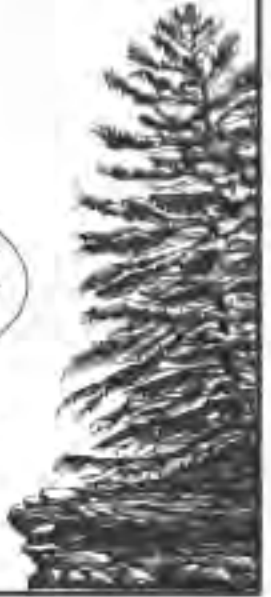




New Marlborough 5 Village News

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Clayton • Hartsville • Mill River • New Marlborough • Southfield

Annual Town Meeting: *The 2016 Warrant... in Brief*

by Larry Burke

The warrant for New Marlborough's Annual Town Meeting on Monday, May 2, begins with a notification to voters of the Town election on May 9. Along with elections of Town officers, there will be a Question 1, where the Town seeks permission of its inhabitants to go outside the limitations of Proposition 2 ½ to assess an additional \$300,000, "for the purposes of funding the operating budgets of the Town and Regional School..."

Moving to the articles that comprise the Warrant (there are thirty-eight in all), the first eleven are mostly procedural in nature, and these are the articles that are normally voted and approved in a matter of minutes. Article 12 seeks to affix the salaries of elected Town officers, and these are unchanged from FY16, with the exception of a \$604 increase to the Town Clerk. Article 13 covers the costs of Town government – salaries and expenses – and here there is an overall increase of just about \$15,000 over FY16 to \$365,642. These articles are recommended for passage by the Finance Committee, as is Article 14, Highway/Public Works, which asks for a \$21,649 increase over the \$973,673 budgeted for Fiscal Year 2016.



in Article 19, sees cutbacks in the care of Umpachene Park and the Village Green, and increases in Library expenses and salaries, for an overall modest increase of \$2,877 over last year. Article 20, which covers police, fire, and medical for the Town, is also a relatively small increase, from \$305,706 to \$310,940, the biggest upticks coming from police salaries and animal control officer salary and expenses.

Article 22 deals with health and human services, and almost all of the \$8,463 increase over last year is devoted to transfer station salaries and expenses. Article 23 addresses the Town's debts and interest on loans.

Many of the loans for older purchases are declining, with the ambulance and new Engine 1 incurring the largest payments. The total increase for this category is \$43,492, for a total of \$224,546.

Article 24 seeks to appropriate \$50,000 for the Stabilization Fund, recommended by the Finance Committee (as were Articles 19 – 23, and all the remaining monetary articles, for that matter), and this article requires a two-thirds vote of those eligible voters present at the Town Meeting for passage.

Article 25 covers all aspects of insurance and benefits for Town employees. There is a big spike in group insurance, up by \$54,831, some savings in workers' compensation, another increase in the Berkshire County Retirement fund, for a total increase of \$63,913. The request for this budget category for FY17 is \$504,461.

Articles 26 through 30 all have to do with the transfers of funds from Free Cash, and they are, respectively: \$165,000 for road repairs; \$140,000 for the purchase of a new excavator; \$50,000 to the Stabilization Account to fund future capital expenditures; \$48,000 for the purpose of buying a new police cruiser; and \$25,000 to buy, jointly with the town of Sheffield, a new asphalt hot box.

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Budgeting for the schools is dealt with in Articles 16 through 18. Article 18 proposes increasing the operating budget by \$155,530 and the capital account by \$23,574, for a total FY17 budget of \$2,587,082. The Finance Committee disapproves this article.

The budget for culture and recreation, covered

Democracy, continued from page 1

Article 33 is designed to give the Board of Selectmen the authorization to acquire the rights-of-way or clear ownership of several small parcels of land abutting the area around the Hadsell Street bridge, in preparation for the replacement of that bridge.

Article 34 seeks permission to change the name of the New Marlborough Monterey Road back to its former designation, North Road.

Passage of Article 35 would authorize the Town to increase the exemptions for the Senior Citizen Work-off Program.

The final article for the night, Article 38, concerns the proposed zoning amendments that would establish Village District boundaries and dimensional requirements for land located within. (See pp. 8 - 9 of the April issue of the NM5VN). □

PIX AND PAPERS:

Finding and Saving Our Town History

A special committee of the New Marlborough Historical Society is searching for old photos and paper records of any sort that will help tell the story of our town's history. The goal is then to get digital copies made and safely stored for future generations. We are looking for anything that sheds light on the history of local families, second-home folk, churches, clubs, sports teams, civic organizations, schools, farms, mills, workshops, studios, other businesses, town government, or whatever. So search your attic, dig around in the basement, and open up the drawer or closet that is stuffed with stuff to see what you can find.

We are interested in everything that helps tell the story about life in New Marlborough – from 1744 right up to the start of the twenty-first century. Then as a second step, the committee is seeking a grant from Boston to bring in a “roving archivist” to take a second look before deciding what’s really worth saving. Not all of it is! And finally, we are going to apply for additional grant funding to get digital copies made of all the good



stuff. Of course you get your originals back.

History matters! Please lend a hand. Members of the committee tasked with “Preserving the Records of Our Past” include Claudette Callahan, Kathy Chretien, David Hosford, Debbie O'Brien and Judy Thompson. All of us are still listed in the telephone book and more than happy to talk with anyone

who has oldies but goodies—photographs or paper footprints that show off New Marlborough. We appreciate your help! □

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THE VIEW FROM THE BOARD

Some weighty decisions lie in the hands of New Marlborough voters this year. We'll come together at Town Meeting on May 2 to determine the amounts and purposes for which the Town may levy taxes. The Town may not levy taxes for any amounts other than those determined at Town Meeting.

One week later, at the annual Town election, voters will be asked to allow the Town to raise the limit of taxes raised, otherwise known as a Proposition 2½ Override. The ballot question will be:

“Shall the Town of New Marlborough be allowed to assess an additional \$300,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of funding the operating budgets of the Town and Regional School for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2016?”

The budget being proposed for the Fiscal Year 2017 was developed with the following priorities:

- offer the very same services as Fiscal Year 2016.
- Provide employees with a cost-of-living increase that will maintain their level of take home pay, in the face of a significant medical insurance increase.
- Increase the pay of Highway Department personnel to better match other towns in the region.

The Board of Selectmen considers this a very modest approach to building the budget. Despite this minimal approach, the cumulative increases in costs outweigh the budget trimming. The total budget will exceed Proposition 2½ limits by approximately \$160,000. We are therefore asking for an override amount of \$300,000, and this likely raises many questions. Some are anticipated here:

Q: How did we get to the point of needing an override?

A: Though we are offering the same services, the cost of these services has increased. A few significant increases are in employee medical insurance, retirement fund, school assessment, and transfer station hauling. Combined with years of very little new growth, flat revenue, and flat/decreasing state aid, revenue growth does not come close to covering the increase in cost of current services.

Q: If the proposed budget exceeds the Prop 2½ limit by only \$160,000, why ask for a \$300,000 override?

A: For the reasons listed above, the Town's revenues increase at a slower rate than the cost of our services, and this is known as a structural deficit. To continue to provide our current services beyond the next fiscal year, we ask for this adjustment. If we were able to foresee economic deflation or a diminished need for services, we might ask for less but that is not the economic forecast for New Marlborough, Berkshire County, or the United States.

It's important to repeat that we cannot levy taxes for any purpose other than those approved at Town

Meeting. This override does not give the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, or Tax Collector the ability to raise taxes by any other amount.

Q: What happens if the Proposition 2½ ballot vote fails?

