from the public hearing, pointed out that the maximum building sizes did not come up as a main sticking point.

Responding to Mr. Hartt, Rebecca Schreiber said that, if the building sizes were not questioned as much as other points at the public hearing, that was only because she and her like-minded citizens did not want to pile on too many objections to the efforts of the Planning Board at one time. Ms. Mummert then said that, "it is a big issue, and we could have brought out 100 people tonight," but they had chosen not to out of deference to the members of the Planning Board. Bob Hartt then said he felt that, at this late hour, with the document needing to be sent on to town counsel in the morning, it was too late to consider a change.

When asked by Chairman Doern what she would do at the Annual Town Meeting if the building sizes were not reduced as she desired, Mrs. Schreiber said she would ask for an amendment from the floor. Mr. Doern responded that a fight over this point at the town meeting would be

destructive to the whole effort, and needed to be avoided. He then asked the Schreibers, Ms. Mummert, and Mrs. Trumbull if they would openly support passage of the bylaw if the Planning Board did accede to the demand to reduce the dimensional requirements by one-half. They all enthusiastically agreed.

While there was some further push-back from Planning Board members, questioning how deep the support for the position represented by the four attending citizens went, the desire to present a bylaw that would pass at the Annual Town Meeting won out. Bob Hartt stated, "The only thing worse than a bad bylaw is no bylaw." Daniel Doern reasoned that it might be important to pass this bylaw, even with this smaller sizing, so as to open people's minds to other, smaller business types, marijuana uses included, and may also lead to consideration of establishing a commercial zone in New Marlborough. He concluded, "It's okay to do something super-conservative. Let's get something passed." And on that note, a motion to reduce the dimensional requirements to 2,500 square feet in the village residential zone and 10,000 square feet in the rural residential zone was unanimously adopted.

Following a thorough disinfecting of the table and chairs, the meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.. □

Larry Burke

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CONSERVATION COMMISSION

February 22: With Commission members Freddy Friedman, John Schreiber, and Nanci Worthington present, the meeting began with an approval, with several minor edits, of the minutes of last month's meeting.

The Commission then moved to the only item on the agenda – the public hearing for the Request For Determination submitted by Emily Renshaw and Mico Menchetti of Morgan, Lewis and Bockius LLP on behalf of their clients, Margaret and Joseph Koerner of 2128 Canaan Southfield Road. The Commission reviewed the status of correspondence between Morgan, Lewis and Bockius and New Marlborough Town Counsel Jeremia Pollard. The commission agreed to continue the hearing until next month.

With no additional hearings scheduled, the commission reviewed the mail. Two forest cutting plans were received – one for Norfolk Road Nominee Trust for eighty-five

acres off Norfolk Road and the second for Thomas Tkacz for fifty-two acres off Rhoades and Bailey Road.

Finally, the Commission returned to a discussion of the Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act and its suitability for adoption by the Town, with Town resident Molly Crine joining in. Ms. Worthington reviewed the intention of the act and the aspects that address watersheds and storm water run-off. The commission voted unanimously to continue consideration of the act, including recommending areas above 1,400 feet in elevation and slopes greater than fifteen percent be covered under the Act. The members agreed to display a map of New Marlborough designating 1,400 foot elevations and geographic areas with 15 percent slope at the next meeting.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned. □

Martha Bryan

IT'S MONUMENTAL

Native Sons Who Served in the Revolutionary War Are Memorialized

A project that began with a simple request from the distant grandson of a onetime resident of New Marlborough is at last a gleaming reality. As reported last September, the Board of Selectmen received a letter from one Tom Adams, asking that a plaque be put up somewhere in town honoring New Marlborough's Moses Adams, a veteran of the Revolutionary War who died at Valley Forge in 1777. With Burial/Soldier Grave Agent Courtney Turner on board, the request soon expanded into a recognition of all 223 men from New Marlborough who served in the war, and on March 5, that vision saw the light of day — an eleven-foot monument reaching for the sky outside the New Marlborough Town Library.

The project, eventually costing about \$20,000, was financed by New Marlborough's American Legion Post 350 and the Pomeroy Sons of the American Revolution, the nearest branch of the SAR, located in Northampton. It also received a wealth of volunteer and at-cost help. Tom Adams, a California resident, developed a program to scan and screen eighteen volumes of war registries – the state had put them online – each with thousands of names. Mr. Turner, together with Berkshires historian James Parrish and New Marlborough resident Ann Riou,



Courtney Turner and the monument he championed — the smaller plaque is dedicated to Moses Adams.

helped refine the list. Mount Everett Sanitation excavated a five-foot deep foundation and discovered an older foundation about three feet down that Mr. Turner believes are the remains of a creamery that predated the library. Michael White Construction oversaw the project and poured the cylindrical base, contained by a specially fabricated piece of flexible plywood with a value of \$1,000, contributed by Maxymillian Construction of Pittsfield. Richard Atwood of Housatonic installed the two massive pieces of granite.

The monument dwarfs the town's other two war memorials, which now stand to the left of the entrance to the library. Asked about the obelisk that more than doubles the height of the structure, Mr. Turner says that it is similar to those on other Revolutionary

War monuments. Besides, the 223 New Marlborough men (20 are buried in town cemeteries) who served in the War of Independence outnumber the town's veterans of every war since, combined: 22 in World War I, 88 in World War II, 13 in the Korean conflict, and 46 in Vietnam.

