



New Marlborough 5 Village News

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Clayton • Hartsville • Mill River • New Marlborough • Southfield

THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING, IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

By Larry Burke

The Annual Town Meeting got underway right on schedule on May 6 at the firehouse in Southfield, with a crowd that included 190 voting citizens and a handful of other interested parties. Faced with the daunting task of wading through the fifty-seven articles on the warrant, Moderator Barry Shapiro got things underway by boldly proposing that the voters act on the first nine articles as a single motion... and he pulled it off!

Things slowed down a bit during the consideration of salaries for Town employees in Article 11. Town Treasurer Marilyn Fracasso spoke of the need of an advocate for the five employees of Town Hall, and asked



photo by Sandra Fusco-Walker

Administrative Secretary Sharon Fleck (in the upper right of the frame), addresses the large crowd in the early going of the Annual Town Meeting, held at the firehouse in Southfield.

for an acknowledgement of the work they do in the form of a 5 percent pay increase, rather than the 3 percent increase offered by the Board of Selectmen. Administrative Secretary Sharon Fleck and Town Clerk Kathy Chretien also addressed the crowd on their own behalf, citing the crowded facilities and poor working environment that they put up with on a daily basis. Courtney Turner of Southfield made a motion to increase the salaries budget by 5 percent over the 2019 amounts for the administrative secretary, the assessors' clerk, the tax collector, the Treasurer, and the town clerk; the motion was seconded and passed by a large majority.

The very next article, concerning the purchase of an electronic vote tabulator for the Town, despite not being recommended by the Finance Committee, found a stalwart advocate in Ms. Chretien. Overcoming the initial howls of disapproval at the prospect of retiring the Town's venerable hand-cranked voting machine, Ms. Chretien turned the tide by enumerating the advantages of a modern voting machine and delighted the audience by ending her argument with a waggish reference to the old machine: "The only thing it [the voting tabulator] doesn't do is 'ding.' If you want, we can put a bell on it." Some further discussion ensued, but when put to the vote, the motion to purchase the tabulator easily passed.

The biggest ticket item of the evening, as it is every year, was Article 16, the school budget totaling \$2,865,681. It passed unanimously after a brief acknowledgement by School Committee member Jane Burke of our selectmen's active role in the District's budgeting meetings. She also urged the audience to "flood

continued

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Annual Town Meeting, continued

the statehouse with requests for greater rural funding,” in order to lessen the burden on local property taxes.

Articles 17 through 27, all related to funding for the Town’s cultural, recreational, and protective boards and organizations, sailed through without objection. Article 28, however, encountered some pushback. The article proposed to raise and appropriate \$150,000 to fund the Stabilization Fund. Barbara Marchione of Mill River asked that there be an amendment to reduce the amount to be appropriated to \$50,000, and to take the balance of \$100,000 from the Free Cash account, with the aim of holding down the tax rate. After Moderator Shapiro pointed out that the proposed amendment to both appropriate and transfer was not within the scope of the article, Ms. Marchione rephrased the amendment simply to reduce the amount to be raised and appropriated from \$150,000 to \$50,000. Michele Shalaby, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen responded that the Board has been endeavoring to give the Town’s finances “the long view,” looking at the balance between the Stabilization Fund, Free Cash, and taking on new debt. She acknowledged that the Free Cash account is substantial – \$616,000 – but capital expenses this year will amount to roughly \$300,000 – to be covered from both the Stabilization Fund and Free Cash – plus the Board is looking at certain large expenditures, such as the Town Hall renovation, that are lurking in the near future. Thus, Ms. Shalaby said, there is the need to infuse the Stabilization Fund with the requested amount, which intentionally avoids the need to go outside the provisions of Proposition 2½. After some further discussion, the motion to amend Article 28 was defeated and the original amount of \$150,000 was approved.

Article 30, which asked the voters for permission to transfer \$115,000 from Free Cash for the purpose of paving the Highway Department driveway, encountered some questions and resistance from several attendees, but Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring was persuasive in stating the need for a stable, impermeable asphalt surface in that work area. Mr. Loring also withstood a bit of a verbal lashing from Marilyn Fracasso on the next article, having to do with the purchase of a new plow truck. Ms. Fracasso was unhappy with the request for “yet another truck,” and, in referring to the Highway Department equipment as “his” (meaning Mr. Loring’s), she eventually occasioned a comment from Selectman

Nat Yohalem to the effect that Mr. Loring is not the personal recipient of equipment purchases, but they are for the Town itself and the road safety of its citizens.

The next article that encountered rough sledding was Article 35, whereby the Town proposed to levy a 6 percent excise tax on rooms in B&B’s, hotels, lodging houses, and short-term rentals in New Marlborough. A succession of individuals who own such businesses



Peter Platt was one of several citizens who spoke against the imposition of a 6 percent excise tax on hospitality businesses in New Marlborough.

photo by Larry Burke

spoke against the article – Peter Platt and Meredith Kennard, owners of The Inn on the Green; Michael Smith and Brad Wagstaff, owners of Gedney Farm; and Doug Newman, an Airbnb host. Despite Finance Committee member Sandra Fusco-Walker’s statement that the Massachusetts Department of Revenue’s estimate of the added income to the Town on a 6 percent tax from existing hoteliers would be in the neighborhood of \$42,000 per year, the voters decided overwhelmingly to defeat the article. A related article proposing the imposition of a 0.75 percent meals tax was also defeated.

Article 36 asked the voters to approve a change to the Southern Berkshire Regional School District Agreement, changing the method of apportioning costs to the member towns from a year-by-year assessment to a 5-year rolling average. The article was approved. (It was subsequently approved by the other four towns, which means that the agreement will be amended to reflect this change.)

Article 38, which would allow the Board of Selectmen to enter into PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) agreements of up to twenty years with photovoltaic companies located in New Marlborough, became the object of lengthy discussion. Deanna Mummert of Mill River expressed the opinion that the townspeople “should not cede this power to the Board of Selectmen,” that it should be the right of citizens to participate in such decisions. Another resident of Mill River, Bill O’Brien, misunderstood the intent of the article, thinking it gave the Board of Selectmen sole power to put a solar field wherever they want. Stuart Lawrence then offered his view, saying that, “From my perspective, the town of New Marlborough is dubious about new business proposals,” and went on to say that he felt the selectmen should have the power to negotiate PILOTs in the best interest of the Town. Both Nat Yohalem and Tara White repeatedly tried to explain that the negotiations take place only after the solar company’s plan has been entirely ap-

proved following public hearings and special permitting, and also that arriving at a long-term arrangement is simply much more efficient for all parties than negotiating year after year. Ms. White added that the PILOT agreement that is in place for the solar field on Knight Road will bring the Town \$915,000 over twenty years. After a torturous twenty minutes of redundant discussion, the question was put to a vote, and easily passed.

At this point in the meeting, Courtney Turner requested that the part of the Warrant dealing with cannabis uses (Articles 48 – 55) be moved up in the lineup, so those citizens who were in attendance for that reason could finish up and go home. Rebecca Schreiber of New Marlborough village voiced her feeling that all eight categories of adult-use marijuana should be prohibited, faulting the Planning Board for not having cannabis bylaws in place. She recommended that, once all uses are prohibited and protective bylaws are in place, the Town could then consider opting back in to certain uses. Brad Wagstaff lightened the tone of the conversation by pointing out that marijuana production has long flourished in New Marlborough, albeit under the table. He concluded, to great applause and laughter, "I'm against rules."

Getting down to the actual voting on the eight articles, only one, Article 52, to prohibit a marijuana research facility, was defeated. In other words, the only allowed commercial use of cannabis-related products in New Marlborough (other than a medicinal marijuana purveyor) will be a cannabis research facility, which would, as members of the Planning Board have pointed out, be an extreme longshot for such a remote, small town as ours.



Highway Superintendent Chuck Loring successfully defended requests by the Highway Department to pave the driveway and work area around the Town Garage and to purchase a new plow truck.
photo by Sandra Fusco-Walker

Coupling this vote with the earlier special ballot vote, it appears that commercial uses of marijuana in New Marlborough will be off the table for the foreseeable future. Planning Board Chairman Peter Tiso did, however, speak to the Board's intention to proceed with the task of fashioning bylaws for all eight uses so they will be in place if the Town ever chooses to opt back in to, say, microbusinesses (which had appeared to be

one of the uses that interested many of the people who had participated in the Cannabis Ad Hoc Committee's survey last year).

The next article to be considered was the Planning Board's proposed zoning bylaw amendment, to establish two distinct zones in New Marlborough, those being Rural Residential and Village Center Residential. As explained by Peter Tiso,

the change from the long-existing single residential zone would serve as a planning tool for future development in the sections of New Marlborough that have a historical pattern of village-like density. The new zoning would favor reduced frontage requirements in the areas that are included in the Village Center Residential zone, and would also act to reduce non-conformity in a number of lots, making modifications to structures less onerous in terms of permitting. Mr. Tiso said that this division into two zones would introduce more "nuance" into the decision-making on what types of growth are appropriate for the village areas. He posed the example of a large solar field as being unsuitable for a village siting.