A: If the ballot vote is negative, the Board of Selectmen will propose an alternate budget with a decrease in our level of services and/or a decrease in our contribution to our capital plan. We'll have another, or continued, Town Meeting and we'll possibly have another date to vote on a new Proposition 2½ override question.

Q: Is it possible to use Free Cash to fund our operating budget and decrease the tax rate?

A: Yes, this is possible, and New Marlborough has done so in the past. While possible, it is not recommended by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and is not considered fiscally responsible. Doing so is similar to using personal savings to pay for living expenses like groceries and gasoline: It does not lead to a financially secure situation. New Marlborough has done this in the past while, at the same time, borrowing to purchase highway and ambulance vehicles and repair Town Hall. Each time, residents have voted to exempt repayment of borrowed amounts and interest from Proposition 2½. Repaying loans costs residents more than the purchase price of the equipment or repairs. We're asking for a change of approach: Let's reserve borrowing for very large amounts, and manage our operating expenses within Proposition 2½ under a new levy limit.

This year is truly a vote of our residents. If we decide we'd like to maintain the present level of services, we'll all have to pay more real estate taxes to do so. If we don't want taxes to increase by the proposed amount, we'll have to decrease the level of services provided. The choice is yours. □

Michele Shalaby



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ANNUAL TOWN ELECTIONS: STATEMENTS BY OUR CANDIDATES

Thirty voters turned out for the annual town caucus on March 29, which established the ballot for the Town election on May 9. All candidates were invited to submit statements for publication. The statements of those who responded appear below. The polls will be open at Town Hall in Mill River from noon to 7:00 p.m. on Monday, May 9.

► Moderator, one year: BARRY SHAPIRO

It has been my honor to have served as town moderator since my election last year. I have taken my new responsibilities very seriously. I joined the Massachusetts Moderators Association and have attended numerous meetings and training seminars of the Association, meeting with moderators from many other towns in Massachusetts from as far away as Martha's Vineyard, and learning the craft of being an effective moderator. I am excited to be standing now for reelection to this important position in our town. Having practiced corporate law for over four decades, having been trained as a mediator, and having served as the chair of many meetings and organizations, I believe that I can achieve an important balance at our Town Meetings. My objective is for everyone to feel comfortable speaking at Town Meeting and to encourage an open discussion of the important issues that we face in a collegial and friendly atmosphere where we can disagree without being disagreeable. I'd like to achieve this through dialogue while still having the proceedings move along briskly so that we can get our work done efficiently. I hope that I will have your vote and I would be happy to speak with anyone about my qualifications. Just call me at 229 3993. Thank you.

► Board of Selectmen, three years: MICHELE SHALABY

I feel honored to have served as your selectman for the last three years, and I ask that you will elect me for another three. I've learned much and believe New Marlborough can benefit from my continued efforts and knowledge. During another term, I will continue to improve our financial operations, oversee further capital planning and fulfillment, advocate for broadband service, insist that we get long-term school planning, and explore service sharing and consolidation.

It is a serious task to manage the operations of our Town, set policy, and propose budgets – budgets that strike a desired and responsible balance between service and tax levels. It is necessary to accomplish these tasks while maintaining civility, professionalism, and an informed mind, accompanied by clear and timely communication. We are obliged to conduct ourselves in a manner that is legal, ethical, inclusive and transparent. Every day, at every meeting and encounter, I strive to fulfill all.

Like most of us, I simply love living in New Marlborough and am grateful for my life here and the diversity of our residents. Thank you all for your contributions

to our community fabric. I truly enjoy the work of a selectman, feel like I'm "hitting my stride," and would like to continue to contribute to our town in this way. As always, I'm happy to hear from you. You can call me at home (229-9050) or send an email (micheleshalaby@gmail.com). See you at Town Meeting!

► Assessor, three years: MARSHA PSHENISHNY

I am running for re-election for a three-year term on the Board of Assessors. I have been an assessor for thirty years. I really like being able to help the people of our town. I have had the opportunity to meet a lot of nice people over the years.

I love the town of New Marlborough and would like to continue to serve the needs of the taxpayers. Thank you in advance for your support on Election Day.

► Planning Board, five years: PATRICIA HARDYMAN

As a member of the New Marlborough Planning Board, I will continue to work diligently with the other members of the Board to fulfill its responsibilities to:

- Implement the Comprehensive Plan;
- Serve as site plan review authority; and
- Update the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

While serving on the Planning Board during these last five years, I have worked with my colleagues to develop and implement a comprehensive plan that envisions the future of our town and sets realistic goals and objectives that address the competing interests of residents. We have worked diligently to update our subdivision rules and regulations in accordance with the vision identified in the Comprehensive Plan, thus helping to:

- Retain the small-town rural character;
- Preserve its natural beauty and resources; and
- Develop a range of housing options.

Since 1988 when I first wandered into New Marlborough, whether I am running or hiking its hills, gardening, or working in my home office, I am continuously reminded that New Marlborough is a gem. As a member of the Planning Board, I will continue to work with the Town's boards and commissions, local groups, and fellow residents of New Marlborough to plot a path for our gem that provides economic opportunities and homes, preserves our natural resources, and protects local wildlife and fish today and for the future generations.

► Library Trustee, three years: BRIAN MIKESSELL

My entire adult life has been devoted to libraries – as a professional librarian for fifteen years, and with work experience in libraries for another dozen years prior to that. I have been a library volunteer and an avid library user and reader my whole life, and I am currently the

director of the Alumni Library at Simon's Rock. I started by working as a student in my college library and literally worked my way up through many different positions in a number of different libraries.

It's easy to love the library, but it's also easy to take it for granted. If you haven't been to the New Marlborough Library recently, I want to encourage you to stop in. Not only do we have top-notch staff and volunteers, but also an amazing range of resources - from your favorite books and movies to high-speed internet access for your 21st century needs. Come to the library to knit or bring your child for the Lego Club. Find it online at the website (www.newmarlboroughlibrary.org) or find it on Facebook. Using the library is just a smart move. Given the rising cost of hardcover books, you could borrow a book from the library instead of purchasing it and save enough to take a friend to a movie! I'm a trustee because I want to make sure everyone in our town has access to a great library for recreation, learning, and work. The library — our library — is not an outdated notion, it's an open door to inspiration.

► **Finance Committee, three years: PRUDENCE SPAULDING**

The Finance Committee is charged by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to develop a yearly budget to be presented to the voters at the Town's Annual Meeting in May. For the past thirty-three years I have been privileged to serve on this committee. About 135 budgets with about ten warrant items must be scrutinized to insure the citizens of the town have the best town government with the best services available, taking into consideration the increasing costs and the effect that these will have on the taxpayers. I would appreciate your vote allowing me to continue to serve the Town of New Marlborough as a member of the Finance Committee.

► **Finance Committee, three years: THOMAS STALKER**

Having served for a few months as an interim member of the Finance Committee, I am eager to continue serving Town citizens in this capacity to help protect the best interests of New Marlborough's taxpayers, while addressing necessary services. Specifically, I will work to:

- Achieve a budget that lives within an annual 2½ percent increase or less
- Seek to align how we work with best practices guidelines of the Massachusetts Municipal Association
- Work closely with Town departments in budget preparation
- Research, plan carefully, and develop proper justification for long-term capital investment needs, that is, roads, bridges, equipment, or other important needs
- Recommend how to pay for capital investment needs
- Provide regular communications of Finance Committee activities on the Town website
- Track expenditures vs. budget throughout the year, not just at budget season

- Fully understand the reasons when expenditures vary by substantial amounts from budget estimates
- Not automatically level fund the budget, plus 2½ percent, without first revisiting all current spending (zero-based budgeting)
- Present a complete budget to Board of Selectmen in sufficient time for considered review and discussion
- Serve as an information resource to citizens about the budget, the uses of "free cash" and Stabilization Fund reserves
- Recommend and justify any use of "free cash" or Stabilization Fund reserves
- Actively solicit your views and opinions on Town financial matters.