The monument "grew and blossomed, grew and blossomed," says Mr. Turner. "We can be proud of this community, which really put its heart into it." □

Joe Poindexter

TOWN'S LARGEST EMPLOYER?

The Farm New Marlborough

By Barry R. Shapiro

(This is the last in a series of articles on the egg producers in town.)

Sitting down at a table in his farm store, sunlight beaming in through the window, Tom Brazie does not hide his feelings about how he spends his days. "I love farming," he says. "I've always been attracted to it."

With family roots in New Marlborough stretching back to the 1700s, Tom, now 41, grew up working the hundreds of acres owned by his family. "We had a family cow and chickens. Traditions in my family were passed down from generation to generation and I grew up on the family land. We knew our responsibility was to take care of the land."

Given his family's ties to the land, it is not surprising that, early in life, Tom began setting out his long-term plan to become a farmer.

"I started a landscaping business when I graduated from Mount Everett High School, but I actually had lawnmowing customers going back to when I was only nine years old. I considered my lawn-mowing to be a step toward farming. When I could, I started collecting animals and putting them on my family's land, not for commercial purposes, but for my family's use. I also started buying equipment that I could use for farming. My one goal was to make enough money through the landscaping business so that I could retire from that and become a full-time farmer."

By 2012, Tom had taken some small steps toward his dream, selling meat from farm-raised animals. "People were paying attention to where their food was coming from, and I was getting excited about one day soon starting my career as a farmer, but I was still making my living from my landscaping business."

Tom's landscaping career, however, came to an abrupt halt in 2017 when a catastrophic garage fire destroyed all of his equipment along with that of some other local businesses. "I took this as a sign that it was time to start farming and I turned to Joel Salatin for inspiration."

Salatin is a well-known guru to many young farmers, and promotes what he describes as "environmentally responsible, ecologically beneficial, sustainable agriculture."

Tom began reading Salatin's writings and took the time to meet with him before crafting his own sustainable



Tom Brazie at the entrance to one of his mobile chicken coops.

photo by Barry R. Shapiro

approach to farming and deciding that, in fact, "farming could be a way to make a living."

Coincidentally, in 2017, the defunct Kolburne School in New Marlborough came up for sale. One half of the School's property had been purchased by the New Marlborough Land Trust, but the other half lay dormant until Martha Bryan, executive director of the Land Trust, suggested that Tom look into the Kolburne School land and buildings as a possible site for his farm.

"Martha pushed me," said Tom. "She encouraged me to consider the land for my dream farm and told me to 'think outside the box.'"

With the help of an angel investor from Monterey (the investor was a customer of Tom's landscaping business), Tom finally achieved his goal of having his own farm, acquiring the Kolburne land and

school buildings for \$400,000 (the loan runs for five years at which point Tom will either refinance with the existing investor or seek other financing).

"The school had everything I needed. There's 140 acres for grazing and, in the future, for hay production. The school's gym became my hay barn. The dorm hallways were wide enough for a wheelbarrow, so some dorm rooms became farrowing suites for my hogs and others for my brood chicks. The buildings near the road, which were dairy and hay barns, are now where my farm store is located. It's perfect."

There's even room for possible expansion.

"Perhaps the buildings just up the road which now have a pool and classrooms and which I'm not currently using could be a community center for our town. There's plenty of room for a football field and baseball diamond. Also, why not also a new town hall?"

With those expansion ideas on hold for now, Tom concentrates on his extensive farming operation which includes a thriving flock of egg-laying hens.

"We have between four and five hundred egg layers in the summer and they produce over 60,000 eggs a year. I have two mobile coops, and I rotate them around the land regularly. The flock is a mixture of Barred Rock,

Australorp, and Rhode Island Reds, all brown egg layers. They eat a great diet of whatever they forage in the pasture along with grain sourced from Berkshire and Columbia County farmers. The hens are usually culled after two years. Eggs are sold at the farm store and used at both Cantina 229 and Gedney Farm. We overwinter them at a greenhouse at my home on South Sandisfield Road. We also have 1,200 to 1,500 meat chickens during the season, a herd of fifty Hereford steers, six sows, two boars and about 100 feeder pigs."

Tom grows particularly animated when discussing the symbiotic relationship between the land and his animals.

"There are basically three types of farms: Degenerative, such as industrial farms, which give nothing back to the land; sustainable farms, such as dairy farms which try to give back to the soil what they take out; and regenerative farms, which is what we try to accomplish. In these farms, we try to build up the soil and increase the microbial activity so that we can increase production. We use the animals to achieve this. This approach allows the soil to capture more carbon and to retain more water.

"All of my animals work together, and I consider them my partners and employees. They are great, happy employees and work for food! In fact," Tom jests, "if you count my animals, I'm probably the biggest employer in town!"

"The cows are the renovators. They go out and prune the grass while they graze. Their first bite removes one-third of the grass, which is perfect for it to grow strong and healthy. It's important for the cows to take just one bite. A second bite suppresses growth allowing undesirable grasses to compete. After they've done that, I move them. They leave behind nicely cut grass and lots of manure, about fifty pounds of manure per cow per day, all of which promotes nice dark grass.