When asked if this measure would effectively increase the density of the village areas, Mr. Tiso said no, the

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minimum of one acre for a by-right lot size would remain as it has been. And he emphasized that, rather than invoking large changes to requirements in either of the two proposed zones, the impetus is “mostly about getting the geographic mapping in place.” Other voices were heard in favor of the zoning amendment, former Planning Board member Holly Morse calling it a “very fundamental” improvement, and Joyce Hackett seeing it as a way of providing more freedom to village residents. When the vote was called for, with a two-thirds majority required for passage, the measure passed, much to the delight of Planning Board members who had seen two previous efforts fail.

At this point in the meeting, three and a quarter hours in, it was necessary to go back to the articles that had been jumped over. These were quickly dispatched, all favorably, and the meeting ended with a vote per Article 56 to amend the Town bylaws by adding a section of regulations on alarm systems in homes and businesses. After some discussion over security concerns with KnoxBox systems, the citizens who had remained in attendance through this long meeting voted in favor of the article. And, with that, the Annual Town Meeting of 2019 entered into the annals of history. □

BROADBAND UPDATE

By Barry R. Shapiro

Work on bringing the longed-for high-speed internet to New Marlborough continues.

“We still expect that all of the pole licenses will be in place by late summer or early fall as originally contemplated,” said Steve Klein, chairman of the Cable Advisory Committee. “Obtaining these licenses is the responsibility of Charter, which is working with the utility companies and the Commonwealth. We know that they have been working on this diligently, engaging in a weekly conference call. Once all of the licenses are in place, Charter will then, pursuant to its contract

with the Commonwealth and its franchise agreement with the Town, have twelve months to finish building the system and to light it up. We look forward to that.”

Mr. Klein is joined on the Committee by residents Broc Kerr, Michael Shocket, John Valente, and Doug Newman. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for June. Until then, keep an estimated completion date of the fall of 2020 in mind and, as always, stay tuned. □

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The Town of New Marlborough is seeking three to five volunteers to serve on a Citizen’s Advisory Committee as part of its Citizen Participation Plan of the Community Development Block Grant. The purpose of the Committee is to be a liaison between the administrator of the grant and the Town, as well as hear any grievances relating to the implementation of

the grant. The Committee will meet quarterly and as needed to hear grievances. Members of the Committee shall not have applied for, or have any intention of applying for, housing rehabilitation assistance through the Block Grant. Please submit statements of interest to Sharon Fleck at sfleck@newmarlboroughma.gov or PO Box 99, Mill River, MA 01244 by June 10. □



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BOARD OF SELECTMEN



April 22: For its first order of business, the Board, with Nat Yohalem and Tara White present and Michele Shalaby conferencing in by phone, reviewed and approved layout plans for sections of four roads in connection with the reconstruction of four Town bridges by the state, specifically, on Norfolk Road over the Umpachene River, Campbell Falls Road over the Whiting River, Canaan Southfield Road over the Umpachene River and Lumbert Cross Road also over the Umpachene River. The selectmen agreed to add the plans to the warrant for approval by the voters at Annual Town Meeting. They previously had been reviewed and recommended by the Planning Board, and abutters have been notified.

The Board discussed the logistics of holding the Annual Town Meeting at the firehouse, which is the first time the meeting will be held there. The discussion covered parking, traffic control, sound system requirements, including headsets for the hearing impaired, and a communications effort to make sure townspeople are aware of the location change.

There was also an update on the initial efforts towards improving working conditions at Town Hall. As previously reported, the Board is recommending in the warrant the transfer of \$25,000 from the Town Hall Renovations account to the new Town Hall Workspace Improvements account. **Chief among the concerns aired by Town Hall office workers is the lack of air conditioning in the summer and adequate heat in the winter.** So H.B. Foster, HVAC specialists, has already been in to assay the heating and cooling situation there. There are also issues with the power coming into the building that will need to be resolved.

Separately, the Town is also looking to bring in a carpenter to make repairs to, or replace, the three outside

doors, which, in the winter, are a conduit for cold air coming into the office area. In addition, an outside contractor is being brought in to clean the ducts and vents that supply heat and fresh air to the office, and there will be a clean-out of office files, with some being moved to a new location away from the employees work area, while the rest will be designated for shredding. But first, according to Town Administrator Mari Enoch, Town Clerk Kathy Chretien in her role as Documents Retention Officer must, according to state law, submit a list of the files to be destroyed to the Secretary of State's office for its approval.

The Board granted a one-year extension of the special permit awarded last April to Park Avenue Solar Solutions for two ground-mounted commercial solar fields at 540 and 646 Mill River Southfield Road. According to the Town's bylaws, special permits lapse after one year if "substantial construction or use" has not taken place. The reason for delay, according to Park Avenue Solar's Kirt Mayland, is that the project has only recently been accepted into the state's Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) program. But he said the firm is now actively engaged in project planning and procurement. In giving his approval, however, Mr. Yohalem stated that the extension is being granted, "on the assumption that we'll have a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) agreement [with Park Avenue Solar] before the end of June," which Mr. Mayland readily agreed to.

Under administrative actions, the Board approved an annual business license renewal for concrete contractor Hunter Bassett for his Bassett Foundations business at 2080 Clayton Mill River Road. The Board also recommended to the Finance Committee a Reserve Fund transfer request from the Highway Department

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for \$10,000 to be used mainly for gravel. As explained by Town Administrator Enoch, last summer's heavy rain storms "wreaked havoc on our gravel roads," and by the fall the Highway Department had just about run through its budgeted gravel. She said Highway Superintendent Loring predicted at that time that he would be asking for a reserve fund transfer due to the impact on the Town's roads of the extraordinary and unanticipated weather.

Under Town Administrator updates, Ms. Enoch reported the Town will be receiving a payout of \$20,602 from Berkshire County Insurance Group. As she reminded the Board, it was a year ago that Berkshire County Insurance, of which New Marlborough was a member, voted to dissolve, and now, following an independent audit, is ready to do the final disbursement of its remaining funds. The group and its assets are now officially dissolved, she said.

Separately, also on the insurance front, Ms. Enoch said the Town's new health insurer, **Berkshire Health Group, which self-funds its claims, recently reviewed its financials and concluded it "has had a good claims experience recently,"** and voted to grant its member towns a one month premium holiday, meaning, she said, that in the month of June neither the Town nor its employees will be billed for health insurance. "So employees won't see that [payment]

come out of their paycheck and the Town won't pay that premium," she said, "but it's only for health insurance. None of that applies to any dental plans, life insurance or anything else."

Peter Schuyten

April 29: After calling the meeting to order, **Chairman Michele Shalaby** asked **Town Moderator Barry Shapiro** to outline the benefits of moving to electronic voting at town meetings. Mr. Shapiro said he had been aware of such systems for some time but had not pursued the idea because he thought it would be cost-prohibitive for such a small town. But he said further investigation convinced him he was wrong, and that an estimated leasing cost of around \$900 for 150 devices for a typical meeting would be well worth it. That cost would include rental of the system, training, support, and shipping.

As Town moderator, he said, it's his responsibility to run an efficient town meeting that results in accurate votes. With an electronic voting system, meeting participants are given a hand-held wireless device providing voters with a yes/no/abstain option instead of the traditional yellow card. When a vote is taken, the device transmits the user's vote to a central device that tallies the voting results immediately. The system shows the number of votes, but not who voted, so all ballots are secret. He also pointed out that votes requiring a two-thirds majority would be far simpler to carry out.

Mr. Shapiro reported that members of the Massachusetts Town Moderators Association who've used such systems are happy with the results. However, to date, he said, most of the towns using them have been larger than New Marlborough and are typically in the eastern part of the state. Nat Yohalem said it seemed worth looking into further and asked Town Administrator Enoch to

come out of their paycheck and the Town won't pay that premium," she said, "but it's only for health insurance. None of that applies to any dental plans, life insurance or anything else."

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work with Town Clerk Kathy Chretien on getting the Board more information.

Ms. Enoch reminded those in attendance that a presentation on the Town's Fiscal FY20 budget would be held the next evening, April 30. She said the chairmen of the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen planned to do a Power Point presentation giving an overview of the Town's financials for the coming year, including the Town's operating and school budgets.

In connection with the Community Development Block Grant awarded to the Town last year, Ms. Enoch said the Town has to appoint a citizens' advisory committee comprising three to five members whose function would be to update the Board on the status of the projects and to deal with any grievances that arise. **The grant, which will be administered by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), will provide funding for the rehabbing of four to six homes in New Marlborough.** She said BRPC recommended the advisory committee include at least one selectman, and that it cannot include anyone who will be applying for a grant. The deadline for establishing the committee is June 30, although the Board would like to have it in place before then, and will be posting notices seeking applicants in the usual places including the Mill River General Store and Southfield Post Office. There will also be a notice published in the NM5VN (see page 4).

As the current three-year transfer station lease with Maurice Brazie at \$7,000 per year is due to expire on June 30, Mr. Yohalem said he met with Mr. Brazie and Solid Waste Coordinator Freddy Friedman to negotiate a new agreement. That agreement calls for another three-year lease, this one at \$8,000 per year, but also gives the Town the option to renew for two more three-year terms, at \$9,000 and \$10,000 per year respectively. He said Mr. Brazie has verbally agreed to the terms, and so the Board then voted to accept the new agreement.