Thank you. I hope I may win your support for my candidacy on Election Day.

► **Finance Committee, one year: ROBERT MILLER**

I was asked to fill a vacant seat on the Finance Committee until Town Meeting. It has been very interesting and informative. I have decided to run for the position for a full term. I am starting to understand the budget process for financing the town. There are many hard decisions that face the Finance Committee to keep the budget reasonable. I promise to do my best, if elected, to do what I feel is in the best interest of our town. □



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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

March 21: After approving the minutes from the March 14 meeting, the Board began what turned into a two-and-a-half-hour review of the Fiscal 2017 budget. The news wasn't good. **The Board is grappling with an initial draft of the operating budget that's some \$260,000, or approximately ten percent above last year's budget,** when everyone in the room was uncomfortably aware that the levy limit only allows a two and a half percent increase. To make matters worse approximately \$90,000 of that amount is in items over which the board has little or no control. They include a \$57,400 increase in the Town's group insurance premium, \$10,800 increase in Berkshire County retirement assessment and a \$6,000 increase in transfer station hauling fees.

Chairman Shalaby began the session by laying out her budget priorities for the year, as follows:

- Maintaining Town services at their current level
- Providing Town employees with a moderate cost of living, or COLA, increase to cover the increased cost of benefits, primarily health insurance, plus a small increase in take-home pay.
- Increasing Highway Department salaries to better match those of neighboring towns
- Improving Town infrastructure through the use of free cash, stabilization funds, and grants.

This last would include a capital expense of \$165,000 to repair Corashire Road and the northern end of Norfolk Road in Southfield from the so-called iron bridge to East Hill Road.

Other budget items of note include a \$171,000, or 6.6 percent increase in the town's share of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District budget and the possible purchase of a \$140,000 excavator requested by Highway Superintendent Loring, which Selectman White said should be funded from the stabilization fund and placed on the ballot, both of which would require a two-thirds approval by the voters. "I want everyone to have to vote on it," she explained, "and stabilization means a two-thirds vote, which will give the townspeople more of an opportunity to voice their opinion."

But nearly everything else requested by town department heads was taken off the table by the selectmen. The list of rejected requests included a \$500

To make matters worse, approximately \$90,000 of that amount is in items over which the board has little or no control.

increase in the assessor's stipend, a \$41,000 Highway Department position, \$5,000 in salary for an additional police department shift, a \$3,500 increase in fire fighter stipends, \$10,000 in gravel for dirt roads, \$1,000 for Highway Department uniforms, and a \$10,000 increase for tree work, plus a \$500 increase in the tree warden's stipend. One exception was the reinstatement by the Board of a \$4,000 stipend for Conservation Commission Chairman Ned Wilson, who's indicated he's considering resigning the position at the end of the current fiscal year.

Finally, the Board unanimously approved language for a \$300,000 override of the 2½ percent levy limit that would be placed on the ballot for Town elections May 9: "Shall the Town of New Marlborough be allowed to assess an additional \$300,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of funding the operating budgets of the Town and the Regional School for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2016?"

In its last action of the evening, the Board voted to appoint Adsit Crosby Road resident Rona Easton to the Conservation Commission. Ms. Easton is a partner with her husband Lon Combs in the award-winning architectural firm Easton + Combs. (For more on Ms. Easton's background see *Designing A Transition* on page 10 of the April 2015 NM5VN.)

March 28: After approving the minutes from the March 21 meeting, **the Board, with all three members present, held an Alcohol Beverage Control Commission hearing to consider an application for a restaurant**

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liquor license for La Cantina restaurant located at 229 Hartsville New Marlborough Road. Owned by husband and wife team Josh Irwin and Emily Rachel and scheduled to open July 1, the restaurant will have seating for fifty-eight people, thirty-four inside and twenty-four outside, and will be open Fridays to Tuesdays from 5:00 to 9:00 p.m. After determining that onsite parking will be adequate, the Board voted unanimously to approve the license application.

The Board then turned its attention to finalizing the budget for presentation to the Finance Committee for its review and approval on March 31. There was a lengthy discussion of Highway Superintendent Loring's proposal to purchase an excavator for \$140,000. For the discussion, Mr. Loring provided the Board with a three-page written justification in which he estimated that having its own excavator could save the Town upwards of \$25,000 a year in excavator rental and outside contractor costs. He said he'd still use contractors for the larger jobs but having an in-house excavator would allow the Highway Department to handle most of the smaller jobs by itself, such as "ditching, cutting and sloping of high shoulders and banks, installing culverts and drainage, and tree and stump removal." The Board agreed it would recommend purchasing the excavator, with Selectman White still insisting that the money be taken from the stabilization fund rather than the free cash account, but she backed off her request to also put it on the ballot at the Town election.

The Board followed that up with a brief review of the other capital items in the budget, including a new police cruiser now estimated to cost \$48,000 rather than the original \$60,000 purchase price, a hot box for transporting warm asphalt for \$25,000, a one-ton pickup truck with plow for \$47,000 and \$165,000 to repair Corashire Road and the northern end of Norfolk Road.

In this case, all of the items would be funded from the free cash account. In other budget-related actions, the Board said it favored taking the proposed \$4,000 Conservation Commission chairman's stipend out of user fees rather than creating a separate budget item for it, and again stripped out a \$10,000 increase for tree work which had somehow made it back into the budget.

In other business, Town Administrator Mari Enoch reported the Highway Department is purchasing a surplus Army truck for \$500 to be used solely for spare parts. She also said the Town will be getting a \$2,000 break on the cost of the pre-cast concrete culvert slated for the Clayton

Mill River Road culvert project because of a typographical error in the bidding sheet put together by Stantec Inc., the project's design engineers. Originally costed out at \$99,836, the culvert will actually cost the Town \$97,475.

The Board approved the Town's participation in this year's Regional Household Hazardous Waste Collection program, which allows

New Marlborough residents to dispose of hazardous materials such as oil-based paints and motor oil at designated collection sites. The fee to the Town for participating is \$1,300 and is based on the town's population and the number of residents who took advantage of the program last year.

April 4: The meeting was convened at 6:00 p.m., with two Selectmen present, Chairman Shalaby and Selectman White. But due to a late season snow storm and a lack of attendees, the selectmen voted to continue the meeting until Monday, April 11.

April 7: The Board convened what it described as a working session to go over the budget and the warrant to be voted on at the May 2 Annual Town Meeting. The initial discussion focused on the size of this year's cost of living, or COLA increase, with the

The Board agreed it would recommend purchasing the excavator, with Selectman White still insisting that the money be taken from the stabilization fund....

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Board initially favoring a 2½ percent raise for Town employees, in contrast to the Finance Committee which voted in favor of a 2 percent COLA on March 31. The difference between the two in terms of the budget is only \$2,100, versus an overall budget figure of \$5.5 million, “clearly not a significant amount,” noted Mr. Yohalem. “Under normal circumstances I would advocate for the 2½ percent COLA, but I’m very concerned about the budget being passed. The Finance Committee has gone on record as opposing two and a half percent, and I feel terrible about the employees who will get slightly less money. On the other hand, I think it’s going to create a furor at the [Annual Town] meeting. And I’d like to do everything I can to get this budget passed.” And with that the Board agreed to follow the Finance Committee’s lead and go with a 2 percent COLA.

The Board also agreed with the Finance Committee to remove from the budget the \$47,000 one-ton pickup truck for the Highway Department and to change the source of funding for the \$140,000 excavator back to free cash, which was also a Finance Committee recommendation.