"Then my laying hens, the 'janitors' move in, three days after the cows leave. Because of the life cycle of the fly larvae, the chickens attack the cow patties looking for fly larvae and spread the manure over the land. The land gets fertilized and the flies are gone because the chickens have eaten them.

"After the chickens are done, I move the cows back in. They're happy because the grass is good, and the patties have been spread out. Cows don't like grazing where the patties are, so there's a nice cooperation between the cows and chickens. The cows are happy and run and kick their legs up when they go out into the field. And you don't want to stand between the chicken coop door and the field when I open it to let them out to start their janitorial work. Feathers and birds come flying out and they go crazy over the manure."

The contribution to the land doesn't stop with the cows and chickens. Pigs are let loose in the woods and do a great job of clearing areas that will be used in the future for grazing.

Tom's hope is that his animal partners will help the Farm New Marlborough grow and scale up without any huge infrastructure that would negatively impact the town's landscape.

"My objective is to heal the earth and heal the community with better quality food, both of which are big pluses. I love this town and hope that one day we can provide enough food here for everyone. I also want as much community participation as possible and enjoy hosting Friday night dinners and farm tours."

Tom's commitment to his hometown is evident even from the farm's name.

"I wanted to get 'farm plates' which allow me to run vehicles on the road under a farm registration. It's a daunting task. Acquiring farm plates puts the farm on the map in the state of Massachusetts and makes it official. I had always called the farm 'Idle Hour Farm' after the name of the road I grew up on. I loved the name, but it didn't fit the farm the way I wanted it to. After scratching my head for a long while, my wife Laurel finally asked me, 'What words are important to have in the name of the farm?' My response was simple. 'Farm' and 'New Marlborough'. She quickly announced, 'The Farm New Marlborough, keep it simple!' The more I thought about the name and the more I thought about my mission of raising food for our community, the more fitting it became. We have 'The Town Hall, The Town Highway Department, The Town Library, The Town Transfer Station', etc. Why wouldn't we have The Farm New Marlborough? And so, it is."

When not busy at the farm, Tom spends time with his wife Laurel, a Stockbridge native, and their two children, Foster, age five, and Adeline, also known as Fig, who is one year old. Competing for Tom's attention are his Border Collie, Dudley, cats, Withers and Ruby, his goat, Lady, and his milk cow, Serafina. Oh, and some chickens and one duck.

"The family loves my eggs," says Tom.

Gazing out at the field behind the farm store, Tom smiles.

"We've accomplished so much here in such a short time and I'm grateful for the community support. It's very exciting to watch. Everything on my farm works together, we are now giving back to the land more than we're taking, and it's really incredible to watch it all happen." □



Photo by Barry R. Shapiro

*Ann Getsinger has created this panoply of Berkshire flora and fauna for all of us.
Get out your colored pencils and make Spring happen in your home!*



Mourning Cloak Butterfly. American Robin. Eastern Painted Turtle. Jack in the Pulpit. Morel Mushroom. Fiddlehead Fern. Northern Leopard Fro



g. Dandelion. Red Trillium. Wild Violet. Trout Lily. Spring Peeper. Wintergreen. Lady's Slipper. Earthworm. Sheet Moss. Rock Cap Moss. Acorn.

NEIGHBORS



Sharon and George Fleck, of Mill River Great Barrington Road celebrated a landmark birthday in early March: On Friday, March 6, George turned ninety years old. Two groups of their respective children, along with spouses and grandkids, arrived to join the festivities. One group came for a birthday dinner on Friday. The second group came on Saturday and celebrated with dinner at Cantina 229, where this picture was taken.



photo by Sharon's daughter, Karen

George and Sharon Fleck at Cantina, celebrating George's ninetieth birthday.

On July 1, **John Weinstein**, of Mill River village, will go to work as the next provost of Bard College at Simon's Rock. He had worked for years in the Bard High School

early colleges, first on the faculty of New York City's program; he later set up an early college in Newark, New Jersey. For the past three years he has been Bard's dean of early colleges.

The role of provost at Simon's Rock involves a combination of academic and operational activities. One of John's goals is to increase the presence of the college in Great Barrington. He noted that there are many activities and programs at the college that town residents could enjoy if communication was increased. John observed, "We don't have a town/gown situation in Great Barrington because the 'gown' presence is minimal. I'd like to change that."

The provost has a residence on campus in Great Barrington, so John and his husband, **Brian Mikesell**, will be moving there. "All of a sudden we'll become week-enders," said John, "and we'll be voting in Great Barrington!" Their home in Mill River will still provide them with a quiet getaway.

The Wrestling **Lupianis** are still at it. Following the footsteps of their winning championship brothers **Bradley (23), Anthony (19),** and father **David (coach),**



photo courtesy of Simon's Rock College

John Weinstein, the incoming provost at Bard College at Simon's Rock in Great Barrington

junior **Zachary (16)** and freshman **Nicholas (15)** both won in their respective weight classes at the Western Mass Tournament, qualifying them for the state tournament at Methuen High School. Zachary placed third in the Division 3 tournament. He has won numerous regional tournaments, frequently being named Most Valuable Player; he earned his 100th win this year, as a junior. Nicholas is the first Mount Everett freshman to compete in the state finals, and placed second. There's one more brother coming along: **Connor, (12),** is currently a sixth grader, and shows great promise in continuing the family tradition. □

compiled by Barbara Lowman: deeuell@yahoo.com



photo by Danna Lupiani

At the Western Mass Tournament at Taconic High School, Zachary (left) won his tournament and was named MVP; Nicholas (right) won in his weight class. Between them is their brother, Bradley, himself a former wrestling champion.