Chairman Michele Shalaby asked Town Moderator Barry Shapiro to outline the benefits of moving to electronic voting at town meetings.

Moving on, Ms. Enoch reported that she and Ms. Shalaby conducted interviews for the position of alternate building inspector with Matthew Kollmer and Don Torrico, a position required by state law and one which the Board had previously indicated it wanted to fill. While both candidates are certified Building Commissioners and are equally qualified, Ms. Shalaby recommended appointing Mr. Kollmar, who she said seems to have more availability. She also recommended appointing Mr. Torrico as an additional Local Inspector, to be used as a backup on an as-needed basis. Compensation for both will be at \$50 per hour, with a one-hour minimum, and no additional expenses. The appointments, which were approved by the Board, will run through the end of the fiscal year on June 30.

Board Secretary Sharon Fleck presented the Board with a proposed three-year lease for a new Pitney Bowes postage meter to replace the existing postage meter, which no longer meets U.S. Postal Service requirements. The Board voted to authorize Ms. Shalaby, as chair, to sign the new agreement.

The Board deferred a decision on a request from Police Chief Graham Frank for a \$3 increase in the detail rate paid to Town police officers, from \$42 to \$45 per hour. Neighboring towns, it was pointed out, pay between \$44 and \$49 per hour, making it difficult to compete with other towns, according to Chief Frank, as officers on road details get paid the rate in the town for which they are working. The Board did not have a copy of the detail policy in front of it, so it agreed to discuss the issue at a future meeting.

Memorial Day coordinator David Hastings met with the Board to go over details for the Memorial Day observance, set for Monday, May 27, at 9:00 a.m. He said state Rep. William (Smitty) Pignatelli will be the featured speaker, while Hevreh Synagogue's Rabbi Neil



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Hirsch will lead the invocation and benediction. In the event of rain, ceremonies will be held in Town Hall.

Ms. Enoch then thanked Commission on Disabilities' Acting Chair Tom Stalker for obtaining the grant from the Massachusetts Office on Disabilities to purchase the hearing assistance devices used at the Annual Town Meeting and Bill Kelly for setting up and testing the devices. And she also thanked Ms. Fleck for her work on the Town's *Annual Report*. In other business, Ms. Enoch said a letter has been drafted to Building Inspector Owen Wright, who had been inadvertently overpaid, and that she and Ms. Shalaby had already met with him to discuss repayment options. She also noted the coordinators of the Town's farmers market asked to switch the day of the market from Saturday to Sunday. The farmers market, which is held on the Village Green, will run from Memorial Day weekend to the end of September.

Anne Sommers

May 9: Slightly before this 12:30 p.m. make-up meeting, displaced from Monday by the Annual Town Meeting, was called to order, Town Administrator Mari Enoch presented Chairman Michele Shalaby with a potted array of tall yellow tulips. It was Ms. Shalaby's final meeting after two three-year terms on the Board. A colorful bouquet of flowers from Selectmen Tara White and Nat Yohalem soon followed.

Then it was on to business, as Ms. Shalaby opened the meeting to a discussion of a year's extension of a permit to CVE North America, which wants to install a solar project on sixteen acres just off Knight Road. Since the

site, a twenty-acre plot owned by John Palfini, was losing its tax-protected status as agricultural land, state law gives the Town the option to acquire the land at fair-market value. The selectmen had to decide whether to decline that right.

They had begun to discuss the possible benefits of collecting rent from a solar electricity producer when yet another issue, independent of the first, arose. The Board needed to alert abutters of CVE's request for the extension, but the March 3 letter containing the request somehow failed to arrive at Town Hall until May 9. So, the Board postponed further consideration of the permit extension request – and the option to buy the Palfini land – to the meeting of June 3, giving abutters sufficient time to react to it.

The Board next took up a dispute that has arisen over its contention that Provisional

Building Inspector Owen Wright had been overpaid in the amount of \$1,014.93. The selectmen asked that Mr. Wright, who has maintained there was no overpayment, be invited to defend his view at its May 15 meeting. Meanwhile, a check from Mr. Wright to cover a repayment, in case it was settled in favor of the Town, is being held for safe-keeping.

Preliminary to the Board's review of the results of the Annual Town Meeting, Michele Shalaby thanked Board Secretary Sharon Fleck for her help in changing the venue of the meeting from Town Hall to the Firehouse. The cooperation of the Fire Department and its assistance in setting up was also applauded.

Discussion then turned to Article 11 of the warrant, in which an amendment increasing from 3 percent to 5 percent the amounts budgeted for the salaries of cer-



Town Administrator Mari Enoch and retiring Selectman Michele Shalaby share a light moment before the Annual Town Meeting on May 6.

photo by Sandra Fusco-Walker

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tain Town Hall employees was passed. Mr. Yohalem observed that the amounts voted at the Town Meeting set budgetary limits, but that it was still up to the Board of Selectmen to apportion salaries. This remark occasioned an exchange between Ms. Fleck, who said, "Morale [in Town Hall] is not good to begin with, and if [the will of the Town's voters] is overturned, it will be terrible." Mr. Yohalem replied, "You are not helping your cause." Later in the meeting, Mr. Yohalem said that Superintendent Chuck Loring, apparently in reaction to the presumed increases for Town Hall employees, asked for a meeting with him to discuss Highway Department salaries.

Other matters decided at the Town Meeting were clarified: Ms. Shalaby asked that the chairman of the Conservation Commission be consulted as to how its expenses should be paid. Ms. White observed that, with the passage of a new bylaw that makes a distinction between village and rural areas of town, the Town's bylaws needed to be renumbered. Ms. Enoch said that the state Department of Revenue did not need to be informed of the failure of an attempt to charge room and meal taxes in town. Ms. Shalaby noted that the new, rolling-average formula for apportioning school-district costs had passed in four towns and awaited only the vote in Alford. All five of the School District's towns must affirm the new formula for it to take effect (and subsequent to this meeting, Alford did vote in favor of the change).

In regard to a newly voted requirement that homeowners with an alarm system connected to the Fire Department install a KnoxBox (it holds a house key that would provide entry in emergencies), Mr. Yohalem asked if the Town needed to carry insurance against break-ins using the key. Ms. Enoch's opinion, based on the experience of other towns, was that it did not.

Ms. Enoch informed the Board that an upgrade to the tax collector software, which would need to be installed by July 1, would cost \$1,104. She said that Chapter 90 funds would reimburse the Highway Department in the amount of \$24,292 for gravel and culvert replacements on East Hill, Hotchkiss, Underwood, Umpachene Falls, and Keyes Hill Roads. Ms. White said that she would need accounting of the reimbursements by September 1. Later, noting its bumps and ruts, Ms. White said, "It would be really nice if the Highway Department did something with the Town Hall parking lot."

Ms. Fleck reported that Mike Leining had provided an estimate of \$2,500 for upgrading the Town Hall circuit-breaker box. The current circuit-breaker array is inadequate to handle the electrical demands of air-conditioning and other anticipated improvements to

Town Hall work spaces.

After running through a check list of all the steps that need to be done in advance of Ms. Shalaby's retirement, the Board then spent an eye-glazing hour or so approving the minutes of four earlier meetings.

Before this, however, Mr. Yohalem said he had something he wanted to read into the record: "I want to express thanks," he said, "on behalf of the Board, on behalf of the town, for six wonderful years, two as chairman, served on the Board by Michele." The room erupted in applause.

Joe Poindexter

May 15: The meeting was called to order at 1:08 pm. The first order of business was to reorganize the Board given the election of Richard Long as new selectman to replace outgoing Selectman Michele Shalaby. Nat Yohalem was given the chairmanship of the Board, with Tara White to serve as Vice Chairman. After reviewing and approving several sets of minutes from past meetings, the Board moved on to the next piece of business, brought forth by Provisional Building Inspector Owen Wright. Mr. Wright had been asked by the Board to pay back to the Town an amount of money that they had

Mr. Yohalem observed that the amounts voted at the Town Meeting set budgetary limits, but that it was still up to the Board of Selectmen to apportion salaries.



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determined was an overpayment. **Mr. Wright read a letter that he submitted to the Board detailing why he believes he was not overpaid, and which justifies his request to have his check returned to him.** The board agreed that the error was theirs and asked Town Administrator Mari Enoch to return the check, which she did. Mr. Yohalem stated that it was both an error and an injustice. There was a payroll error resulting in an overpayment to Mr. Wright, but it was an injustice that he wasn't compensated the full salary for the work he was performing and that he was in fact performing all the duties of the building inspector position during the seven weeks in question. Therefore, Mr. Yohalem felt in retrospect that Mr. Wright should receive the full payment, and the Board then asked Ms. Enoch to return to him his check. All members of the Board seemed happy to return the check to Mr. Wright, and thanked him for all the hard work he has done and continues to do.