On the other hand, the Board, after considerable discussion, agreed to disagree with the Finance Committee and recommend supporting the Town’s share of the school budget, which this year by nearly 7 percent, largely due to a redistribution of the assessment.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to a discussion of how best to present the budget at the Saturday morning, April 30, budget presentation meeting – whether to do a power point presentation, how many slides to include, and what they should look like. But as Selectman White said as the meeting was winding down, “There are really only two things people will want answers to, and they are, why do we need an override, and how much are my taxes going up.” As previously reported, the Board will be

asking voters to approve a \$300,000 levy limit override at town elections on May 9.

April 11: With all three selectmen present, the Board’s first order of business was to convene a special permit hearing for Sophia and Antonio Montero of 95 Downs Road, who are requesting a special permit to build an eight-foot kitchen extension onto the side of their Downs Road home. Representing the Monteros was architect Diego Gutierrez of Housatonic who explained the house is already a pre-existing, non-conforming structure and the kitchen would further encroach on the setback by about eight inches. But as he pointed out, it’s

a “very minor encroachment that would not be detrimental to the neighborhood” and that without it the interior space of the kitchen “would be a little awkward.” He assured the Board there are no plans for further extensions on the property, nor is there any room for such. “It’s a very tight site,” he said. By roll call vote the Board approved

the special permit.

That was followed by a discussion of transfer station fees for the Fiscal Year 2017, with **Solid Waste Coordinator Freddy Friedman** saying he has no plans to raise the cost of the basic permit, currently at \$105, but is proposing to raise the late fee for permits purchased after August 15 to \$150, from \$130. He also said that since most households have at least two vehicles, he’s planning on issuing two transfer station stickers per permit. As in the past, permits will be available for purchase online and by mail, at Town Hall and at the transfer station. The Board approved both proposals.

The next item on the agenda was a review of the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting. However, Town Administrator Enoch said there’s been only one substantive change since the Board previously reviewed it on April 7. That change, which was confirmed with

***The Board also agreed
with the Finance
Committee to...change the
source of funding for the
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to free cash....***

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Town Counsel Jeremia Pollard, is that any transfer of free cash to the stabilization account requires a two-thirds vote by the town, not a simple majority. The rest of the changes, according to Ms. Enoch, will mostly involve minor wording changes. The Board agreed to meet again on Thursday, April 14, to review these and, more importantly, to determine the order in which the articles will appear on the warrant, which the selectmen are expected to sign next week.

Selectman White raised the issue of the Board's decision last week to recommend approval of the school budget, saying she's had second thoughts about it, and would like the Board to reconsider. She said every year the Board agrees to support the school budget in return for the District's promise, "to work with us on making the budget more effective. But year and year after year there's never any change. The only thing they really understand is if the budget doesn't pass." Saying he's on the fence about it and could go either way, Mr. Yohalem indicated he's much more concerned about the long term and isn't convinced that, "the proper way to attack this is by defeating the budget." Ms. Shalaby pointed out the last time the school budget was voted down, in 2011, it didn't result in any substantive changes. "We're actually only hurting ourselves when that happens," she said. So Board is now split on recommending the school budget with the Board members agreeing, at Mr. Yohalem's suggestion, that each selectman may make a statement on their position at the annual meeting.

At Ms. Shalaby's urging, the Board agreed to establish a broadband committee to be "charged with planning for and bringing broadband access to our Town." As she noted, the Board members themselves "have neither the time nor expertise to focus on what needs to be done." Instead, a notice will be go out seeking volunteers with specific skill sets such as knowledge of fiber optic networks, wireless technologies, network design, and municipal finance and legal expertise. Volunteers will be asked to respond to Board Secretary Sharon Fleck by May 15.

Town Administrator Enoch said she'd been contacted by an organization called Mass Gathering, which will be conducting a series of running races Memorial Day weekend, including a 10K race on Sunday, May 29, that would come into the Town of New Marlborough. There would be approximately 150 runners entering the Town on the Mill River Great Barrington Road for half a mile before turning around and heading back toward Route 23 between 9:30 and 10:30 a.m. Ms. Enoch said she's already spoken to Police Chief Frank, who said the safest thing would be to simply close the road and detour traffic up to Route 57 for that hour. The Board said it had no objection to closing the road for the race as long as it was publicized in advance.

In the final item of night, Ms. Shalaby said she received a request from WiredWest that the Board send a letter to the governor's office asking it to lift the "pause" on the last-mile broadband program. The letter, according to WiredWest, should also include a statement on what the Town needs and wants from Massachusetts Broadband Institute, "at a time when the last-mile policy is being reviewed by the state." With the Board's agreement, Ms. Shalaby said she will draft something for review at the next meeting. □

Peter Schuyten



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THE PHOTO/POTLUCK DINNER



The Annual New Marlborough Cultural Council Photography Show/Potluck Dinner held at the Southfield Church Hall on April 2 was another great success – a big turnout to enjoy some fine socializing, eating, and viewing local photographers' takes on the theme of "Doors." Louise Yohalem, head of the NMCC, gave thanks to all, and, in particular to Ned MacDowell for his efforts in putting the show together.

A REQUEST FROM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH



As we near our 150th anniversary, it is interesting to note that the church was erected as a promise made by the Reverend Peter Menietti to Mary, mother of Jesus, when he was very ill in Italy. He vowed to build a church in honor of Mary. When appointed a parish priest at St. Peter's Church in Great Barrington, he do-

nated \$100 towards the building of the Immaculate Conception Church in Mill River. Andrew Devine, Michael Brennan, Michael Curtin, Michael Doyle, and Dominick Garrahan also donated \$100 each. William Huntley, a non-Catholic, donated the land to satisfy the amount needed for the church. He was given an honorary pew in the church, where he occasionally sat during services.

Are any descendants of these people in the area? And might they have memorabilia to share? If so, please contact Claudette Callahan at 229-7771. □

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email: ssmithlaw@barringtonlawoffice.com

SCREEN IT LOCAL:

New Marlborough Library Turns into a Cinema for Summer!

by Jodi Rothe

A new committee formed by New Marlborough town librarian Deb O'Brien met in early April to discuss screening a series of films at the library during the summer, beginning Tuesday, May 24. Kenzie Fields chaired the meeting, which was attended by playwrights Michael Brady and Jodi Rothe, graphic artist and designer David Cicchetti, filmmaker and professor Larry Burke, and Deb O'Brien.

The committee decided to choose a selection of entertaining and thought-provoking documentaries that run ninety minutes or less. Each screening will begin with a reception at 7:30 p.m. with savories such as popcorn, cookies, iced tea, and lemonade. The screening will end with a voluntary discussion of the film led by someone with knowledge of the particular subject matter of the film. For example, the first film ("Girls in the Band") is about the struggles of female jazz performers who wanted to be accepted in a male dominated culture – so the committee plans to seek someone with knowledge of women in jazz to be the moderator.

All screenings will be held on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Following the refreshments, the films will screen at 8:00 p.m. The schedule is as follows:

- May 24 "The Girls in the Band"
- June 28 "Finding Vivian Maier"
- July 26 "A Small Good Thing"
- August 23 "Red Army"

The trailer for "The Girls in the Band" states, "When the world told them they couldn't play, they did it anyway. In the nineteen thirties and forties, hundreds of women musicians toured the country in glamorous All-Girl Bands, while others played side-by-side with their male counterparts. Yet by the mid-fifties female jazz musicians had literally disappeared from the workplace; their



names, their contributions to music, completely forgotten.... These incredibly talented women endured sexism, racism, and diminished opportunities for decades, yet continued to persevere, inspire, and elevate their talents in a field that seldom welcomed them. Today, there is a new breed of gifted young women taking their rightful place in the world of jazz, which can no longer deny their talents."