Thank You to Our Contributors:

Ed & Dorothy Ostrander; Elizabeth & Eugene Rosenberg; Lawrence Rosenthal & Joyce Bernstein;
Janet S. Brown; Julie Sandorf

OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

photo by Chris Morrissey



A burly bobcat strides through the Morrissey side yard

Chris Morrissey wrote on March 4 of his **bobcat** sightings around his home near Lake Buel, one of which occurred right in the middle of Hillside Avenue, heading up toward the Mill River Great Barrington Road. And, around 8:15 a.m. two Sundays earlier, from an upstairs window he was able to catch sight of “a thirty-five-pound male followed by a twenty-five-pound or so companion, thirty feet behind. By the way, an incredibly powerful looking animal.”

Scottie Mills checked in from her home in New Marlborough village on March 9, “I heard my first **woodcock** last night! Spring is coming!” And then two days later, “**Frogs!** Hopping across the road last night!” In subsequent days, Scottie also heard many **wood frogs** and saw **caddis fly larvae** in a shallow pond.

Nicole Campanale, who lives over near Caulkins Cross Road, wrote the following on March 12: “While walking on our new driveway this evening Will, Henry, and I saw some **moose tracks!**”

Don Beauchamp, from the southern climes of Clayton wrote on March 16 to say, “Lar, had a really good month with bird sightings! On Feb 18, I had a close viewing of an **eagle**, plus the first **red-winged blackbird**. Then all the regulars at the feeder, and plenty of **bluebirds** around. The first week of March brought **bufflehead ducks**, **wood ducks**, close **coyotes**, and **woodcocks**. Then **chickadees** in bluebird house. Yesterday, a young **Coopers hawk** flew right in front of me on top of Collins hill, and then today on the Clayton Mill River Road, another **Coopers**, who kindly sat in tree for a photo op. Also many frogs, but no peepers yet.”

Don mentions seeing **red-wings**, and others around town have been seeing unusually large flocks of them, some travelling together with **starlings** and **grackles**. **Liz Goodman** has seen them in great numbers in Clayton,

as has **Eugene Cleary** in New Marlborough village. Quite often during the middle weeks of March, an enormous flock, maybe close to 1,000, had been descending upon **Larry and Jane Burke’s** place on Woodruff Mountain. The cacophony is wonderful! Larry took a number of photos of the birds, including the one seen here, which shows just a small fraction of the flock in flight, and which he then pushed in a bit of an expressionistic direction with Photoshop. □

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



photo by Nicole Campanale

A moose's footprint, with Nicole Campanale's hand for scale



photos by Don Beauchamp



In descending order, a male wood duck, a Cooper's hawk, and a bluebird

photo by Larry Burke



A study in black and red (if you go to nm5vn.org!)

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

This month's recipe from Mel Podsiadlo uses simple, staple ingredients that combine to produce something comforting and delicious. With the possibility that we will all be spending much of April in our homes, this recipe is a perfect way to spend an afternoon – kneading the dough, mashing potatoes, and assembling the pierogi in a slow and relaxing way. And if you are suddenly looking for homeschool inspiration, cooking not only includes math and science, but can be expanded to include English Language Arts and social studies (E.g., write a paragraph on the history of pierogies) and even gym (it's hard work to knead!).

Fiona Kerr

Mel's Grandma's Pierogies

I moved to the U.S. from my home in Montreal over twenty years ago and, after feeling out of sorts in a number of places, when we moved to New Marlborough I finally felt like I was home. The landscape, the culture, and the sense of community reminded me in many ways of the things I was searching for from my childhood. Unfortunately, the one thing that's missing is much of my family. Food has become an increasingly important way to feel connected to the people I love dearly but don't get to see often. One of the most celebrated things we eat on special occasions is my grandmother's pierogies. She is still a very spirited woman but being her early 90s, she finds this dish too laborious to make. It warms my heart that my husband Dave has taken over the tradition of making the pierogies. Some years ago, I visited my grandmother and had my mom video tape her as she demonstrated her pierogi-making, step by step. Every year since, Dave watches the video before beginning the hours-long process and follows my grandmother's recipe religiously. Despite his vigilance, every year my grandmother reliably finds something to critique: "You need to add more cheese!" "Did you use any salt?" Fortunately, Dave finds my grandmother's needling to be a sign he's part of the family. And anticipating what this year's critique will be has become a fond part of the family tradition.