Mr. Wright read a letter that he submitted to the Board detailing why he believes he was not overpaid, and which justifies his request to have said check returned to him.

Next came announcements. Ms. Enoch stated that Seaboard Oxford, LLC submitted a termination letter for its solar net metering credit purchase agreement with the Town. It said in the letter that it had been unable to secure adequate financing to make good on the 30 percent net meter discount agreement. Mr. Yohalem wondered whether the company was legally allowed to back out of the deal and the Board agreed to refer the matter to town counsel for review.

Administrative Board Secretary Sharon Fleck announced that she was still in the process of obtaining three quotes for repair of an electrical panel in the Town Hall utility room. Ms. Enoch reminded her to communicate to all bidders the requirement that they must pay the prevailing wage to employees.

Ms. White asked for an update on the road grader, as she noticed the one that was on loan to the Town was no longer at the Highway Department garage. Ms.

Enoch informed all that the loaned grader had been returned, the new one was on its way, and the old one is still working and will grade until the new one arrives. The topic of the need to repair the potholes in the parking lot of Town Hall was also brought up.

Mr. Yohalem had several topics to bring up: He asked each Board member to think about any special projects he or she would be interested in spearheading, to be discussed further at the next meeting. He also expressed some uncertainty about what happened with respect to Articles 10 and 11 at the Annual Town Meeting. It seemed to him that the amendment to Article 11 to increase the salaries of five town staff members may be in conflict with Article 10. The Board The Board will refer the matter to town counsel for review. **Finally, Mr. Yohalem and Ms. Enoch discussed their meeting with the Highway Department.** The Highway Department would like an ad hoc committee formed to review job responsibilities and salaries in New Marlborough and compare them with those of other nearby towns. The meeting was then adjourned at 1:48 p.m. □

Jackson Liscombe

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CANDIDATES NIGHT AND ELECTION RESULTS

Roughly thirty people attended the Candidates Night forum on May 8 at the church in Southfield. Barry Shapiro served as moderator of the event, which featured questions and answers from the two candidates for the Board of Assessors, Marsha Pshenishny and Scott Walker, as well as the two candidates for the Board of Selectmen, Richard Long and Ivan Douglas Newman.



Richard Long occupies the podium as Doug Newman (left) and Barry Shapiro (right) listen intently. Photo by Larry Burke

Reactions of the attendees to the forum, sponsored by the 5 Village News, were universally positive, so hopes are high that this can become an annual event.

of anyone on the ballot (317), Tammi Palmer as Cemetery Commissioner. □

Larry Burke

In the ensuing elections on May 13, Mrs. Pshenishny prevailed, 185 votes to 156; Richard Long won the seat on the Board of Selectmen, 245 votes to 115. In uncontested races, Barry R. Shapiro retained his post as Town Moderator, Eric Schaefer was re-elected to the Planning Board, John Bellinger to the Board of Health, Nathan Redman as Tree Warden, and, earning the most votes

AN INVITATION TO ALL FAITHS

Congregations at the Southfield Church have included our Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, atheist, and agnostic neighbors, and I am adamant in my belief that all our ancient scriptures have truth for all of us to learn, regardless of personal faith traditions. It is in this ecumenical spirit that I welcome "The Gospel of Mark Alive," a remarkable evening of storytelling from Reverend Bert Marshall, June 14 at 6:00 p.m.

In 2003, while pastor of Lee Congregational Church, Rev. Marshall took a three-month sabbatical to Halifax, Nova Scotia, with the purpose of committing the entire Gospel of Mark to memory, so that he could put these stories in front of a live audience, very possibly the way our ancient scriptures were intended to be heard. He has been doing so for the past sixteen years. As a part of our 225th Anniversary celebration, I look forward to his presentation in the sacred space that is our Southfield

Church, with its vibrant acoustics, beautiful light, and undeniable spirit. □

Robert Olsen

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A REPORT FROM THE FIREHOUSE

Many thanks to all who turned out on April 27 to support the New Marlborough Fire Company's annual Spring Dance. A big Thank You to Michael Smith and all of the folks at Gedney Farm for a delicious meal and great hospitality; to David Malachino and the musicians of Cornerstone for a lively night of music; and to Firefighter Winonah Carpenter for organizing the evening's festivities.

Additionally, thank you to our table sponsors who made the evening possible:

Herbert and Jeanine Coyne
 Freddy Friedman and Mary Jo Friedman
 and Haymeadow Pond Farm
 Edward Goodnow
 Paul Joffe
 Margaret and Joseph Koerner
 Steve and Elaine Mack
 Andrea Marks and David Warmflash
 William and Anne Tatlock
 Julia & Douglas Trumbull
 Keith Wilkinson Excavating and Wilkinson Gardens

In addition to dinner, music, and dancing, the evening included a brief ceremony, during which officers from neighboring fire departments of Canaan and Monterey were recognized, and awards were distributed to New Marlborough firefighters. This year's award recipients are Hunter Lucey, Firefighter of the Year; Brian Dillon, Most Improved Firefighter; and Solomon Joffe, the Dedication Award.

Finally, EMT and former firefighter Neil Crawford was recognized for more than forty years of service to the community and presented with a rocking chair in which to enjoy his retirement from the emergency services. Neil will retire in June, and the Fire Company and First Responders are thankful for his dedication and commitment to the town and its citizens for these many, many years.

We look forward to seeing everyone on August 17 at the Pig Roast! □

David Smith, Fire Company President



Following the awards ceremony, folks started busting some moves to the tunes of the band, Cornerstone.



Firefighter Solomon Joffe, right, received the 2019 Dedication Award at the annual spring dance on April 27. He is seen here shaking hands with Brian Dillon, who received the Most Improved Firefighter Award.



Hunter Lucey shakes hands with EMT/Firefighter Robert Fedell after receiving the Firefighter of the Year Award at the annual Spring Dance at Gedney Farm. Looking on, left to right, are Fire Captain Ed Harvey, Firefighter Brian Dillon, and Fire Company President David Smith.



Neil Crawford receives a rocking chair as a well-earned reward for his more-than forty years of service to New Marlborough's volunteer emergency services as a firefighter and EMT.

SEEING RED

The Meeting House Gallery Season Gets Underway

Cynthia Atwood is one of twenty-three artists who are seeing red these days, preparing for the first Meeting House Gallery exhibit of the season, an invitational show called Seeing Red, opening on Friday, June 21.

“I love the title. So many things come to mind” says Cynthia, “Crying eyes, red eyes, discombobulation of the world – the chaos and polarization in our world can make me sad, frustrated, sometimes angry. Obviously, I am not alone in this, and I observe how I and others aim our ire in response.” Fearlessly playful and provocative, Cynthia’s work, titled Eager 2019, fabric and wire on aluminum, is part of her Target series.

Invitational, themed shows at the Meeting House Gallery are notorious for challenging both established and less well-known artists to step outside expected bounds. This exhibit will be no exception as an assignment focusing on the color red is likely to result in passionate expression.

These days, with artists mixing media far beyond the old, clearly delineated models of painting, photography, and sculpture, visitors to the gallery may expect to see some edges being pushed by the works of Peggy Reeves, Leslee Carsewell, and



Cynthia Atwood, in her studio, alongside one of her new creations

photo by Ann Getsinger



“Biomorphic” by Michael Thomas

Robin Schmitt. We will also see an impressive selection of sculpture, with work from Robin Tost, Michael Thomas, and Peter Barrett – all three, major participants in the Sculpture Now exhibit that graces The Mount in Lenox each summer. Cookie Coyne and Jane Burke always delight, exhibiting the many ways clay moves them.

Jacob Fossum, just back from an art residency in Iceland, and Pat Hogan, fresh from a solo show at the Berkshire Museum, are among the invited painters seeing red. Joining them will be Diane Barth, Susie Crofut, Elizabeth Lombardi, and Judith Wyer.

Ruben Kier will see some red in outer space with his Astrophotography, along with a variety of creative work from Kathleen Starling, Betsey Wells Farber, Martina Müller, and Sharon Magruder.

Seeing Red runs from June 22 to July 21 at the Meeting House Gallery in New Marlborough, with an opening on Friday, June 21 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. Gallery hours are Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome to see red! □

Ann Getsinger



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Upcoming: Events Calendar for June and July

June 1: Harpsichordist Mariken Palmbloom, playing selections from Bach's *The Art of the Fugue*, and other Baroque works, 7:00 p.m., Southfield Church

June 7: Early Railroads in South County, a First Friday program presented by railroad historian Richard Paddock and sponsored by the New Marlborough Historical Society, 7:30 p.m. in the Meeting House Gallery, wine and cheese to follow the program

June 8: Paul Celebi, piano, 7:00 p.m. at the Southfield Church

June 11: Navigating the Healthcare Internet, an informational program presented by Danielle Chretien, MLS, free and open to the public, 4:30 to 5:50 p.m. in the Fairview Hospital Conference Room, 29 Lewis Avenue, Great Barrington; pre-register at (413) 854-9609

June 14: *The Gospel of Mark Alive*, performed by Reverend Bert Marshall, 6:00 p.m. at the Southfield Church

June 21: Seeing Red, twenty-three artists respond to the theme of the season's first Meeting House Gallery show literally, figuratively, or sparingly; opening reception 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the New Marlborough Meeting House Gallery; on view Friday to Sunday 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. thereafter until July 21

June 22: Eagle Band Trombone Ensemble, big brass visits the Southfield Church at 7:00 p.m.