Descriptions of the subsequent films will appear in these pages as the summer unfolds. In addition to providing an interesting evening for town residents, part of the mission of the film series is to draw our citizens to the many resources of the library that reach far beyond the local level. For example, many people don't know they can order any hardcover book, audio, eBook or video through the library for free. The library also has access to an eBook collection with over 100,000 titles you can download to your Kindle or iPad, and access as well to academic libraries across the United States. So, Deb's message is "ask and you will receive!" It's a new world at the library – and it's free and fun, and that even includes the popcorn on Tuesday movie nights this summer! □

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THE LAND TRUST GALA



Land Trust Executive Director Martha Bryan poses with Leslie and Brad Wagstaff, hosts of the event at Gedney Farm. Behind them are a sampling of the many goods and services that the guests were invited by bid upon.

The First Annual Red Hot Blues Bash, sponsored by the New Marlborough Land Trust and held at Gedney Farm on April 9, was, by all accounts, an overwhelming success. The event was completely sold out, with 250 (or maybe a few more) guests, who enjoyed dinner and drinks, an amazing variety of auctioned items and services provided primarily by New Marlborough businesses and artists, and a truly red hot band that propelled much of the crowd on to the dance floor. According to Land Trust Executive Director Martha Bryan, the number-one aim of the occasion was, “to gather and celebrate our community resources – both natural and human.” Among the celebrated human resources were three “unsung heroes of the community,” Narian Schroeder of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, New Marlborough Central School teacher Tom Masters, and long-time Town Librarian, Deb O’Brien. □



Lead guitarist Steve Ide and vocalist Carol Ide.



Above: The dance floor was rockin' and rollin' as the band, the BTUs, turned up the volume. Right: Deb O'Brien rises to receive her “Unsung Hero” award, to the hearty applause of the assembled guests.



UPCOMING: Events Calendar for May and June

May 2: Annual Town Meeting; make your voice heard and your vote count, 7:00 p.m., Town Hall

May 7: New Marlborough Fire & Rescue Spring Dance, 6:00 to 10:00 p.m., Gedney Farm.

May 9: Town Election, noon to 7:00 p.m., Town Hall

May 15: Applications for the New Marlborough Cultural Council Scholarships to Flying Cloud summer programs are due

May 21: The Art-Folk Duo, Oakes & Smith opens the second season of Saturday night music at the Southfield Church, 7:00 p.m., with a reception on the lawn following the concert; free and open to the public, contributions welcome

May 24: The New Marlborough Library Film Series presents the documentary film, "The Girls in the Band," 7:30 p.m.; screening begins at 8:00 p.m.

June 3: The Women of 19th Century New England, a First Fridays talk by author and historian Carol Owens; 7:30 p.m. New Marlborough Meeting House; sponsored by the New Marlborough Historical Society and free and open to the public

June 17: Vessels, a themed show of the works of area artists and the first exhibit of the 2016 season curated by New Marlborough Village Association's Gallery Committee; opening reception: 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. The show will remain open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays until July 10

June 28: The New Marlborough Library Film Series, presents the documentary film, "Finding Vivian Maier," refreshments 7:30 p.m.; screening begins at 8:00 p.m.

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BROADBAND UPDATE

The “pause” imposed by Governor Baker on any further action by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) remains in effect, but the New Marlborough Board of Selectmen, who are anxious to bring broadband to the town, are continuing their respective efforts to make broadband a reality.

Seven selectmen from various towns attended a meeting convened by WiredWest in Northampton on April 2, and it was the consensus of the meeting that the towns should reach out to the Governor’s office and demand that the pause be lifted. Selectman Michele Shalaby reports that the selectmen are drafting a letter to the Governor demanding action. Ms. Shalaby also stated that communication with representatives of Monterey, Tolland and Sandisfield are continuing as the towns explore how they can collaborate on a “semi-regional” approach to bring broadband to their residents. The consensus at this point is that once the “pause” is lifted, the towns should be ready to move forward quickly to seek state funding either with or without WiredWest. New Marlborough is also seeking to establish a broadband committee of independent citizens to provide assistance to the Selectmen through this process. An appeal for volunteers can be found on the Town’s News & Notices website.

WiredWest has indicated that its board is discussing a possible change to its operating model that would have the towns, rather than WiredWest as previously proposed, owning most of the local assets (cables and electronics but not certain network interfaces). It is also reviewing the mechanism by which towns can withdraw

from the cooperative.

Speculating about the rationale behind the Governor’s pause, New Marlborough’s WiredWest representative Tim Newman says, “The Governor thinks that some towns can’t afford fiber and is considering alternative technology to fiber, namely fixed wireless. This is technology that is in the beta stage and, while it may look good on paper, it is slower than fiber and not proven to work. It may be that the Governor will, on his own, refuse to provide funds for fiber, and only fund, instead, fixed wireless. I think that would be a mistake. The economies of scale realized in a regional fiber network should make fiber affordable.” Mr. Newman adds that it is a foregone conclusion that the June 30 deadline for towns to approve borrowings to finance their portion of the build out will be postponed.

On a final note, an online petition available on change.org is circulating, urging the Governor to move the broadband internet access forward. The content of the petition initially contained some comments that Tim Newman viewed as negative toward WiredWest. Arthur Dellea of Alford, who posted the petition, has since removed the offending remarks in order, Mr. Dellea states, “to avoid legal recourse.” For his part, Tim Newman says, “I threatened nothing and demanded nothing. I told him that the comments should be removed because they were factually inaccurate and were a disservice to WiredWest and his neighbors who want broadband

So, once again and once again, stay tuned. □

reported by Barry R. Shapiro

SOUL-FILLED SOUNDS AT THE SOUTHFIELD CHURCH

by Robert Olsen

The second season of Saturday evening concerts at the Southfield Church kicks off in May with a musical match made in heaven, the art folk duo, Oakes & Smith. Robert Oakes’ and Katherine Smith’s harmonious vocal blend have been filling local venues with an ethereal sound and unique quality, not often heard in today’s popular music, since they joined voices in 2007. The duo has performed at The Colonial Theater, The Guthrie Center, and Infinity Music Hall, and has appeared weekly at Canyon Ranch since March 2014, among an astonishing array of other venues throughout Western Massachusetts and beyond.

At the heart of their musical creation is a strong bond of love, and a passion to pursue the creative calling. Oakes and Smith hope to inspire listeners and remind them that peace, sincerity, and beauty are still very much alive in the world.

On February 2, 2016, the duo released their fourth

collection of songs, “Between the Earth and the Sky.” One of the songs from this collection, “Never Let the Light Die,” has been on high rotation on Soul Traveler Radio, and critics have given them glowing reviews:

“emotional, heartfelt music that touches the soul...(they) have such beautiful and incredible voices that blend perfectly to the point that they become one whole voice”

— Anthony Avina, *On Request Magazine*

Oakes & Smith will kick off our second season on Saturday, May 21 at 7:00 pm. The concert will be followed by a festive reception on the lawn, weather permitting, featuring gelato from The Southfield Store. There is no admission charge for the concert; donations will be collected to support the artists. Generosity is encouraged! □

THIRTY YEARS AND COUNTING

by Barbara Lowman

She'll celebrate her thirtieth anniversary in May: Marsha Pshenishny was first elected to New Marlborough's Board of Assessors in May of 1986, and is now the longest-serving Town employee. She has seen a gradual increase in the complexity of the office's duties during that time, but looking back thirty years, it seems like a completely different office.

When she was first elected, Ms. Pshenishny observed, "There was no computer. It was all paper and pencils."