Mel Podsiadlo

Grandma's Pierogies

Ingredients

4 cups of unsifted flour	2 Lbs of Idaho potatoes, mashed
1 Tsp of salt	3 Tbsp of butter
2 Tbsp of oil	1 onion chopped
2 egg yolks	2 cups of grated sharp cheddar
1 cup of very hot water	Salt pepper to taste

- Combine flour and salt
- Add oil to hot water
- Beat egg yolks then add to water
- Add egg yolk and water mixture to flour
- Knead then let sit covered with a bowl for 30 minutes
- Roll dough until thin (approximately the width of ravioli dough)
- Fry onions in butter, then mix with cheese and mashed potatoes
- Cut dough into circles that are approximately 3-1/2 inches in diameter
- Place approximately 1 Tbsp of potato mixture to the center of the circle then fold in half
- Pinch the edges of the circle with fingers, taking care to not get any potato in the seal
- Boil pierogie in water. Set timer to 5 minutes once pierogies float to the surface then strain
- Fry the pierogies in butter and serve



LAND TRUST NEWS

First the good news...the Spring Equinox has arrived. Daylight is increasing. Spring is here!

We are so lucky to live in a town where there are many exceptional opportunities to get outdoors right outside your kitchen door. It is wonderful to see that our trails and properties are being enjoyed by significant numbers of people. In these times of emotional stress, stepping out into fresh air and sunlight is healing for the spirit. And, while keeping a prudent distance, a hike in the company of others provides comfort and a reaffirmation of community. Hope you can get out there and take a deep breath. The mosses in the woods are at their peak green right now! The spring ephemerals will show their beauty any day now.

If you are looking for some suggestions for hiking trails, pick up a copy of our Trail Guide: *A Guide to Eleven Hiking Trails in New Marlborough, Second Edition*. The Bookloft in Great Barrington and the New Marlborough Library have copies for sale, or request a copy by writing nmlandtrust@gmail.com.

Once the Covid-19 situation stabilizes, our Land Trust volunteers will hit the trails. We have plans for property improvements, trail maintenance, installing new kiosks at both the New Marlboro Preserve and the Goodnow Preserve, new trail signage and maps, and nature programming. Can't wait until the coast is clear and we can safely work together.

The Spring Road Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, April 25. Only if it is safe to do so, we will gather volunteers for roadside spring cleaning.

And the other good news...the Red Hot Blues Bash, originally scheduled for April 18, will be held on a date later this year. When the time is right we promise an exceptional evening of food, music, and cheer in celebration of our community and of the land we all share and love. I have a feeling by then we will all need a big party!

Be safe and keep well. Take care of yourselves and others. Remember the peace found in nature and on the trails.
Martha Bryan

SUPER TUESDAY PRIMARY RESULTS

It seems like about a century ago, with all that has landed on our doorstep since March 3, but be that as it may, we did have our Presidential primary here, which happened to be the maiden voyage of the Town's new voting machine. The results were as follows:

Total number of votes cast: 437 (of 1,041 on the Town voting list).

Democrats cast 391 of those votes.

- Biden – 146
- Sanders – 100
- Warren – 86
- Bloomberg – 47

(Plus a few random votes, probably through early voting, of candidates who had dropped out).

- Republicans cast 45 votes.
 - Trump – 33
 - Weld – 7
 - Walsh – 3
 - (Plus a few random votes)

The Libertarians cast 1 vote.

Larry Burke



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THE LOG

Police Department (selected entries)

- Feb. 1 4:01 p.m. With the assistance of environmental police from Norfolk, an officer rescues an ATV-er whose vehicle has broken down in the vicinity of East Indies Pond, Cookson State Forest.
- Feb. 2 3:21 p.m. Officer assists a driver who has locked herself out of her car on Mill River Southfield Road.
- Feb. 4 9:24 a.m. A dog owner reports that her husky has taken off for the woods behind her house on Knight Road.
- Feb. 6 9:30 a.m. A resident reports her concern for the safety of both her own dog and that of a visiting dog that has roamed loose on her Brewer Hill Road property and on the roadway itself.
- Feb. 7 2:22 p.m. A nearby resident reports a vehicle rollover on South Sandisfield Road.
- Feb. 8 8:16 p.m. The Highway Department is alerted after a caller reports a dead deer on the shoulder of Hartsville New Marlborough Road.
- Feb. 9 4:12 a.m. An investigation of a "strange odor of gas" reported by a Southfield village resident reveals that the smell comes from a decaying animal.
- Feb. 10 10:24 a.m. A car hits a tree on South Sandisfield Road.
- Feb. 11 5:33 a.m. A vehicle rolls over on Mill River Great Barrington Road.
- Feb. 12 4:52 p.m. A Clayton Mill River Road resident reports her suspicions of a caller in the area claiming to be a solar panel salesman.
- 6:38 p.m. A BOLO (be on the lookout) is ordered for a Southfield resident who had not returned after leaving his home on a Berkshire Regional Transport Authority bus at 8:00 a.m. that morning.
- Feb. 14 12:46 p.m. A caller reports two vehicles speeding in excess of 100 miles per hour westbound on Route 57.
- Feb. 15 5:25 p.m. A Clayton Mill River Road resident reports that her cat was struck by a passing car.
- Feb. 16 5:05 p.m. An officer assists a driver who has locked himself out of his van in Southfield village.
- Feb. 17 9:54 a.m. A caller registers her dissatisfaction with the lack of Police Department effectiveness in curbing speeding past her Clayton Mill River Road residence.
- Feb. 18 8:20 p.m. An officer transports the driver and his passenger to their Pine Street residence after their vehicle slides into a tree on Downs Road.
- Feb. 19 4:20 p.m. A real estate agent reports the forced entry into a home on Hayes Hill Road on which he has a listing.
- Feb. 24 5:39 p.m. A Hayes Hill Road resident concerned about a rabid raccoon under the house is advised to call back if the raccoon emerged.
- 11:48 p.m. A caller, reporting her suspicions of a driver who stopped at her residence off New Marlborough Hill Road to ask for directions to a town in Connecticut, is instructed to call back if the driver returned.
- Feb. 25 12:10 a.m. National Grid is informed of a tree on wires on New Marlborough Hill Road.
- 3:59 p.m. A Have-a-Heart trap is set up after a Hayes Hill Road resident reports an injured raccoon in her yard.
- Feb. 28 2:53 p.m. Verizon notified of phone wires down at the intersection of Norfolk and East Hill Roads.
- Feb. 29 10:27 a.m. An officer assists a driver whose vehicle is disabled on Hartsville New Marlborough Road.
- 11:00 p.m. An officer, investigating a Jeep Wrangler idling on River Road, instructs the occupants, an eighteen-year-old male and a sixteen-year-old female naked in the back seat, to move on.