June 25: Understanding How Your Heart Functions, a program from the Fairview Cardiac Rehabilitation team, free and open to the public, 4:30 to 5:50 p.m. in the Fairview Hospital Conference Room, 29 Lewis Avenue, Great Barrington; pre-register at (413) 854-9609

June 29: The Berkshire Hillsmen, down-home harmonies from a barbershop quartet. 7:00 p.m. at the Southfield Church

July 6: The Zola Boys return to the Southfield church, 7:00 p.m., with their Bluegrass Brother harmonies

July 12: A History of The Trustees in the Berkshires, a First Friday (the second Friday, this month) program of the New Marlborough Historical Society; 7:30 p.m. in the Meeting House Gallery, wine and cheese to follow the program — free and open to the public

July 16: Organizing Your Healthcare Data, Deborah Phillips, MS, LDN, IFNCP, on taking charge of information about your health; free and open to the public, 4:30 to 5:50 p.m. in the Fairview Hospital Conference Room, 29 Lewis Avenue, Great Barrington; pre-register at (413) 854-9609

July 26: Water Works, the second show of the 2019 season, exhibiting the works of twenty-three artists; opening reception 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the New Marlborough Meeting House Gallery; on view Friday to Sunday 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. thereafter until August 25

July 27: String Quartet (TBA) from the Norfolk Music Festival Fellows, a rare opportunity to hear brilliant young musicians before they turn pro; 4:00 p.m. at the Southfield Church



A WILDFLOWER FOR THE FUTURE

The Land Trust is moving forward with a new look. Community member and extremely talented designer David Cicchetti's new mark (left) captures the Land Trust mission of preserving nature for the future, while bringing people together today. Inspired by the beauty of our natural flora, the new logo elevates a seedpod to a place of beauty and suggests scattering seeds and gathering new growth back to a core – a symbolic gesture to which the Land Trust aspires. Look for our new roadside signs at our primary trailheads – Joffe Nature Sanctuary, Goodnow Preserve, Thousand Acre Swamp, Lower Carroll Mill, and New Marlboro Preserve.

While we loved the former mark, developed by the late Susie Hardcastle, the organization has become larger and more active. David's design deftly captures the new spirit of the Land Trust. To us, a wildflower is welcoming, friendly, and full of energy. It beckons you to join in the fun. It suggests that however different we all are, we're all still connected. A wildflower promises growth and change over time. And it has a sense of whimsy, too. □

Ian Devine, President



photo by Martha Bryan

A hearty spring road cleanup crew gleaned sixty bags of garbage from our roadsides on April 27.

HOUSE DAMAGED BY FIRE, BUT SAVED

Around 2:00 p.m. on Friday, May 17, occupants of the Shirley Hart residence on Canaan Southfield Road discovered a fire, likely caused by a bad electrical power strip, in a back bedroom of the house. 911 was dialed, and Fire Chief Chuck Loring, who was at the other end of town at the time, then immediately requested mutual aid from the towns of Monterey, Sheffield, Canaan, and Norfolk. By the time trucks and firefighters from New Marlborough arrived on the scene, personnel from Canaan Fire Department had already begun to suppress the fire, demonstrating the crucial importance of mutual aid in our rural towns.

Chief Loring said that, while there is considerable smoke and water damage to the house, it was extremely fortunate that the residents were at home at the time, so a quick response limited the actual fire damage to the bedroom. The house will not be habitable for a

considerable period of time, and Chief Loring is in the process of finding assistance for the homeowners. □

Larry Burke

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HERE COMES THE SUN

And New Marlborough Says, 'It's All Right'

By Joe Poindexter

It's hard to find anyone in these parts opposed to harnessing the clean, quiet energy of the sun. We just don't want solar panels glaring at us out the living room window. Therein lies a challenge for the businesses that would like to erect photovoltaic arrays in New Marlborough, as well as for the state and local authorities tasked with permitting these initiatives.

Thus far, three companies have targeted New Marlborough for solar power. Two are moving forward.

Park Avenue Solar Solutions of Greenwich, Connecticut, has begun construction planning for an installation on eighteen acres of a semi-abandoned gravel pit tucked behind Mill River Southfield Road and out of view of everyone except its co-owner, Norm Hankey. Park Avenue received a permit from the Board of Selectmen in May 2018 but then had to sit on its hands for nine months while it awaited a Statement of Qualification (SOQ) from the state Department of Energy Resources (DOER) attesting to the company's stability and that its project has secured an interconnection with an electric utility. The SOQ is a requirement whether or not the company seeks a subsidy under DOER's Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) program. (Pardon the acronyms; they seem to bloom wherever government bureaucracies become involved.)

Park Avenue's Mill River project received the state's blessing in February, and it has asked the Town for a year's extension to get its solar field up and running. Two matters remain to be negotiated: the so-called Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) and a decommissioning bond (monetary insurance that the solar array will be properly removed at the end of its lease). Voters at the Annual Town Meeting authorized the Board of Selectmen to negotiate a PILOT for up to twenty years — the length of a typical solar project lease — an increase from three years under the previous regulation. According to Kirt Mayland, a co-developer with Park Avenue, the company will begin construction of its solar array in August and start generating electricity by late fall.

CVE North America, headquartered in Manhattan, experienced a similar delay for a project off Knight Road, originally permitted by the Town last June. DOER gave its approval also in February, and CVE, too, has asked for a year's extension on its permit. It awaits notification of the abutters of the sixteen-acre plot of land, owned by John Palfini, and, separately, a decision by the Town whether to exercise an option to buy the land (see May 9 Board of Selectmen report for more on this option).

Under the seemingly safe assumption that the Town will decline, CVE foresees starting construction on the project "as soon as is reasonably practicable," writes CVE President Thibaut Delespaul. Alexander Fox, a business developer at CVE, says that eligible New Marlborough residents and other National Grid customers will be able to subscribe to Halo Community Solar, a CVE brand, and receive solar credits that will reduce their monthly electricity bill up to 10 percent. The project will be open for subscribers in 2020. Interested customers can visit halosolar.com for information.

Competitive Power Ventures (CPV, sorry, yet another acronym), the third solar contractor, was to have built on two lots a little north of New Marlborough Central School on Hartsville Mill River Road. On April 4, the Braintree, Massachusetts, company withdrew its permit application. Almost from the outset, CPV encountered resistance from a group of abutters who were concerned about the potential contamination not only of their views but of the potable water coming to their residences. They also pointed out that the proposed installation would have been located within that part of Mill River that has been recognized with inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, which, according to the abutters, would have made it ineligible for state subsidy.

According to Robert Mastria, CPV director of development, however, the decision to pull out was governed purely by the cost of interconnectivity with National Grid. "CPV elected not to continue development of the Mill River project due to the high cost of electrical network upgrades that would be required," he said. Indeed, Mill River's National Registry status appears to have played no part in the decision. According to DOER Communications Director Jessica Ridlen, the subsidy prohibition applies only to "a project that is sited on a state register of historic places."

This leaves two projects still on track to begin powering New Marlborough refrigerators and light bulbs by late this year or early next. And here's the kicker: The Town is borrowing \$720,000 from the state as its part of the obligation to wire New Marlborough for high-speed broadband. According to a rough calculation, PILOT payments from Park Avenue and CVE should just about cover the debt service on that loan. It may be pure serendipity, but the timing couldn't have been better. □

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



This month's recipe is courtesy of Jake Levin from his new book "Smokehouse Handbook" (Storey Publishing, 2019).

During the spring and summer at our house, most large get-togethers involve firing up the smokehouse for some good old-fashioned barbecue. In our home, pork ribs are where it's at. There is something so satisfying about the process of making and eating them; we have been known to load up our smokehouse with upwards of 20 racks of ribs. The great thing about ribs is I can sleep in, go to the farmer's market, and come home with enough time to have smoked pork ribs for dinner. They are perfect for a grill table, above-ground pit, hot-smoke drum smoker, or smokehouse (as long as it is built for hot smoking). □

— Jake Levin

Smoked Pork Ribs

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons rub*
- 1 rack pork ribs, spare or baby back
- 1/3 cup barbecue sauce

*Pork Barbecue Rub - Makes about 1 cup

This rub is perfect for barbecued ribs and pork shoulders. It also works well as a generic taco seasoning.

- 1/2 cup fine sea salt or kosher salt
- 1/2 cup ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup muscovado sugar
- 3 tablespoons sweet paprika
- 2 tablespoons ground coriander
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper

Mix the ingredients together and store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place.