The Board met twice a week to do paperwork. One of the assessors at that time, Harry Gustafson, took care of all the field work. This situation seems quaint now, as requirements of the state have vastly increased. New assessors are required to take a state-run ten-week course, meeting twice a week during their first year in office. Each assessor receives "The Bible" – a lengthy state manual that is periodically updated. Our assessors also participate in area breakfast meetings with other towns to share experiences and procedures.

Nowadays, the mandatory revaluation of property is handled by a consulting firm, Paul Kapinos and Associates, that assists towns throughout the state. One appraiser is appointed for New Marlborough, which promotes continuity and efficiency. The firm can also handle a lot of extra data required by the state.

The revaluation occurs every three years, although Ms. Pshenishny says the state will be going to a five-year revaluation schedule. Individual assessments are



adjusted each year by a formula based on current real estate sales. Usually this means a gradual adjustment over the three-year period, but Ms. Pshenishny still remembers the unusual year of 1989, when properties in New Marlborough were "hot." Real estate values skyrocketed that year, and so did the accompanying "sticker shock" in assessed valuation.

If Kapinos and Associates conduct the revaluation and assorted data requirements from the state, what do our local assessors do? "Plenty!" responds Ms. Pshenishny. All building permits require a site visit, as do requests for property tax abatements. The Board also handles motor vehicle abatements, records all deeds, and has to stay current with real estate sales.

Despite the fact that most of her duties require working with data, Ms. Pshenishny has always valued and enjoyed working with people, assisting them in solving problems associated with their property. In particular, she likes to help senior citizens navigate the requirements for a property tax abatement. When asked what is the most common complaint she receives, she replied, "Valuations too high – and sometimes a resulting site visit shows they're right."

Reflecting on the changes in town government over thirty years, Ms. Pshenishny said, "It's big business now, but the old days were fun." Does she have any plans to retire? "I'm up for election in May for another three-year term. After that, we'll see." □

Thank You to Our Contributors!

Michele & David Shalaby; Howard & Pat Nourse; Jim & Pilar Oates; Hope Crocker; Myles Whitney, in memory of his father, Hilton Whitney; Jim & Leni Herzog



Gedney Farmers' Market



When:

Starting Friday May 27th, and will be open every Friday all season, rain or shine, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Where:

Gedney Farm, in the back field adjacent to the patio area. Stop by to shop, and then enjoy a drink, food, a stroll and the wonderful ambience created by the wood-fired argentine grill and the serene fields of the property.

What:

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NEIGHBORS



Longtime New Marlborough resident and executive director of the former Kolburne School, **Jeane Weinstein**, passed away on March 30 at the age of ninety. Following a Bachelor of Science degree from Teachers College and a Master's degree from Columbia University in special education, she began working in 1947 at the Kolburne School founded by her parents, Luma and Stella Kolburne, in Norwalk, Connecticut. In 1968, she and her husband, Sydney, relocated Kolburne School to New Marlborough. She continued as executive director until her retirement in 2011; the school closed in 2012.

During her many years in New Marlborough, she was active in civic organizations such as the Great Barrington Rotary Club, the New Marlborough Village Association, and the women's auxiliary of the Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Great Barrington. She was also active in professional associations, affecting special education policies and laws throughout the state. Jeane was community-minded, and fostered behind-the-scenes contributions. As examples, Kolburne students helped the New Marlborough Cultural Council with the set-up and clean-up for Elihu Burritt Day, and for Great Barrington's Walk for the Homeless, Kolburne vans were available to assist those who needed a ride.

Former staff members observed that Jeane was totally dedicated to running Kolburne School. Especially in the early days she would work long into the night after the staff had left; she might check supermarket fliers for sale items that could supplement the school's kitchen offerings. She took an interest in individual students, finding opportunities to place them in jobs in the community, course work beyond Kolburne, or arts resources to develop special talents. A group of five young boys eventually stayed on at the school for decades. They stayed in a separate house, had jobs at the school commensurate with their abilities, and felt themselves to be valued members of the school community.

One former staff member said that he continued to get calls from students who had left the school. In the course of their conversation, they always asked how Jeane and Syd were doing: they touched so many lives in ways large and small.

Marilyn Litchfield McGee passed away on January 2, 2016. She was born on January 7, 1961, daughter of **Bernard (Danny) and Beverly Litchfield** of Southfield, and grew up in Southfield.

As a child she was a practical joker, and honed those skills for the next fifty-four years. She was always ready to encourage a smile and brighten someone's day. She was a 1978 graduate of Mount Everett Regional High School, graduating a year early to pursue a degree in licensed practical nursing from Berkshire Community College. She began her career at Fairview Hospital, where she was employed for several years.

In the late 1980s, Marilyn relocated with her children, Crystal and John, to Louisiana to raise her family. She suffered a debilitating accident which caused her to be placed on disability, ending her nursing career. She married Dennis McGee in March, 1999.

Louisiana's devastation by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in a way opened a second career for Marilyn. Her lifelong concern for animals' welfare led her to open her home and

heart to many pets that had been abandoned or injured in the storm, providing them with shelter and love.

Likewise, Marilyn will be missed by her friends and loved ones, and will always be remembered for her kindness, compassion, and generosity.

A memorial service will be conducted on Saturday, May 14, at 11:00 a.m. At the United Church of New Marlborough in Southfield.

New Marlborough resident **Natalia Delgado** was part of the delegation accompanying President Obama on his historic visit to Cuba in mid-March. Born in Cuba, Natalia emigrated to the United States with her family in 1959. She has remained active in programs involving Cuban legal and business issues; in lobbying Congress, with other Cuban Americans, to lift the embargo on food and medicine to Cuba in 1999; and in fund-raising for the Catholic Charities agency in Cuba.



Neighbors, continued

Currently she is the director of the Cuba Capacity Building Project, a collaboration between the Columbia University School of Law and the University of Havana's Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy. The project will focus on developing legal institutions in Cuba to support a market economy and attract foreign investment, to provide training for businessmen in how a market economy works, and the rules for conducting a business in the larger world economy.

Natalia found the experience of the trip and the Cuban government's management of it to be fascinating. The entire country's attention was riveted on the proceedings. Many of the events were televised nationally, but no information was released about the Obamas' itinerary, thus avoiding the possibility of embarrassing spontaneous demonstrations. Nonetheless, her impression from all her contacts was that of a country glued to the television coverage, and excited and hopeful at the prospect of future interaction with the United States. □

Neighbors compiled by Barbara Lowman: deeuell@yahoo.com

OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

Despite the plentitude of wildlife at this time of year, we've not received much in the way of sightings. Everyone must be paying more attention to the wild behaviors of our candidates for President. **Teena Parton**, of New Marlborough Village area, however did come through with one pulse-quickening encounter on April 18: "We just had a medium **black bear** come on our deck and peer through the door. All outside lights were on and there were no feeders or compost outside. He or she had two red tags in his ear. Has this bear visited anyone else recently?"

Diane Barth took this pic of the **woodcock** that stopped her car on East Hill Road. "He was bobbing away and refused to budge from the middle of the road. I was able to walk right up to him and take his picture before he decided he'd had enough of me."

Our correspondent from Mill River, **Angus Kerr**, has this informative and cautionary tale: "Spring has finally arrived, with warm sunny afternoons between drizzly days, and the odd frosty morning. As things start to green and we welcome new chicks and spring lambs in our local barnyards, there might also be some other youngsters in the woods. Huddled in their dens, young coyotes are waiting to emerge.

"From mid-March to mid-April, coyotes begin to have pups, litters of about five scrawny, hairless babies. During this time, adults rarely venture out of the den to hunt for food, but from late April to May, coyote pups begin to wean, and adults begin hunting once again. Coyotes are essentially scavengers, but, as any poultry or pet owner sadly knows, they will not pass up an easy meal of chicken or cat. The young pups are still unable to eat whole food, and instead need their parents to regurgitate food for them.