Graham Frank, Chief of Police



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FIRE AND RESCUE

Feb. 1 6:29 p.m. Hotchkiss Road Missing Person
 Feb. 6 12:04 p.m. Underwood Road Medical Call
 Feb. 7 2:24 p.m. South Sandisfield Road MVA
 Feb. 9 4:16 a.m. Norfolk Road Odor of Gas
 Feb. 11 12:17 a.m. Sisson Hill Road Odor of Gas
 Feb. 11 5:40 a.m. Mill River Great Barrington Road MVA
 Feb. 12 11:01 a.m. Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call
 Feb. 14 8:10 p.m. Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call

Feb. 15 3:34 p.m. Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call
 Feb. 16 8:00 a.m. East Hill Road Medical Call
 Feb. 16 5:30 p.m. Underwood Road Medical Call
 Feb. 18 5:26 a.m. Norfolk Road CO Alarm
 Feb. 18 8:20 p.m. Downs Road MVA
 Feb. 27 5:16 p.m. Mutual Aid to Sheffield Medical Call
Fire Company President David Smith

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BREAD BUSINESS RISING

By Robbi Hartt

Biblical arguments aside, some are wondering right now, is it possible to live by bread alone? Listening as the news projections change in hourly increments, we appear to be participating in a forced experiment that will test the answer to that question. As all of the Southern Berkshires plundered Big Y and Price Chopper last week buying toilet paper and cans of tuna and tomato soup, the challenge of how to get our daily bread hit many people. Fortunately, Mill River's own Travis Brecher, of Creature Bread, has a solution "on offer" — plain, country loaves and other varieties, all sourdough, all organic, \$8 each.

Was it watching his mom, Louise, bake her own bread when he was a child that sparked Brecher's interest in breadmaking? "Maybe that had some influence," Travis acknowledges, "but I was more influenced by my love of enjoying bread and spending time with friends." For someone who grew up outside of New York City, spent the first part of his career reporting for Reuters in Egypt, and then continued in journalism in Baltimore, this may seem like a surprising passion and career path. After moving to Mill River a year and a half ago, however, Travis rediscovered the beauty of working with his hands.

"I've always been a hobbyist mechanic, which I guess is similar in a way," he explains. While producing videos on the Arab Spring and endless war updates for Reuters, by the end of each day he had, at best, produced "a virtual reality." The next day, the blank computer screen stared back again, waiting for a new lead from him. Now he finds



Travis Brecher, in a moment of repose...with loaves
photo by Robbi Hartt

"keeping it small" and the idea of a "starter" that originated long ago and feeds itself daily incredibly satisfying. He began baking bread as a hobby, but 1,000 loaves into it, he decided to start selling at a local farmer's market. Although he had no intention of starting a business, he has slowly become New Marlborough's "local baker," selling roughly 100 loaves a week to neighbors and local businesses.

Collaborating with Tom Brazie of The Farm New Marlborough was a natural fit for Travis. "Tom is focused on good, local, ethics-based farming practices," Travis

notes, adding "I liked his commitment to being about the right way for a community to eat." He later began selling his bread at Equinox/Mill River Farm as well. He has also recently partnered with Matthew Rubiner of Rubiner's cheesemongers and Josh Irwin and Emily Rachel of Mooncloud, restaurant, both in Great Barrington, providing bread to accompany sandwiches and locally sourced charcuterie plates.

While each loaf weighs between 550 and 650 grams, the process of baking bread is a great physical workout—part Bikram yoga (with multiple ovens firing at 500 degrees) and part forearm workout (each loaf baked in a heavy cast-iron Dutch oven with a lid). Mentally, however, it allows time and space for other exercise, sometimes in the form of listening to podcasts, sometimes catching up on the phone with friends. Tending to the process is critical, as just a few seconds can make a difference in



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the crust and hydration, but there is also a comforting routine and rhythm in the art of breadmaking.

If you are looking for simple ingredients, it doesn't get more basic than this: starter, organic flour, water, and salt. For that reason, it really is all about the starter, which is essentially live, wild yeast. Travis was gifted his starter from a good friend in California, and he credits much of his success to that starter. But self-fed yeast only gets you so far. The two-stage prepping process requires twelve-sixteen hours, four to ferment and eight-twelve to rise. But what really sets his bread apart, as anyone who has become addicted to it knows, is the careful steaming and baking process of the final hour, which produces a memorable outer crust (if you're not a European hard crust lover, stick to your Wonder Bread) and amazingly soft interior.