Directions:

1. An hour or so before smoking, apply the rub to your ribs (about 1 tablespoon per side). You want a nice even coat, with the meat still visible beneath the rub. Fill a spray bottle with water, cider vinegar, or whiskey.
2. Place the ribs, bone side down, in the smoker at a temperature between 225° and 250° F (110 and 120 C). Place a pan of water below or near the ribs to help keep moisture in the air.
Note: If you don't have a smoker or feel like smoking them on your grill, you can do these ribs in your oven (follow recipe and temperature guidelines as is), they just won't have that smokey flavor.
3. Every hour or so, check the ribs. Spray the ribs with what's in your spray bottle to wash away any soot, and so that you can see the color that the ribs are turning. You'll know they are ready for barbecue sauce application when they have achieved a deep reddish brown color throughout. They should be this color after about 3 hours.
4. Once the ribs have achieved the right color, lightly coat the first side with barbecue sauce. Let them smoke for 15 more minutes. Flip the ribs and coat the other side with barbecue sauce. Let smoke for another 15 minutes.
5. Wrap the ribs in foil and return to the smoker for about 1 hour. The ribs are ready when you can pick them up from the center and each side bends down limply. Too stiff and they aren't ready, but if they are too floppy and they just fall apart they are overdone (not the worst thing in the world). Different people like their ribs different textures, so experiment to see what level of chew you like. There is no wrong way.

NEIGHBORS



At its meeting on April 25, the Finance Committee took time out to honor long-time member **Prudence Spaulding**. Prue has been a Finance Committee member for thirty-six years, and had decided not to seek another term. Sandra Walker provided a cake bearing the inscription, "What are you going to do on Thursday nights NOW?" Prue will continue as Inspector of Animals and Fence Viewer, posts she has held for as long as her Finance Committee membership. Many thanks, Prue, for all those years of service to New Marlborough.

Local author **Jake Levin**, of Mill River, has just published *Smokehouse Handbook*, a compendium of smoking techniques, recipes, and instructions for building a versatile backyard smoker – which he and his brother, **Will**, have constructed at their home.

Jake has been a professional butcher for ten years, and has been curing meats for even longer. He is currently employed at *Jacuterie*, an artisanal charcuterie in Ancramdale, New York. *Smokehouse Handbook* is available in Great Barrington at The Bookloft, JWS Art Supplies, One Mercantile, and soon, at the Berkshire Food Co-op. (A recipe from Jake's book is featured on page 17 of this issue.)

Mill River artist **Robin Tost** will be part of the "SculptureNow at the Mount" exhibit with her sculpture, *Phoenix*. The exhibit opens on June 9 at The Mount in Lenox, when the thirty-one participating artists will be present to talk about their work; it runs through October.

Her sculpture is composed of many bits of scrap metal, sewn together with wire and attached to a nine-foot steel frame. All colors were found on the metal scraps as they were collected. They range from extremely bright on the top of *Phoenix* to burned and corroded at the base. The size of this piece was dictated by the dimensions of the door to Robin's studio – it just barely fit on its way out!

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compiled by Barbara Lowman: deeuell@yahoo.com



Prudence Spaulding, feted at her last Finance Committee meeting

photos by Sandra Fusco-Walker

photo furnished by Storey Publications



Jake Levin, butcher, and now, author



Robin Tost, with her newest sculpture, "Phoenix"

photo by Larry Burke



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OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBORS

Coming out of a winter in which many of us noticed a scarcity of birds at our feeders, it seems as though our avian friends have now come back in force. **Joe Poindexter** wrote the following lines on May 15, well summarizing the pleasures bird sightings provide us: “Dear Wildlife Editor, color has arrived at the bird feeder here on East Hill: **gold finches, purple finches, rose-breasted grosbeaks, great swarms of bluejays, a red-headed woodpecker** and, this morning for the first time in memory, a **red-winged blackbird**. The sun has just broken through to illuminate the freshness of new leaves. We homo sapiens may be on our way to torching planet earth, but we haven’t succeeded yet.”



photo by Don Beauchamp

Common yellowthroat warbler



photo by Don Beauchamp

American redstart

All over town, similar happy reactions are pouring in. **Virginia Dawson** in Clayton and **Robert Twing** have **Baltimore orioles** feasting on fresh oranges that they have put on their feeders. **Don Beauchamp** has had a host of welcome visitors at his feeders: “My first **hummingbird** arrived on April 29, followed by **orioles** and **rose-breasted grosbeaks** on May 3; on May 5, many **yellow warblers**; then a pair male **white-crowned sparrows** on May 8; two pairs of **American redstarts**, and an **American bittern** on May 10, not to mention a **bald eagle** that flew overhead. May 11 brought the **common yellowthroat warbler**, and on May 15 I spotted two male **chestnut-sided warblers** in front of the house.”

Will Levin, who lives on the Mill River Great Barrington Road, also reported seeing **grosbeaks** and **orioles**, and also, “**wood thrush, hermit thrush, and veery** – my favorite orchestra of late spring to midsummer.” On the harsh-reality side of nature, Will added that a **bear** had killed and eaten twenty-two of his father’s chickens.

Larry and Jane Burke were awakened on May 12 by unearthly screeching, clattering sounds coming from right below the bedroom window, and that turned out to be a conversation between a magnificent pair of

sandhill cranes. The cranes proceeded to stroll around the yard for more than half an hour before disappearing. Two days later, Larry spotted four **Canada goose goslings**, along with their proud parents, on the pond near his house. They stayed around for two more days before moving to a pond deeper in the woods, hopefully out of the clutches of the **snapping turtles** that, in many years past, have picked off the youngsters from underneath as they swam.

The **wild turkeys** seem to be present in greater numbers than ever. **Ed Harvey** spotted two **toms** trying to outdo each other in one of The Farm New Marlborough fields, and **Graham Frank** came across a pair on Land Trust land that appeared to be answering the age-old question, “Which comes first, the turkey or the egg?”

Turning to wildlife of the four-legged variety, **Barry Shapiro**, who lives above Mill River near the Sheffield border, writes of an amazing encounter in



photo by Don Beauchamp

Rose-breasted grosbeak



photo by Don Beauchamp

Baltimore oriole

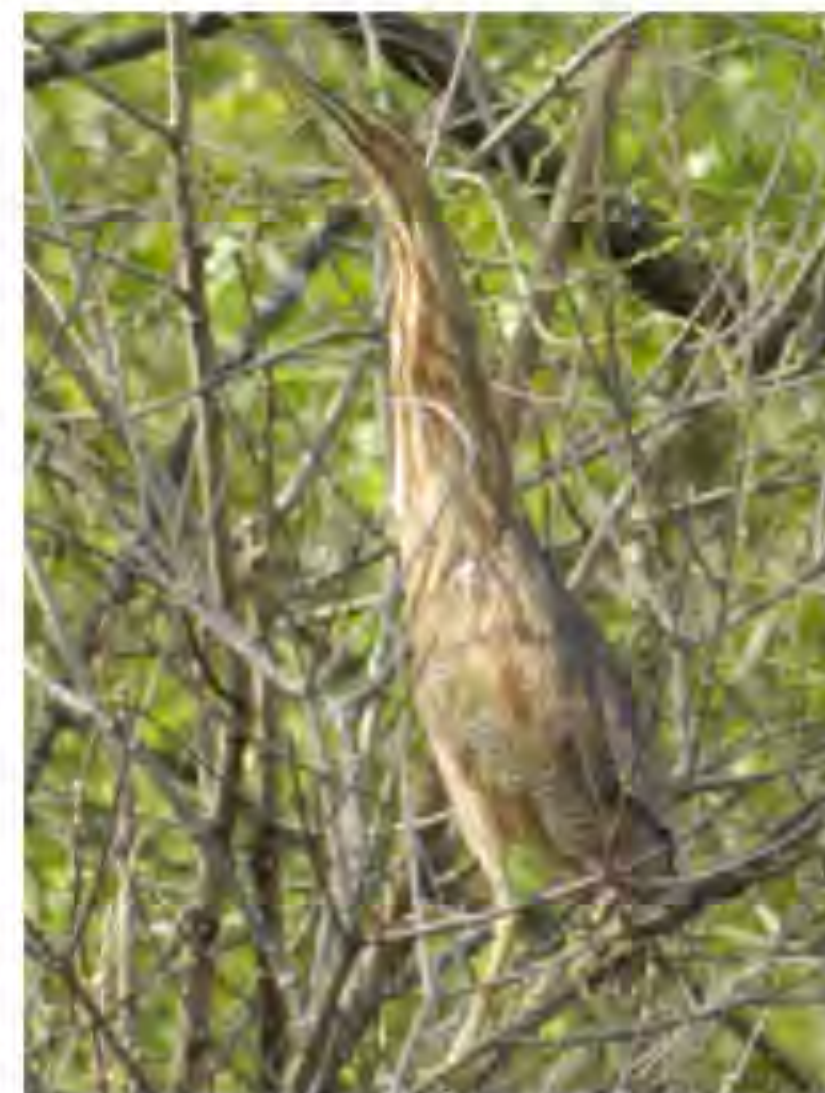


photo by Don Beauchamp

Bittern



photo by Larry Burke

Goldfinch, with a bit of suet on its beak

photos by Larry Burke



Canada goose family



photo by Larry Burke

Sandhill crane pair

photo by Ed Harvey



Tom turkeys facing off

photo by Graham Frank



Turkeys in the hay

mid-May: "While driving near our home, I saw what seemed to be a very strange-looking animal tumble over a huge boulder and land on the road about 100 yards in front of me. I could not tell what it was until I drove closer and saw a **bobcat** and a **fox** locked in mortal combat, the bobcat lying on its back, its fangs bared, with the fox on top of it, held tightly by the claws of the far more muscular bobcat. There was not much movement, but it appeared that the fox was struggling to escape from the bobcat's grasp and was not going to survive. I felt I needed to intervene, so I pulled very close to the animals and honked the horn. Nothing happened and then, very suddenly, the bobcat loosened its grip, jumped up and disappeared over the boulder. The very shaken fox slowly limped away into the brush. I hope it survived. A reminder that there is a less pleasant side to nature than the lovely photographs often posted in this column."