"As we start to enjoy the warmer weather, don't forget about our wildlife neighbors, who are also beginning to explore our shared neighborhood. So don't forget to bring in your cats and lock up your chooks!" □

Compiled by Larry Burke, lburke2@me.com



photo by Diane Barth

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

Our thanks to the standing room only crowd who brought their delicious food to the Cultural Council's Pot Luck Supper on April 2. Thanks to Robert Olsen for being our gracious host, to the photographers who shared their art and to Dave Herrick of the Mill River General Store for his donation of water and all of the eating and drinking necessities. The pot luck supper was made possible by supporters of the Cultural Council.

Maureen Hosford and Louise Yohalem, Co-chairs, NMCC



THE LOG

POLICE DEPARTMENT (SELECTED ENTRIES)

- Mar 1 3:57 p.m. Clayton Mill River Road resident reports three robocalls from the "IRS" threatening a lawsuit over back taxes (See note in the April issue of 5VN warning readers to be alert for such scams.)
- Mar 2 3:20 p.m. Clayton Mill River Road resident reports sighting a dead cow in the Konkapot River. An officer arriving at the location eight minutes later is unable to confirm the sighting.
- Mar 8 12:50 a.m. A Canaan Valley Road resident, alerted by his neighbors that someone was entering his house, calls to say that he is out of town and that no one was authorized to use the house.
- 10:02 a.m. Adsit Crosby Road resident reports an IRS phone scam call
- 1:03 p.m. Assist in the arrest of two Sheffield residents at Dollar General in Sheffield when the vehicle of one of them is found to contain a quantity of illegal drugs.
- Mar 9 12:36 p.m. Sheffield Police Department issues a BOLO (be on the lookout) for a Sheffield motorcyclist, who evaded arrest after a high-speed chase that exceeded 100 mph.
- Mar 10 1:03 p.m. A Main Road resident reports receiving an IRS scam call.
- Mar 16 6:20 p.m. Sisson Hill Road resident reports an unattended open fire.
- Mar 20 8:28 p.m. Assist in the transfer to Sharon Hospital of a Cornwall, Connecticut, woman whose car has driven over an embankment on Brewer Hill Road.
- Mar 21 3:29 p.m. The new owner of house on Foley Hill Road reports that a white Dodge pickup, suspiciously parked next to his house that morning, drove off as he approached it — patrols to take notice.
- 7:53 p.m. Canaan Southfield Road resident reports a car and a pickup drag racing on the straight stretch of Clayton Mill River Road that runs along the cornfield.
- Mar 22 9:50 a.m. An all-terrain vehicle, reportedly stolen, is located on Clayton Mill River Road and returned to its owner on Boardman Street, Sheffield.
- Mar 25 2:45 p.m. A business owner on Norfolk Road, called by a "representative" of National Grid, was told that her electricity would be shut off in thirty minutes if she failed to convert \$1,500 to pre-paid credit cards and phone the numbers in to him — she stayed home; the lights stayed on.
- 2:54 p.m. A Canaan Southfield Road fugitive from justice is taken into custody at the Sheffield Police Department.
- Mar 29 11:19 a.m. Hartsville New Marlborough resident reports threat of arrest from a "representative" of the IRS.
- Mar 31 11:06 a.m. Electrical pole and wires down on Norfolk Road.
- 6:34 p.m. A New Marlborough Monterey Road resident reports his suspicion that a neighbor has removed gravel from his property during a recent ten-day absence; his evidence: tractor-wheel tread marks leading from his gravel pile to his neighbor's house.



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FIRE AND RESCUE

March 2 9:36 p.m.	New Marlborough Southfield Road CO Alarm	March 21 12:05 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Monterey Standby
March 9 3:45 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call	March 21 6:39 p.m.	Calkins Cross Road Wires Down
March 12 12:18 p.m.	Sisson Hill Road Brush Fire	March 25 4:33 p.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call
March 16 6:15 p.m.	Sisson Hill Road Brush Fire	March 28 4:02 a.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road Medical Call
March 20 1:09 a.m.	Berkshire Woods Fire Alarm	March 28 5:17 a.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road Medical Call
March 20 8:46 p.m.	Brewer Hill Road MVA		

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Spring Dance: The New Marlborough Fire Company's Annual Spring Dance will be held on Saturday, May 7, at Gedney Farm in New Marlborough village. Tickets are available at the Mill River General Store or from any New Marlborough firefighter. Call David Smith, (413) 229-0291 for more information. □

RAILROAD STREET YOUTH PROJECT SPONSORS PRESCRIPTION DRUG COLLECTION

The non-profit organization Railroad Street Youth Project has put out a request to Berkshire County residents to participate in an effort to remove their unused prescription drugs from their households. According to their sources, 434 Berkshire teens abused leftover prescription drugs for recreational purposes in 2015.

The Railroad Street Project asks that the public drop off medications at police stations in these towns, at any convenient time: Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, and Sheffield. These medications can include unwanted and expired prescription, over-the-counter, and controlled medications from anyone in your household, including pet medications. Needles are accepted in puncture proof plastic containers. For more information, email Kamal at the Railroad Street Youth Project kamal@rsyp.org.

This effort is supported by community coalitions including: Berkshire District Attorney David E. Capeless,

Childrens' Health Program, Pittsfield Prevention Partnership, Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, Berkshire Health Systems, and The United Way. □



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THE SCHOOL REPORT:

Springtime Equals Test Time

by Jane Burke

The early spring is not much fun at school for anyone. Administrators are weighed down scheduling and administering the tests per state requirements. Teachers are devoting their energies to preparing the kids for tests but trying not to make them anxious. And then there are the kids themselves who have to get through the experience of up to ten hours being tested and the untold additional hours practicing test questions.

There is a growing movement of parents who think that civil disobedience is the only way to shine a light on the damaging impact of the testing culture on the quality of education. They are part of the opt-out movement that is taking hold in some parts of the country. Locally, quiet discontent has been building since the birth of the state learning standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts put forward through the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993.

While the transition to the new standardized curriculum was onerous, it was generally agreed that it was in everyone's interest that all children have similar opportunities. Then came the tests! The Commonwealth needed evidence that all kids were progressing over time, especially the ones from the low-quality schools. In 1998 the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) was introduced. Since then children from grades three through eight have been tested every spring in English Language Arts and Math totaling about eight hours of tests. Later, a science MCAS was added for fifth and eighth grades, further increasing time spent in testing and prepping. To graduate from high school, students must retest and show proficiency in all three subjects. At Mount Everett this occurs in the tenth grade. These tests have been generally accepted as a given.

Things began to change in 2011. The pressure on teachers and students increased when a new bar for student learning was established through President Obama's Department of Education's Common Core Curriculum for Math and English Language Arts. This new approach was geared to better provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to be "college and career ready." The Massachusetts Department of Education adopted the Common Core that asks children to master abstract thinking and understand the relationship between concepts. By 2013 teachers at Southern Berkshire Regional District schools were bringing these new standards into their classrooms: another new challenge for schools to manage and for students to master. Many parents were surprised to see what their children were being asked to do.

Just as everyone was getting used to the rigors of MCAS, the test was becoming increasingly viewed as ineffective in measuring student thinking skills as outlined in the Common Core. A new test called PARCC (for Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), designed by the private global corporation Pearson, has now arrived. In the 2014-15 school year, eleven states and the District of Columbia participated in PARCC.

This brings us to now. At SBRSD all 3rd to 8th graders are taking PARCC for the first time, while the science tests and required graduation tests are still MCAS. It is expected that eventually a hybrid test will evolve, that will likely be administered starting at grade three. Some observers of trends in education worry that, notwithstanding its expertise in the field, Pearson is a private company that not only devises the tests, but also administers and scores them at a cost of about \$25 per student. This company also owns the data on every child.