Travis takes the "oven fresh" distinctive quality of his bread very seriously, noting that he usually sells his loaves within ten minutes of taking them out of the oven, while they are still warm to the touch. "They're never more than two-three hours out of the oven," he promises.

In addition, Travis enjoys experimenting with new flavors and ingredients — rosemary loaves, sesame loaves, golden raisin loaves, with orange zest and toasted coriander and fennel seeds, and more. Some of these ideas come from well-known chefs like Chad Robertson of Tartine in San Francisco. Others come from Travis's

past connections, including an Iranian roommate who encouraged him to infuse Persian influences into his traditional breads, resulting in his caramelized onion and turmeric loaf. A slice of raisin bread with cheddar cheese is an unforgettable breakfast, but it also works with olive oil and balsamic vinegar for a sweet-savory appetizer. Travis Brecher, your local baker, recently established a new name, Creature Bread, for his business, based on his love of Edward Gorey drawings and the way they suit the wild creature, yeast. Unfortunately, when he asked for permission to use a Gorey drawing for his logo, he was turned down.

With the constantly evolving updates on the global pandemic, everyone is changing their routines. This makes Travis's business less predictable and more vulnerable in some ways, since fresh bread should be eaten within a day or two — who knows when the local farmers' markets will resume? It also has opened up an incredible opportunity for Travis to serve his local community even more. His Wednesday and Saturday farm stand sales have now turned to email orders and home deliveries, bringing the comfort of home-made bread to a time and place eager for the physical and emotional nurture that only "love of enjoying bread and spending time with friends"— or family — can provide. □

To place your orders, email Travis Brecher at: creaturebread@gmail.com



SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPORT

At the March 12 School Committee meeting, the issue that preoccupied all present was the Covid-19 virus and its impact on the District, but first, members proceeded to consider the FY21 budget for timely action in order to meet town meeting requirements. No discussion was needed since the March 5 meeting included the public hearing on the budget, where all questions were answered. The PowerPoint and budget booklet presented are on line at <https://www.sbrsd.org/budget.html>. Also, the finance subcommittee had met numerous times during the budget-building process and heard the rationale for every item from faculty and administration. At those meetings, members were able to discuss their concerns with Superintendent Beth Regulbuto, who then made adjustments accordingly. The budget passed unanimously.

Ms. Regulbuto was then asked to give an update on the

ever-changing information that she was getting about the protocols for schools to protect students and staff from the virus. At that time the message from the state was to wipe surfaces, as well as make sure students had tissues for sneezes and coughs and not come to school if they felt unwell. Only when there was an active case in the school community would the District shut down. Members gave their opinions about the need to close the schools. After discussion it was determined that, without a change to existing policy, the superintendent, not the School Committee, holds the authority to close down the District. Ms. Regulbuto announced that the Berkshire County superintendents had agreed that any decision should be county-wide and that on the next day they would meet again to determine the appropriate action. She assured the committee that she would share

information as soon as there was clarity.

As it happened, early the next morning, Friday, March 13, Ms. Regulbuto closed all schools in the District for that day. A message to parents said this was a precautionary measure to do a deep cleaning and disinfection, with the intention of having the schools reopen on Monday. She spent that day participating in conference calls with the commissioner of Education, the State Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, and the Berkshire County Superintendents. The resulting decision was to close Berkshire County schools for two weeks, to reopen on March 30. This precipitous closure left teachers and students wondering about items they had left in school. The school buildings were opened on Saturday and Monday so everyone could retrieve needed items while practicing social distancing.

Over that weekend, superintendents were on numerous conference calls with the Commissioner of Education and other state agencies. By Sunday, March 15, the directive had changed to close all school buildings through April 6. As of now, schools are closed to everyone.

All administrators and their support staff have been working remotely, putting in long hours to keep up with the latest directives from the state. They meet through the conferencing app Zoom to work on how to best manage the fast-changing landscape. There are complex contractual issues to be determined for teachers, staff, and bus companies. While there is a desire to provide educational support to students, there are legal issues that require equity for all students when it comes to on-line learning. As this is being written, only enrichment suggestions are allowed. Dr. Amy E. Lyn, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development has posted suggested resources at <https://www.sbrsd.org/enrichment-activities.html>. This link is also posted in the banner on sbrsd.org.

For families who do not have computers, Technology Director Chris Thompson was on campus March 19 to sign out laptop computers. The school is also making ac-

THE “NO SCHOOL” REPORT

By Jane Burke

Waking up to no school on Friday March 13 might not have felt like anything other than a snow day. In fact, the first days of the school closure are being counted as snow days by the state. So far there is no required learning for students. The state is only allowing the schools to encourage enrichment learning opportunities. It is unclear what the role of teachers will be during this time. With so much uncertainty in the air, what is actually going on at homes in New Marlborough to comply with social distancing and help keep children learning? Several families responded to my

tivity packets available for elementary school students. The District worked with community partners and now provides daily breakfast and lunch bags that can be picked up on weekdays from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Undermountain Elementary School. This is managed by Director of Food Services Jeremy Wells. If you wish to receive meals contact him with the number of meals you need at: meals@sbrsd.org or 413-248-0727. Delivery is available to those who need it.