Finally, the sighting many of us wish for but few get to see – a **mountain lion** – from **Elyse Mercier**: "I was driving from New Marlborough to Hartford on Route 57 at around 5:30 a.m. back in late April. I had just passed the New Marlborough-Sandisfield town line when a large animal ran very fast toward my car from the passenger side of the road. I swerved and it turned around and ran back the way to came. It was distinct in its fast, low movement and its long tail." □

Send your wildlife encounter stories to lburke2@me.com

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INTO THE WOODS: A SURVIVAL PRIMER

By Nancy O'Shaughnessy Smith

This past March, two young girls from California made national news after they survived for two days in the woods. When asked how they managed the ordeal, they credited their 4H Club experiences and the survival training they had received from that organization.

A friend and I organized a small 4H Club called the Trailblazers, made up of New Marlborough and Monterey kids. Within twenty-four hours I had several messages from parents, "Did you hear about those two girls – we have to do something like this!" So, I started thinking, who could we find to teach survival skills? Then I ran into Tes Reed, who must have read my mind because, without even having to ask, she offered to teach survival skills to our group. What a gift.

Who is the amazing Tes Reed? In her own words, "I am a New Marlborough native who has been taking kids and adults into the woods for the past fifteen years on the land where I grew up. I am passionate about the wild, and I consider our connection to the natural world a vital piece of our health, happiness, and well-being. I am an experienced guide who enjoys gardening, writing, and exercising, loves wild edibles, and is often seen around town walking my dogs."

So, on a rainy April morning, seven kids, one volunteer older sibling (Thank you, Evie!), and two adults walked into the woods with Tes. She began by asking the kids questions: "What do you like to do outside, climb trees, play with friends, run around, read books? What are the dangers when you are outside, the weather, falling branches, animals? If you have to survive in the woods, what are the most important skills to have, and what are the dangers and priorities?"

Tes taught us that shelter is the most important priority, followed by water, fire, and then food. Humans will die from hypothermia long before they will die of starvation.

As we walked, Tes pointed out numerous edible plants, and the kids harvested plenty. In the mix, which we would later eat for lunch, was coltsfoot, dandelion greens, garlic mustard. Another food-related activity was helping Tes plant ramp bulbs. It is a delicious edible, and she thought she had the perfect location for it. We will have to check in with her next year to see if this endeavor was successful!

Deep in the woods, Tes described how to build a debris shelter. It was raining, and she stressed again how dangerous it is to be cold and wet.. We started by finding a good spot. We picked a sturdy ridge pole, and then we placed sticks leading from the ridge pole to the ground. This was kind of like a tent frame. Then Tes timed us. In five minutes, give or take, we had covered our frame with debris –leaves, sticks, bark, and moss. We were all



The 4H Club survivalists, posing by their improvised shelter.

able to fit in our shelter, all seven of us! It was really fun, and, at the same time, interesting to learn we could do this to survive.

Next on the agenda, making fire. We discussed ways to make fire without a match, but for this particular day, one match would be allowed. Given that it was a rainy day, we would have to be careful not to waste it. Tes sent the kids on missions to find specific supplies. First, birch bark was shredded into fine pieces. Next was delicate and, with hope, dry branches. Then we found slightly larger branches, and then some fairly sizeable pieces. When all the supplies were gathered a teepee of semi-dry materials was formed. There was a small door left open for the match to reach the birch bark on the inside. And with one careful scratch of the match, we had a fire!

Water was carried in on this outing, as well as a cast iron pan and a little jar of olive oil. Tes cooked up a wild edible stir-fry, and it was tasty and enjoyed...or at least eaten... by all. (She did add a little salt!) Sticks became our eating utensils. While we ate around the fire, Tes had the children reflect on what they are thankful for. Some responses: friends, family, home, books, trees. It is always good to keep the perspective of how fortunate we all are. We are all thankful for Tes, her knowledge, her beautiful land, and that she volunteered her time to be with us and teach us what she knows. Our group will enjoy the area we are lucky to call home with a deeper appreciation of what it takes to survive, and will continue our education of outdoor survival and other similar topics so we are able to be safe while having our fun adventures.

Tes offers many outdoor opportunities for kids and adults. One of the 4H kids says, "It was really fun for me and all the other kids to meet Tes. I just love her so much!" To contact the much-loved Tes, write to tesreed@verizon.net. □

THE LOG

Police Department (selected entries)

- Apr. 3 8:26 a.m. A Mill River resident reports a domestic disturbance at a neighbor's house.
- 9:34 a.m. An officer reports an apparent breaking and entering at an unoccupied residence on Mill River Southfield Road.
- 2:07 p.m. A resident reports the dumping of dozens of beer cans on East Hill Road.
- Apr. 4 7:42 a.m. Following the report of a collision with a deer on New Marlborough Southfield Road, the deer, one or more of its legs apparently broken, is located near the Iron Bridge at the head of Norfolk Road and put down.
- Apr. 5 9:37 p.m. A caller reports that a pick-up truck, driven, she believes, by a person against whom she has a restraining order, has twice driven past her Foley Hill Road residence.
- Apr. 6 7:25 p.m. Following a report of an illegal burn in Mill River village, the responsible party says he will extinguish the fire.
- Apr. 7 9:58 a.m. Officer assists a driver who has locked himself out of his pick-up truck at the Meeting House on the New Marlborough Green.
- 6:19 p.m. A caller reports observing a male urinating on a sign at the head of his driveway on Brewer Hill Road.
- 6:53 p.m. A caller reports a domestic dispute at his Hayes Hill Road residence.
- Apr. 11 4:55 p.m. A Cross Road to Canaan Valley Road resident reports she has caught a skunk in a trap meant for problem raccoons.
- 5:10 p.m. Cows loose on Tamaridge Road.
- Apr. 12 6:21 p.m. A lost wallet, turned over to the Lee Police Department, is returned to its owner on Calkins Cross Road.
- Apr. 14 12:58 p.m. A caller reports being verbally accosted while out walking on Hayes Hill Road.
- Apr. 16 1:30 a.m. Officer removes tree branches fallen onto Route 57.
- 7:07 a.m. Tree on wires on Sisson Hill Road.
- 7:38 a.m. A Norfolk Road resident reports a power outage.
- 3:45 p.m. Officer returns a motorcycle license plate to its owner on Mill River Great Barrington Road.
- 8:25 p.m. An officer scares off a bear roaming Mill River village, hitting it with a single "bean bag round," a baton-shaped plastic missile, delivered from a 12-gauge shot gun that does not wound its target; an hour later the bear returns.
- Apr. 17 3:52 p.m. A caller reports losing a set of keys while working on East Hill Road.
- Apr. 23 10:22 a.m. A driver reports she has collided with a rock on New Marlborough Southfield Road.
- 2:56 p.m. Following a motor vehicle stop on New Marlborough Hartsville Road, the driver is found to be operating an unregistered vehicle with a suspended license.
- Apr. 24 3:30 p.m. A driver flags down a police patrol to report that he was nearly run off Clayton Mill River Road by a flatbed truck.
- Apr. 25 4:44 p.m. A caller reports a sighting of what he believes to be a rabid coyote in the vicinity of Lumbert Cross and Canaan Southfield Roads.
- Apr. 26 7:35 p.m. An unlicensed driver, stopped for operating under the influence of alcohol on North Road, is brought into custody.
- Apr. 27 11:40 p.m. Officer assists a motorcyclist who has run out of gas on Hartsville New Marlborough Road.
- Apr. 29 3:12 p.m. Officer assists in freeing a vehicle stuck in the mud on the side of Hartsville Mill River Road.
- Apr. 30 8:31 p.m. Officer assists a driver who has locked himself out of his SUV on Mill River Great Barrington Road.