Some parents in the Berkshires have run out of patience. Kristin Sanzone of Hartsville is a parent and former teacher who is leading the way helping concerned parents. She started a Facebook page, Berkshire County Mass Opt-Out, that now has 400 followers. There she shares research that shows testing is not improving student performance, and also that some educators feel the tests are actually having a negative effect by taking away time for creative work. The expense of the tests is also draining resources away from programs.

Mrs. Sanzone is defending parents' rights to have their children opt out of the testing. She stated that "Politicians and testing companies are not going to change on the issue of testing. Parents are the ones who can apply pressure for change." She noted that, "...teachers at SBRSD are not allowed to initiate conversations with parents about the tests, but the new resolution does allow teachers to talk with parents who ask about the impact of the tests on their own children." If students opt out, she does not believe that our schools will be penalized by a reduction in rating, as the state officials have threatened. The commonwealth has never successfully sanctioned a school with a high opt out rate.

Monterey school committee member Maria Rundle said, "There are lots of hidden costs beyond the tests themselves. The cost of math tutors eliminates a Spanish position. We are driving good teachers away."

Kristen Sparhawk, a New Marlborough school committee member said, "The SBRSD school committee appears to be divided on how to handle the opt-out

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The School Report, continued

situation. A resolution was introduced at the April 7 meeting by Maria Rundle and Francoise Lartigue of New Marlborough that stated there would be no School District-imposed penalties for the student or parent who chooses to opt out of testing. This passed by a vote of 5 – 4. However, we have no control over the state mandate that all students must pass the 10th grade tests to graduate.”

The closeness of the vote may be an indication of

the school committee’s overall uncertainty at this time on the subject of mandated testing. Ms. Sparhawk commented on the possible repercussions for a high opt out rate: “A participation rate of less than ninety percent could hurt us this year.”

It remains to be seen how broad and diverse the Massachusetts opt-out effort will be, but it appears that the pushback on testing is a new reality in our schools. □

THE MOUNT EVERETT HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL - “CHICAGO”



Theatergoers who were lucky enough to find themselves in the friendly confines of the Consolati Performing Arts Center on the second weekend of April were treated to a rollicking, tuneful rendition of the Fred Ebb/Bob Fosse musical, “Chicago,” performed by a deeply talented cast of Mount Everett high school and middle school players. For several of the actors this was their swan song – seniors Eli Gold and Samantha Twing, both of whom have performed memorably in plays and musicals since they were third-graders. “Chicago” was a great note to end on, with Eli exuberant in his role as the sleazy lawyer Billy Flynn, and Samantha comically inhabiting the part of Hunyak, a woebegone Hungarian husband murderer. The acting, choreography, and singing were uniformly excellent – kudos to director Ralph Petillo, musical director Carlton Maaia II, and costume designer Julie Chamberlain. Along with Samantha Twing, New Marlborough was well represented on stage by the ebullient performers Eastland Bates, Olivia Marchione, and Mary Shalaby. We in the Southern Berkshire School District are indeed fortunate to have such a strong theater program to support our amazingly talented youth.

NEW ACQUISITIONS AT THE LIBRARY

Adult Fiction

Lilac Girls, by Martha Hall Kelly
Most Wanted, by Lisa Scottoline
The Dig, by John Preston
The Last Mile, by David Baldacci
The Excellent Lombards, by Jane Hamilton
Murder at the 42nd Street Library, by Con Lehane

Adult Nonfiction

The Vanishing Velazquez: A 19th Century Obsession with a Lost Masterpiece, by Laura Cumming
Cook It in Cast Iron: Kitchen-Tested Recipes For The One Pan That Does It All, by America's Test Kitchen
The Rarest Bird in the World: The Search for the Nechisar Nightjar, by Vernon R.L. Head
The Last Voyageurs: Retracing LaSalle's Journey Across America: Sixteen Teenagers on the Adventure of a Lifetime, by Lorraine Boissoneault
One Wild Bird at a Time: Portraits of Individual Lives, by Bernd Heinrich

Children's Fiction

Have a Look, Says Book, by Richard Jackson
Are We There Yet?, by Dan Santat
Wednesday in the Tower, by Jessica Day George
Ivy & Bean, by Annie Barrows
Kimberly the Koala Fairy, by Daisy Meadows
Mom, Dad, Our Books, and Me, by Danielle Marcotte
Rain Fish, by Lois Ehlert
The Typewriter, Bill Thomson

Children's Nonfiction

What If You Had Animal Feet?, by Sandra Markle

DVD

Norm of the North *Sisters*
The Revenant *Brooklyn*
The Lady in the Van

Books on CDs

Most Wanted, by Lisa Scottoline
The Road to Little Dribbling: Adventures of an American in Britain, by Bill Bryson
The Last Mile, by David Baldacci



May 24: The New Marlborough Library Film Series presents the documentary film, "The Girls in the Band," from 7:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Refreshments at 7:30, screening at 8:00.

June 28: The New Marlborough Library Film Series presents the documentary film, "Finding Vivian Maier," from 7:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Refreshments at 7:30, screening at 8:00.

Library Summer Hours

Mon. Wed. Sat. 10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Tues. Fri. 1:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Thurs. 1:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Memorial Weekend Bake Sale
Saturday May 28 at 10 a.m.
 sponsored by the New Marlborough
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- ✧ **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 p.m.
- ✧ **Board of Health:** First Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.
- ✧ **Conservation Commission:** Last Saturday of the month at 9 a.m.
- ✧ **Board of Assessors:** Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
- ✧ **Fire Department training:** Every Tuesday at 7 p.m. at the fire station
- ✧ **Building Inspector:** Monday 5 - 7 p.m., Wednesday 8 - 10 a.m.
- ✧ **First Responders:** meeting/training: First and third Wednesday at 7 p.m. at the fire station
- ✧ **Cultural Council:** Second Thursday at 4:15 p.m at the library
- ✧ **Post Office:** Mill River Window: Monday - Friday 11:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
Southfield Window: Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
(The Southfield PO lobby is open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)
- ✧ **Town Treasurer:** Monday & Tuesday 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
- ✧ **Tax Collector:** Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
- ✧ **Selectmen's Administrative Secretary:** Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- ✧ **Dog and Animal Control Officer:** John Springstube 413-232-7038
- ✧ **Town Clerk:** 229-8278; 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. weekdays; Saturday by appointment
- ✧ **Town Hall:** 229-8116
- ✧ **Police:** Business office: 229-8161

Transfer Station Hours:

Wednesday: 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Saturday: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Sunday: 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

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New Marlborough Highway Department

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Hours: Monday - Friday 7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
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(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

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Pam Stebbins, Jon Swan, Marianne Swan
Contributing writers: Ann Getsinger,
Mary Richie Smith, Tara White. Index: Donna Weaver

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For advertising, contact Barbara Lowman, tel: 229-2369
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- ♦ **Campbell Falls Carpentry:** Licensed and insured contracting at campbellfallscarpentry@gmail.com (413)229-6097 and (413)429-7677. Mass Contractors # 7614140, HIC# 170377
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- ♦ **James Edelman:** General Contractor, Real Estate Sales. Best Results. Construction License #090773. Home Improvement Registration #152035. Real Estate Sales License #9086247. 413-528-0006 or cljvedelman@aol.com
- ♦ **Susan M. Smith:** Attorney At Law; Concentrating in the areas of Estate Planning, Estate Administration, Elder Law, Real Estate and Zoning Matters. ssmithlaw@hughes.net or 229-7080
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- ♦ **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 229-2369.