It seems now like the very distant past that the School Committee gathered on February 24 for another special meeting, the third in a series of professional development sessions led by Liz Lafond of Massachusetts Association of School Committees. In keeping with the District goals of continuous improvement, the Committee has participated in trainings about roles and responsibilities, the open meeting law, and in setting committee goals. At this meeting, topics were self-evaluation and school committee goals. According to veteran members, this is the first time a SBRSD School Committee has undertaken a self-evaluation. The group felt it important to do so since faculty, administrators, and superintendent all participate in this process. The first step will be an online survey that requires full participation from the Committee to get a picture of how it sees itself. At a previous meeting the Committee had identified its goal of increasing public understanding of role of the Committee through the creation of a School Committee Handbook. A plan was developed to attempt to complete the handbook by early fall ahead of the November election. It will provide much needed information for new members and clarify to all stakeholders the School Committee's role, processes, and procedures.

It is anticipated that the next regular School Committee meeting on April 2 will be held virtually via Zoom. The governor has waived many of the open meeting requirements in order to allow government to operate. A full transcript of the meeting will be provided. □

Jane Burke, Chair, SBRSD School Committee

email request for information:

One family with three children is enjoying some unstructured time together. The two younger children go to private school where state constraints do not apply. That means that teachers are sending them work to do – posting worksheets, offering online classes, and checking in on them. Doing a worksheet in the woods seems to be a nice change, and the online platform gives the opportunity to interact with fellow students. The high school student in this family attends public school. To stay in touch with friends, he hikes with them at the Goodnow

Preserve or other open space in New Marlborough. He said, "Socializing is very needed." In the beginning he thought it would be really easy, "but I found I really needed to talk to friends about what is happening. Without there being school, this free time doesn't feel like free time because you can't have kids over or do the usual things." He wonders what he can learn on his own, and math seems to be the biggest challenge without the teacher there.

Another email response, also from a three-child household tells a different story. They are all devastated that they can't go back to school to see their friends and teachers, and one even misses the academic parts of school! Their mother told me, "Like most parents, I realized quickly that we would all need a schedule and routine to stay sane through all of this. I found a Covid-19 Daily Schedule online and modified it to fit our family. We invested in online learning programs (ABC Mouse and Adventure Academy) to focus our homeschooling lessons and supplement with appropriate worksheets and inspire creative activities. I meet individually with each child for one hour every day for direct instruction and informal assessment of their progress. We try to have four hours outdoors every day. I feel so grateful to live in such a beautiful place with such awesome outdoor opportunities during this time."

Another parent said, "It is hard for parents. They are feeling isolated themselves. They are scrambling with their own work as well as struggling to keep their kids on task. Establishing routines is pretty important to limit screen time, have time dedicated to increasing writing skills, and time outside. Without anything prescribed from the school, a parent has to come up with other motivators." The report from that household is that it is fun



A private school student works online with his teacher and another student. photo by Kenzie Fields

not to be in school but not fun to be without friends.

In talking with a graduating senior, she said she hadn't thought that the school closure was really going to happen. Her big concern now is, "will we be able to have a graduation ceremony?" While it is too bad that the play she was working on might not happen, and the outcome of her AP English class is up in the air, she is not stressed about school being closed for now. She said, "Senior year has been much more laid back than junior year. We would be stop-

ping classes in late May anyway so it probably won't make much difference." For now, she has occasional babysitting jobs helping out parents who can't be home with their kids. She thinks she is taking the proper precautions and also staying away from vulnerable people.

David Travis of Mill River works for Khan Academy. This is an on-line learning organization that offers free on-line classes, lessons, and practice. They offer Learning Academy for Kids for grades two through seven and the Khan Academy for grades eight and up. In our interview, Mr. Travis stressed that the program is completely free. He said, "It is fully aligned with state standards and can be used in a number of ways. The math is especially well developed. Since the school closures, they have increased their capacity by 50 percent and their engineering team is working on increasing it further." He has also offered to create an informal tutorial for families who would like guidance in how to navigate the website. As mentioned in the School Committee report, other suggested resources are listed on the SBRSD.org website.

This is not like spring vacation. The needs of parents and children are high, but if we continue to share ideas and listen to each other, the children will benefit. □

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All interlibrary loan deliveries have been cancelled, so we are not placing holds at this time.

Our WiFi is accessible 24/7 and no passwords are required. This is accessible also from our parking lot.

Please know that our community’s safety is of the utmost importance to us. I am grateful to our very busy Town Health Inspector for his thoughtful input, as this was a very difficult decision for me to make. Your patience is appreciated, and any further updates will be delivered to you as soon as determinations are made.

Please always Please feel free to communicate any questions or concerns at newmarlborough@gmail.com. My staff and I stand ready to address them, and we look forward to seeing you once again in person once this health crisis abates.

Sincerely,

Deb O'Brien - Library Director



Racebrook Lodge invited the New Marlborough Library to help celebrate Dr Seuss’ Birthday. The Cat in the Hat (a.k.a Deb O’Brien) read Horton Hears a Who and we made Horton the Elephant crafts.

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

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

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