Graham Frank, Chief of Police

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FIRE AND RESCUE

April 2	9:29 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call	April 20	6:26 a.m.	Mill River Great Barrington Road Fire Alarm
April 4	10:50 p.m.	Mutual Aid to Great Barrington Medical Call	April 20	1:22 p.m.	South Sandisfield Road Medical Call
April 7	7:27 p.m.	Hayes Hill Road Medical Call	April 21	1:55 p.m.	Hayes Hill Road Medical Call
April 13	2:41 a.m.	East Hill Road CO Alarm	April 23	10:25 a.m.	New Marlborough Southfield Road MVA
April 13	11:50 a.m.	Umpachene Falls Road Medical Call	April 26	10:15 p.m.	Stratford Road CO Alarm
April 14	3:50 a.m.	East Hill Road CO Alarm	April 27	9:10 p.m.	Hartsville New Marlborough Road Medical Call
April 16	7:28 p.m.	Lumbert Cross Road Medical Call			
April 19	1:41 p.m.	Clayton Mill River Road Medical Call			

HIGHWAY NEWS — SPRING UPDATE

I think it's safe to say that mud season is pretty much over. Whenever the weather allows, the highway crew has been grading unpaved roads. A high water table and extreme freezing and thawing created a perfect storm for potholes. We are tackling the worst of them first, but please be patient with us, as it is only possible to fix them on good weather days.

We are in the process of wrapping up our pavement roadway report, based on an inventory completed last fall by the firm of Beta Engineering. On a scale from zero (terrible) to 100 (excellent), our roads range all the way from 7.85 to 99.85. We expect that the overall average of around 70 has fallen somewhat given this winter's damage. I understand residents who live on the lowest rated roads, those with constantly occurring potholes, may feel their roads deserve more attention, but with a limited budget, we need to prioritize our efforts on the busier collector roads.

The Town receives about \$340,000 from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Chapter 90 program and, during the past three years, has been allocating more than \$240,000 in additional funds toward road projects. Additional funds are available from the MassWorks grant program. Three years ago, it paid \$1 million to repair Clayton Mill River Road. We are eligible to apply once every three years, but the program is very competitive, and we think we will be lucky to win another grant four to five years after the last one.

If, altogether, this seems like a lot of money, bear in mind that roads in the Northeast crack and deteriorate over a ten-year period and require constant preventive maintenance. At the same time, the cost of paving and construction is rising much faster than the rate of state support. Since 1995, Chapter 90 funds have increased by 33 percent; the cost of road construction, 220 percent. To cite one example, the cost to change culverts, fix drainage, reclaim surfaces, add gravel, and repave one mile of a twenty-two-foot-wide road today runs between \$350,000 and \$400,000. If you add to that the preventive maintenance costs of chip sealing, resurfacing, and fog seal, you can see that we will never catch up. There is no magic pot of money out there, so we as a town need to decide if we are okay with this or if we need to look into other ways to fund our roads.

Once again, thank you for your patience and understanding. We appreciate your support. □

Chuck Loring, New Marlborough Highway Superintendent

SO YOU WANT TO BE A VENDOR AT ELIHU BURRITT DAY?

Nothing could be better than being outside, seeing old friends, making new friends, and making some money as a vendor at the 45th annual Elihu Burritt Day sponsored by the New Marlborough Cultural Council on the Village Green in New Marlborough, August 17, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

If you like flea markets and craft shows and want in on the action at Burritt Day, it's time to begin to get it together and sign up early for your space to sell your

wares. Spaces (10' x 10') are \$30, and tables are available to rent for an additional \$10.

For registration details and more information, please contact:

Wendy Miller

860-830-1250 or brookmedefarm@me.com

Holly Valente

413-229-0059 or villavalente@gmail.com □

Thank You to Our Contributors: Ann Riou; Joyce & Tom Weeks; Graeme Whitelaw

NEW PRINCIPAL CHOSEN FOR MOUNT EVERETT

The news that long-time principal of Mount Everett High School Glenn Devoti has decided to retire this coming August caused concern among many people who had come to love his leadership over these past twenty-six years. They enjoyed having a leader so dedicated to serving the students, teachers, and the community. He was especially caring about the well-being of staff and students, celebrating their accomplishments, and was always there for them in time of need. How could anyone step into his shoes?

Faced with this question, Superintendent Beth Regulbuto pondered the best answer for the school. To explain her process, she wrote, "To me, a critical part of the work a superintendent does is hiring a great leadership team. It's important to be sensitive to the fact that we are losing someone who has been with us for twenty-six years, to the amount of change the staff has been dealing with, and the culture of our school community. I think sometimes there is a great benefit to bringing in new people from the outside, and at other times it's good to promote from within."

It was clear from the experiences of other Berkshire County districts in search of principals that there is a shortage of qualified and certified personnel. Ms. Regulbuto decided to consider a person already at the school. She said, "At the beginning of this school year, I appointed Jesse Carpenter to the position of assistant to the Principal, which he enthusiastically accepted. Little did either of us know he would be thrust into the acting principal role on many occasions this year, and I have found him to surpass all expectations I had for him." She was also aware of his deep experience at



Jesse Carpenter

photo by Amy Carpenter

Mount Everett – as a student who graduated in 1992, as an 8th grade language arts teacher since 1998, as the middle school building leader, high school athletic director, varsity boys' soccer coach, varsity baseball coach, after-school program (Homework Center) coordinator, and summer school English language coordinator in the middle school program. He also had taken the time and effort to become certified as a school administrator. Finally, he had worked very closely with Glenn Devoti through the years. For all of these reasons, Ms. Regulbuto chose Jesse Carpenter as

the new principal.

Some personal notes about Jesse Carpenter: When he was fourteen he and his four siblings moved from New Jersey to New Marlborough, where his parents had found jobs at the Kolburne School. While he was reluctant to leave his friends in New Jersey he said, "I am grateful that I moved, or I would have never found this fantastic community that I live in now."

At Mount Everett, he was an outstanding student athlete. He went on to earn a BA in English from Wesleyan University in 1996. After graduation he worked for a year as a college baseball coach, but was drawn back to his Berkshire roots, where he decided he really wanted to teach. Following a year teaching at Kolburne School, he started his long career at Mount Everett. Of his teaching role, he says, "I want my students to grow in the classroom and as individuals. I thoroughly enjoy classroom teaching, but I also relish the opportunity to guide them in their extra-curricular pursuits and in their individual lives. I have worked with Glenn closely. I am indebted to him for the opportunities he has given me as a teacher and a leader."

Over the years he has furthered his own education at Westfield State University, where he earned an MA in English, and, over that time, he has become fully invested in the Southern Berkshire community. He lives in the school district with his wife, Amy, who is the director of the childcare program in the District. His four children all attend school at the Sheffield campus. His daughter Gwendolyn, a senior at Mount Everett, received the Superintendent's Award for Excellence and this year broke the Berkshire County basketball scoring record. Summing up his deep connection to the District, Jesse says, "I could not imagine teaching, coaching, or serving at any other school." □

Jane Burke

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GUIDING SBRSD TOWARD NEW HORIZONS

Jane Burke Takes the Helm of the School Committee

It took two meetings and a series of divided ballots, but on May 9, New Marlborough's Jane Burke was elected Chairman of the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) School Committee. Mrs. Burke was supported by younger, newer members of the ten-person Committee who are looking to for help in navigating the choppy seas facing educators in Southern Berkshire County. With the District's student population shrinking and the cost of college soaring, guidance in optimizing the resources of the District has never been more critical.

Mrs. Burke brings impressive credentials to her new position: She has a graduate degree in science education from Harvard University, years of experience as a science teacher, a record of innovation as the creator and former director of Flying Cloud Institute, where artistic creativity is infused with the insights of science, and a history with SBRSD that goes back decades. She has served on the Building Com-



Jane Burke photo by Joe Poindexter

mittee, and the Mount Everett School Council, and she was a member of the search committee for the new school superintendent.

Perhaps most relevant of all, Mrs. Burke sits on an ad hoc committee formed to ponder the District's educational future. It reached a consensus on just one issue, says Mrs. Burke: "No consolidation of school districts for now – there are too many hurdles." She sees her role as chairman to guide the Committee to a better understanding of the possibilities of collaboration rather than consolidation. For example, Mrs. Burke would like to investigate the possible benefits of collabor-

ative services for children with special needs. Another example: CTSB, a cable TV broadcaster located in Lee, has offered, at no cost, to broadcast special electives offered at one school to other south county high schools.

Mrs. Burke is also keen on enrichment of educational opportunities within the district. She is enthusiastic about an initiative of her predecessor as chairman, Kenneth Knox, in which a professor from Simon's Rock has volunteered to conduct a two-year seminar at Mount Everett on the humanities, spanning from ancient times to the present and considering not only history and literature but also, for example, philosophy and music. "There is so much talk of workforce readiness," says Mrs. Burke, "but employers are looking for good learners with communication and problem-solving skills, those capable of creative thinking whom they can train." And on a broader scale, "An educated populace understands the needs of democracy," she says.

There is at least one nuts-and-bolts issue Jane Burke would like her Committee to tackle: the state per-pupil subsidy for students in rural areas of Massachusetts. The committee is aiming a letter-writing campaign at State Senator Adam Hinds and Governor Charlie Baker to make good on a promise to pay 100 percent of school transportation costs. So far, the state reimbursement has remained at about 75 percent.

There are strong opinions among members of the School Committee, says Mrs. Burke, and the chairman needs to listen to the views of all of them. "At the same time, I need to maintain focus on matters where we can have an impact," she adds, "and with new members working with experienced ones, we can be effective in serving our district with some fresh ideas." □

Joe Poindexter

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Town Hall: 229-8116

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

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

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